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Understanding Motives for Posting Online Reviews

By

Mara Plecas

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Science in Service Leadership and
Innovation

Department of Service Systems
College of Applied Science and Technology

Rochester Institute of Technology-Croatia
Zagreb, Croatia
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Committee Approval:

Jennifer Matic

Date

Capstone Advisor

Abstract

With the help of the Internet, information is no longer only controlled by large businesses and news media. Consumers now have an opportunity to assert their opinion of products or services online in form of online reviews and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communication. Both positive and negative word-of-mouth communication can have a strong influence on consumers' behavior and on business performance. Positive word-of-mouth is becoming a new way of promoting and building brand relationships with consumers. Negative word-of-mouth is motivated by revengeful behavior due to a negative or dissatisfying experience. Vast amount of research has shown that word-of-mouth can be a powerful tool for influencing consumers, but only limited research on electronic word-of-mouth communication and motivation behind posting online reviews in the form of reviews, comments and ratings has been published to date. This quantitative study explores the relationship between motives for posting online reviews and demographic data of the participants from Zagreb, Croatia. Sample (n=122) completed an online survey and results have shown that the respondents agreed the most with the statements of *altruism*, followed by *collectivism* and *self-enhancement* and *balance* scoring the lowest. Correlation was only found between gender and motives for posting online reviews. This difference was rather small and statistically significant only in the case of *altruism* where the correlation was stronger with women than men.

Keywords: eWOM, motives, online reviews, demographic data, customer behavior

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Introduction

The evolution of technology as well as the prevalence of the Internet has brought numerous benefits including new, more effective and efficient channels of communication, expanding and accessing information rapidly, making it easy to conduct business online. This phenomenon has resulted in the public airing of customer reviews, ratings and comments making personal experiences available to a multitude of users (Barreda & Bilgihan, 2013). In their study, Buhalis and Law (2008) emphasize the importance of online reviews in the tourism industry by stating that consumers tend to rely and trust other users rather than companies (as cited in Barreda & Bilgihan, 2013, p. 267). According to a recent study conducted by Wu, Mattila, Wang and Hanks (2016) online reviews have a strong effect on consumer behavior, as 49% of consumers will not book a hotel without reading consumer reviews first while 35% of travelers are willing to change their travel plan after reading online reviews on sites such as Tripadvisor (p. 224). As much as online reviews can help consumers make wiser purchasing decisions, business owners' and employees dealing with customers directly can experience very negative and stressful situations when customers are not satisfied with their service or product and they post reasonable or unreasonable negative reviews.

On one hand, online reviews help customers make wiser choices and help get the value for money every customer strives for. Paying attention to helpful reviews can be beneficial for businesses as they have an opportunity to gain competitive advantage. Companies can differentiate themselves from their competitors by improving and investing in products customers value; customizing products and services to suit the customer's individual needs which will result in building their customer base while maintaining relationships with their current customers (Peppers & Rogers, 2011, p. 422-423). They can be a reflection of the validity

of the product and the service that employees provide. In fact, they can serve as a type of monitor for businesses. (Ngo-Ye & Thomas, 2011, p. 25).

On the other hand, reading negative online reviews can be very frustrating on employees and business owners especially if the reviews are not justified. It is extremely hard for employees, since they are the ones that are in direct contact with customers, and they know exactly what happened. Also, they are the ones that will get blamed for every negative review. A great amount of studies have been conducted on word-of-mouth (WOM) communication as well as understanding the motivation behind posting product evaluations online. Many have indicated that individuals that post the most are those who had received either a very satisfactory or very unsatisfactory service as well as that individuals in general post more positive reviews than negative (Moe & Schweidel, 2013, pp. 9-11).

Motives are defined as factors that lead a person to engage in a behavior that causes a certain activity. In their study, Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler (2004) interpret motives as important determinants of consumer behavior and useful in explaining why consumers engage in posting online reviews or electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (p. 38). Understanding customers has always been the most difficult part of any business, particularly today when consumers can express their opinions and share experiences online about anything, with just one click. Marketers need to understand who their customers are and their motivation for posting their opinions online (Moe & Schweidel, 2013, p. 9). In their study, Mathwick and Mosteller (2017) have stated that although all customer may show the same level of engagement, not all customers share the same external and internal motivators for their behavior. Therefore, it has become of crucial importance to understand why consumers post online reviews, both positive and negative (as cited in Wu, Mattila, Wang & Hanks, 2016).

Research Problem

When managers have insight into the customer's perspective they have the chance to improve their services, build brand image and loyalty, maximize profit, minimize unnecessary costs etc. Although a great amount of studies have been conducted on word-of-mouth, not many have examined motives for posting online reviews, therefore more research needs to be done on this subject. Conducting a quantitative study through survey method with participants from Zagreb gave a better understanding of the main motivators that drive customers to post online. This study examined the relationship between gender, age, level of education and motivators for posting online reviews. It is of significant importance for service managers and marketers to understand motivation behind posting reviews because applying the acquired knowledge, will lead to reaching high satisfaction levels and therefore create and support positive instead of negative, online reviewing behavior (Wu et al., 2016, p.225). Additionally, Wu et al. (2016) argued that examining the behavior behind posting online reviews can help management see their company from the customer's perspective (p.225).

Hypotheses

This study aims to examine motivation behind consumers posting online reviews by exploring the relationship between motives for posting online reviews and demographic data of the participants, which includes age, gender and level of education of the participants. Hypotheses have been sorted into four categories of motives in accordance with the literature review and studies conducted by Henning-Thurau et al. (2004), Cheung and Lee (2012) and Parikh, Behnke, Vorvoreanu, Almanza and Nelson (2014) which provided useful frameworks that became the base of the study and that have led to suggest 4 different theoretical perspectives or motivators. *Balance* can be described as posting positive and negative review in the

accordance with the experience. *Altruism* can be defined as selfless enjoyment of helping other users. *Collectivism* can be described as being a part of an online community. Lastly *Self-enhancement* can be described as increasing one's own welfare in order to gain positive recognition from other users. The researcher defined the hypotheses of this study as follows:

H1: Gender is positively related to motives for posting online reviews.

H2: Age is positively related to motives for posting online reviews.

H3: Level of education is positively related to motives for posting online reviews.

Significance of the Study

This study is conducted to understand customer motivation for posting online reviews. By conducting this research, employees and companies dealing with online reviews on a daily basis will get a better understanding on motives that drive customer behavior. Consumers using reviews can read experiences and opinions of other consumers, thanks to the development of online product and service reviews, and improve their purchase decisions (Vimaladevi & Dhanabhakaym, 2012, p. 92). When reviewers are satisfied with products, they want to maintain their positive mood as much as possible. Their motivation for posting reviews then lies in them wanting to help the online community and other users as well as the company itself (Chen & Huang, 2013, p. 1768).

But as much as online reviews can help consumers make wiser purchasing decisions, business owners and employees dealing with customers directly can experience very negative and stressful situations when customers are not satisfied with their service or product and they post reasonable or unreasonable negative reviews. Conducting this study will help employees and business owners gain better understanding of the customer. Also, getting informed and aware of the significance of online reviews can result in increasing their practical knowledge as

well as reducing stress levels. This study will contribute to existing literature about the motivation for posting online reviews. Readers will gain a better understanding of the importance of online reviews and main motivators behind posting online reviews.

The purpose of this quantitative study is to explore the motivation behind posting online reviews among participants from Zagreb through examining the relationship between motivators and demographic data of the participants.

Literature Review

A great amount of studies have been conducted on trying to find the reason for posting product and service evaluations online. Word-of-mouth communication has always been the most effective way of promotion and best way to verify if the next purchase decision is going to be successful, but was mostly reserved for friends and family. Today, with the evolution of technology, consumers can read hundreds of reviews from a multitude of users from different parts of the planet. Although having quick access to information, experiences and opinions posted on online review sites is efficient, different motivators for posting opinions online generate different customer behavior. This literature review presents information about word-of-mouth communication prior and in the Internet era as well as understanding motives for online reviews; from individuals who pose as “experts” and post “fake” reviews to individuals motivated purely by altruistic motives and restoring balance through online reviewing in order to describe the importance of motivation for posting online reviews.

Word-of-Mouth (WOM) communication before the Internet era

Generally speaking, word-of-mouth has always been the cheapest, most effective way of promotion. Prior to the Internet era, consumers shared each other’s product-related experiences through traditional WOM (e.g. discussions with friends and family) (Sundaram, Mitra &

Webster, 1998; Vimaladevi & Dhanabhakaym, 2012). Arndt (1967) provided one of the earliest definitions of word-of-mouth (WOM) as an oral, person-to-person connection between a communicator and a receiver who engage in a non-commercial conversation regarding a brand, product, or a service offered for sale (as cited in de Matos & Rossi, 2008, p. 578).

In their study, Sundaram, Mitra and Webster (1998) also agreed with Arndt (1967) stating that: “Both positive and negative WOM communications can have a strong influence on consumers’ behavior and on ensuing business performance” (Sundaram et al., 1998, p. 527).

An interesting study conducted by Keng et al. (1995) indicates that consumers who experienced some form of dissatisfaction with the products or services they have received are more likely to tell their friends and family about their dissatisfaction rather than complain to the organization itself (as cited in Cheng, Lam & Hsu, 2006). The consumers who felt the need to address their dissatisfaction felt complaining will only cause additional annoyance (Cheng, et al., 2006). The evolution of technology and the arrival of the Internet gave new opportunities for consumers to engage in electronic word-of mouth (eWOM). Consumers now have an opportunity to exchange, share and post their own advice and opinions of products or services online. With the help of the Internet, information is no longer only controlled by news media or large businesses (Vimaladevi & Dhanabhakaym, 2012. pp. 91-92).

EWOM (Electronic Word-of-Mouth) communication

There are a few definitions explaining eWOM. Goldsmith (2006) defined electronic word-of-mouth communication (eWOM) as word-of-mouth communication on the Internet, which can be found on online forums, electronic bulletin board systems, blogs, review sites, and social networking sites (as cited in Floyd, Freling, Alhoqail, Cho & Freling, 2014, p. 218). Furthermore, Vimaladevi and Dhanabhakaym (2012) stated that eWOM can be defined as: “All

informal communications directed at consumers through Internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services, or their sellers” (p. 91). Hennig-Thurau et al., (2004) also defined eWOM adding: “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” (p. 39). Floyd, Freling, Alhoqail, Cho and Freling, (2012) conducted a meta-analysis on how online reviews affect retail product sales addressing numerous authors who compared traditional WOM and eWOM. Lee et al., (2008); Senecal and Nantel (2004) stated that one of the reasons consumers like eWOM is because of its broad range of different opinions in one place (as cited in Floyd et al., 2012, p. 218). Dellarocas (2003) found that retailers have more control over information they think it would benefit them (as cited in Floyd et al., 2012, p. 218). Also, Floyd et al., (2012) mentioned eWOM is easier to decipher because feedback is posted in writing form (p. 218). Floyd et. al., (2012) has concluded during their study that products that are reviewed on online sites have significantly higher sales and influence over consumers (p. 227).

Vimaladevi and Dhanabhakaym (2012) stated that Word-of-mouth (WOM) communication is a new marketing trend that is crucial to understand as consumers’ base their purchase decisions on it (p. 91).

One major difference between traditional WOM and eWOM is in the behavior of the customers. In the offline world, individuals who had a direct negative experience with a product are more likely to express their dissatisfaction. For that reason, traditional WOM (offline word of mouth) tends to be more negative than positive. However, researchers have observed that in the world of online reviews, customers tend to post positive product reviews more than negative ones (Moe & Schweidel, 2012, p. 9). Henning-Thurau et al., (2004) stated that nowadays online

reviews and consumer-opinion platforms are available to a multitude of Internet users and provide information on every area of consumption (p. 40).

Thanks to the development of online product and service reviews, customers can read experiences and opinions of fellow consumers and help decrease their uncertainty about a product's quality. Because customers often make offline purchases based on online reviews many businesses, such as Amazon.com, have promoted and expanded their online review services (Vimaladevi & Dhanabhakaym, 2012, p. 92).

Morgan et al., (2003) examined the effect of positive and negative WOM on tourism products. They noted that negative WOM comments can have an overwhelming impact upon a destination's image (as cited in Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan 2005, p. 7). Similarly Crick's (2003) study noted that industry results can vary based on the behavior of locals towards tourists. Because of negative WOM the impact on the industry can be negative when locals display hostile feelings (as cited in Litvin et al., 2005, p. 7). Vimaladevi and Dhanabhakaym (2012) noted that negative eWOM has a stronger impact on the decision-making process.

Review making is a phenomenon in the sense that customers don't have to leave positive or negative reviews if they don't want to since it is not defined by any contract. It depends on the customers' willingness to do so and it has a strong impact on business (Cheng and Huang, 2013, p. 1759). However, Henning-Thureu, (2004) address the problem that "only limited research on consumers' eWOM communication has been published to date" (p. 39); encouraging researchers to conduct more studies on this matter.

EWOM impact on customer behavior

Different motivators for posting opinions online generate different customer behavior. Moe and Schweidel (2012) conducted a study addressing the behavior of 2 types of individuals.

The first type is the “least active” posters who display bandwagon effects by posting better ratings when previously displayed ratings were more positive; so they were easily manipulated by others as they would adjust their ratings to fit the majority of users. The second type is the “most active” who are prone to post more negative ratings if they saw that the products or services they want to rate already have mostly positive ratings. They consider themselves to be “experts” who want to achieve popularity in the community by posting negative comments that would attract attention (pp.10-11). In a study conducted by Goldsmith and Flynn (1993), the key WOM player is the *opinion leader*, who “interprets the meaning of media message content for others, i.e. *opinion seekers*” (as cited in Litvin et al., 2005, p. 4).

Rust and Oliver (1994) stated that a consumers mood and response to a product or service, depends on whether the consumption experience was satisfying or not. Depending on the satisfaction level, the response can be either positive or negative. If positive the response arouses emotions like excitement, happiness, or contentment and brings higher rating (as cited in Chen & Huang, 2013, p. 1768). This would support Isen and Shalcker’s (1982) statement that “people rate an object or experience more positively when they are in a good mood” (Chen & Huang, 2013, 1768). Nygren, Isen, Taylor and Dulin (1996) mentioned “someone who is feeling happy has more ready access to thoughts about the positive aspects of any relatively neutral stimulus than does someone in a control state” (p. 60). On the other hand, positive mood doesn’t keep people from a negative reaction. If people encountered a negative experience they tend to be more cautious and self-protective. When people are in a positive mood, other factors in the decision-making equation like utility, choice or outcome are important influencers because consumers are not only focusing primarily on probabilities (Nygren, Isen, Taylor & Dulin, 1996, p. 60).

Thus, when reviewers have positive feelings towards products it motivates them to help fellow consumers and companies as well by sharing and posting their opinion through reviews (Chen & Huang, 2013, p. 1768). Overall, research indicated that “individuals were more likely to submit ratings when they were very satisfied or not satisfied.” When their evaluation was moderate, individuals wouldn’t post as actively as when the evaluation was positive (Moe & Schweidel, 2012, p. 10). When reviewers are satisfied with products, they want to maintain their positive mood as much as possible so that is another reason why they are more prone to posting online reviews. These suggestions from different authors may explain the positive relationship between ratings and review behaviors (Chen & Huang, 2013, p. 1768).

Although overall there is a positive mood regarding online reviews, there are still cases in which customers respond negatively to products or services. Except genuine negative reviews posted entirely because of negative experiences with products or services, nowadays there is a practice of dishonest or “fake” reviews that anyone can post since nearly all services and products can be evaluated online and most people have Internet access. Reasons for doing so might be competitiveness between business owners that then resort to employees posing as customers with the intention of giving a bad review (Litvin et al., 2005, pp. 16-17).

For reasons indicated in this literature review, marketers and consumers alike must exercise caution in drawing inferences from posted product ratings and reviews, since the individuals behind these opinions might not have sincere intentions toward a certain company, product or service and may not reflect the overall customer base’s perceptions (Moe & Schweidel, 2012, p. 12). Nevertheless, the impact that online reviews and eWOM in general have on businesses is becoming a new object of interest to many companies since it has become a tool for developing strategic plans, improving brand competition, monitoring consumer

satisfaction and is a key influencer in purchase decisions (Chen & Huang, 2013, p. 1759; Litvin et al. 2005, p. 1; Vimaladevi & Dhanabhakaym, 2012, p. 99).

Motivators behind posting online reviews

There are a number of studies explaining the motivational factor behind WOM communication. Dichter (1966) identified four main motivational categories of positive WOM communication: product-involvement, self-involvement, other-involvement, and message-involvement (as cited in Henning-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004, p. 40). In 1993, Engel et al. altered Dichter's typology, and introduced dissonance reduction (reduces doubts following a major purchase decision) as an additional factor which the authors explained as a reason for articulating negative WOM communication only (as cited in Henning-Thurau et al., 2004, pp. 40-41).

One of the most comprehensive studies on motives for WOM communication is the one by Sundaram et al. (1998). The authors wanted to investigate the relationship between consumption experiences and motives that drive consumers to engage in both positive and negative unsolicited WOM communications (p. 527). The authors carried out 390 critical-incident interviews, identifying eight motives for consumer WOM communication. Four explained positive WOM communication (altruism, product involvement (having a personal interest in the product), *self-enhancement* (enhancing one's own welfare), helping the company), and the other four negative WOM communication (altruism, anxiety reduction, vengeance, advice seeking (gaining advice on how to solve problems) (Henning-Thurau et al., 2004, pp.40-41; Sundaram et al., 1998). An interesting finding from this study was that *altruism* was introduced as both negative and positive motive for WOM communication. A study conducted by Cheung and Lee (2012) suggested that sense of belonging, being part of a community and

helping others proved to be the biggest motivators behind posting reviews on online consumer-opinion platforms. Similarly, Verhagen, Nauta and Feldberg (2013) found that consumers feel the need to warn and inform fellow community members, so sense of community usefulness is a strong motivator behind negative eWOM (pp.1430-1431).

Since there is much competition between service and product providers it's not unusual for some business owners to resort to stealth marketing tactics. Neisser (2004) defined stealth marketing as "employing tactics that engage the prospect without people knowing they are being marketed" (as cited in Litvin et al., 2005, p. 16). The most common tactic is when a company uses employees on their behalf to pretend to be customers and post positive online reviews, enhancing their ratings. Also, another tactic is when a company uses their employees to pretend to be customers of a competitor, mentioning non-existing problems and posting negative comments on their online review platforms, decreasing the competitions rating. This has become a problem for most travel related review sites where restaurants, properties and destinations can receive a harsh "hate" review (Litvin et al, 2005, p. 17).

With these studies from the literature review in mind, it can be said that online reviews affect customer behavior in several ways depending on the intention and motivation factor behind the review. Online reviews are important because in the majority of cases they provide a positive online communication because positive feelings towards products motivates them to help fellow consumers and companies as well as by sharing and posting their opinion through reviews (Chen & Huang, 2013, p. 1768). Understanding motives for posting online reviews is important because they uncover intention and explain and influence behavior. The methodology section next describes the research design for this study as well as methods for data collection and analysis used for this study.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design for this study is quantitative. The research design of inquiry is nonexperimental as a survey method was used to describe the motivation of consumers who post reviews online. Studies conducted by Henning-Thurau et al. (2004), and Cheung and Lee (2012) as well as Parikh et al. (2014) have provided useful frameworks that served as a base for the researcher's study. The researcher examined research questions and surveys from the mentioned studies and combined parts of them to put together the survey for this study which have led to suggest 4 different theoretical perspectives or motives that served as dependant variables for this study: *balance*, *altruism*, *collectivism* and *self-enhancement*. *Balance* is defined as one's need for posting either positive or negative reviews in accordance with the experience; *altruism* is defined as selfless enjoyment of helping other users; *collectivism* is defined as a person's need to be a part of an online community; and *self-enhancement* is defined as the need to increase one's own welfare and gain positive recognition from other users. Demographics like gender, age and level of education were used as independent variables for the study. The researcher defined the hypotheses as follows:

H1: Gender is positively related to motives for posting online reviews.

H2: Age is positively related to motives for posting online reviews.

H3: Level of education is positively related to motives for posting online reviews.

The hypotheses stated in this study are based on the belief that the dependent variables, motives for posting online reviews (balance, altruism, collectivism and self-enhancement), are positively related to gender, age and level of education (independent variables).

Analyzing whether there is a connection between demographic data like age, gender and level of education and motives for posting reviews online as well as comparing findings from existing studies is the aim of this study.

Strategy of Inquiry

Quantitative research focuses on specific variables and studies them in order to determine if there is a connection between them (Denscombe, 2014, p. 238). The approach is associated with the production of numerical data, which is tested for validity and reliability to ensure it reflects the research itself, and not the researcher's preferences (Denscombe, 2014, p. 238). Since quantitative methods measures quantities rather than impressions and tests statistical significance the researcher will gain more credibility in terms of the interpretations and the confidence of the results (Denscombe, 2014, p. 269).

A survey method was used as a strategy of inquiry for this study as the survey method is primarily associated with quantitative research (Denscombe, 2014, p. 242). The researcher used the survey method because surveys enable getting information about a large number of people that can be generated relatively quickly and cost-efficiently. The findings enable the researcher to generalize conclusions to the population which is less possible to do in a qualitative studies such as interviews, where the ability to generalize is limited due to the size of the sample. Also, surveys enable the researcher to look for patterns of activity within groups or categories of people (rather than individuals) (Denscombe, 2014, p. 242). A disadvantage of the survey method is that the data is only as good as the methods used to collect them and the questions the researcher asks.

The researcher examined studies from Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) as well as Cheung and Lee's (2012) and Parikh et al., (2014) and used parts of their surveys to construct survey

questions for this study. These comprehensive studies all explore the motivation and intention of posting behavior and online reviewing. The authors discuss the most important part behind consumer behavior when it comes to engaging in eWOM; motivation and intention. Their research also served as a basis for many other researchers who wanted to explore the motivation behind electronic Word-of-Mouth communication. For this study the researcher combined existing survey and research questions from the mentioned studies and categorized the questions by dividing them into 4 categories in accordance with the 4 different theoretical perspectives or motivators (balance, altruism, collectivism and self-enhancement). The complete survey can be seen in Appendix A.

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of statements that were scored with a 5 score Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) indicating the level of agreement or disagreement with each item.

The questions in the first part of the survey were mixed together in order for survey objectives to appear less obvious and so the participants could answer the questions as honestly as possible.

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of basic demographic questions that will be linked to the dependent variables in order to examine the relationship between a participant's demographic data with the motives for posting reviews online. The researcher asked 3 questions regarding the demographic data of the participants, revolving their gender, age and level of education.

Participants

The targeted participants of this study were individuals from Zagreb who actively post online reviews. The requirement for participation was that participants must actively post

reviews online and this was clearly stated in the survey. Selection of participants was by convenience sampling. The sample size was 122 participants. The sample consisted of both men and women with age groups varying from 19 years old to 60 and over years old with various education levels from less than High school to Ph.D. level of education.

Data Collection

The researcher created an online survey, using Survey Monkey, an online survey tool. The survey was distributed online through the researcher's social profiles and distribution tools such as Facebook, WhatsApp and e-mail by posting the link of the survey and sending the survey on request via Messenger app or e-mail. Participants were encouraged to complete and share the survey depending on their availability and willingness. The researcher managed to collect 122 responses, completed anonymously to ensure minimum bias and prejudice.

Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed partially using the Survey Monkey data analysis tool. The analysis tool analyzed answers for every question and then summarized it so the researcher could compare the results of each question. The researcher used SPSS Statistics software package to calculate and analyze correlation between 4 scales of motives and demographic variables (gender, level of education and age).

Scale motives were calculated in a way that each of the statements were associated with a numeric value: strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, neutral = 3, agree = 4, strongly agree = 5. The values for four questions that make a certain motive were then calculated. This way, the researcher got four scale motives (balance, altruism, collectivism, self-enhancement) in which each respondent could score between 4 (if the respondent chose "strongly disagree" on all four statements) and 20 (if the respondent chose "strongly agree" in all four statements). Distribution

of motive scale results can be seen in the results section. The distribution of the results of the respondents within each of these variables shows how many respondents achieved a certain result (grouped into classes), from the lowest possible score (4) to the highest possible score (20) (Figure 1).

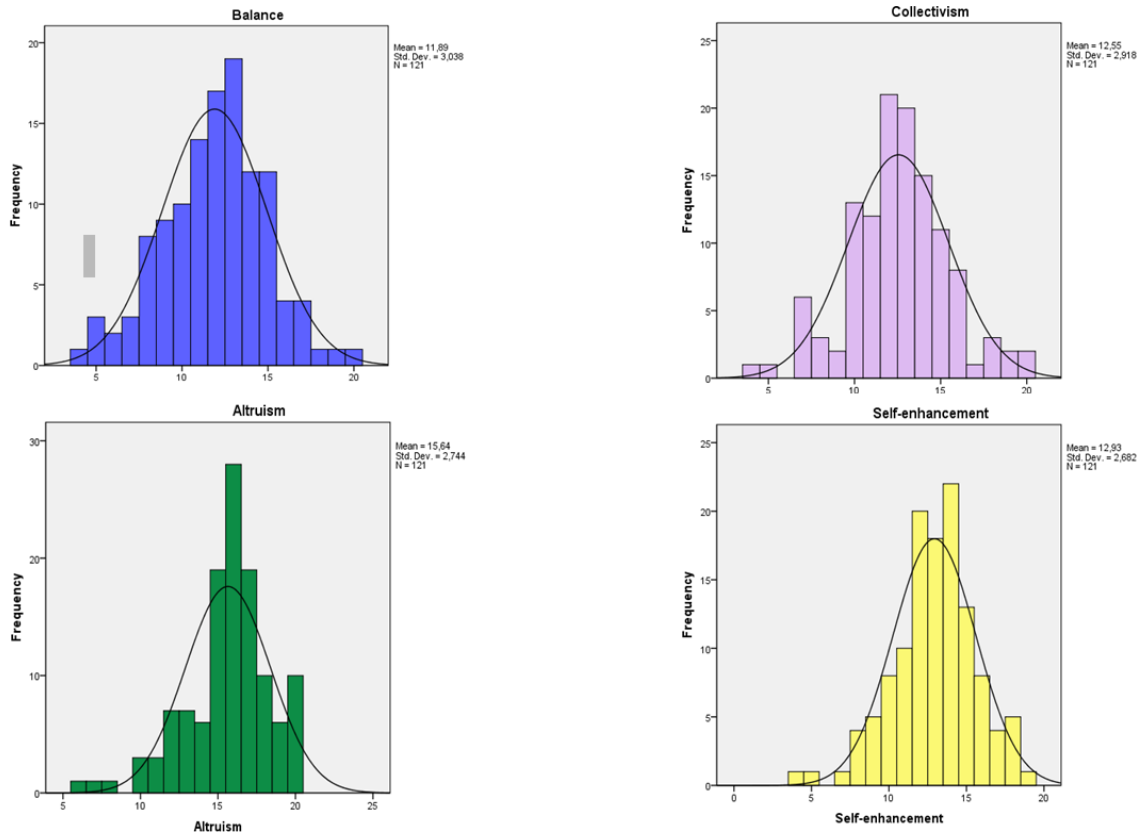


Figure 1. Distribution of Motive Scale Results

To compare the average results, the researcher has calculated the minimum and maximum, mean and standard deviation to measure the dispersion of the results. The minimum/maximum theoretical result was, the same in all 4 cases, between 4 and 20 (Table 1).

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Balance	121	4	20	11,89	3,038
Altruism	121	6	20	15,64	2,744
Collectivism	121	4	20	12,55	2,918
Self-enhancement	121	4	19	12,93	2,682
Valid N (list wise)	119				

Table 1. Comparison of average results

The statistical significance of the difference between the average degree of agreement with the four scales of motives for posting online reviews (balance, altruism, collectivism, self-enhancement) was tested by dependent variance analysis, respectively, repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) (Table 2).

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial η^2
Motivators <u>Sphericity Assumed</u>	957,807	3	319,269	111,605	0,000	0,486
Error (Motivators) <u>Sphericity Assumed</u>	1012,693	354	2,861			

Table 2. Repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA)

Post-hoc analysis by each motive individually found that the average scores of all four scales of motivates differed significantly statistically, with the exception of *collectivism* and *self-enhancement*.

Pairwise Comparisons

(I) Motivators	(J) Motivators	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. ^a	95% Confidence Interval for Difference ^a	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Balance	Altruism	-3,731*	0,251	0,000	-4,406	-3,057
	Collectivism	-0,655*	0,222	0,023	-1,252	-0,059
	Self-enhancement	-1,076*	0,247	0,000	-1,738	-0,413
Altruism	Balance	3,731*	0,251	0,000	3,057	4,406
	Collectivism	3,076*	0,195	0,000	2,553	3,598
	Self-enhancement	2,655*	0,197	0,000	2,128	3,183
Collectivism	Balance	0,655*	0,222	0,023	0,059	1,252
	Altruism	-3,076*	0,195	0,000	-3,598	-2,553
	Self-enhancement	-0,420	0,196	0,202	-0,945	0,105
Self-enhancement	Balance	1,076*	0,247	0,000	0,413	1,738
	Altruism	-2,655*	0,197	0,000	-3,183	-2,128
	Collectivism	0,420	0,196	0,202	-0,105	0,945

Based on estimated marginal means

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0,05 level.

a. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

Table 3. Individual comparisons results in 4 motives

In order to determine whether there is a difference between expressing motives for posting online reviews and gender, the researcher computed an independent samples t-test for each of them (Table 4)

Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
Balance	Male	36	11,42	3,350	0,558
	Female	85	12,09	2,893	0,314
Altruism	Male	36	14,81	3,371	0,562
	Female	85	16,00	2,365	0,257
Collectivism	Male	36	11,94	3,216	0,536
	Female	85	12,81	2,762	0,300
Self-enhancement	Male	36	12,44	2,677	0,446
	Female	85	13,14	2,673	0,290

	t-test for Equality of Means						
	t	df	Sig.	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Balance	-1,123	119	0,264	-0,677	0,603	-1,872	0,518
Altruism	-2,225	119	0,028	-1,194	0,537	-2,258	-0,131
Collectivism	-1,502	119	0,136	-0,867	0,577	-2,010	0,276
Self-enhancement	-1,310	119	0,193	-0,697	0,532	-1,750	0,356

Table 4. Independent samples t-test

In order to determine whether age is associated with the motives for posting online reviews, the researcher used Spearman's correlation coefficient between the results on 4 scale motives and age (Table 5).

		Correlations				
		Balance	Altruism	Collectivism	Self-enhancement	Age
Balance	ρ	-	0,472**	0,595**	0,482**	0,066
	p		0,000	0,000	0,000	0,469
Altruism	ρ	0,472**	-	0,633**	0,602**	0,029
	p	0,000		0,000	0,000	0,755
Collectivism	ρ	0,595**	0,633**	-	0,648**	0,059
	p	0,000	0,000		0,000	0,517
Self-enhancement	ρ	0,482**	0,602**	0,648**	-	-0,061
	p	0,000	0,000	0,000		0,504
Age	ρ	0,066	0,029	0,059	-0,061	-
	p	0,469	0,755	0,517	0,504	

N = 120

Table 5. Spearman's correlation coefficient – age and motives

Spearman's correlation coefficient is used to measure the strength and direction of association between ranked variables.

The researcher also used Spearman's coefficient of correlation to verify if correlation between the level of education and the dependent variables (Table 6).

		Correlations				
		Highest lvl of completed education	Balance	Altruism	Collectivism	Self-enhancement
Highest level of completed education	ρ	-	-0,083	0,015	-0,081	-0,043
	p		0,370	0,872	0,376	0,638
Balance	ρ	-0,083	-	0,472**	0,595**	0,482**
	p	0,370		0,000	0,000	0,000
Altruism	ρ	0,015	0,472**	-	0,633**	0,602**
	p	0,872	0,000		0,000	0,000
Collectivism	ρ	-0,081	0,595**	0,633**	-	0,648**
	p	0,376	0,000	0,000		0,000
Self-enhancement	ρ	-0,043	0,482**	0,602**	0,648**	-
	p	0,638	0,000	0,000	0,000	

N = 120.

Table 6. Spearman’s correlation coefficient – level of education and motives

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Out of 122 participants, 70,5% participants that completed the survey were women while 29,5% were men (Figure 2).

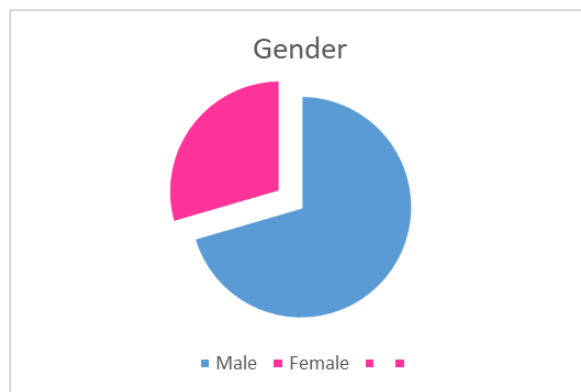


Figure 2. Gender

Regarding age, the majority of the participants, 86,9%, indicated they belong to the 20 – 29 age group, while the rest of the participants were distributed between age groups 30 – 39 (5,7%), 40 – 49 (4,9%) and 19 and under (2,5%). There were no responses indicating participants that belong to age group 60 and more years old. (Figure 3).

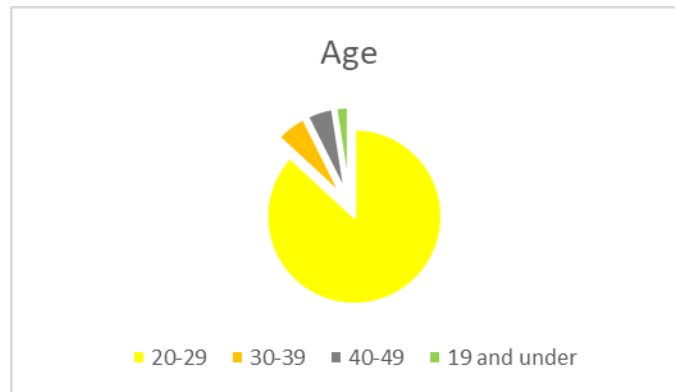


Figure 3. Age

When it comes to the level of education data, there is much more diversity as participants were dispersed over all categories of education level. The majority of participants indicated their completed level of education was “Bachelor’s degree” (31,1%), following “some college, no degree” (21,3%) and “Master’s degree” (18,9%). There was a good percentage of participants (13,9%) indicating “high school” as their completed level of education, while the rest of the participants were distributed through the following categories: “completed some college” (6,6%), “completed some graduate program (4,1%)”, “Ph.D., law or medical degree” (2,5%) and “less than high school” (0,8%) (Figure 4).

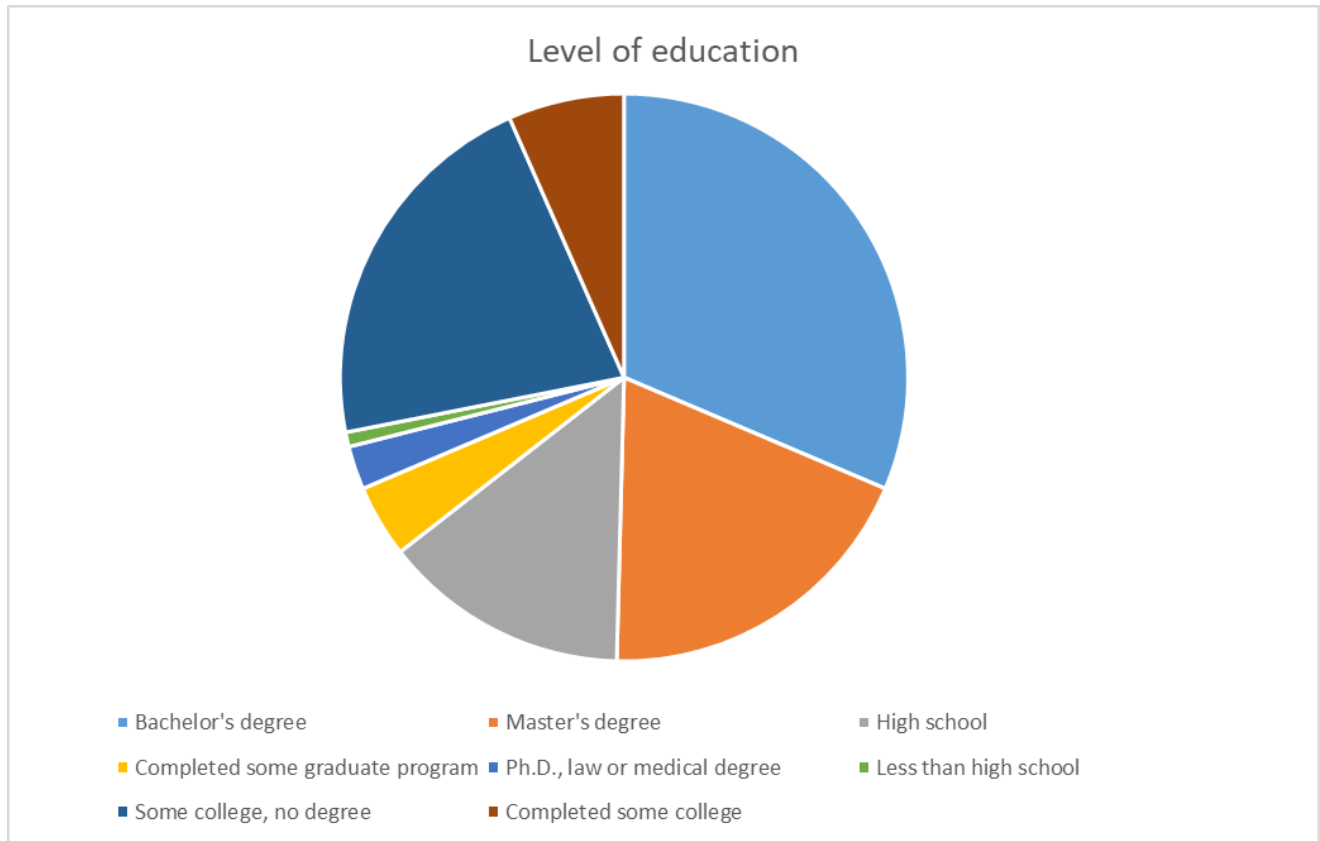


Figure 4. Level of education

Average results indicate that respondents achieved relatively high scores on all scales (Table 1). *Altruism* averaged 78% of the possible number of points, following *self-enhancement* 64%, afterwards *collectivism* 62%, and *balance* 56% scoring the lowest out of the 4 motives.

Statistical Analysis

As stated earlier, the statistical significance of the difference between the average degree of agreement with the four scales of motives for posting online reviews was tested by ANOVA analysis of variance which determined that the difference between motives is statistically significant with the level of risk less than 1% ($F = 111.6$; $df = 3/354$; $p < 0.001$) (Table 2).

Testing each motive individually following a post-hoc analysis determined that the average scores of all four scales of motives differed significantly statistically, with the

exception of *collectivism* and *self-enhancement*. In other words, on average, the respondents agreed most with the statements of *altruism* scale motive, following *collectivism* and *self-enhancement*, which respondents equally agreed, whereas the lowest average scored balance scale motive (Table 3).

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: Gender is positively related to motives for posting online reviews.

In order to determine whether there is a difference between expressing motives for posting online reviews and gender, the researcher computed an independent samples t-test for each motive (Table 4). Results showed that women in all motives averaged somewhat higher than men, but this difference is rather small and statistically significant only in the case of *altruism* where it reaches approximately 1.2 points (Table 4). The researcher has concluded that men and women expressed equal agreement with the offered motives, except in the case of *altruism*, where women achieved an approximately 8% higher score than men. The hypothesis was confirmed only in the case of women and *altruism*.

Hypothesis 2: Age is positively related to motives for posting online reviews.

Spearman's correlation coefficient was used to determine whether age is associated with the motives for posting online reviews. Results showed that age did not statistically significantly correlate with either of the four motives. Based on the results, the researcher has concluded that there isn't enough evidence to argue that there is a correlation between age and the motives for posting online reviews (Table 5). This is seen by the fact that p-values are all higher than 0.05 (Tables 5 and 6) so the hypothesis wasn't confirmed.

Hypothesis 3: Level of education is positively related to motives for posting online reviews.

The researcher also used Spearman's coefficient of correlation to verify if correlation between the level of education and four scale motives for posting online reviews existed. As in the case of age, the level of education did not statistically significantly correlate with either of the four scales of motives. Respondents of different levels of education did not differ from the motives of publishing online reviews (Table 6).

Level of education also didn't correlate with the motivators. This is also seen by the fact that p-values are all higher than 0.05 (Tables 5 and 6) so this hypothesis was also not confirmed.

Discussion

With the evolution of technology, new channels of communication have appeared, enabling faster online communication and accessible information. This phenomenon has resulted in the public airing of guest reviews, ratings and comments making personal experiences available to a multitude of users (Barreda & Bilgihan, 2013). The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between motives for posting online reviews and demographic data of the participants. Motives for posting online reviews were identified as *altruism*, *collectivism*, *self-enhancement* and *balance* and served as the dependent variable, while demographic data of the participants was identified as age, gender and level of education and served as the independent variable for this study. *Altruism*, the act of doing something for others without anticipating anything in return. Consumers share their experience to help others and give advice and is the most often motive discussed in previous literature. *Collectivism*, refers to being motivated for the sake of increasing the welfare and contributing knowledge to a group or collective (Cheung & Lee, 2012, p. 220). *Self-enhancement*, a motive considered egoistic because the ultimate goal is to increase the consumers own reputation. *Balance* theory suggests writing comments to restore balance that was disrupted with a dissatisfying consumption experiences (Henning-Thurau et al., 2004, p. 44).

Through research, the researcher found these four motives for posting online reviews occurring in various previous studies by Henning-Thurau et al. (2004), Cheung and Lee (2012) Parikh et al. (2014) and others and wanted to test the relationship behind them and participants demographic data. Sample (n=122) completed an online survey used as a strategy of inquiry for this study which the researcher distributed online through her social profiles.

The relationship between these variables was analyzed using 3 hypotheses to see whether there is a positive correlation between them. The first hypotheses explored correlation between motives for posting online reviews and gender, the second hypothesis tested whether age is associated with the motives for posting online reviews while the third hypothesis focused on the correlation between level of education and motives for posting online reviews. The findings showed that correlation was only found between gender and motives for posting online reviews. The results indicated that the correlation was stronger with women than men. This difference was rather small and statistically significant only in the case of *altruism* where women scored approximately 8% higher than men. No other statistically significant results were found when it comes to hypothesis testing, except the connection between women and *altruism*.

These studies also used demographic data in their research but haven't really focus on drawing the connection between participants data and motivators for posting online reviews. All 3 studies had included men and women, mostly in equal percentages with the exception of Henning-Thurau et al. (2004) whose research included more males than females. Parikh et al. (2014) stated that males reported reading and contributing reviews more often than females, which is opposite of the result the researcher has generated. An explanation of different results might be the researcher's sample which included a majority of women (70/30), geographical position and

cultural diversity as well as the focus of the research itself, as the researcher focused more on the motivators for posting reviews online and demographic data of the participants.

When testing whether there is a statistical significance between the four motives for posting online reviews (*balance, altruism, collectivism, self-enhancement*) using ANOVA test, results indicated there was a statistically significant difference between each motive and respondents agreed the most with the statements of *altruism*, followed by *collectivism* and *self-enhancement* (which respondents equally agreed) while *balance* scored the lowest.

Some of the findings supported earlier works by authors like Henning-Thurau et al. (2004), Cheung and Lee (2012), Parikh et al. (2014) Yoo and Gretzel, (2008) confirming that *altruism* is the main and most important reason why users post reviews online. Although a great deal of studies have been conducted on e-word-of-mouth, more research needs to be done on this subject as few have examined motives for posting online reviews in Croatia.

Limitations

The researcher's review of prior literature indicates that research on eWOM communication and motivation for posting online reviews remains relatively new and has only received limited attention in the scholarly literature. This study has certain limitations that need to be taken into consideration.

Since the survey was conducted online, there is a possibility that certain members of population did not have a chance to participate in the survey due to possible malfunction of the web link provided or due to the social profiles and distribution tools the researcher has chosen as well as a possibility of no Internet access at the given time (Denscombe, 2014, p. 21).

Additionally, the sample consists of respondents from Croatia and the majority of the sample 70,5% are female; which can indicate that the survey results are more applicable to

Croatian women. Also, regarding age, 86,9% of the surveyed population are between the ages of 20 and 29, giving an indication that the results are more applicable to one particular age group. A more diverse sample of potential users in different age categories, professions, and consumers with more usage experience with the consumer-opinion platforms would be more applicable to the population of Croatia. Consequently, there is a possibility that the results do not necessary reflect the entire population of Croatia. In order to be more confident the sample size should be equally distributed 50/50 where as the researcher sample consisted of 70/30.

Recommendations

Understanding motives for posting online reviews has important implications for employees and companies dealing with online reviews on a daily basis, as well as users using reviews to make buying decisions or help other users make easier decisions. Nowadays, customers rely and trust other users rather than companies as the majority of users won't make travel plans if they don't read online reviews prior to their purchase (Wu et al., 2016, p. 224).

Understanding motives for posting online reviews is important because thanks to the development of online product and service reviews, customers can read experiences and opinions of other consumers and help increase their probability of a successful purchase (Vimaladevi & Dhanabhakaym, 2012, p. 92).

Different motivators for posting opinions online generate different customer behavior. When reviewers are satisfied with products, they want to maintain their positive mood as much as possible and have greater tendencies to help fellow consumers and companies by posting online reviews (Chen & Huang, 2013, p. 1768). On the other hand, since there is much competition between service and product providers it's not unusual for some business owners to resort to stealth marketing tactics like posing as customers with the intention of giving a bad

review (Litvin et al., 2005, p. 16). This has become a problem for most travel related review sites so it is important to uncover motives behind online reviews, to recognize dishonest customers and warn other consumers that these tactics exist (Litvin et al, 2005, p. 17).

This study is valuable because it can serve as a cornerstone to building other ways to study the subject of motivation for posting online reviews. The researcher recommends using a bigger sample more representative of the population of Croatia as well as using a more diverse sample that include professionals, consumers more experienced with consumer-opinion platforms ect. in order build on and extend the study and generate or confirm other findings. Furthermore, using a qualitative research design to examine what motivates users to contribute and post reviews online, that is, what is the cause, will give a deeper more detailed understanding of the topic.

Another recommendation for further research would be focusing on direct questions like „Why do you post online reviews?“ or „What is your motivation for posting online reviews?“ that would give a better understanding of the motivation behind the behavior since this study is focused on the relationship between the participants demographic data and motivators for posting online reviews. Additionally, since the research design is quantitative and the researcher used correlation and ANOVA methods to analyze results, only the connection between the dependant and independent variables can be confirmed, but not the cause so using different research methods might help.

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Appendix A

Understanding Motives for Posting Online Reviews

This survey will be used to examine the possible relationship between posting reviews online and the demographic data of the participants. The requirement for participation is that you must actively post reviews online. If you don't post reviews online, please don't complete the following survey.

Your completion of this survey will serve as consent to participate in this study and it is completely voluntary. This survey will take approximately 4 minutes to complete. Thank you for your participation, it is greatly appreciated!

1. Understanding Motives for Posting Online Reviews

Listed below are a number of statements regarding attitudes towards online reviews. Please read each one and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. I have a strong desire to share a successful consumption experience on online review sites.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

2. I feel that my participation in writing online reviews improves my status in the online community.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree

- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

3. I believe people posting reviews online share the same objectives as me.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

4. My contributions show others that I'm a clever customer.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

5. I want to give other consumers the opportunity to buy the right product and experience excellent service.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

6. I feel good when I can tell others about my successful experience with a product or service.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

7. I want to help others with my own positive experiences.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

8. I see myself as a part of an online community.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

9. I have the expertise to provide knowledge/information that others consider valuable.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree

- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

10. If a negative consumption experience occurs I will deliberately write a negative review. The company has harmed me so I will harm the company back.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

11. I enjoy helping other consumers.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

12. Writing reviews online helps me to shake off frustration about bad service experience.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

13. I feel happy when I share a positive consumption experience through online reviews.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

14. I want to save others from having the same bad experience as me.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

15. I like to help the online community.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

16. It is fun to communicate this way with other consumers.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral

- Agree
- Strongly Agree

This section will ask several questions about your personal information including gender, age and level of education. Please choose one of the following statements:

17. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

18. Which category below includes your age?

- 19 and under
- 20 - 29
- 30 - 39
- 40 - 49
- 50 - 59
- 60 +

19. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Less than high school
- High school degree
- Some college, no degree
- Completed some college
- Bachelor's degree
- Completed some graduate program
- Master's degree
- Ph.D., law or medical degree

- Other