Acceptance and forwarding of electronic word of mouth

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study examines the influence of source credibility, message credibility and tie strength, on acceptance and subsequent forwarding of electronic word of mouth. Forwarding electronic word of mouth also depends on personality traits, which this work investigates in form of moderation effect of individual regulatory focus.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Hypotheses are developed using social exchange theory and the elaborate likelihood model and tested using structural equation modelling. Data was collected online, using a random sample of 324 respondents in India.

Findings: Findings indicate that source credibility and tie strength are instrumental in influencing acceptance of electronic word of mouth. A strong mediation role of acceptance of electronic word of mouth, confirms that people tend to forward information online only if they accept it.

Research Implications: This study represents a unique effort to focus on the combined effects of message credibility, source credibility and tie strength on acceptance and subsequent forwarding of electronic word of mouth.

Originality/Value: This study provides original insights about antecedents of forwarding electronic word of mouth as well as the role of individual regulatory focus as a moderator in the process.

Keywords: source credibility, message credibility, tie strength, regulatory focus, electronic word of mouth.

Paper type: Research paper

1. INTRODUCTION

The marketing landscape has witnessed significant growth in consumer generated content, due to easy access and quick distribution of information through the Internet. With social networking sites encouraging consumers to become part of a larger marketing community, peer-to-peer communications on these platforms represent a new form of consumer socialization, involving seeking, sharing and forwarding information. Electronic word of mouth (EWOM) is defined as "any positive or negative statement made by present or previous customers about a product, service or company, which is made available to large audiences via the Internet" (Abubakar et al., 2016). Interpersonal communication about products and brands is perceived to be more trustworthy than marketer generated content, as it minimises uncertainties (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Nielsen (2012) reported consumers become four times more likely to make a brand purchase (or no-purchase) decision based on positive (or negative) online reviews, and are influenced more by testimonials than by objective product benefits (Hu et al., 2011). Advertising as a traditional form of communication appears to be gradually losing its effectiveness as a growing share of new business sales come from consumer generated rather than marketer generated content. When receivers pass forward EWOM to others in their social network, it creates a viral or ripple effect that facilitates exponential dispersion (Dobele et al., 2007). However, online communicators are generally not responsible for the consequences of their recommendations and hence, may pass on unsubstantiated information (Bickart and Schindler, 2001). Forwarding EWOM without validation by a receptor, especially when it attains wide reach, potentially damages a brand's image (Granovetter, 1973). Therefore, it is important for marketers to understand sharing, propagating and forwarding of EWOM (Referral Marketing, 2015).

Earlier research used several approaches to measure and evaluate the relative success of viral marketing communication, ranging from changes in attitude and behaviour to measures of reach, frequency, penetration, speed of transmission and content of conversations (Danilo, 2008). Acceptance and forwarding EWOM are relatively recent conceptualizations, and few studies have identified factors that lead to them, with the primary focus limited to the source or message itself or an individual's motivation to accept and believe in information received (Cheung et al., 2008; Ho and Dempsey, 2010). In contrast to previous studies (e.g. Wong, 2012) that focused on antecedents of accepting EWOM, the present work examines the impact of source credibility, message credibility and tie strength on acceptance and forwarding EWOM. Thus, this research offers three contributions. First, it provides a conceptual basis for the relationships between the three antecedents (message credibility, source credibility and tie strength) and acceptance of EWOM, with social exchange theory and elaborate likelihood model providing the theoretical underpinnings. Second, it examines acceptance of EWOM as a conduit between the antecedents and forwarding EWOM, in process offering a new perspective. Lastly, an exploration of the moderating role of individual regulatory focus, using regulatory fit theory, is a novel contribution. Regulatory fit theory has been widely applied in studies on social behaviour, including word of mouth (Haws et al., 2010; Cheema and Kaikati, 2010). This is one of the few studies to explore it as a moderator on forwarding EWOM. The paper is organised as follows, initially a review of the literature is presented, followed by theoretical background and hypotheses. Next, research methodology and findings are discussed along with theoretical and practical implications.

2. THEORITICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) proposes that people perform certain behaviours after estimating the potential benefits of each and then selecting one with most benefits. Central to the theory is the principle of reciprocity in form of rewards for information, which

makes interpersonal interaction a process whereby parties conduct activities and exchange valuable resources with one another. Members in a virtual community share and forward valuable information either for tangible rewards such as gifts, points, discounts or psychological rewards like friendship, love, support, trust, self-esteem, prestige and social interdependence (Blau, 1964; Jinyang, 2015). Hence, identifying the motive to forward information in virtual communities is of great significance, as it can stimulate information sharing behaviour (Bordia et al., 2006). Prior research related to electronic word of mouth communication can be broadly classified into three streams. The first stream focuses on antecedents to why consumers seek, believe or accept EWOM, prominent of them being argument quality (Cheung et al., 2009; Cheung et al., 2012), source credibility (Cheung et al., 2009), homophily (Wang et al., 2008) and tie strength (Chu and Kim, 2011). The second stream focuses on individual motives such as personal motivation, opportunity and ability (José-Cabezudo and Camarero-Izquierdo, 2012), need for inclusion, belongingness, uniqueness and altruism (Jason and Dempsey, 2010). Finally, the third stream centres on consequences of EWOM such as purchase decisions (Park and Lee, 2008), customer attitude and behaviour (Edward et al., 2009; Mei-Hsin Wu, 2013), product judgement, acceptance, and adoption (Cheung et al., 2008; Lee and Youn, 2009), marketing implications (Chen and Xie, 2008; Trusov et al., 2009), and information dissemination (Jacob et al., 2015; Wong, 2012; Minxue Huang et al., 2011). In this work, accepting EWOM (AEWOM) is defined as the extent to which a recipient believes EWOM information to be true and is likely to consider it valid. Forwarding EWOM (FEWOM) refers to the intention of resending the information received (Gershoff et al., 2003).

2.1. Antecedents to AEWOM

Consumers are now playing an active role in creating, generating and distributing EWOM independent of a marketer (Berthon et al., 2008). Customer acquisition through

referrals and word of mouth has, thus, become an important goal for firms (Roy et al., 2014). However, there is a gap in our knowledge about factors that influence AEWOM and subsequent FEWOM, despite the fact they both contribute greatly to brand success (Ho and Dempsey, 2010). Previous studies have focused largely on the persuasive effect of EWOM with little exploration of factors that cause it. Elaborate likelihood model (ELM) is one of the most frequently used theoretical frameworks for EWOM (Chan and Ngai, 2011; Park and Lee, 2008; Gupta and Harris, 2010). According to ELM, individuals will process EWOM using either a 'central' or 'peripheral' route (Yi-Wen et al., 2013), before accepting and forwarding information. The central route is manifested as message credibility in this work, while source credibility and tie strength form the peripheral route for processing information, as suggested by Sussman and Siegal (2003).

2.1.1 Source credibility and AEWOM

Participants in a social world are often strangers with no physical proximity and therefore, the credibility of the information source becomes critical for AEWOM. Consumers often use heuristic cues to assess the credibility of EWOM, and source credibility is considered one of the main factors that determines their trust (Paul and Cara, 2015). Source credibility refers to the extent to which a source is perceived to be trustworthy, credible, and knowledgeable (Petty et al., 1981). A trustworthy source provides valid and persuasive information due to his/her possession of expertise, either through skills or knowledge, and this is amply discussed in literature (Dou et al., 2012; Lawrence et al., 2013; Ho and Dempsey, 2010). Online reviews derived from product/service usage expertise in form of consumer experiences, testimonials and recommendations are considered to have no financial profit motive on the part of a sender and hence, the credibility of a source is usually not questioned (Hass, 1981). Receivers judge information based on perceived expertise and trustworthiness of the source, and perceived credibility enhances message validity and

minimises cognitive costs. Such online reviews are considered to be valid, truthful and worth accepting (Sweeney et al., 2008). Hence:

H1: Source credibility is positively associated with AEWOM.

2.1.2. Message credibility and AEWOM

Message credibility refers to the extent to which one perceives, reviews or recommends a message as believable (Fogg et al., 2002). A review is considered credible when a receiver perceives it as believable, truthful and factual (Cheung et al., 2009). An individual is likely to accept a review depending on his/her perception of credibility of a message, represented by its cognitively rich content and diagnostic character, indicating its perceived usefulness (Sweeney et al., 2012). Consumers evaluate a review as credible based on knowledge gained, and reciprocate through adoption (Wathen and Burkell, 2002; Sussman and Siegal, 2003). Hence:

H2: Message credibility is positively associated with AEWOM.

2.1.3. Tie strength and AEWOM

Peer communication on social media is largely dependent on tie strength, generally manifested as close-knit communities, forums and groups with limited access to outsiders. Tie strength is determined by the intensity of social relationships amongst members and ranges from weak to strong, depending on the amount of time spent, emotional intensity, intimacy shared, and reciprocity (Granovetter, 1973). As Antheunis et al. (2010) demonstrated, stronger ties imply similar opinions, beliefs and attitudes, as strongly connected people exhibit greater demographic equivalence (Mesch and Talmud, 2007). Strong ties as an outcome of frequent interactions result in higher trust, harmonious relationships and effective transfer of ideas and information (Hansen, 1999) and this closeness increases the acceptance of EWOM (Mazzarol et al., 2007). Thus:

H3: Tie strength is positively associated with AEWOM.

2.2. AEWOM and FEWOM

Sussman and Siegal (2003) use ELM to explain how individuals process and judge a message and suggest that consumers forward online reviews only when they accept the validity of EWOM, contingent on both source and content credibility. Reviews perceived as credible will be considered valuable and useful and accepted and shared, causing widespread diffusion thereby lengthening the word of mouth chain (Minxue et al., 2011). Previous studies on information adoption have focused on how people internalise and use incoming information and then decide to pass it forward (Nonaka, 1994). Cheung et al. (2008) employed an information adoption model and found a strong link between perceived information usefulness and its subsequent spread among online communities. Thus:

H4: Acceptance of EWOM is positively associated with forwarding EWOM.

2.3. Mediating role of AEWOM

Classical information processing and response frameworks include Strong's attention, interest desire, and action model (1925), Rogers' innovation adoption model (1995), McGuire's five stage information processing model (2001), and Petty and Cacioppo's ELM (1986). These models assume that message communication influences a receiver's attitude and subsequent behaviour in that sequence, and the decision to pass a message forward or not follows the attitude towards the received information. Previous studies (Cheung et al., 2009; Berger and Milkman, 2009) proposed a positive and strong association between positive message evaluation, banked on credibility, leading to acceptance and forwarding of EWOM and thus, it seems that forwarding occurs only when consumers find information valuable and develop a positive attitude (Phelps et al., 2004). In their recent study, Cho et al. (2014) also established that a message from known group members who enjoy high trust and harmonious relationships are more likely to be noticed, opened and forwarded, as the message is perceived to be more informative, entertaining, and less risky (Hansen, 1999; Mazzarol et al.,

2007). Furthermore, Chu and Kim (2011) and Wong (2012) suggested that consumers carefully evaluate source and message credibility before forwarding a message to other members with close ties. Therefore, this study proposes that a message gets diffused only when it is accepted, based on its evaluation of the three antecedents. Hence:

H5: AEWOM mediates the relationship between source credibility and FEWOM.

H6: AEWOM mediates the relationship between message credibility and FEWOM.

H7: AEWOM mediates the relationship between tie strength and FEWOM.

2.4. Moderating role of regulatory focus

Over the years, regulatory focus theory has been an important area in research to understand consumer goal attainment (Higgins, 1997; Haws et al., 2010). The personality traits of an individual are a significant determinant of message transmission, as needs for competence, achievement, accomplishment and a desire to make a difference in the social environment are important motivators for engaging in EWOM (Sundaram et al., 1998). According to regulatory focus theory, a 'promotion' focused person is concerned about personal growth and advancement, while a 'prevention' focused person is concerned about safety and protection through fulfilment of duties and obligations (Higgins, 1997, 1998). Therefore, promotion focused individuals with an approach strategy for goal attainment are expected to exhibit intentions to forward EWOM in return for a sense of achievement (Förster et al., 1998). In contrast, prevention focused individuals, having an avoidance strategy, will not forward EWOM as they view this as an intrusion on the privacy of others (Förster et al., 1998; Higgins, 2002). Hence, this study argues the regulatory focus of the recipient will influence the relationship between accepting and forwarding EWOM.

H8: Promotion focused individuals will be more willing to forward EWOM once it is accepted compared to prevention focused individuals.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Measurement scales

The present study uses an eight-item instrument from Beltramani (1982) to measure message credibility, an eight-item instrument from Bearden and Netemeyer (1999) to measure source credibility, and a four-item scale developed by De Bruyn and Gary (2008) to measure tie strength. AEWOM is measured by a four-item instrument by Wu and Shaffer (1987) and Gershoff et al. (2003), while FEWOM is measured by a six-item scale developed by Sun et al. (2006). Finally, to measure regulatory fit, an eight-item scale by Lockwood et al. (2002) is employed. A seven-point anchor was used for all the items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) in the final questionnaire. To reduce common method bias, the survey was designed such that the independent and dependent variables were presented non-sequentially (Podsakoff et al., 2003). An English version of the questionnaire was pre-tested with fifty respondents to ensure clarity of meaning of each statement. The final research instrument is presented in Appendix A.

3.2. Data collection

A structured online questionnaire was developed and data was collected in from June to July 2016. Only those respondents who had made some purchase, based on an online review/recommendation, within last six months qualified for the survey. Panel data from a national panel service provider was used for this study. Panels are comprised of a large number of willing and qualified respondents, and make the data collection process more accurate and efficient (Deutskens et al., 2006). A total of 650 people were emailed the questionnaire and after quality checks and accounting for invalid or incomplete responses, a total of 324 complete questionnaires were obtained, reflecting a response rate of 49%.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Of the total sample, 56.8% percent were men, 29.3 percent were less than 26 years of age, and 68.4 percent were university graduates or below. The data was split into two samples

(sample 1: 160 responses; sample 2: 164). Sample 1 was used for testing psychometric properties of measures while sample 2 was used to test the structural model as well as for mediation and moderation analyses.

4.1. Measurement model (sample 1)

Exploratory factor analysis was not performed as all measures in the main model used well-tested scales without any item additions. Additionally, exploratory factor analysis allows for variables to freely load across constructs, often producing counterintuitive results (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). To test measurement and structural integrity of the constructs and items, both covariance based structural equation modelling (CBSEM) using AMOS, as well as partial least squares based structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) using SMARTPLS were used as they complement each other in their data requirements, strengths and weaknesses. While PLS-SEM is relatively immune to small and non-normal data compared to CBSEM, CBSEM provides more robust values to loadings and path values for testing theories (Hair et al., 2013). Hence, a convergence of findings using the two methods for both factor loading and path values would establish the statistical robustness of the framework. First, the measurement model was tested for reliability and validity in accordance with Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step approach, where a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is first performed using AMOS 14 and superimposed with the outer model readings from Smart PLS 2.0. The fit indices obtained from CFA with CBSEM represent a reasonable fit with the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) values of 0.92, 0.93 and 0.93 respectively. Similarly, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and root mean square residual (RMR) present a good measurement model picture with values of 0.09 for each. Construct validity is ensured through convergent and discriminant validities (Table 1), where convergent validity is examined by checking

composite reliability (CR) of each construct (which should be above 0.7) and average variance extracted (AVE), which should be above 0.5 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007).

INSERT TABLE 1 AROUND HERE

For discriminant validity, the AVE for each construct was compared to the squared correlation of the construct in question. None of the squared correlations exceeded the AVE for any particular construct (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Additionally, correlation between the two variables is fixed at 1.0, and the chi square value of the difference is estimated between this restricted model and an unrestricted CFA model (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). On comparing the original unrestricted model with every restricted model, all cases had a significantly poorer fit (i.e. $\Delta\chi 2\ (1) > 3.84$), thus, indicating sufficient discriminant validity.

4.2. Structural model (Sample 2)

The structural model was tested using a fully disaggregated structural model using both CBSEM and PLS-SEM to ensure robustness of the loadings as well as the paths (Bagozzi and Heatherton, 1994). Complete disaggregation models capture more information compared to a path analysis with summated measures and is used as depicted in Figure 1 (Bagozzi and Heatherton, 1994).

INSERT FIGURE 1 AROUND HERE

The fit index obtained from CBSEM is satisfactory with IFI, TLI and CFI values at 0.93, 0.92 and 0.92 respectively. RMR and RMSEA were also very low at 0.09 and 0.06, suggesting a good model fit. The R^2 and redundancy values for dependent variables, obtained as an output of PLS-SEM, also suggests good predictive validity for the model.

4.3. Mediation test (sample 2)

For a stringent test of mediation, the methodology proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) was adopted. Through path analysis using both CBSEM and PLS-SEM, this test was completed by comparing the path coefficient of independent variables (IV) to dependent variables (DV) across a constrained model (path of mediator to DV set to zero) and an unconstrained model. Table 2 summarizes the mediation test using this methodology.

INSERT TABLE 2 AROUND HERE

As shown in Table 2, the path coefficient for the direct connection from source credibility to FEWOM reduces in absolute value as the mediating path (unconstrained path via AEWOM) is introduced, yet remains significant, indicating partial mediation. However, the direct path from tie strength to FEWOM becomes non-significant as the mediating path is introduced. This is evidence of a relationship between tie strength and FEWOM being strongly mediated by AEWOM. Theoretically, it implies that forwarding behaviour may happen because of source credibility without sufficient acceptance of the message content by a user, however tie strength leads to forwarding behaviour only when the message is accepted.

4.4. Moderation test (sample 2)

The study also proposes a moderation effect of promotion and prevention focus on the relationship between acceptance and forwarding EWOM. A moderation test was conducted using hierarchical moderated regression analysis (HMRA) (Sharma et al., 1981). Both independent and moderator variables (continuous) were mean-centred to prevent bias in the regression coefficients. Summated measures of constructs were created for this analysis. The moderators were classified depending on the significance of the coefficients of the interaction term as well as those of predictor and moderator variables. All independent variables were

found to have variance inflation factor values less than the threshold value of 3.3, indicating lack of multi-collinearity (Table 3).

INSERT TABLE 3 AROUND HERE

The results of the HRMA analysis show that even after the interaction terms are added, no additional variance is explained ($\Delta F = 0.029$) in forwarding EWOM. Examination of individual interaction terms reveals that none are significant. It is concluded that neither promotion (PROF) nor prevention (PREF) focus moderate the relationship between acceptance and forwarding EWOM and as a consequence H8 is not supported. Additionally, in PLS-SEM, an interaction term was added, multiplying each item of moderator by each item of independent variable (for which there is a ready function available in Smart PLS 2.0) and linked to the dependent variable (FEWOM). This was done sequentially for both moderators and found that path values of the interaction terms to dependent variable (AEWOMxPROF and AEWOMxPREF) are insignificant, suggesting a lack of moderation.

5. DISCUSSION

This study investigated the relationship between three antecedents, namely source credibility, message credibility and tie strength, on acceptance and forwarding EWOM. It also examined the importance of AEWOM as a conduit for forwarding EWOM based on three antecedents. Finally, the regulatory focus of the individual was tested for its effect on acceptance and forwarding EWOM. Items for each construct were validated for each of these sub-dimensions, followed by checks on the model using both CBSEM and PLS-SEM for robust analysis.

In the structural model, H1 (Source Credibility → AEWOM), H3 (Tie Strength → AEWOM) and H4 (AEWOM → FEWOM) are well supported, while H2 (Message

Credibility → AEWOM) is not. Source credibility greatly affects information acceptance as consumers trust and accept information from an expert, which is in line with Sweeney et al., (2008). Strong ties result in higher trust, harmonious relationships and effective transfer of ideas and information, which increases acceptance of EWOM (Mazzarol et al., 2007). The non-significant relationship between message credibility and acceptance of EWOM (H2) is contradictory to expectations, and implies that consumers are generally not overly concerned about message credibility and look more for source credibility and tie strength as indicators to believe and accept online reviews, thus preferring peripheral route of information processing. One possible explanation could be that EWOM is automatically perceived to be highly persuasive, with pre-established credibility coming from a peer group who have no financial profit motive in recommending a particular brand, unlike marketers who present information, sometimes misleading, to promote sales (Chung and Darke, 2006). Our results suggest the credibility of the source, in line with the study of Paul and Yun-Chen (2011), and tie strength are instrumental in people accepting consumer generated content, which then becomes critical in forwarding online reviews to others. A reasonably strong mediator role of AEWOM (H5 and H7) also ensures that people tend to forward online reviews only when the message comes from credible source sharing strong ties. Finally, absence of a moderation effect on regulatory focus (H8) highlights the universal characteristic of information forwarding behaviour irrespective of individual regulatory focus. This is in contrast to findings about personal growth aspirations (implying a promotion focus) to be positively associated with forwarding online review behaviour (Jason and Dempsey, 2010). Researchers have argued that consumers are driven by their desire to sustain their current self-regulatory goal, and while it is true individuals have a predominant regulatory focus (Lee and Aaker, 2004; Higgins et al., 2001), it may be possible they exhibit a combination of high and low promotion and prevention foci at the same time (Carver and White, 1994). This study focused

on the current predominant regulatory focus of an individual and not on the possible combination of high and low regulatory focus. This may have provided additional insights and offers an opportunity for further research.

6. IMPLICATIONS

In contrast with previous research, this study focused on credibility of message and source and tie strength as antecedents of EWOM acceptance, thus being the first work to examine two peripheral routes (source credibility and tie strength) embedded in ELM as a cause of accepting and forwarding behaviour (Chan and Ngai 2011; Park and Lee, 2008; Gupta and Harris, 2010). Second, this study tested AEWOM as a conduit between the antecedents and forwarding EWOM, offered additional perspective to the overall process, and supported information processing models which emphasise attitude formation before behavioural response (McGuire, 2001; Rogers, 1995). Lastly, an exploration of individual regulatory focus as a moderator is a novel contribution of this study. In line with regulatory focus theory, this work examined but found no significant effect of regulatory focus on forwarding behaviour of individuals, a unique and contrasting contribution to extant theory and related literature (Higgins, 1997; Jason and Dempsey, 2010).

These findings have numerous implications for practitioners, managers and e-marketers. Consumers judge the usefulness of online reviews based on peripheral cues, with message content largely ignored before forwarding it. Companies would therefore be wise to have channels to monitor the complaints of opinion leaders to avoid negative EWOM going viral. According to the broken window theory, negative consumption experience has a greater cascading effect than positive reports (Tsao et al., 2015). Companies need to respond to consumers' complaints with sincerity, an apology if appropriate, an explanation if possible, and a prompt solution for product or service recovery. This will give consumers a sense of

assurance and that they are valued, and will reduce their desire to spread negative information about the company or brand.

Managers also need to collaborate with lead users/opinion leaders and request them to share their consumption experiences. Such collaboration with lead users would allow product/service improvement and a firm could share this information with other buyers. This would act as an emotional reward to expert consumers for their feedback and enable customer-brand co-creation (France et al., 2015). Findings of this study also indicate that online reviews received from strong ties are more persuasive in terms of acceptance and subsequent forwarding. Marketers should encourage consumers to forward their consumption feedback and encourage their close friends to forward it as well.

Study results showed no moderating effect of individual regulatory focus. Efforts could be made to boost self-enhancement, which might encourage more sharing of positive EWOM (Ezgi, 2016; Buechel and Berger, 2015). Companies can highlight personal and social benefits of forwarding EWOM to encourage promotion focused consumers. In a brand crisis situation, managers can manage reputation by following and analysing discussions to detect sentiment in the content that might have viral effects in social media communities. In an attempt to regain the brand image, a brand manager can identify loyalists and motivate them to act as e-fluentials to help make the message go viral in closely knit online networks (Sun et al., 2006).

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has certain limitations and suggestions that can enable future research. First, this work ignores an important variable in culture. Culture influences opinion giving, opinion seeking, and forwarding behaviour. For example, individuals from collectivist cultures are less likely to display affect compared to individuals from individualist cultures (Matsumoto et al., 2005). Does this make them less likely to forward messages as it would

engender affect? A careful investigation of the hypothesised model in different cultural contexts would be valuable. Second, Hennig and Barbar (2012) report that compared to women, men are more viral video mavens. Could there be a similar behaviour pattern for forwarding EWOM? An interesting avenue for future research would be to test the moderating role of gender differences that may affect forwarding behaviour. Third, situational factors such as a consumer's mood and emotions may influence his/her intentions to forward EWOM. Finally, highly involved consumers may be more susceptible to forwarding behaviour, warranting further investigation.

INSERT APPENDIX A AROUND HERE

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APPENDIX A

Construct	Item
Message credibility	• I think this review is credible • I think this review is trustworthy • I think this review is convincing • I think this review is honest • I think this review is plausible • I think this review is questionable • I think this review is authentic • I think this review is reasonable
Source credibility	• I consider the reviewer as being sincere • I consider the reviewer as being honest • I consider the reviewer as being trustworthy • I consider the reviewer as being credible • I consider the reviewer as being biased • I consider the reviewer as being reputable • I consider the reviewer as being reliable • I consider the reviewer as being truthful
Tie strength	• Likelihood of sharing personal confidences with peers • Likelihood of spending some free time socializing with peers • Likelihood of performing a large favour for your peers • Likelihood of peers performing a large favour for you
AEWOM	• I closely follow the suggestions of the comments in the website • I agree with the opinion suggested in the website • I am likely to accept the comments in the website • I am influenced by the comment in the website when making a decision
FEWOM	• I tend to pass on information or an opinion about the products to the contacts on my "friends" list on the SNS when I find it useful

	• I am likely to pass along my contacts' comments containing information or opinions about the product that I like to other contacts • When I receive product related information or an opinion from a friend, I pass it along to my other contacts • I am likely to pass along interesting information about products from one group of my contacts on my "friends" list to another. • I tend to pass along positive reviews of products to other contacts • I pass along negative reviews on products to other contacts
Regulatory Focus	• I frequently imagine how I will achieve my hopes and aspirations • In general, I am focused on achieving positive outcomes in my life • I often imagine myself experiencing good things that I hope will happen to me • Overall, I am more oriented toward achieving success than preventing failure • I frequently think about how I can prevent failures in my life • In general, I am focused on preventing negative events in my life • I often imagine myself experiencing bad things that I fear might happen to me • I am more oriented toward preventing losses than I am toward achieving gains

Biographies:

1. Dr. Sabita Mahapatra is an Associate Professor in the area of Marketing. She has more than ten years of teaching and research experience. She has published and presented several papers in National and International Conferences and credited with research publications in various referred journals. She is recipient of State & National level Scholarship and UGC scholarships. She is member of various Institutional and professional bodies. Her area of interest includes Consumer Insight, Sales Management, Neuro/Emotional Marketing, Social Marketing, Qualitative Research, Services/Health Marketing.

2. Dr. Abhishek Mishra is an Assistant Professor in the Indian Institute of Management, Indore. He did his Ph.D. in the area of Product Design and its implications on Brand Equity from IIM Lucknow. He has publications in leading marketing journals, like Journal of Business Research, Journal of Brand Management and his research interests are in the area of New Product Development, Product and Brand Management and Fuzzy Sets and Systems.

Table 1: Item Descriptive and Reliability

Measure	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Factor Loading (PLS-SEM)	Factor Loading (CBSEM)	C-alpha**	CR**	AVE**
Source Credibility	SC1	4.8224	1.41739	0.831	0.762	0.9127	0.9291	0.6212
	SC2	4.9034	1.44049	0.788	0.794			
	SC3	4.9003	1.33558	0.817	0.753			
	SC4	4.8847	1.33550	0.793	0.791			
	SC5	4.7726	1.40801	0.778	0.689			
	SC6	4.8442	1.39890	0.792	0.728			
	SC7	4.9408	1.32273	0.735	0.766			
	SC8	4.6417	1.50395	0.768	0.740			
Message Credibility	MC1	4.9034	1.55323	0.808	0.718	0.8850	0.9092	0.5592
	MC2	4.6324	1.58373	0.800	0.737			
	MC3	5.0187	1.42070	0.755	0.773			
	MC4	4.9720	1.40840	0.825	0.813			
	MC5	4.8380	1.48279	0.685	0.788			
	MC6	4.9720	1.37244	0.701	0.653			
	MC7	4.3364	1.55490	0.558	0.484			
	MC8	4.4517	1.63888	0.811	0.637			
Tie Strength	TS1	4.5794	1.54942	0.867	0.633	0.8347	0.8901	0.6702
	TS2	6.1184	1.36645	0.825	0.764			
	TS3	5.0467	1.32323	0.744	0.843			
	TS4	5.0000	1.24248	0.833	0.760			
Acceptance of EWOM	AEWOM1	4.9751	1.42500	0.839	0.790	0.8553	0.9021	0.6973
	AEWOM 2	4.9907	1.33109	0.844	0.760			
	AEWOM 3	5.0436	1.21371	0.845	0.786			

	AEWOM 4	5.0498	1.32193	0.812	0.751			
	FEWOM 1	4.9595	1.36528	0.827	0.786			
	FEWOM 2	5.0249	1.32736	0.822	0.786			
Forwarding EWOM	FEWOM 3	5.0405	1.33050	0.827	0.790	0.8969	0.9211	0.6612
	FEWOM 4	5.0343	1.35165	0.809	0.765			
	FEWOM 5	5.0343	1.36545	0.865	0.833			
	FEWOM 6	4.8754	1.37956	0.723	0.661			

**C-alpha: Cronbach Alpha; CR: Composite Reliability; AVE: Average Variance Extracted

Table 2: Mediation Test Results

Hypothesis	Path: IV→DV	Path via AEWOM	Std. Path coefficient (PLS-SEM)	Std. Path coefficient (CBSEM)	Result
H5	Source Credibility → FEWOM	Constrained	0.564**	0.585**	Partial Mediation
		Unconstrained	0.319**	0.175*	
H 6	Message Credibility → FEWOM	**Not Evaluated**[+]			
H 7	Tie Strength → FEWOM	Constrained	0.591**	0.807**	Full Mediation
		Unconstrained	0.172	0.005	

** Significant at 95% level of significance; + not evaluated since the path of MC to AEWOM was non-significant rendering this mediation superfluous.

Table 3: Moderator Analysis

Independent Variables		FEWOM		
		Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
		Standardized β	**Standardized β**	**Standardized β**
Main Effects	Acceptance of EWOM (AEWOM)	0.769***	0.582***	0.603***
Moderator	Promotion Focus (PROF)		0.107*	0.146
	Prevention Focus (PREF)		0.213***	0.191
Interaction	AEWOM X PROF			-0.068
Terms	AEWOM X PREF			0.035
R^2		0.591	0.643	0.644
Adjusted R^2		0.590	0.640	0.638
F Change		460.911***	23.339***	0.029
Δ R^2		0.591	0.052	0.000

Note: Significance - *p<0.05,**p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Figure 1: Structural Model