



UNIVERSIDAD DE MURCIA

FACULTAD DE ECONOMÍA Y EMPRESA

Word of mouth marketing. Strategies to enhance consumers in promoting products and brands

Marketing Boca a Boca. Cómo Conseguir que el Consumidor hable de tu Producto o Marca

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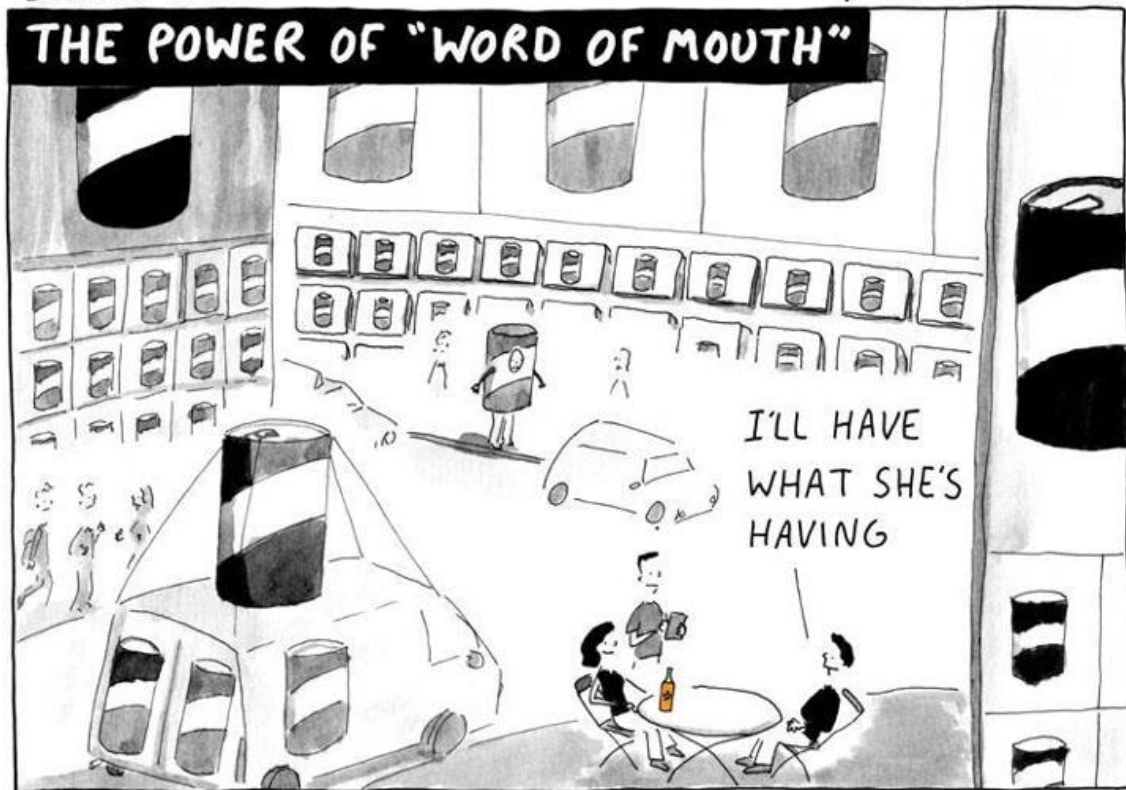
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BRAND CAMP

by Tom Fishburne



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INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

Let's imagine that Carlos has decided to buy a tablet. All his friends have one, and he does not want to be worth less. He sees that one of his friends has shared a post about a new tablet that Samsung has just launched on Facebook. When he checks his Twitter account, a "trending topic" attracts his attention: "Ipad". If many people are talking about it, it could mean that Apple is going to launch a new Ipad. Then, he decides to search for some information about new tablets in some blogs he usually reads. Nowadays, this situation may be a typical purchase decision process. All information Carlos has been exposed to about tablets has something in common: the sender of the information is another consumer. This situation represents the issue under research in this dissertation.

The exchange of information about products and brands between consumers is referred to as word of mouth (WOM). WOM is considered the most influential and credible information source for consumers (Arndt, 1967; Litvin et al., 2008) having more impact than firm-generated information (Engel et al., 1969; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). The development of the Internet has enabled consumers to share information easier and easier. New online platforms in which consumers can inform each other about products, brand, services, personalities and other issues have been created (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). In this context, other consumers' opinions can be read by consumers over the world reaching a great scope (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). This information exchange that occurs online is called electronic WOM (eWOM). As traditional WOM, eWOM also influences consumer behavior (Chen et al., 2011; Park and Lee, 2007).

Approximately, 88% of online shoppers consult products reviews before purchasing (Reevo, 2012), and 70% of Internet users trust eWOM (Nielsen, 2013). EWOM also affects company sales (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004; Duan et al., 2008; Liu, 2006) and it has shown more influential than firm-generated information on the Internet (Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Trusov et al., 2009). A great deal of attention is being devoted to this new communication phenomenon. The increasing interest in eWOM contrasts with the loss of confidence and decrease in investments on advertising (GroupM, 2013; Nielsen, 2012). Therefore, companies are interested in using eWOM as a new communication tool (Kozinets et al., 2010). They are encouraging consumers to spread the word about their products and services (Verlegh et al., 2013). This intentional influence of consumer-to-consumer communications via professional marketing techniques is called WOM marketing (WOMM) (Kozinets et al., 2010). Nevertheless, companies are currently in the process of learning how to develop WOMM campaigns. Although more and more studies are analyzing WOMM, the topic is still very recent, thus very little is known about how to

develop WOMM (de Vries et al., 2012; Feng and Papatla, 2014; Kumar and Rani, 2013). The key is how to trigger consumers to spread the word about products and brands.

Companies can reach two objectives with a WOMM campaign: a fast diffusion of the information, or to persuade consumers to buy the product (Libai et al., 2013). A fast diffusion of the information is related to the creation of awareness about a product or a brand, while the persuasiveness is related to product adoption. Previous studies have shown that WOM is crucial in the adoption of a new product (Goldenberg et al., 2001; Mancharanda et al., 2008; Narayanan et al., 2005; Van den Bulte and Lilien, 2001). However, these studies did not analyse the role of WOM in creating awareness as they assume that consumers need to be aware about a new product through advertising in order to spread the word about it (Goldenberg et al., 2001). Nevertheless, since companies can develop WOMM campaigns, they can first use WOMM to create awareness. Thus, before the extent literature review related to WOM done in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 analyzes the suitability of a WOMM campaign compared to advertising at the first stage of new product launches.

Next, we will examine the strategies that a company should follow to develop a WOMM campaign. All consumers have not the same characteristics, thus, there will be some consumers more appropriate than others for reaching each aim: diffusion or persuasiveness. According to previous studies, the most suitable consumers to enhance information diffusion are highly connected people (known as hubs) (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Hinz et al., 2011). In contrast, individuals who exert a great influence (opinion leaders) are the best to persuade consumers (Mancharanda et al., 2008; Rogers and Cartano, 1962). Thus, the next chapters deal with these two types of seeds.

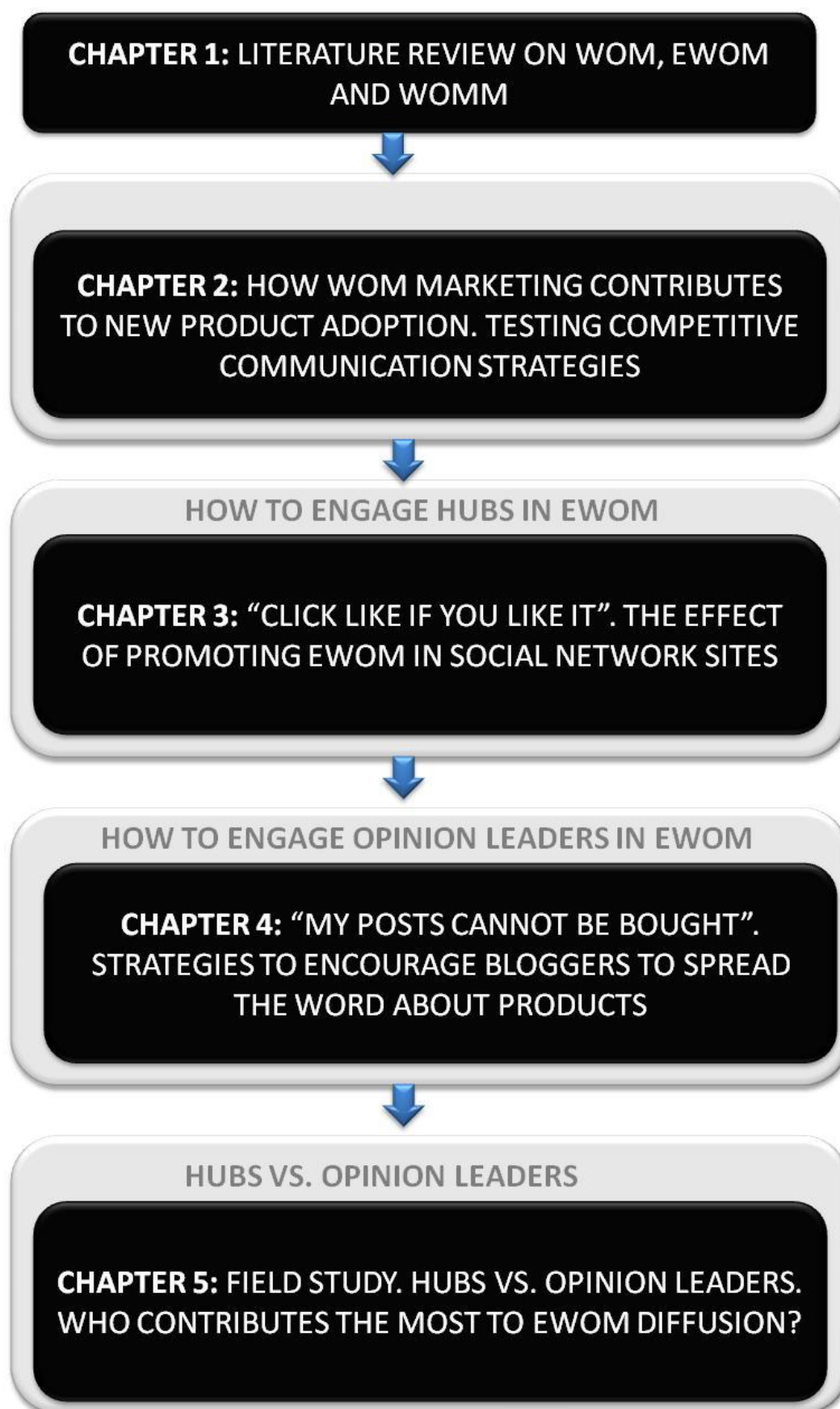
In Chapter 3, we analyse how to engage hubs in eWOM through social network sites in order to enhance the diffusion of information. Chapter 4 examines the strategies that should be followed to trigger opinion leaders on the Internet. These studies were developed using lab experiments. Finally, as literature has shown that opinion leaders can be also highly connected (Valente, 1996), we have developed a field study using objective data from Twitter in order to find out who reach more diffusion of their opinions, opinion leaders or hubs (Chapter 5).

The objective of this dissertation is therefore to analyse the strategies to be followed in order to enhance WOM about products and brands. Chapter 2 shows the importance of eWOM in creating awareness about a new product. Different types of seeds are then analyse regarding of the objective of the company: hubs with the aim of enhancing information diffusion (Chapter 3) and opinion leaders to reach a great persuasiveness

(Chapter 4). A field study in which the role of each type of seed in the diffusion of eWOM is also examined (Chapter 5). A literature review about WOM, eWOM and WOMM is firstly needed in order to develop this work (Chapter 1). We can see the structure of this dissertation in Figure 1.

The main contributions of the dissertation developed are the following. The topic is up to date, and it is of interest not only for academicians but also for practitioners. The literature related to WOM has been extensively reviewed from early studies to most recent research. It has provided a wider perspective from which to face the different empirical studies and has provided a rich framework for hypotheses formulation. Finally, this dissertation has followed the recent recommendations of Pham (2013) regarding how to improve research in the consumer behaviour field. Therefore, different samples (students, Facebook users, bloggers, Twitter users), different methodologies (lab experiment, online experiment, field study), different analysis (analyses of variance, equation modeling, regressions) and different theoretical perspectives (Persuasion Knowledge Model, Social Influence Theory, Information Integration Theory, Order Effects) have been used in order to enrich and improve the scope of this research.

Figure 1. Dissertation structure



CHAPTER 1:

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 WOM

1.1.1 WOM concept

Literature about word of mouth (WOM) is very extensive. First studies date from the sixties (Arndt, 1967; Dichter, 1966; Engel et al., 1969), although even in the fifties Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) published "Personal Influence" in order to explain how this personal influence works. Since then, lot of studies have analysed WOM, although this communication process has been more studied since the nineties. WOM is also currently of great interest, however the majority of recent studies have focused in its electronic version, that we will explain in the next section.

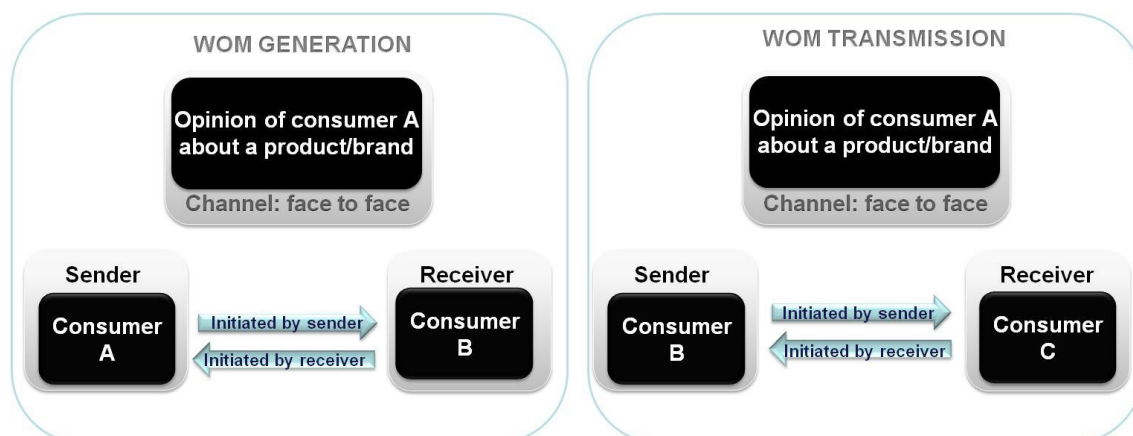
Several concepts are related to WOM. WOM has also been referred to as personal recommendations in the literature (Arndt, 1967b), interpersonal communication (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004), interpersonal influence (Gatignon and Robertson, 1986) or informal communication (Silverman, 2001). However, the most used term and the one selected to be used in this dissertation is WOM.

WOM can be defined as "*a face-to-face conversation between consumers about a product or a service experience*" (Sen and Lerman, 2007, p.77). It usually occurs in a private conversation, face-to-face, constructed by two parties: the sender of WOM information, and the receiver (Gilly et al., 1998). An important WOM characteristic is the source of information has not commercial interest (Smith, 1993). This aspect appears on several definitions. Arndt (1967b; p.3) defines WOM as "*face-to-face communication about products or companies between those people who are not commercial entities*". More recent studies have contributed with other definitions, which also take into account WOM is unbiased. For example, Litvin et al. (2008; p. 460) describe WOM as "*the communication between consumers about a product, service, or a company in which the sources are considered independent of commercial influence*". In a similar vein, Brown et al. (2007) state that WOM is a consumer-dominated channel of marketing communication where the sender is independent of the market. Most common WOM sources are friends and relatives, although WOM can also occur with neighbours and acquaintances (Brown and Reingen, 1987).

WOM may be initiated by the sender or by the receiver (Gilly et al., 1998). It is initiated by the sender when a consumer (the sender) tells other consumer/s (the receiver/s) about a product or brand. It is initiated by the receiver when she/he asks the sender about it (Gilly et al., 1998). WOM can be positive or negative and may be created by the sender or just transmitted by him/her (Gilly et al., 1998; Stephen and Lehman, 2009). The first is called WOM generation, to distinguish it from WOM transmission (Stephen and Lehman, 2009). WOM transmission occurs when the receiver, after obtaining

product or brand information from others' experience, decides to transmit this information to other consumers (Stephen and Lehman, 2009). Literature in offline WOM has focused mainly on WOM generation, however, recent studies have started to analyse WOM transmission in the offline context (Stephen and Lehman, 2009). We can see how WOM works in figure 1.

Figure 1. WOM



There are antecedents that explain WOM as well as this communication process originate some consequences. Antecedents are composed of senders' motives or reasons to spread the word and situational and psychographic factors that enhance the likelihood that they generate and/or transmit WOM information. In addition, WOM influences the receivers' decision making. Thus, we will explain both, antecedents and consequences of WOM in the next sections.

1.1.2 Antecedents

Previous studies have analysed satisfaction/dissatisfaction as one of the main antecedents of WOM (Brown et al., 2005; Heitmann et al., 2007; Henning-Thurau et al., 2002; Jones et al., 2006; Ladhari, 2007; Ranaweera and Prabhu, 2003; Schlesinger and Heskett, 1991; Swan and Oliver, 1989; Wangenheim and Bayón, 2007). WOM generation occurs usually as a result of a consumption experience. If the experience with a product or brand is positive, the consumer will be satisfied and WOM that he/she generate will be positive (Brown et al., 2005; Heitmann et al., 2007). In contrast, WOM created by dissatisfied consumers will be negative (Anderson, 1998; Richins et al., 1983). Several studies have confirmed that satisfaction/dissatisfaction affects the valence of WOM (Anderson, 1998; Brown et al., 2005; Richins et al., 1983). However, the relationship between satisfaction/dissatisfaction and WOM generation have been found inconsistent (Harrison-Walker, 2001; Mazzarol et al., 2007). Not all satisfied/dissatisfied consumers spread the word, thus the use of satisfaction/dissatisfaction in isolation is not enough to explain WOM generation

(Mazzarol et al., 2007; Westbrook, 1987). Satisfied/dissatisfied consumers are led by different motivations to spread the word. Literature has shown that it also depends on several situational conditions and psychographic factors (Harrison-Walker, 2001; Mazzarol et al., 2007). The main motivations, situational and psychographic factors are reviewed in the following lines.

a) Motivations. Why do consumers engage in WOM?

Consumers may have several motives to speak about product and brands. The majority of the studies have not distinguished between WOM generation and WOM transmission or have just focused on WOM generation. Recent literature has shown that the motivations to generate WOM can be different than the motivations to transmit it (e.g. De Angelis et al., 2012; Stephen and Lehman, 2009). The motivations to spread the word could be also different depending on the valence of the opinion. These motivations, which are showing in Table 1, are the following:

Self-enhancement: Self-enhancement refers to the tendency to seek experiences that improve or bolster the self-concept by drawing attention to one's skills and talents (Baumeister, 1998). It is driven by one's desire for positive recognition of others (Engel et al., 1993). Self-enhancement has been mainly related to positive WOM (Dichter, 1966; Engel et al., 1969; Stephen and Lehmann, 2009; Sundaram et al., 1998). Recently, De Angelis et al., (2012) have shown that self-enhancement is also a motivation to engage in negative WOM. They have demonstrated that it leads consumers to generate positive WOM but to transmit negative WOM. Consumers talk about their own positive experiences as a direct way to satisfy their self-enhancement, as well as about negative experiences they heard occurred to others as an indirect way to self-enhance.

Altruism: Altruism in this context is the desire to help others to make a better purchase decision without anticipating any reward in return (Engel et al., 1969; Mazzarol et al., 2007; Sundaram et al., 1998). Altruism is related to both positive and negative WOM. Previous studies have shown that altruism is behind the generation of positive WOM (Dichter, 1966, Engel et al., 1969; Price et al., 1995; Sundaram et al., 1998). Researchers have also shown that consumers spread negative WOM with the aim of preventing others from experiencing the problems that they had encountered (Sundaram et al., 1998; Mazzarol et al., 2007; Wetzler et al., 2007).

Build/maintain social capital: Consumers may satisfy their need of social interaction and friendship sharing opinions about products (Stephen and Lehmann, 2009). This motivation explains why consumers may develop positive and negative WOM. Stephen and Lehmann (2009) have shown that consumers can transmit WOM in order to maintain

existing social capital, in the sense that giving information to a friend is a way to keep that friendship alive. Additionally, when consumers have a negative experience, they can generate negative WOM with the objective of strengthen the social relationships with other consumers (Wetzer et al., 2007).

Helping the company: The company may also serve as a driver of WOM. Consumers can generate positive WOM with the aim of helping the company (Mazzarol et al., 2007; Sundaram et al., 1998). Consumers may wish to help a service provider as a result of a series of mainly positive interactions over the long term (Mazzarol et al., 2007).

Advice seeking: Advice seeking is defined as “obtaining advice on how to resolve problems” (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, p. 41). Arndt (1967,b) posited that receivers can actively seek information about products. According to Sundaram et al. (1998), consumers who had encountered negative consumption experiences and were unaware of the means to seek redress tend to share their negative experiences to obtain some advice on how to resolve their problems.

Revenge: Revenge is defined as “the actions taken by a customer to cause harm to a firm for the damages it has caused” (Bechwati and Morrin 2003, p. 441). This motivation is related to negative WOM. Consumers can share their negative experiences with the motive of deterring others from patronizing the businesses that they perceived did not care enough about customers, did not listen to customer complaints, and consequently should not be allowed to operate (Sundaram et al., 1998; Wetzer et al., 2007). Senders generate WOM in order to harm someone else (mainly the company), in response to the feeling of being harmed by that person (Sundaram et al., 1998; Wetzer et al., 2007).

Reduce cognitive dissonance: Cognitive dissonance occurs when consumers hold two cognitions that are inconsistent one another, and then experience the pressure of an unpleasant motivational state (Bem, 1967). Consumers usually feel uncertainty after purchase decision because they can recognise that they may not have needed the product, may not have selected the appropriate (Soutar and Sweeney, 2003; Sweeney et al., 2000) or feel psychological discomfort subsequent to the purchase decision (Sweeney et al., 2000). Thus, a motivation to spread positive WOM gains support and justification for a purchase decision. The information giver may be seeking the legitimation of friends in order to overcome cognitive dissonances (Gatignon and Robertson, 1986). Reducing cognitive dissonance has also been analyzed as a motivation to generate negative WOM. Consumers can share their negative experiences with the product or brand as a means of easing their anger, anxiety, and frustration (Engel et al., 1969; Sundaram et al., 1998).

Reciprocity: Reciprocity refers to the extent to which consumers will help other consumers in their decision making by spreading WOM, while they will receive other consumers' advices about products they are interested in (Wang and Fesenmaier 2004). Gatignon and Robertson (1986) proposed that consumers can generate WOM in order to search for reciprocity due to receivers may demonstrate gratitude for information received or provide other services in return. Stephen and Lehmann (2009) have demonstrated that WOM transmission can occur by increasing the chances of the receiver reciprocating later by providing the sender with information.

Table 1: Motivations to spread WOM

Motive	Type of WOM	Studies
Self-enhancement	Positive and negative WOM generation and transmission	Dichter (1966), Sundaram et al. (1998), Engel et al. (1969), Gatignon and Robertson (1986), Stephen and Lehmann (2009), De Angelis et al. (2012)
Altruism	Positive and negative WOM generation	Dichter (1966), Sundaram et al. (1998), Price et al. (1995), Wetzer et al. (2007), Mazzarol et al. (2007)
Build/maintain social capital	Positive and negative WOM generation and transmission	Stephen and Lehmann (2009), Wetzer et al. (2007)
Helping the company	Positive WOM generation	Sundaram et al. (1998), Mazzarol et al. (2007)
Advice seeking	Negative and positive WOM generation	Arndt (1967b), Sundaram et al. (1998)
Revenge	Negative WOM generation	Sundaram et al. (1998), Wetzer et al. (2007)
Reduce cognitive dissonance	Positive and negative WOM generation	Engel et al. (1969), Gatignon and Robertson (1986), Sundaram et al. (1998)
Reciprocity	Positive and negative WOM generation and transmission	Gatignon and Robertson (1986), Stephen and Lehmann (2009)

b) Situational factors. When does the likelihood of engaging in WOM increase?

Factors related to the situation can enhance the probability to engage in WOM. Several situational factors have been described in the literature. These factors are compiled in Table 2. Studies that have analysed situational factors have focused in WOM generation whereas situational factors that affect WOM transmission have not been analyzed yet.

Product/service-related factors: Previous studies have shown that the quality of the service affects the tendency to generate positive WOM (Boulding et al., 1993; Danaher et al., 1996; Hartline and Jones, 1996; McKee et al., 2006; Ng et al., 2011; Zeithaml et al., 1996), while low quality in services increases the probability to engage in negative WOM (Harrison-Walker, 2001; Zeithaml et al., 1996). Other products/services characteristics such as originality also increase positive WOM, and also negative WOM generation when the product is not useful (Moldovan et al., 2011). In addition, if companies offer a limited quantity of a different product, consumers will consider the

opportunity costs of telling another person about these products (, decreasing the likelihood of generating positive WOM Frenzen and Nakamoto, 1993).

Consumer-related factors: Consumers' relationship with the product or service can lead to WOM generation. The relationship between the consumer and the brand such as loyalty toward the brand and trust in it can contribute to enhance WOM (Carpenter and Fairhurst, 2005; Sichtmann, 2007). Product involvement is also an antecedent of positive and negative WOM generation (Blodgett et al., 1994; Lau and Ng, 2001; Wangenheim, 2005). Additionally, expertise with the product category enhances the probability of generating positive and negative WOM (Wojnicki and Godes, 2008).

Company related-factors: The most study company-related factor is commitment with the company. Commitment is an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship with an specific entity (Brown et al., 2005). Previous studies have shown that commitment is an antecedent of positive WOM (Bettencourt, 1997; Brown et al., 2005; Harrison-Walker, 2001; Henning-Thurau et al., 2002; Kim et al., 2001; Lacey et al., 2007). Trust in the company, in the service provider, and loyalty toward the store are also determinants of positive WOM (Kim et al., 2009; Ranaweera and Prabhu, 2003; Reynolds and Arnold, 2000). In addition, reputation of the firm may reduce the intention to individuals of engaging in negative WOM (Lau and Ng, 2001).

Employee-related factors: Previous studies have shown that relationships between employees and customers such as commercial friendship that can be developed between employee and customer and social support displayed by the service provider can increase positive WOM generation (Adelman and Ahuvia, 1995; Bloemer et al., 1999; Gremler et al., 2001; Kim et al., 2001; Price and Arnould, 1999; Reynolds and Arnold, 2000). In addition, the extent to which buyers feel that they are treated equitably by the retailer or when consumers feel they have received a preferential treatment stimulate positive WOM (Lacey et al., 2007; Swan and Oliver, 1989). Characteristics of the employee such as professional attitude and ability, professional knowledge, presentation and communication ability, and personal integrity are also related with positive WOM generation (Heung, 2008).

Product failure and service recovery-related factors: Once product failure has occurred and before service recovery, the likelihood to generate negative WOM depends on the severity of the problem with the company (Brown and Beltramini, 1989; Lau and Ng, 2001) and whose is the blame for a product failure being more likelihood to generate negative WOM when the blame is for the company (Richins et al., 1983). Additionally, the low confidence in the effectiveness of the complaints lead to negative WOM (Blodgett

et al., 1993; Richins et al., 1983; Swanson and Kelley, 2001), while providing a customer the opportunity to express him/herself increases positive WOM intention and decreases negative WOM generation (Cheng et al., 2006; McKee et al., 2006).

Service recovery characteristics also affect the likelihood to generate WOM. For example, if the service recovery is initiated by the company, if the consumers perceive they are fairly treated by the retailer when they have complained and the company speed in solving the complaint affects to WOM generation (Blodgett et al., 1993; 1994; Swanson and Kelley, 2001). In addition, when service recovery is successful, consumers will have a higher tendency to spread positive WOM (Davidow and Leigh, 1998; Kim et al., 2009; Maxham III, 2001; Maxham III and Netemeyer, 2002; Swanson and Kelley, 2001; Tax and Chandrashekar, 1992), while when the complaint is poorly handled, consumers will more likely generate negative conversations (Tax and Chandrashekar, 1992).

Company actions: WOM can be also motivated by advertisements or other communication strategies (Dichter, 1966; Engel et al., 1969). When consumers find adverts or other communication actions as original or entertaining, they will have more likelihood to engage in WOM (Dichter, 1966; Engel et al., 1969). However, advertising can even generate negative WOM when the adverts are very provocative (Mazzarol et al., 2007). Companies can also incentive consumers to generate more positive WOM or to reducing the negative WOM generation (Wirtz and Chew, 2002).

Consumption experience-related factors: Emotions created in a consumer experience could explain the likelihood to generate WOM (Jones et al., 2006; Westbrook, 1987; White, 2010). More surprising and arousal experiences can increase the intention to engage in positive WOM, while unpleasant and negative surprising experiences lead negative conversations (Derbaix and Vanhamme, 2003; Ladhari, 2007). Mazzarol et al. (2007) have shown that consumers can perceive risk in offering recommendations. This study found a potential reluctance to convey positive and negative WOM due to consumers can feel uncomfortable about offering a direct recommendation for fear that the receiver would not have the same experience. In line with this result, Cheng et al. (2006) have shown that it is more likely that a consumer engage in negative WOM if this behaviour is seen as common and righteous behaviour by the receivers. Consumers can also perceive risk when they switch a service provider that leads to negative WOM about the dropped service provider (Wangenheim, 2005).

High involvement in the purchase decision can also affect WOM generation (Lau and Ng, 2001). Additionally, when consumers have a purchase experience, if they perceive

it as novel or have other people close, they will be more engaged in WOM (Bone, 1992; Lau and Ng, 2001; Mazzarol et al., 2007).

Relationship between sender and receiver: Tie strength and homophily are characteristics related of the relationship between sender and receiver. These characteristics do not exactly enhance the likelihood to engage in WOM. Specifically, they enhance the probability to the sender be activated, that is, the probability to the receiver asks advice to the sender. However, as their importance in WOM literature, we considered that they should be dealt. Tie strength refers to the intensity of the social relationship between consumers (Brown and Reingen, 1987). Consumers can speak about products and brands with friends and relatives (considered as strong ties) or with neighbours and acquaintances (catalogued as weak ties). Strong ties are more likely than weak ties to be activated for the flow of information (Bone, 1992; Brown and Reingen, 1987; Wirtz and Chew, 2002).

Homophily is the degree to which pairs of individuals are similar in terms of certain attributes, such as age, sex, education, and social status (Rogers, 1983). Brown and Reingen (1987) have shown that homophilous ties may have a greater likelihood of being activated for the WOM flow of information.

Table 2: Situational factors that enhance WOM generation and transmission

Factors classification	Factor	Type of relationship	Type of WOM	Study
Product/service related factors	Service quality	Positive	Positive and negative WOM generation	Bloemer et al. (1999), Boulding et al. (1993), Danaher et al. (1996), Hartline and Jones (1996), Heung (2008), McKee et al. (2006), Ng et al. (2011), Swan and Oliver (1989), Zeithaml et al. (1996)
	Product originality	Positive	Positive and negative WOM	Moldovan et al. (2011)
	Limited product	Negative	Positive WOM generation	Frenzen and Nakamoto (1993)
Consumer related factors	Loyalty toward the brand	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Carpenter and Fairhurst (2005)
	Trust in the brand	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Sichtmann, (2007)
	Product involvement	Positive	Negative WOM generation	Dichter (1966), Blodgett (1994), Engel et al. (1969), Lau and Ng (2001), Sundaram et al. (1998), Wangenheim (2005)
	Expertise with the product category	Positive	Positive and negative WOM generation	Wojnicki and Godes (2008)

Table 2: Situational factors that enhance WOM generation and transmission (continues)

Factors classification	Factor	Type of relationship	Type of WOM	Study
Company-related factors	Commitment	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Bettencourt (1997), Brown et al. (2005), Harrison-Walker (2001), Henning-Thurau et al. (2002), Kim et al. (2001), Lacey et al. (2007)
	Trust in the company	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Kim et al. (2009), Ranaweera and Prabhu (2003)
	Loyalty toward the store	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Reynolds and Arnold (2000)
	Reputation of the firm	Negative	Negative WOM generation	Lau and Ng (2001)
Employee-related factors	Empathy with the employee	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Bloemer et al. (1999), Chaniotakis and Lymperopoulos (2009)
	Trust in the employee	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Bloemer et al. (1999), Gremler et al. (2001), Kim et al. (2001)
	Social support	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Adelman and Ahuvia (1995)
	Commercial friendship	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Price and Arnould (1999)
	Loyalty toward the salesperson	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Reynolds and Arnold (2000)
	Preferential treatment	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Lacey et al. (2007)
	Equitably treated	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Swan and Oliver (1989)
	Professionalism	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Heung (2008)
	Personal integrity	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Heung (2008)
Communication ability	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Heung (2008)	
Product failure and service recovery-related factors	Problem severity	Positive	Negative WOM generation	Brown and Beltramini (1989), Lau and Ng (2001)
	Blame in the company	Positive	Negative WOM generation	Richins et al. (1983)
	Blame in the consumer	Negative	Negative WOM generation	Richins et al. (1983)
	Success/ no success service recovery	Positive	Positive and negative WOM generation	Davidow and Leigh (1998), Kim et al. (2009), Maxham III (2001), Maxham III and Netemeyer (2002), Swanson and Kelley (2001), Tax and Chandrashekar, 1992)
	Opportunity to consumers' expression	Positive/negative	Positive and negative WOM generation	Cheng et al. (2006), McKee et al. (2006)
	Perception of justice	Negative	Negative WOM generation	Blodgett et al. (1993; 1994)
	Perceived likelihood of successful redress	Negative	Negative WOM generation	Blodgett et al. (1993) Richins et al. (1983), Swanson and Kelley (2001)
	Initiated by the company	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Swanson and Kelley (2001)
Time spent in service recovery	Negative	Positive WOM generation	Swanson and Kelley (2001)	

Table 2: Situational factors that enhance WOM generation and transmission (continues)

Factors classification	Factor	Type of relationship	Type of WOM	Study
Company actions	Incentive	Positive/negative	Positive and negative WOM generation	Wirtz and Chew (2002)
	Message involvement	Positive	Positive and negative WOM generation	Dichter (1966), Engel et al. (1969), Mazarrol et al. (2007)
Relationship between sender and receiver	Tie strength	Positive	Positive and negative WOM generation	Bone (1992), Brown and Reingen (1987), Wirtz and Chew (2002)
	Homophily	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Brown and Reingen (1987)
Consumption experience-related factors	Risk perception in provider switching	Positive	Negative WOM generation	Wangenheim (2005)
	Involvement with the purchase decision	Positive	Negative WOM generation	Lau and Ng (2001)
	Presence of others	Positive	Negative and positive WOM generation	Lau and Ng (2001), Mazarrol et al. (2007)
	Perceived risk	Positive	Positive and negative WOM generation	Cheng et al. (2006), Mazarrol et al. (2007)
	Novelty of consumer experience	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Bone (1992)
	Emotions developed in consume experiences	Positive	Positive and negative WOM generation	Derbaix and Vanhamme (2003), Jones et al. (2006), Ladhari (2007), Westbrook (1987), White (2010)

c) Psychographic factors. Who engage more in WOM?

The extent to which consumers engage in WOM can also depend on their psychographic characteristics, as Table 3 shows. Consumers with high degree of innovativeness, opinion leadership, market mavenism, and deal proneness are more likely to generate WOM (Engel et al., 1969; Feick and Price, 1987; Richins and Root-Shaffer, 1988; Schneider and Rodgers, 1993, Wangenheim, 2005, Walsh and Elnor, 2012; Wirtz and Chew, 2002). Other consumers' characteristics such as self-confidence, social responsibility and sociability enhance negative WOM (Lau and Ng, 2001; Mazarrol et al., 2007; Paridon, 2006), while need for uniqueness only affects the likelihood of generating positive WOM (Cheema and Kaikati, 2010).

Table 3. Psychographic factors that enhance WOM generation and transmission

Factor	Type of relationship	Type of WOM	Study
Innovativeness	Positive	Positive and negative WOM generation	Engel et al. (1969), Im et al. (1993)
Opinion leadership	Positive	Positive and negative WOM generation	Engel et al. (1990), Richins and Root-Shaffer (1988)
Market mavenism	Positive	Positive and negative WOM generation	Feick and Price (1987), Schneider and Rodgers, (1993), Wangenheim (2005), Walsh and Elner (2012)
Deal proneness	Positive	Positive and negative WOM generation	Wirtz and Chew (2002)
Self-confidence	Positive	Negative WOM generation	Lau and Ng (2001), Mazzarol et al. (2007), Paridon (2006)
Social responsibility	Positive	Negative WOM generation	Lau and Ng (2001)
Sociability	Positive	Negative WOM generation	Lau and Ng (2001)
Need for uniqueness	Negative	Positive WOM generation	Cheema and Kaikati (2010)

1.1.3 WOM influence

Once the sender has generated or transmitted WOM, these opinions will have effect on the receivers. Previous studies have shown that WOM exerts a great influence on consumers (Arndt, 1967; Bansal and Voyer, 2000; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). Both, negative and positive WOM affect product judgments (Bone, 1995), attitude toward the product (Charlett et al., 1995), attitude toward the brand (Herr et al., 1991), product involvement (Giese et al., 1996), purchase decisions (Bansal and Voyer, 2000; Cherlett et al. 1995; East et al., 2008; Gilly et al., 1998; Murray, 1991), the adoption of a new product (Goldenberg et al., 2001; Narayanan et al., 2005; Mancharanda et al., 2008; Van den Bulte and Lilien, 2001) and brand loyalty (Casaló et al., 2008; Money, 2004). Opinions by others also affect the decision to switch the provider (Wangenheim and Bayón, 2004) and even impact post-purchase product judgments (Bone, 1995). Moreover, customers acquired through WOM add more long-term value to the firm than consumers acquired through traditional marketing channels (Villanueva et al. 2008). These influence can vary depending on several factors. Next section examines these determinants.

a) *Determinants of influence. When does the influence of WOM increase?*

As we can see in Table 4, previous research has examined factors that make opinions more or less influential. The impact of WOM can be higher or lower depending on the characteristics of the communication process, depending on who is the sender and who is the receiver of information. Other factors that may affect the impact of WOM are the

relationship between sender and receiver, situational factors and the type of product around which the communication is revolved.

Communication process: Volume and valence have been the most studied determinants of WOM (Mahajan et al., 1984). Valence captures the nature of WOM messages, whether they are positive or negative (Liu, 2006). Negative WOM prevents the receiver from buying the product whereas positive WOM strongly recommends its purchase. Previous research has tried to show that the relative influence of positive vs. negative WOM is not the same. According to the traditional literature on interpersonal influences, there is a negative bias and negative WOM is more diagnostic and helpful than positive one to establish a classification of a product (Herr et al. 1991; Mizersky, 1982). Nevertheless, other studies have shown that positive opinions are more influential than negative WOM (Bone, 1995; East et al., 2008). Therefore, the results are not conclusive at this respect.

Volume also affect the impact of the opinions. If the consumer receives lots of opinions about a product or service, the impact of these opinions is higher (East et al., 2008). In addition, when the opinion is strongly expressed it has a greater effect on consumers than when is not (East et al., 2008). Finally, WOM communication produced face-to-face has a greater impact on product judgments than printed consumers' reports (Herr et al., 1991).

Sender: Senders may have some characteristics that make their recommendations more influential. Opinions given by opinion leaders, market mavens or experts exert a great influence on consumers (Bansal and Voyer, 2000; Bone, 1995; Gilly et al. 1998; Rogers and Cartano, 1962; Walsh and Elner, 2012; Wangenheim and Bayón, 2004). We will explain more this concepts in the section 2.3.

Receiver: Receiver-related factors can also affect the impact of WOM. The impact of WOM is higher when the information fits with the previous opinion of the receiver about the product or the brand (East et al., 2008; Wilson and Peterson, 1989). The impact of WOM also depends on whether the receiver actively search for advice. The greater the extent to which the WOM is actively sought by the receiver, the greater the intention to purchase, but only if the advice is positive (Bansal and Voyer, 2000; East et al., 2008).

Relationship between sender and receiver: WOM among strong ties have shown a greater influence than among weak ties for positive (Bansal and Voyer, 2000; Brown and Reingen, 1987; East et al., 2008) and negative WOM (East et al.; 2008). Even though weak ties exert a lower influence than strong ones, weak ties play a crucial role in the flow of WOM information across groups. They display an important bridging function,

allowing information to travel from one distinct subgroup of referral actors to another subgroup in the broader social system (Brown and Reingen, 1987; Granovetter, 1973). In addition, previous studies have shown homophily between receiver and sender enhance the influence of positive WOM (Gilly et al., 1998; Wangenheim and Bayón, 2004). However, not all similarities between both individuals affect WOM. Only perceptual homophily, that is similarities in values, preferences and lifestyle, enhance positive WOM influence (Gilly et al., 1998; Wangenheim and Bayón, 2004).

Table 4: Determinants of WOM influence

Factors classification	Factor	Type of relationship	Type of WOM	Study
Communication process-related determinants	Valence	Negative information is more influential than positive information		Bone (1995), East et al. (2008), Herr et al., (1991), Mizersky (1982)
	Volume	Positive	Negative WOM generation	East et al. (2008)
	Strength of expression	Positive	Positive and negative WOM generation	East et al. (2008)
	Vividness	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Herr et al. (1991)
Sender-related determinants	Sender expertise	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Bansal and Voyer (2000), Bone (1995), Gilly et al. (1998), Wangenheim and Bayón (2004)
	Opinion leadership	Positive	Positive and negative WOM	Gilly et al. (1998), Rogers and Cartano (1962)
	Market mavenism	Positive	Positive and negative WOM	Walsh and Elner (2012)
Receiver-related determinants	Previous opinion about the product	Positive/negative	Positive and negative WOM generation	East et al. (2008), (Wilson and Peterson, 1989)
	WOM actively sought by the receiver	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Bansal and Voyer (2000), East et al. (2008)
Relationship between sender and receiver related determinants	Tie strength	Information from strong ties is more influential than from weak ties	Positive and negative WOM generation	Bansal and Voyer (2000), Brown and Reingen (1987), East et al. (2008)
	Homophily	Positive	Positive WOM generation	Gilly et al. (1998), Wangenheim and Bayón (2004)
Product related determinants	Type of product	More influential for services than for goods	Positive and negative WOM generation	Murray (1991)

Type of product: Previous studies have shown that WOM is more influential in services than in goods (Murray, 1991). Consumers cannot try a service before the purchase, so they feel more risk in buying a service than a good (Litvin et al., 2008). In fact, WOM has more impact in individuals who perceive high risk in a purchase and when the situation is difficult to judge or it is ambiguous (Arndt, 1967a; Bone, 1995).

b) Comparison between WOM and other information sources

WOM is considered the most influential information source by consumers. WOM is perceived to be more reliable, credible and trustworthy by consumers compared to firm-initiated communications (Arndt, 1967). In 1955, Katz and Lazarsfeld found WOM seven times more effective than newspapers and magazines advertising, four times more effective than personal selling, and twice as effective as radio advertising in influencing consumers to switch brands. A few years later, Engel et al. (1969) showed that sixty per cent of customers of a new auto-repair centre cited WOM as the most influential factor in their choice. In similar vein, Day (1971) computed that WOM was nine times as effective as advertising at converting unfavourable or neutral predispositions into positive attitudes. More recently, Grewal et al. (2003) indicated that individuals are more inclined to embrace the information sent through WOM than that sent through commercial promotion, on the ground that WOM information transmitters are usually believed to have no ulterior motive nor receive incentive for their referrals. In summary, previous research seems to support the superiority of WOM over firm-initiated communications in impacting consumers' decisions.

1.2 eWOM

1.2.1 eWOM concept

The development of the Internet has changed the way consumers communicate by allowing a common space for sharing opinions (Goldsmith, 2006; Kozinets et al., 2010). Nowadays, consumers can easily share opinions with other consumers through the Internet. Several definitions have been proposed for electronic WOM (eWOM). The most used definition by researchers is found in the work of Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004, p. 39) who defined eWOM as "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". A similar definition for this concept has been proposed by Litvin et al. (2008, p. 461) who defined eWOM 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". These definitions collect the eWOM generation, that is, a consumer has an experience with a

product or a service and writes her/his opinion about it on the Internet. More recently, a distinction has been made between generation and transmission of eWOM. However, eWOM transmission is not included in the previous definitions. The Internet has exponentially increased the frequency and importance of opinion transmission. For example, an opinion received by email can be easily transmitted to other consumers with only a “click”. The same occurs in social network sites. Clicking “like” or “share” in Facebook or doing a “retweet” in Twitter is enough to transmit eWOM. In addition, consumers can transmit messages or thoughts that have been created by other consumers but also those created by companies. This situation occurs in viral marketing actions in which a company create some content, generally a video, that consumers pass on to other consumers (this concept will be further explained in section 2.3). Thus, it is important that the definition of eWOM collects the idea of transmission. A recent eWOM definition by Huang et al. (2009, p. 160) describes more broadly the concept. They defined eWOM as “the informal communications through the Internet” (Huang et al., 2009, p. 160). However, they neither specify the two types of eWOM. Therefore, this dissertation will use the following definition that takes into account both aspects of eWOM: “Information created by consumers or passed on between consumers on the Internet about products or brands” (López and Sicilia, 2014b, p. 47).

EWOM, as WOM, has been referred to using different terms: Online WOM (Duan et al., 2008; Steffes and Burgee, 2009; Sun et al., 2006; Trusov et al., 2009), word of mouse (Van Hove and Lievens, 2007; Xia and Bechwati, 2008), Internet WOM (Hu and Li, 2011; Schindler and Bickart, 2005), online consumer reviews (Chen et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2011; Zhu and Zhang, 2010), and online user reviews (Cao et al., 2011; Kim and Gupta, 2012; Ye et al., 2009). However, the most used term is eWOM (Cheung et al., 2009; Gruen et al., 2006; Gupta and Harris, 2010; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Litvin et al., 2008; Park and Lee, 2009).

The platforms through which eWOM is generated and transmitted are called social media (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Social media includes social network sites, virtual communities, blogs, forums, review sites, email and any other platform in which consumers can create and transmit information (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

In sum, eWOM seems the extension of WOM on the Internet, however, both communication processes differ in many aspects as we have explained in the next section.

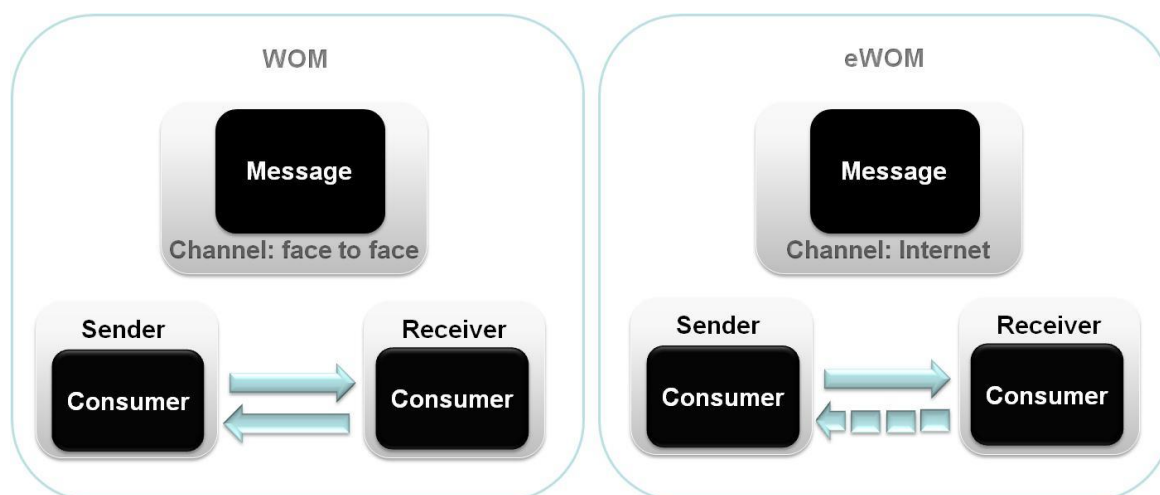
1.2.2 From WOM to eWOM

Both WOM and eWOM provide consumers' opinions about a product or brand, but they do not use the same channels to transmit information. EWOM activity differs from WOM in many aspects (see Table 5 and Figure 2). In WOM communication, the information is exchanged in a simultaneous and bidirectional face-to-face conversation (Gilly et al., 1998; Park and Kim, 2008), while in eWOM consumers need to interact with their computers to post, share or search for consumer reviews (Sen and Lerman, 2007). Thus, in eWOM the conversation does not have to be simultaneous or bidirectional. For example, the sender writes an opinion on the Internet that can stay there for a long time. Thus, many consumers can see this opinion and decide whether to answer the sender or not. The permanence of the opinion online increases the level of information exchange compared to traditional WOM communication (Henning-Thurau et al., 2004). In addition, unlike WOM, the source and receiver do not usually know each other in eWOM (Chaterjee, 2001), whereby sender and receiver of information are separated by both space and time (Stefees and Burgee, 2009). Sources of information in eWOM are usually anonymous individuals who have little or no prior relationship with the information seeker (Xia and Bechwati, 2008). Thus, it is a many-to-many communication in which the information exchanged is more voluminous in quantity compared to information obtained from traditional contacts in the offline world (Henning-Thurau et al., 2004). Thus, as opposed to traditional WOM, the non-commercial focus may not be certain in eWOM (Chaterjee, 2001). In fact, companies can write opinions on the Internet about their products as unbiased consumers' opinions (Dellarocas, 2006; Mayzlin 2006). However, although there may not be relationship between the sender and receiver in eWOM, the sender is not always anonymous. For example, when consumers pass on emails or post on social network sites to their friends or relatives, they are transmitting eWOM to known receivers.

Table 5. Differences between WOM and eWOM

	WOM	eWOM
Communication channel	Face-to-face	Electronic
Message source	Known	Known/Unknown
Type of communication	Synchronous	Asynchronous
Conversation	Bidirectional	Bidirectional or unidirectional
Communication model	One- to- one	Many- to- many
Network Size	Small	Large
Scope	Local-geographically restricted	Internet world
Volume of information exchange	Few	Large
Commercial interest	No	Unknown

Figure 2. WOM vs. eWOM



1.2.3 Antecedents of eWOM

As WOM, eWOM may be driven by several motivations and situational factors that enhance the likelihood of generating and/or transmitting eWOM. As some of them may also drive traditional WOM, this section addresses only the antecedents of eWOM that differ from those of the traditional process.

a) Motivations. Why do consumers engage in eWOM?

One of the first studies that analyse motivations to engage in eWOM was Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004). These authors based their study in the motivations to engage in traditional WOM proposed by Ditcher (1966), Engel et al. (1969) and Sundaram et al. (1998). Following studies have been also based on these pioneer works, thus, the motivations to engage in WOM and eWOM are nearly the same. As for traditional WOM and as we can see in Table 6, consumers generate and/or transmit eWOM with the aim of satisfying their need of self-enhancement (Cheung and Lee, 2012; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Ho and Dempsey, 2010; Yap et al., 2013; Yoo and Gretzel, 2008), and altruism (Cheung and Lee, 2012; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Ho and Dempsey, 2010; Jeong and Jang, 2011; Phelps et al., 2004; Yap et al., 2013; Yoo and Gretzel, 2008), building or maintaining social capital (Cheung and Lee, 2012; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Ho and Dempsey, 2010; Phelps et al., 2004; Yap et al., 2013), seeking advice for their decision making (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Yap et al., 2013), reducing their cognitive dissonance after a purchase (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Jeong and Jang, 2011; Yap et al., 2013; Yoo and Gretzel, 2008), helping the company (Jeong and Jang, 2011; Yoo and Gretzel, 2008; Yap et al., 2013) or taking revenge against the company after a negative experience (Yoo and Gretzel, 2008).

Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) have added a different motivation to generate eWOM. They have shown that consumers can write opinions on the Internet because of they receive an economic incentive. They established that the platform operator can pay them to give their opinion on his/her platform (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Table 6. Motives to spread eWOM

Motive	Type of WOM	Studies
Self-enhancement	Positive and negative eWOM generation and transmission	Cheung and Lee (2012), Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), Ho and Dempsey (2010), Yap et al. (2013), Yoo and Gretzel (2008)
Altruism	Positive and negative eWOM generation and transmission	Cheung and Lee (2012), Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), Ho and Dempsey (2010), Jeong and Jang (2011), Phelps et al. (2004), Yoo and Gretzel (2008), Yap et al. (2013)
Economic incentives	Positive and negative eWOM generation	Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)
Build/maintain social capital	Positive and negative eWOM generation and transmission	Cheung and Lee (2012), Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), Ho and Dempsey (2010), Phelps et al. (2004), Yap et al. (2013)
Advice seeking	Positive and negative eWOM generation	Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), Yap et al. (2013)
Reduce cognitive dissonance	Positive and negative WOM generation	Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), Jeong and Jang (2011), Yap et al. (2013), Yoo and Gretzel (2008)
Helping the company	Positive WOM generation	Jeong and Jang (2011), Yoo and Gretzel (2008), Yap et al. (2013)
Revenge	Negative WOM generation	Yoo and Gretzel (2008)

b) Situational factors. When does the likelihood of engaging in eWOM increase?

In eWOM, unlike WOM, product/service, company and employee related factors have not been very studied as antecedents of eWOM. Less studies have also analysed service recovery in eWOM literature if we compare with WOM studies being their results in line with results for traditional WOM, as we can see in Table 7. Results related to consumer factors are also similar in eWOM context. Consumers who are involved with the product, loyal toward the brand, who are identified or feel committed to it are more likely to write opinions on the Internet about the product (Taylor, 2012; Yeh and Choi, 2011; Wolny and Mueller, 2013).

In addition, as the importance of information transmission has increased with the development of the Internet, eWOM transmission has received more attention among eWOM than among traditional WOM researchers. These issue is perceptible in the company actions and the relationship between sender and receiver factors. Thus, more studies in eWOM, if we compared it with traditional WOM, have focused on what the company can do to consumers transmit information about their products and also, to which consumers is more likely to transmit it. For example, Hansen and Lee (2013) have shown that the higher the economic incentive that consumers receive, the higher their intention to generate and transmit eWOM in social network sites. In addition, if the

message created by the company is of high quality, relevant or important, contains multimedia effects, comic messages or that messages transmit emotions are more probably to be shared on the net (Dobele et al., 2007; Hsieh et al., 2012; Phelps et al., 2004).

Table 7: Situational factors that enhance eWOM generation and transmission

Factors classification	Factor	Type of relationship	Type of WOM	Study
Consumer-related factors	Loyalty toward the brand	Positive	Positive eWOM generation	Yeh and Choi (2011)
	Product involvement	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM generation and transmission	Taylor (2012), Wolny and Mueller (2013)
	Brand identification	Positive	Positive eWOM generation	Yeh and Choi (2011)
	Brand commitment	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM generation	Wolny and Mueller (2013)
Product failure and service recovery-related factors	Complaint cost	Positive	Negative eWOM generation	Mardhiyah and Dharmmesta (2013)
	Success/ no success service recovery	Negative	Negative eWOM generation	Mardhiyah and Dharmmesta (2013)
Company actions	Incentive	Positive	Positive eWOM generation and transmission	Hansen and Lee (2013)
	Message involvement	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM transmission	Phelps et al. (2004), Huang et al. (2009)
	Entertainment value	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM transmission	Hsieh et al. (2012), Taylor (2012).
	Awareness of persuasive intent	Negative	Positive and negative eWOM transmission	Hsieh et al. (2012)
	Emotions	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM transmission	Dobele et al. (2007)
Relationship between sender and receiver	Tie strength	It is more likely that transmit opinions between strong ties	Positive and negative eWOM transmission	Camarero and San-José (2011), Chiu et al. (2007), Chu and Kim (2011), Huang et al. (2009), Sohn (2009)
	Homophily	Negative	Positive and negative eWOM transmission	Chu and Kim (2011)
	Trust	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM generation and transmission	Chu and Kim (2011)
	Number of contacts	Negative	Positive and negative eWOM transmission	Camarero and San-José (2011)
	Individuals' Integration	Negative	Positive and negative eWOM transmission	Camarero and San-José (2011)
	Density of the social network	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM transmission	Shon (2009)

Although eWOM usually occurs between strangers, people that know each other offline can share opinions on the Internet. As tie strength increases, it is more likely that eWOM will be transmitted through social network sites (Chu and Kim, 2011). In the same vein, it is more likely that consumers pass on emails to their email contacts if they have a closer relationship with them (Camarero and San-José, 2011; Chiu et al., 2007; Huang

et al., 2009). However, this result is not replicated for eWOM generation (Chu and Kim, 2011). Probably because consumers perceive risk to share their own experiences through social network sites although the major of their contacts are close friends. When consumers generate eWOM in these platforms also weak ties will see their experiences. Unlike WOM literature, Chu and Kim (2011) have shown that it is more likely that consumers transmit both positive and negative eWOM when their contacts are not similar from themselves. In addition, these authors have not found that homophily affects eWOM generation. Homophily among social network sites users may prohibit their capacity to access diverse information and knowledge from each other and thus discourage eWOM. In addition, the higher the trust the sender has on their contacts in social network sites, the higher his/her intention to generate and transmit positive and negative eWOM (Chu and Kim 2011).

c) Psychographic factors. Who engage more in eWOM?

As traditional WOM, some consumers' characteristics can also influence the likelihood to engage in eWOM (see Table 8). However, previous studies have not analysed the same psychographic factors in both communication processes. Only opinion leadership have been studied also online as an antecedent of eWOM, with similar result than traditional WOM (Sun et al., 2006; Yeh and Choi, 2011). Other antecedents of eWOM are the degree in which consumers search for online opinions, that are more likely to generate and transmit eWOM (Sun et al., 2006). People more motivated to exchange information and with more ability in information exchanging on the Internet also will have a higher intention to generate eWOM (Gruen et al., 2006). In addition, Chiu et al. (2007) have shown that people with high level of extraversion and openness and those who score low on conscientiousness are more likely to transmit eWOM through emails. In line with this result, more self-expressive consumers and individuals who perceive themselves as efficient in helping others have a higher intention to generate eWOM (Huang et al., 2009; Taylor, 2012). Moreover, more positive attitude toward viral messages increases the intention to transmit eWOM, while negative one discourages WOM transmission (Camarero and San-José, 2011). In addition, susceptibility to social influence also determines eWOM. Consumers with high susceptibility to social influence have a higher intention to engage in eWOM in social network site context (Chu and Kim, 2011; Hansen and Lee, 2013).

Table 8. Psychographic factors that enhance eWOM generation and transmission

Factor	Type of relationship	Type of WOM	Study
Opinion leadership	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM generation and transmission	Sun et al. (2006), Yeh and Choi (2011)
Extraversion	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM transmission	Chiu et al. (2007)
Opinion seeking	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM generation and transmission	Sun et al. (2006)
Susceptibility to social influence	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM generation and transmission	Chu and Kim (2011), Hansen and Lee (2013)
Motivation	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM generation	Gruen et al. (2006)
Ability	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM generation	Gruen et al. (2006)
Attitude toward viral messages	Positive/negative	Positive and negative eWOM transmission	Camarero and San-José (2011)
Conscientiousness	Negative	Positive and negative eWOM transmission	Chiu et al. (2007)
Self-expressiveness	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM generation	Taylor (2012)

1.2.4 eWOM influence

Online opinions have been shown to have a great impact on consumer decisions. The permanence of the opinion on the Internet has much facilitated the study of eWOM influence. Previous studies have analysed the effect of eWOM using objective data such as ratings, number of comments, or sales obtained. These studies have shown that eWOM influences current sales (Chen et al., 2004; Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Duan et al., 2008; Liu, 2006; Zhu and Zhang, 2010), and future sales (Dellarocas et al., 2007). Previous studies have also examined the impact of eWOM through surveys. They have demonstrated that eWOM enhances the preference for the product (Khare et al., 2011), the attitude toward the product and the brand (Doh and Hwang, 2009; Lee et al., 2009; Wu and Wang, 2011) and the intention to purchase it (Doh and Hwang, 2009; Park et al., 2007). EWOM has also a direct effect on the decision making (López and Sicilia, 2013; López and Sicilia, 2014a; Senecal and Nantel, 2004; Park and Lee, 2009). As traditional WOM, eWOM has also determinants which enhance or reduce the influence of this communication process. However, the majority of these determinants vary regarding traditional WOM.

d) Determinants of influence. When does the influence of eWOM increase?

Communication process: Most studies have analysed communication process characteristics as determinants of eWOM. As in WOM, the most studied factors that enhance eWOM influence are valence and volume. Previous studies have shown the effect of volume (Chen et al., 2004; Dellarocas et al., 2007; Duan et al., 2008; Khare et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2008; López and Sicilia, 2014a; Park et al., 2007 Liu, 2006) and

valence as determinants of eWOM influence (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Dellarocas et al., 2007; López and Sicilia, 2014a; Qui et al., 2012). As in traditional WOM, in eWOM it is not clear whether positive or negative opinions are more influential. For example, previous studies have shown that negative reviews have more impact than positive ones (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Lee et al., 2009; Park and Lee, 2009). However, Sen and Lerman (2007) have shown that consumers perceive more useful a positive review than a negative one. In addition, as more extreme are both positive and negative opinions, more diagnostic they are (Qui et al., 2012).

Other factors have been studied such as the consensus of opinions, that is, the degree to which online opinions rated a product similarly. Khare et al. (2011) have shown that consensus between negative opinions positively affect eWOM influence. This effect is not significant for positive eWOM (Khare et al., 2011). In addition, Qui et al. (2012) have shown that the reviews are less diagnostic if there is low consensus in product evaluations. The quality argument such as its relevance and comprehensiveness also enhance the usefulness of the opinion and the influence of eWOM (Cheung et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2008; Park et al., 2007). The depth is also important, that is, the number of words the review has (Mudambi and Schuff, 2010). The same occurs for emotional reviews and for opinions with visual information. When several positive opinions express emotions, the evaluation of the product will be higher than when these opinions are not emotional. The result is replicated by negative emotional opinions (Kim and Gupta, 2012). In addition, blog posts are more influential when they contain visual information than when they do not (Lin et al., 2012). If the review is personalized the opinions will also exert a higher influence (Senecal and Nantel, 2004; Xia and Bechwati, 2008). The perceived credibility of the opinion (Cheung et al., 2009; Fan et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2011) and the reputation of the website where the opinion is located (Park and Lee, 2009) also enhance the influence of eWOM. Additionally, Godes and Mayzlin (2004) have shown that dispersion, that is, the extent in which a conversation about a product takes place across a broad range of communities, affects the impact of eWOM. More disperse conversation have a higher effect than conversations within a narrow and homogenous population (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004).

Sender: Characteristics of the sender have relatively less studied as determinant of eWOM influence, probably because the sender is usually anonymous in this communication process. However, some websites offer some information about the sender such as the time this individual is registered in the website, the number of comments he/she has written or the helpfulness of his/her comments. Readers can evaluate all these aspects in order to evaluate the credibility of the sender. Previous

studies have shown that as the higher the sender credibility, the higher the influence of eWOM on decision making (López and Sicilia, 2014a; Wu and Wang, 2011).

Receiver: Unlike traditional WOM, most research has examined the characteristics of the receiver. For example receivers' Internet experience has been analysed. Zhu and Zhang (2010) have shown that eWOM is more influential for consumers with high Internet experience. However, López and Sicilia (2014a) have found a quadratic relationship between consumers' Internet experience and e-WOM influence. Consumers with high and low Internet experience will be more affected by online consumers' opinions while consumers with medium-experience with the Internet will be less affected by eWOM. In a similar vein, people with high Internet shopping experience have been shown to consider eWOM as more useful (Park and Lee, 2009a). Previous experience with this communication process also determines the influence of eWOM. Consumers who usually seek and/or give opinions on the Internet will be more affected by online opinions (López and Sicilia, 2013). In addition if consumers are more motivated to process information from eWOM (called as precommitment) or are more susceptible to interpersonal influence, the opinions they read will have a higher influence on them (Khare et al., 2011; Park and Lee, 2009a). Demographics variables such as genre or education also enhance the impact of eWOM. López and Sicilia (2011) have shown that women are more influenced by eWOM than men, and consumers with a low education level are more influenced by online opinions than consumers with a high education level.

Relationship between sender and receiver: As in traditional WOM occurs, tie strength and homophily affect the impact of eWOM. De Bruyn and Lilien (2008) have analyzed the effect of tie strength and homophily between sender and receiver while they participated in a survey sended by email. Similarly with WOM results, they have shown that consumers are more likely to open the email if it has been sent by a strong tie. In contrast, unlike in traditional WOM, it is more likely that they show some interest for the survey clicking in the link of the study and finally answering the questionnaire if the email has been sent by heterophily senders.

Product: More product related determinants have been analysed in eWOM than in WOM, as well as a different product classification have used. One criteria to classify products is depending on their qualities that can be search or experience qualities (Nelson, 1970). Search qualities are those that "the consumer can determine by inspection prior to purchase," and experience qualities are those that "are not determined prior to purchase" (Nelson, 1974, p. 730). Park and Lee (2009) and

Table 9: Determinants of eWOM influence

Factors classification	Factor	Type of relationship	Type of WOM	Study
Communication -process related determinants	Valence	Negative reviews influence more than positive ones		Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006), Lee et al. (2009), López and Sicilia (2014), Park and Lee (2009), Qui et al. (2012), Sen and Lerman (2007)
	Volume	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM generation	Chen et al. (2004), Dellarocas et al. (2007), Duan et al. (2008), Liu (2006), Doh and Hwang (2009), López and Sicilia (2014), Lee et al. (2008), Park et al. (2007)
	Depth	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM	Mudambi and Schuff (2010)
	Consensus	Positive	Negative eWOM	Khare et al. (2011), Qui et al. (2012)
	Personalization	Positive	Positive eWOM	Senecal and Nantel (2004), Xia and Bechwati (2008)
	eWOM credibility	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM	Cheung et al. (2009), Fan et al. (2013), Lee et al. (2011)
	Argument quality	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM	Cheung et al. (2008), Lee et al. (2008), Park et al. (2007)
	Dispersion	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM	Godes and Mayzlin (2004)
	Web site reputation	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM	Park and Lee (2009)
	Emotions	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM	Kim and Gupta (2012)
Visual content	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM	Lin et al. (2012)	
Sender-related determinants	Sender credibility	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM	López and Sicilia (2014), Wu and Wang (2011)
Receiver-related factors	Internet experience	Positive/quadratic	Positive and negative eWOM	Zhu and Zhang (2010), López and Sicilia (2014)
	Precommitment	Positive	Negative and positive eWOM generation	Khare et al. (2011)
	Experience with eWOM	Positive	Positive and negative eWOM	López and Sicilia (2013)
	Gender	Women are more influenced by eWOM than men	Positive and negative eWOM	López and Sicilia (2011)
	Education	Negative	Positive and negative eWOM	López and Sicilia (2011)
	Susceptibility to interpersonal influence	Positive	Negative and positive eWOM generation	Park and Lee (2009a)
	Internet shopping experience	Positive	Negative and positive eWOM generation	Park and Lee (2009b)
Relationship between sender and receiver related determinants	Tie strength	Positive	eWOM transmission	De Bruyn and Lilien (2008)
	Homophily	Negative	eWOM transmission	De Bruyn and Lilien (2008)

Table 9: Determinants of eWOM influence (continues)

Factors classification	Factor	Type of relationship	Type of WOM	Study
Product related determinants	Experience vs. search products	More influential for experience than for search products	Positive eWOM	Park and Lee (2009), Senecal and Nantel (2004)
	Hedonic vs. utilitarian products	More influential for utilitarian than for hedonic products	Positive and negative eWOM	Sen and Lerman (2007)
	Product popularity	Negative	Positive eWOM generation	Chen et al. (2004), Zhu and Zhang (2010)

Senecal and Nantel (2004) have shown that online reviews are more influential when they are about an experiential product rather than for a search product due to the higher risk perception of buying a product that they cannot try it before purchase.

Products can also be classified into utilitarian and hedonic products. Utility is measured as a function of the product's tangible attributes (Drolet, et al., 2000), whereas hedonic products are characterized by an affective and sensory experience of aesthetic or sensual pleasure, fantasy and fun (Hirschman and Hoolbrook, 1982). Sen and Lerman (2007) have shown that consumers see eWOM as more useful when it is about utilitarian products than about hedonic ones.

Product popularity can also influence the impact of eWOM. Recommendations work better for less popular products than for more popular products (Chen et al., 2004; Zhu and Zhang, 2010).

e) Comparison between eWOM and other information sources

According to recent research, the effect of eWOM on consumers is somehow similar to that of traditional WOM (López and Sicilia, 2013). Even, in determined situations, the influence of eWOM is higher than the traditional process (López and Sicilia, 2013; Steffes and Burgee, 2009). Previous studies have also shown a higher impact of eWOM compared to firm-generated information. 70% of Internet users around the world trust in eWOM, being more credible than firm-generated information (Nielsen, 2012). Bickart and Schindler (2001) also showed that eWOM generates more product category interest than exposure to marketing-generated sources of information on the Internet. Similarly, Parker (2005) also reported that eWOM is pervasive and growing. Consumers in this study were approximately 16 percent more likely to be influenced by eWOM than by traditional advertising media (radio, TV and newspapers). In addition, Trusov et al. (2009) have shown that eWOM referrals have substantially longer carryover effects than traditional marketing actions, have a strong impact on new customer acquisition and

produce substantially higher response elasticities. In addition, those customers who consult referral sources are less likely to switch than those who do not use eWOM.

Given these impacting results, it is not surprising that marketers worldwide are increasingly interested in developing eWOM campaigns as a potential new communication tool (Kozinets et al., 2010). The use of eWOM and WOM as a communication tool is called WOM marketing (Kozinets et al., 2010), that will be explained in the next section. The use of eWOM as a communication tool offers marketers a wide variety of options to combine it with other information sources. Traditionally, eWOM and WOM have been combined with other communication tools in the sense that the company promotes a product or service, and consumers who have bought or tried it spread the word about it (Bass, 1969; Rogers, 1983). However, WOM marketing can be used to create conversations about the product even before using other communication tools. Thus, the first study of the dissertation, located in chapter two, analyses the effect of using WOM marketing in new product launches, before the advertising campaign has started. However, first it is necessary to explain what WOM marketing is and how it works, as well as previous studies that have analysed it. This issue will be dealt in the next section.

1.3 WOM Marketing

Once literature has demonstrated the importance of WOM and eWOM for consumers and the superiority of these communication processes over firm-generated information sources, it is not strange that companies want to use them as a communication tool (Kozinets et al., 2010). The intentional influence of consumers to spread the word about companies' products is known as WOM marketing (Kozinets et al., 2010).

1.3.1 WOM Marketing (WOMM) concept

Kozinets et al. (2010) defined WOM Marketing (WOMM) as "the intentional influencing of consumer-to-consumer communications by professional marketing techniques". More recently, the Word of Mouth Marketing Association (2012) defines WOMM as "any business action that earns a customer recommendation". In a similar vein, López and Sicilia (2014, p. 47b) defined WOM marketing as a "communication tool that firms can use to encourage consumers to spread the word about their products or brands". Basically, this marketing technique consists of giving a message (original/valuable information) to some consumers (who are called the seed) in order to spread the word. They can engage either in WOM or eWOM. The seed could generate new WOM/eWOM or simply transmit the information that the company has sent to him/her. An example in which the seed generates eWOM is the WOMM campaign developed by the destination marketing organization (DMO) of Costa Brava (Spain). It organized a 'blogtrip' in which

16 travel bloggers were invited to sample the best experiences of the region for a week. The result was more than 17 million comments about Costa Brava resulting from the marketing action for the week. One example of a WOMM campaign in which the seed transmits the information is the campaign called “A hunter shoots a bear” developed by Tippex. The company created and uploaded on Youtube an interactive video in which the consumers could choose the end of the story. Consumers shared the video by email and social network sites. The video has been watched more than 21 million of times.

Two types of spreading the word can be distinguished in endogenous and exogenous WOM/eWOM. According to Godes and Mayzlin (2009), conversations between consumers generated because of a WOMM campaign are called exogenous WOM/eWOM, in contrast to endogenous WOM/eWOM, as they occur naturally and without a firm’s intervention. If we consider the action of DMO of Costa Brava, the 17 million opinions generated in this week are exogenous WOM, because the DMO planned an action (the blogtrip) to encourage bloggers to spread the word. However, if these bloggers had gone to Costa Brava without the organization of a blogtrip – that is, without the DMO intervention – and had then posted opinions about the place, this WOM would have been endogenous. Figure 3 shows how WOMM works and their differences between endogenous WOM/eWOM. The next section to the chapter explains with further details each of the components of the process.

1.3.2 Components of a WOMM strategy

a) The sender: Who initiates exogenous WOM?

Unlike endogenous WOM, exogenous WOM is initiated by the company (Godes and Mayzlin, 2009). The company sends a message to consumers with the aim of encouraging them to spread the word about their products or brands.

b) What does the message consist of?

Companies have to decide what to communicate in order to encourage receivers to spread the word. The message can be either valuable or original information. Companies can also give receivers an incentive prompting them to spread the word.

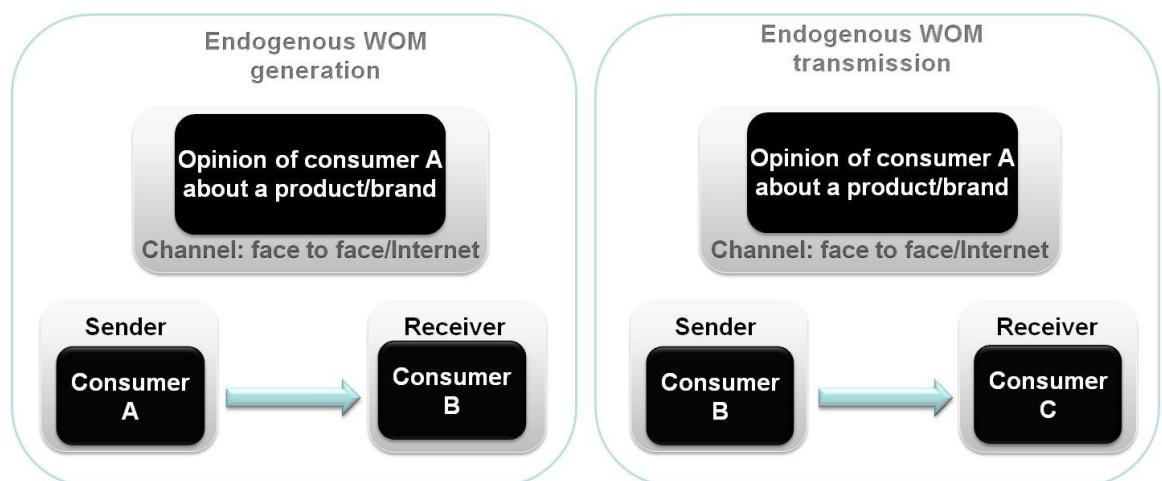
Valuable information: Companies can give receivers some information in form of text, graph information, images or even videos with the aim of spreading the word about it. The information should be valuable to stimulate receivers. For example, it could consist of information about a new product before launching it into the market as Samsung did with the Galaxy S4. Samsung gave some clues about the characteristics of the new mobile phone through Twitter before its official launching.

Original information: Companies can also create original information to encourage consumers to spread the word. This information can be created either offline or online. Original information offline turns into actions to earn attention of consumers. Street visuals, theatrical stunts could be used as vivid messages with the aim of spreading the word (Andrews, 2011). An example of this original information was the action of Adidas locating big boxes of their trainers in the most crowded square of Amsterdam, or recently Nike wearing the statue of Colon in Barcelona with the new t-shirt of the F.C. Barcelona team. In an online context, companies could create a video, an image or a text, upload it to social network sites or send it by email in order to be forwarded. An example of this action is the campaign called “The Desperados Experience” developed by the brand of beer Desperados. They uploaded a video on Youtube simulating a party in which the consumer could interact with the video choosing the members of the party or opening doors to enter in other rooms.

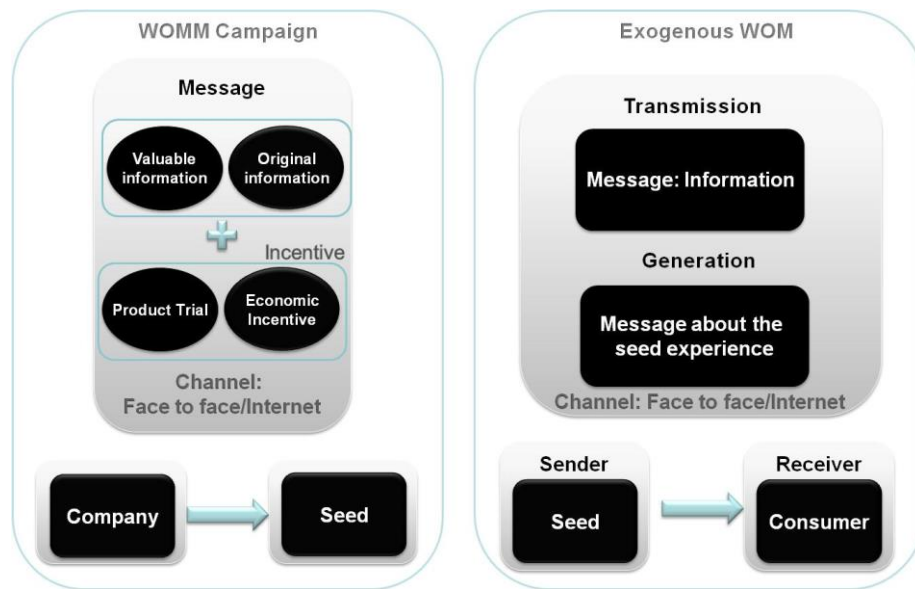
Should the message include incentives?: Companies sometimes include any kind of remuneration accompanied by the information that the consumer may receive in trade of sharing information (Roy, 2011). Incentives may consist of an economic incentive, a product trial or a gift. Companies can also provide a product trial to consumers to encourage them to spread the word. The aim of giving a product to consumers is that they talk about their experience with this product. Companies that offer a service also can invite some consumers to try the service they provide such as the DMO of Costa Brava did developing the blogtrip.

Figure 3. Endogenous vs. exogenous WOM/eWOM

ENDOGENOUS WOM/eWOM



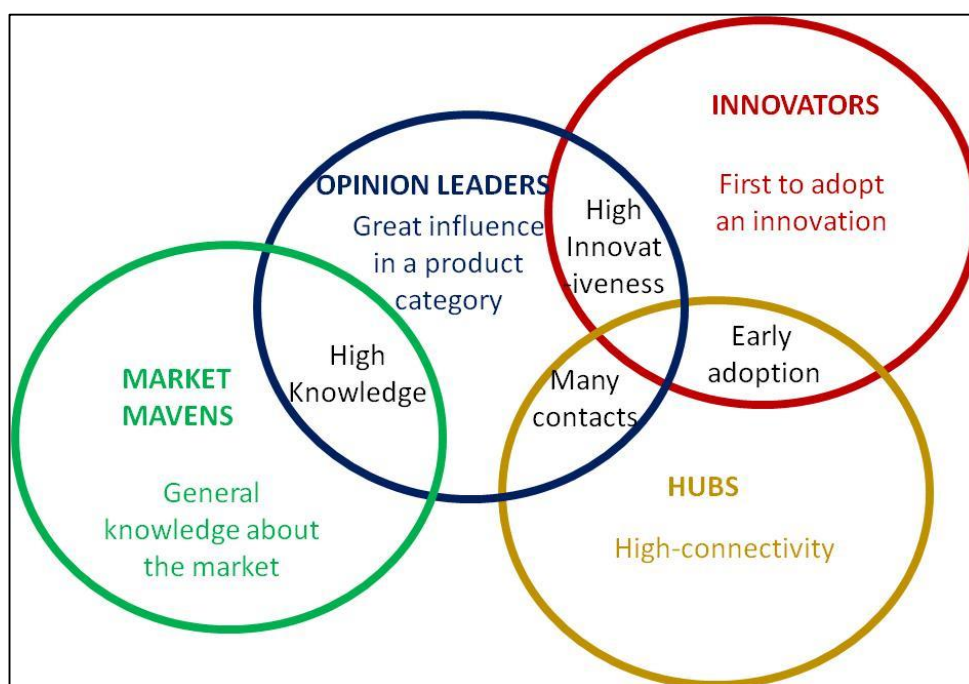
EXOGENOUS WOM/eWOM



c) Who receives the initial message? Types of seeds

The seed is the initial group of consumers who have been contacted by the company to start with the WOMM campaign (Libai et al., 2013). Selecting these initial, conversation-starting consumers is a critical managerial decision, and firms try to select those consumers who are best suited to helping achieve the aims of the WOMM campaign (Stephen and Lehmann, 2012). Previous WOM studies have highlighted the importance of “influentials” in WOM communication (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Iyengar et al., 2011; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). The general concept “influential” has been very much used in WOM literature. However, research has used it to refer people with different characteristics. For example, Watts and Dodds (2007) use the term influential to call high-connected people but Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) refer influential as consumers who influence the purchase decision of other consumers. Goldenberg et al. (2009) mixed up these ideas in their paper. For these authors, influential people are believed to have three important traits: (1) they are convincing (may be even charismatic), (2) they know a lot (i.e., are experts), and (3) they have a large number of social ties (i.e., they know many people). Thus, the concept is not being used homogeneously. This conceptual problem of classifying influentials depending on the characteristics that better reflect the type of influence each consumer may have. According to this idea, influentials can be divided into opinion leaders, innovators, market mavens and hubs.

Figure 4. Characteristics that differentiate each seed and common features



Opinion leaders: Opinion leaders are “individuals who exert an unequal amount of influence on the decision of others” (Rogers and Cartano, 1962, p. 435). Compared with consumers who seek their advice, opinion leaders frequently possess more knowledge, experience, expertise, and involvement with the product category (Lyons and Henderson, 2005). In addition, opinion leaders usually have many contacts (Valente, 1996), although this is not a critical requirement to be considered as opinion leaders.

Innovators: Innovators are the first individuals who adopt an innovation (Rogers, 2002). Diffusion Theory posits that innovators are crucial in new product diffusion (Bass 1969, Mahajan and Muller 1979). According to this theory, a new product is first adopted by some innovators who, in turn, influence others to adopt it.

Although opinion leaders could have more innovative behaviour than other consumers (Lyons and Henderson, 2005), and innovators usually have greater opinion leadership than later adopters, not all opinion leaders are innovators. When the product is too innovative the opinion leader should demonstrate prudent judgement in decisions about adopting new ideas. Opinion leaders can perceive risk losing their status recommending very innovative products that those in their social circle are not ready to adopt (Rogers, 1993). Therefore, opinion leaders and innovators should be treated as different concepts.

Market mavens: Market mavens are “individuals who have information about many kinds of products, places to shop, and other facets of markets, and initiate discussions with consumers and respond to requests from consumers for market information” (Feick and

Price, 1987, p. 85). Their potential of influence is associated with their general knowledge of the market. Market mavens could be confused with opinion leaders. Opinion leaders have more expertise with a product category (Lyons and Henderson, 2005), whereas the influence of market mavens is based on more general knowledge and experience with markets (Freick and Price, 1987).

Hubs: Hubs are “well-connected people with a high number of connections to others” (Hinz et al., 2011, p. 56). Their importance as seeds is related to the high number of potential consumers they are connected with. The opposite to hubs are fringes, who “are connected to a few number of others” (Hinz et al., 2011, p. 56). Unlike other type of seeds such as opinion leaders, innovators or market mavens, hubs are not more persuasive, innovative, or knowledgeable than others (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Hinz et al., 2011). Their potential resides on their greater reach compared to other individuals (Hinz et al., 2011). Moreover, hubs adopt sooner than other people not because they are innovative but rather because they are exposed earlier to an innovation as a result of their multiple social links (Goldenberg et al., 2009). Therefore, hubs and innovators should be treated as different concepts.

d) *WOMM strategies*

WOMM is the general term that encompasses all marketing techniques or strategies used to encourage consumers to spread the word about products or brands. WOMM strategies can vary depending on the message sent, the seed used and the channel through which WOM is generated or transmitted. As we can see in Figure 5, the main WOMM strategies that have been used by practitioners are the following:

Figure 5: WOMM strategies



Referral programs: The most traditional WOMM activity is the referral programs. This technique is defined as “creating tools that enable satisfied customers to refer their friends” (Word of Mouth Marketing Association, 2007). The message used in this strategy

is basically an incentive and the seed a current customer. If the seed attracts a new customer, he/she will receive the incentive (Ryu and Feick, 2007). Companies can also reward both, the sender and the receiver of the recommendation (Ryu and Feick, 2007; Verlegh et al., 2013). The most typical rewards are financial rewards or discounts (Verlegh et al., 2013). The channel used to contact with the seed can be either online or offline.

Viral marketing campaigns: Viral marketing is defined as “the phenomenon by which consumers mutually share and spread marketing-relevant information, initially sent out deliberately by marketers to stimulate and capitalize on word of mouth” (Van der Lans et al., 2010). This strategy does not intend consumers to generate WOM but to transmit and diffuse an initial message promoted by the company (Ferguson, 2008). Thus, the most suitable seed for these campaigns are the hubs. The message is usually original information, especially in form of video or image that attracts consumers’ attention. Viral Marketing is mostly developed online, as companies upload information on the Internet and consumers transmit it through this medium. Traditionally, companies sent the information to consumers by email, however, nowadays, social network sites such as Facebook or Twitter offer tools that allow consumers to pass on information to other consumers easily.

Community marketing actions: This strategy requires the creation of a brand community. A brand community is defined as “a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among users of a brand” (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001, p. 412). By creating a brand community, companies offer a common space to talk about the brand to consumers who share interest about it. Then, the community facilitates the communication among consumers and between the consumers and the company. The seed here may be any member of the community, who is usually a customer of the company who decides to follow the brand in the community developed by the company. However, depending on the objective of the specific action, companies can select seeds with specific characteristics among the community members. The message can be either original or valuable information; and it may be accompanied by an incentive. Traditionally, brand communities were created offline. However, with the development of the Internet, companies started to create communities in their own websites (Jang et al., 2008). These brand communities are called virtual brand communities (Cova and Pace, 2006). Nowadays, these brand communities are being progressively transferred to social network sites.

Product seeding campaigns: This technique is usually used in new product launches. It consists of an initial group of consumers who receives a trial product early on, in order

to spread the word about the new product (Libai et al., 2013). The message is the product itself and may be accompanied by some valuable information about it or even by some promise of economic incentive in reward for generating or transmitting WOM. The seed can be opinion leaders, innovators, market mavens or even hubs, depending on the objective of the campaign. The seed can generate WOM both offline and/or online.

Grassroot marketing or guerrilla marketing: Grassroot marketing or guerrilla marketing consists of “organizing and motivating volunteers to engage in personal or local outreach” (Word of Mouth Marketing Association, 2012). It is a variety of low-cost and unconventional marketing techniques that relies on time, energy and imagination rather than on a big budget (Išorait, 2010). The message involves original information created offline such as intercept encounters in public places, street giveaways of products, stunts (Išorait, 2010). This strategy does not much allow selecting a seed with specific characteristics; the seeds will be people who are in the place where the grassroot marketing action is being developed. Although the action is usually offline, consumers can also spread the word on the Internet taking photos or recording videos.

1.3.3 Previous studies on WOM Marketing

WOM marketing is a recent concept, thus it has not been widely studied. Once we have explained what WOM marketing is and how it works, we have shown previous results about it. These results are related to the effect of WOM derived from a WOMM campaign, the message and the seed used with this purpose.

a) The effect of exogenous WOM

An important issue that has been studied is the effectiveness of a WOMM campaign. Godes and Mayzlin (2009) have shown WOM generated by a WOMM campaign increases sales as it occurs with endogenous WOM (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Duan et al., 2008). In addition, the Word of Mouth Marketing Association (2007) suggests that a WOMM campaign can amplify WOM, but WOM effects are the same regardless of its origin (endogenous or exogenous). In fact, it is very difficult for consumers to distinguish between endogenous and exogenous WOM (Dellarocas, 2006; Mayzlin, 2006), particularly in an online context. When individuals search for opinions on the Internet, they do not know whether the sender has posted the opinion because he/she has been previously recruited by a company.

Consumers who have been recruited to generate or transmit information have the option to disclose they have spread the word about a product due to a WOMM campaign. According to Word of Mouth Marketing Association (2012), WOMM campaigns require that both marketers and the seed ensure that any connection between them that could

affect the credibility consumers give to the seed's statements should be disclosed. However, marketers fear that disclosure will reduce the WOMM campaign effectiveness (Abendroth and Heyman, 2012). Previous studies have shown that when disclosure occurs, the sender is rated as more credible and receivers tell more people about the brand being discussed (Carl, 2008). In addition, early disclosing leads to more favourable evaluations of the sender in comparison to know after the conversation that the transmitter has received an incentive to spread the word (Tuk et al., 2009).

b) The message

Literature on WOMM has focused principally on the seed. However, very little is known about what to communicate in order to spread the word. As we have explained, companies can send consumers some valuable or original information with or without incentives. Previous studies about viral marketing have shown that if the message created by the company is high quality, relevant or important for the consumer, it will be more likely to be transmitted (Phelps et al., 2004). Humorous, emotional, and messages with multimedia effects have been also shown more shared in viral marketing campaigns (Dobele et al., 2007; Hsieh et al., 2012; Porter and Golan, 2006). However, it is unknown the effect of a message in which the company directly encourages consumers to spread the word. Thus, this issue will be studied in study 2 located in the chapter 3 of this dissertation.

The benefit of offering an incentive in a WOMM campaign is not clear yet. The type of incentive (economic vs. product) has been also motive of discussion. Previous studies have shown that economic incentives enhance the probability to give opinions both offline (Ryu and Feick, 2007), and online (Hinz et al., 2011). In addition, Ryu and Feick (2007) have shown that when the company gives an incentive to the seed, WOM generated of referral programmes is higher among weak ties and for weaker brands compared to absence of incentive. In contrast, Verlegh et al. (2013) have shown that the presence of incentives reduce the favourability of the response to a referral among weak ties. According to this study, financial rewards may result in scepticism on the part of the receiving consumer (Godes et al., 2005). The reason behind this scepticism is that the potential social benefits of providing an opinion are perceived to be lower and the social and psychological costs are perceived to be higher when an incentive is offered than when is not (Ryu and Feick, 2007). The likely negative effect of rewards can be diminished by giving an incentive to both the transmitter and the receiver of information (Verlegh et al., 2013). In fact, Ryu and Feick (2007) have demonstrated that the

likelihood of generating WOM is higher among strong ties when company also rewards the person who receives the information.

Very little is known about the effect of using products as incentives. Studies have analyzed the effect of product seeding programmes. For example, Libai et al. (2013) have shown that a product seeding campaign has an effect on the acceleration and acquisition of new customers. However, it is unknown whether giving a product as incentive has better results than giving an economic incentive or even giving only information. It is also not clear the effect of incentive size. Ryu and Feick (2007) have shown that an increase in reward size did not increase the likelihood of referral. However, a recent study that analyzes referral programmes on the Internet has shown that the higher the incentives that were offered to both parties, the better WOM results were observed (Ahrens et al., 2013). In addition, Verlegh et al. (2013) have demonstrated that the negative effect of rewarding the transmitter decreases using a symbolic incentive. Thus, the effect of reward size needs further research. Additionally, the use of incentives has been studied basically in referral programmes. Thus, we try to cover this gap in this dissertation. We have compared the effect of a WOMM campaign that used different incentives and incentive sizes in study 3 located in chapter 4. The use of products and money as incentives are compared as well as the strategy of giving only information about the product to the seed in order to find the best strategy to increase the seeds' probability to engage in WOM.

c) The seed

Different seeds may be suitable to WOMM campaigns depending on the objectives marketers want to achieve. It remains very difficult to identify consumers with the characteristics that are necessary for each WOMM campaign. Nevertheless, the development of the new information technologies has facilitated this issue. Previous studies have analysed the situations in which it is more suitable to select each seed and how to identify it.

Opinion leaders: Literature has shown the importance of opinion leaders in the diffusion of new products (Coleman et al., 1966; Iyengar et al., 2011; Nair et al., 2010; Valente, 1995). They will come to know about the new product through advertising and then transmit the information to other consumers via WOM (Coleman et al., 1966; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). Previous studies have shown that opinion leaders are especially important at adoption stage (Manchanda et al. 2008; Narayanan et al., 2005; Van den Bulte and Lilien, 2001). In fact, Van Eck et al. (2011) have demonstrated that opinion leaders increase the maximum adoption percentage. Thus, the importance of opinion

leaders extends to more advanced phases of decision making. They can be crucial at the final decision to buy a product due to their high level of persuasiveness.

The development of the Internet has facilitated the identification of opinion leaders. Opinion leaders on the Internet are related with bloggers (Droge et al., 2010). When a company identifies influential bloggers and contacts with them for a WOMM campaign a great tension may appear between the blogger and the company (Kozinets et al., 2010). Bloggers are recruited as a type of marketer transforming interpersonal communication into an intended persuasion effort (Kozinets et al., 2010). Bloggers are due to their community, thus they must adjust their post to their communal norms. According to Kozinets et al. (2010), bloggers take WOMM messages and meanings and then alter them to make the marketing message more believable, relevant to conform to the norms and expectations the community has developed. If the post created by the blogger is not in agreement with these communal norms, it can create a negative impression among the readers and a loss of reputation. Thus, bloggers could avoid participating in WOMM campaigns in order to limit these negative consequences. Thus, as the importance of opinion leaders and the probability of negative reactions of bloggers facing a WOMM campaign, the study 3 of this dissertation presented in chapter 4 analyses what is the best message and/or incentive to engage bloggers to spread the word.

Market mavens: Feick and Price (1987) suggested that market mavens can be good seeds to transmit information that it is not interesting to opinion leaders such as general messages about marketing mix changes; messages spanning multiple product classes, messages about low involvement products or for information not based on products characteristics. Additionally, their higher propensity to engage in WOM (Schneider and Rodgers, 1993; Walsh and Elsner, 2012) and to retain this characteristic across channels (Barnes and Presey, 2012) turns market mavens into a very suitable seed for a WOMM campaign. In fact, marketing communications and strategies targeted at market mavens deployed through offline channels not only generate offline WOM, but have also proved useful across multiple channels (Barnes and Presey, 2012). Recent research is also showing the effect of recruiting market mavens in WOMM campaigns. For example, Walsh and Elsner (2012) have shown that the average order value and cash contributions of new customers acquired through the referrals of market mavens are higher than the cash contributions of new customers acquired through non-mavens.

Market maven literature has not offered conclusive results regarding how to identify this seed. Existing research is very confusing at this issue. For example, Feick and Price (1987) identified mavens as female and less educated. In contrast, Lester et al. (2012) showed that market mavens on social media are also female, but highly educated. Lastly,

Barnes and Presey (2012) established that market mavens are technology-savvy and individualistic, are of either gender and tend to be older and more intensive and experienced users of Web platforms and also intensive users of virtual worlds than those with low maven propensity (Barnes and Presey, 2012). Therefore, further research is needed to better identify this type of seed.

Hubs: In the WOM literature, connectivity has been recognized as important for spreading information and it has shown a great impact on the speed of a new product adoption and on the total number of adoptions (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Hinz et al., 2011). Libai et al. (2013) have found that while most of the social value created by a WOMM campaign could be achieved choosing the seed randomly, targeting hubs increases social value by about a third on average in a product seeding campaign. Using hubs, a higher portion of the social value gain comes from accelerating the purchases of customers who would have purchased anyway (Libai et al., 2013). In addition, a recent study has shown the superiority of the seeding strategy using hubs over less connected people or over a random selection of consumers in a viral marketing campaign (Hinz et al., 2011). Relevant literature has also classified hubs into innovativeness and followers. Goldenberg et al. (2009) have shown that while innovative hubs have a greater impact on the speed of adoption process speed, follower hubs have a greater impact on market size (total number of adoptions). However, previous studies have recognized the difficulty of involving hubs in WOMM campaigns. Hubs can suffer from information overload due to their central position in the social network (Porter and Donthu, 2008). Thus, they must filter the information they transmit to others. Nevertheless, their potential should not be underestimated despite these limitations. Hinz et al. (2011) proposed that promoting a low-risk product generates less risk to transmit the information, thus hubs do not hesitate before participating in these cases. In addition, hubs will be more suitable to create awareness about a new product or to disseminate quickly information due to their high connectivity. In sum, viral marketing campaigns should try to use hubs as a seed to achieve a faster social contagion.

Traditionally, hubs have been hard to identify (Stephen and Lehmann, 2012). Thus, Stephen and Lehmann (2012) propose an alternative approach to reach hubs in situations where hubs cannot be directly targeted in a WOMM campaign. They suggest targeting regular consumers who, through incentives, are encouraged to transmit WOM to their higher-connectivity friends. However, hubs can be easily identified online. Some social media platforms such as social network sites provide information about the connectivity of consumers. It is possible to learn how connected a person is just seeing how many “friends’ or “followers” they have in these platforms. In this context, hubs will

be people with lot of contacts in social network sites (Hinz et al., 2011; Stephen and Lehmann, 2012; Watts and Dodds 2007). As companies can easily identify hubs in social network sites, and their importance to transmit information, the study 2 of this dissertation in chapter 3 analyzes how to encourage hubs to spread the word in social network sites.

CHAPTER 2:

HOW WOM MARKETING

CONTRIBUTES TO NEW

PRODUCT ADOPTION. TESTING

COMPETITIVE COMMUNICATION

STRATEGIES

2.1 Introduction

Successful introduction of new products is important for a firm's long-term performance (Kuester et al., 2012; Prins and Verhoef, 2007). Marketing activities are therefore devoted to increasing the likelihood of success when a new product is launched (Peres et al., 2010). Communication is considered to be the element that is most directly responsible for aiding consumers' acceptance of the product (Lee and O'Connor, 2003). Specifically, product innovations can be transmitted by both commercial and interpersonal communication via word of mouth (WOM) (Mahajan et al., 1990). Literature has demonstrated that personal interactions have greater influence over consumer choices than personal selling, print advertisements, or radio (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955; Bickart and Schindler, 2001). In addition, previous research has shown that WOM is a crucial driver of new product diffusion (Arndt, 1967; Bass, 1969; Coleman et al., 1966; Kawakami and Parry, 2013). However, extant research supports the idea that the diffusion process would never be initiated without the customer's initial exposure to commercial communication (Goldenberg et al., 2001; Manchanda et al., 2008; Narayanan et al., 2005; Van den Bulte and Lilien, 2001). They confirm that WOM needs informed individuals to start the diffusion process. Therefore, advertising remains as the first communication tool to be used when introducing a new product into the market (Manchanda et al. 2008; Narayanan et al., 2005; Van den Bulte and Lilien, 2001).

Nowadays, new technologies make it easier for consumers to share product- and brand-related information with each other (Stephen and Lehmann, 2009) and to transmit information faster than traditional WOM and reach far beyond the local community through the Internet (Chatterjee, 2001). This process is referred to as eWOM. Previous studies have demonstrated that eWOM, like traditional WOM, exerts a great effect on consumer decisions. In fact, it affects company sales (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Duan et al., 2008), and nearly 70% of Internet users trust eWOM (Nielsen, 2013). Thus, marketers are increasingly interested in making use of eWOM as a new communication tool (Kozinets et al., 2010; Verlegh et al., 2013). This intentional influencing of consumer-to-consumer communications via professional marketing techniques is called WOM marketing (WOMM) (Kozinets et al., 2010). WOMM has recently attracted a great deal of attention among marketers as a viable alternative to traditional marketing communication methods (Trusov et al., 2009; Verlegh et al., 2013). Firms such as Nokia, Procter & Gamble and HP are already using WOMM. Thus, it is thought that through WOMM consumers can be aware of a new product before its advertising campaign has even started.

Since a company can develop WOMM campaigns before advertising, it is very relevant to analyze which communication strategy should be used first when introducing a new product into the market. Recommendations regarding which communication strategy should be used could help firms to achieve better control of the adoption process and optimize their investments accordingly. In this chapter we address this issue by investigating how a firm should orchestrate a communication campaign that drives consumer awareness and adoption of a new product. Specifically, we analyze which communication tool should be the first one to be developed in order to create new product awareness – WOMM or advertising. Also, we examine the communication tool that creates a higher adoption of the product. In order to accomplish these objectives, we have conducted four studies. We have firstly analysed this issue using a student sample for a technological product. A second study replicates the first one using a more general sample. Finally studies three and four test competitive communication strategies using two different product categories in order to overcome possible generalization problems. To the best of our knowledge, this is one of the first studies to analyse whether WOM should be actively promoted by firms, or naturally promoted by customers following an advertising campaign.

2.2 Literature review and hypotheses development

2.2.1 *The role of WOM in the diffusion process*

Previous research has established the importance of WOM as a driver of new product diffusion (Arndt, 1967; Brooks, 1957; Kawakami and Parry, 2013). The model proposed by Bass (1969) assumes that the diffusion process is driven primarily by interpersonal communication. A classical study of this stream is that of Coleman et al. (1966), who analyzed social contagion effects on physicians' behaviour. Here, interpersonal communication was the driving factor behind physicians' adoption of a new drug. Later studies have also highlighted the importance of WOM in new product diffusion. For instance, Bandiera and Rasul's (2006) study showed that farmers' social networks influence their decisions to adopt a new crop. This result also applies to the adoption of a new service. Conley and Udry (2010) demonstrated that WOM affects the adoption of new farming technology. Similarly, Bell and Song (2007) concluded that social interaction stimulates the trial of a new Internet service.

The decision to adopt a new product is determined by the success of a sequence of two main stages: product awareness and product adoption (Iyengar et al., 2011; Van den Bulte and Lilien, 2001). Distinguishing between awareness and adoption may be critical to understanding what drives adoption decisions, because research suggests that different factors may affect these two stages differently (Van den Bulte and Lilien, 2001).

Literature on new product diffusion has demonstrated that commercial communication is more important for creating awareness-knowledge of a new idea, recognizing it as the best way to inform consumers that the product is available. On the other hand, extant research supports the idea that personal sources are more important at the adoption stage (Narayanan et al., 2005; Rogers and Adhikarya, 1979; Van den Bulte and Lilien, 2001). According to this perspective, the new product is first adopted by individuals who have been influenced by commercial communication and who, in turn, influence others to adopt it (Bass, 1969; Buttle, 1998; Goldenberg et al., 2001; Hogan et al., 2004; Rogers, 1983).

2.2.2 Awareness stage

Our proposal differs from previously established thinking. Nowadays, many consumers can first come to know about a product through others' opinions posted on the Internet, particularly in blogs or forums, before the advertising campaign has started. Traditionally, advertising used to have the greatest reach. A communication campaign in which the top TV channels in each country were used could reach more than 50% of the viewing audience (Gluck and Sales, 2008). The wide coverage of mass media made them ideal vehicles for advertisers who needed to reach larger audiences (Li, 2002). If this option remained the preferred one today, all product campaigns should begin with advertising. However, new technologies and devices have fragmented audiences into smaller segments due to the growth in the number of media outlets and products competing for public attention (Gluk and Sales, 2008; Webster and Ksiazek, 2012). There are more TV channels, and the Internet has further increased the media options open to audiences (Gluk and Sales, 2008). Content that was previously available only on a single platform is now available on portable devices such as smartphones and tablets, as well as on TV (Gluk and Sales, 2008). This audience fragmentation occurs at the same time as consumers' opinions gain importance. Currently, eWOM is created in larger volumes than advertising and has some degree of permanence, so some authors argue that it propagates information more continuously than advertising does (Stephen and Galak, 2010). According to this new perspective, eWOM is able to reach large number of consumers in a short period of time (Van der Lans et al., 2010). It is also able to do this more effectively, as previous studies have shown that eWOM has more impact than advertising (Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Trusov et al., 2009), while it is becoming more and more evident that advertising is losing its effectiveness (GroupM, 2013; Nielsen, 2012). More and more often consumers consider themselves to be overwhelmed by too many advertising messages, so they actively avoid them (Hann et al., 2008). Based on this reasoning, when introducing a new product into the market, a WOMM strategy

makes it possible to quickly disseminate the information about the new product, and thus create more new product awareness than advertising. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: In a new product launch, a communication campaign that starts with WOMM generates more awareness than a communication campaign that starts with advertising.

Companies need consumers to be involved in the WOM process in order to stimulate the diffusion of the new product. The more conversation there is about a product, the more likely someone is to be informed about it, thus promoting consumer awareness (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004). Trusov et al. (2009) showed that WOM leads to more people becoming involved in this communication process, and this higher involvement leads, in turn, to increased amounts of WOM. Moreover, as the volume of WOM grows, consumers' adoption speed increases (Shen and Hahn, 2008). The challenge, however, is how to effectively involve consumers in WOM about the new product. Consumers may decide to participate for several reasons. They may contribute to the diffusion in an attempt to build social relations (Stephen and Lehman, 2009); alternatively, they may wish to transmit information on new products in order to appear pioneers (Dichter, 1966; Mazzarol et al., 2007). Thus, they will transmit credible and useful information so as not to lose their reputation. Unlike WOM, advertising is perceived as having very low credibility due to its commercial interest (Flanagin and Metzger, 2000), and therefore individuals will be more reluctant to transmit this information. In contrast, WOM is perceived as being more helpful, because consumers can find richer and more varied information than advertising can provide, by mixing objective and subjective information (Ghose and Ipeirotis, 2007). Thus, it is more likely that individuals will talk about a new product when receiving information from other consumers than when exposed to advertising. The results of Feng and Papatla (2011) give support to this reasoning. They have recently shown that increases in advertising spending reduce consumers' interest in providing WOM. Thus, we propose that:

H2: In a new product launch, a communication campaign that starts with WOMM generates more WOM communication than a communication campaign that starts with advertising.

Some consumers may show some kind of resistance towards an innovation (Bagozzi and Lee, 1999). When this resistance is beaten, the adoption process continues. Consumers then develop some interest, and hence decide to learn more about the product (De Bruyn and Lilien, 2008). At this point, some consumers may actively search

for information about it. This information search is then an indicator of innovation advance once resistance is overcome. H1 proposes that WOM leads to more awareness than advertising. If H1 holds, more consumers will know about a new product when WOM is used before advertising. Since Bickart and Schindler (2001) have shown that exposure to eWOM generates more product-category interest than firm-generated sources of information, it will be more likely that more consumers exposed to WOM will search for information about the new product, compared to consumers exposed to advertising, who are less likely to search for information. Therefore, consumers who have heard about a new product through WOM will be more motivated to search for information about it, in comparison to consumers who have been exposed to an advert. As a result of this reasoning, we propose the following:

H3: In a new product launch, starting with a WOMM strategy generates more information searches about the new product than a communication campaign that starting with an advertising campaign.

2.2.3 Adoption stage

Consumers tend to combine information from multiple sources, and interactions between these information sources are very likely to occur (Collins and Stevens, 2002). As a result of using several sources, multiple routes for retrieving information are formed in memory, increasing the accessibility of the product which, in turn, enhances its recall (Sjödén and Törn, 2006). Integration Theory (Anderson, 1971) provides support for this idea. According to this theory, information from different sources is combined when consumers form an overall evaluation. Recent research has shown that combining advertising with other information tools, such as publicity, generates a more favourable attitude towards the brand than using only one communication tool (Kim et al., 2010). Since the combination of different communication tools is more effective on consumers than the repetition of the same tool (Chang and Thorson, 2004), firms should use a different information source during the second stage of the adoption process.

If two or more communication tools are to be combined, order effects should be considered. Past research in this area has shown that the order in which people encounter information may affect persuasion (Haugtvedt and Wegener, 1994; Hogarth and Einhorn, 1992). An order effect exists when an outcome varies with the order in which the phenomena occur (Hogarth and Einhorn, 1992). Two main effects can occur, primacy or recency (Lana, 1963). The primacy effect refers to previous information exhibiting greater effect than subsequent information, whereas the recency effect refers to subsequent information generating greater effect than earlier information (Lana, 1963). Previous studies have shown that either primacy or recency effects prevail

depending on the attention consumers pay to each stimulus (Crano, 1977; Hendrick and Costantini, 1970). Primacy effect arises when people fail to process later stimulus information as carefully and attentively as earlier information (Crano, 1977). When people pay equal attention to all information, primacy effects typically disappear, and often a recency effect is found (Hendrick and Costantini, 1970).

These order effects may have an impact on the communication strategy used to promote the new product. Initially, as consumers usually try to avoid advertising (Cho and Cheon, 2004), they will pay more attention to WOM, causing, at first, a primacy or recency effect depending on the order in which WOM is presented. When WOM is presented first, the greater attention paid to WOM in comparison to advertising will cause a primacy effect on awareness as established in H1. In contrast, when WOM is presented at the adoption stage a recency effect should show up and product adoption will be stimulated in this case. According to this theory, WOM is more attention getting and therefore it determines which effect either primacy or recency prevails. However, the prevalence of primacy or recency could also depend on the great diagnosticity of prior information.

An alternative perspective to this order effect considers that earlier information is more diagnostic than later information (Herr et al., 1991; Pieters and Bijmolt, 1997), and may have a greater impact on final judgments. People often overestimate the validity of prior impressions and interpret subsequent information in light of earlier evaluations (Herr et al., 1991). Similarly, previous research has shown that a positive prior impression about a product is very difficult to alter (Laczniak et al. 2001). Prior information is so influential that, upon receiving new information that challenges a prior attitude, people first try to defend their prior attitude by searching for pro-attitudinal information within their memory (Pham and Muthukrishnan, 2002). Therefore, as a way to obtain new product success, firms should start a new product launching with WOMM. Since WOM is usually composed of several sources, it could also lead to more trust (Chen et al., 2004; Sweeney et al., 2008), as well as increased impact on consumers compared to advertising (Hogan et al., 2004). This strategy will help the firm to create a strong and trustworthy prior impression about a new product. As a consequence of the superiority of prior impression and the higher attention that consumers pay to WOM compared to advertising, a primacy effect is very likely to occur when the communication campaign starts with WOMM. In contrast, when the communication campaign starts with advertising the prior impression about the product will not be so strong, and thus, the recency effect that WOM may cause will not be so influential as if WOM were presented first. In addition, if the strategy of starting with WOMM is then followed by advertising, which is considered less credible, the combination of less and more diagnostic

information will reinforce initial judgments (LaBella and Koehler, 2004). Thus, WOMM should be followed by advertising in order to strengthen its impact and achieve the synergistic benefits derived from exposure to different communication tools (Chang and Thorson, 2004). The above discussion leads us to propose the following hypothesis:

H4: A communication strategy composed of WOMM at the awareness stage and advertising at the adoption stage has a greater impact on product adoption than a communication strategy composed of advertising at the awareness stage and WOMM at the adoption stage.

2.3 Study 1

2.3.1 Methodology

a) Design and subjects

A between-subjects experimental study was developed using Internet users, in which the communication strategy for launching a new product was manipulated (two between-subject conditions). In one of the conditions subjects were exposed to eWOM first, and then to an advert, while in the second condition the order was reversed. The subjects consisted of 171 university students randomly assigned to one of the two conditions. Two control conditions were also created with only one exposure, whereby subjects were exposed only to either the advert or eWOM. An additional sample of 47 university students participated in these control conditions and were assigned randomly to the two conditions. In sum, we collected a total of 218 valid questionnaires.

b) Product

A new gadget was considered to be well-suited to the experiment because this type of product is characterized by its short life cycle (Beard and Easingwood, 1996), so firms involved in these categories launch new products very frequently. Gadgets were one of the most new product categories purchased in 2011 (Nielsen, 2012). A real wristwatch mobile phone from LG was chosen for the study. It was selected because the product chosen needed to have functions and attributes that the subjects could perceive as new and easily understand, so that the new product's complexity did not affect the results. If individuals did not understand the product, the intention to adopt it could be very low regardless of the communication campaign used (Antioco and Kleijnen, 2010). In addition, mobile phones are very appealing to our target consumers (Roach, 2009). A pre-test developed among university students ensured the perceived novelty of the product. We used the real brand and the real image of the product in order to create a more realistic scenario.

c) Stimuli

We created two web-based stimuli for the experiment: the first included an advert for the new wristwatch mobile phone and the second included a consumer opinion about the product (these stimuli are presented in the appendix 1 and 2). We chose a consumer opinion because it represents the most widely used eWOM format (Henning-Thurau et al., 2004). The first web stimulus contained information about the launching of several new, real, mobile phones. The stimulus included the advert for the target product in banner form. Banner represents the most traditional and used ad format on the Internet (Calisir and Karaali, 2008). The second stimulus consisted of an online forum which contained some opinions from consumers about the same new mobile phones that appeared in the other stimulus. One of those opinions was a positive post about the LG wristwatch phone. We replicated the web design from a real technological site, as recommended by Koernig (2003). These web-based scenarios simulated real Internet browsing, in order to ensure that awareness of the new product was developed in a realistic setting.

d) Procedure

The experiment was developed in the university computer labs. Students participated voluntarily, and were recruited via adverts requesting participation. The main experiment was developed in two sessions separated by two days. By following this procedure we were able to analyze which strategy was more efficient at each stage of the diffusion process (new product awareness and new product adoption). A certain delay was necessary to allow for memory decay and to avoid a ceiling effect for recognition memory (Heckler and Childers, 1992). Half of the participants were exposed to the advert in the first session and eWOM in the second (N=80), while the other half were exposed to eWOM first and then to the advert (N=91). A total of 103 individuals were exposed to advertising first, and 100 to eWOM, however, not all of them returned to the second session: 23 individuals were lost in the first case, and 9 in the second. Data collection was done in April 2010.

Regarding the control conditions, subjects only saw one stimulus, either the advert (N=24), or eWOM (N=23). The reason behind these control conditions was to compare the adoption intention between individuals who are exposed to just one communication tool and those who are exposed to both tools – advertising and WOMM. This comparison can be useful to further corroborate the higher impact of online consumers' opinions over advertising.

Before starting the first session, participants were instructed to imagine that they had been searching for information on the Internet about new mobile phones, when they came across the website in question. An image of the new product was displayed within each stimulus in order to control for possible visual memory effects (Guan and Tay, 2007). Thus, regardless of the experimental condition, all individuals saw the product at the awareness stage. In the second session individuals saw the other stimulus depending on the experimental condition they were assigned to in the first session. At the end of the second session students were thanked for participating and were given a gift. Participants in the control conditions only saw one of the stimuli, in just one session.

e) Measurement

Product awareness was assessed after the first session, and product adoption after the second. Awareness was measured by asking participants the names of the mobile phones that appeared on the webpage (spontaneous awareness). They had then to select the mobile phones that appeared on the site from a list of twelve they were given (suggested awareness).

Two days later, individuals were exposed to the second stimulus. After exposure, participants were asked, through a yes/no question, whether they had looked for information about the new LG wristwatch phone, and whether they had told other people about it. In addition, if they did talk about the target product, they were asked if they had done so face-to-face, online or through both channels. Then, participants were asked about their intention to adopt the new product. Following previous studies (Bass et al., 2001; Herzenstein et al., 2007), we used a purchase intention scale for this purpose (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.812$). At the end of the questionnaire the individuals also provided some demographic information (sex and age). The questionnaire is shown in appendices 9 and 10.

2.3.2 Results

The main sample is composed of 60.2% males and 39.8% females whose mean age is 21 years old. Individuals who participated in the control condition are 49% male and 51% female, with a mean age of 21 years old. They are students of four different university degrees (Business Administration, Psychology, Maths, and Advertising and Public Relations).

A chi-squared test was used to test the first three hypotheses. This test is used to compare proportions between independent samples. Regarding spontaneous awareness, we established two categories: individuals who only remembered the product (wristwatch mobile phone) and individuals who remembered both the product

and the brand (wristwatch mobile phone from LG). As shown in Table 1, more individuals remembered either the product only ($\chi^2=101.356$, $p<0.01$), or both the product and the brand ($\chi^2=111.014$, $p<0.01$) when the communication strategy began with WOMM, compared to when it began with advertising. The results for suggested awareness are consistent with the results obtained for spontaneous awareness, as more individuals remembered the product when they had been exposed to eWOM, than when they had been exposed to the advert ($\chi^2=80.449$, $p<0.01$) in the first session. Thus, H1 is supported.

Table 1: Hypotheses testing. Main results. Study 1

Spontaneous awareness (only product)¹					
Communication strategy	N	%	χ^2	p-value	Hypotheses
WOMM+advertising	91	84.6	101.356	0.000	H1
Advertising+WOMM	80	7.5			
Spontaneous awareness (product and brand)¹					
Communication strategy	N	%	χ^2	p-value	Hypotheses
WOMM+advertising	91	58.2	111.014	0.000	H1
Advertising+WOMM	80	3.8			
Suggested awareness¹					
Communication strategy	N	%	χ^2	p-value	Hypotheses
WOMM+advertising	91	95.6	80.449	0.000	H1
Advertising+WOMM	80	30.0			
WOM about the new product²					
Communication strategy	N	%	χ^2	p-value	Hypotheses
WOMM+advertising	91	57.1	19.551	0.000	H2
Advertising+WOMM	80	23.8			
Information searched for²					
Communication strategy	N	%	χ^2	p-value	Hypotheses
WOMM+advertising	91	6.6	1.600	0.185	H3
Advertising+WOMM	80	2.5			
Intention to adopt³					
Communication strategy	N	Mean Value	F	p-value	Hypotheses
WOMM+advertising	91	2.445	4.068	0.045	H4
Advertising+WOMM	80	2.156			

¹These variables were measured after the first session.

²These variables were measured just before the second session.

³This variable was measured after the second stimulus in the second session.

Almost 60% of individuals first exposed to eWOM told other people about the target product. However, less than 25% of the subjects first exposed to the advert told others about the new product ($\chi^2=19.551$, $p<0.01$). Therefore, communication campaigns initiated with WOMM generate more interpersonal communication than those initiated with advertising, as stated in H2. It is also interesting to note that most of this communication occurred face-to-face (90.6%), 7.5% was online, and the remainder of the individuals (1.9%) told others about the new product both face-to-face and online.

For individuals first exposed to the advert, all conversations generated were face-to-face (100%).

Regarding H3, 6.6% of individuals exposed to eWOM during the first session sought information about the LG wristwatch mobile phone, while this was true for only 2.5% of the consumers who saw the advert first ($\chi^2=1.600$, $p>0.10$). However, these differences are not significant, so H3 cannot be accepted.

ANOVA test was undertaken to test H4 (see Table 1). As expected, individuals who were exposed to the communication campaign initiated with WOMM showed a higher purchase intention than consumers who were exposed to the stimuli in the opposite order ($M_{WOMM+Advertising}= 2.456$ vs. $M_{Advertising+WOMM}= 2.156$, $F(1,169)=2.115$, $p<0.05$). Therefore, H4 is fully supported confirming the higher effect of prior information and ruling out the order effect explanation.

Additional analyses were conducted to further understand the results obtained using the control conditions to establish comparisons. As Table 2 shows, individuals exposed to just one stimulus (summing the two control conditions), showed a lower intention to adopt than individuals exposed to two stimuli ($M_{two\ communication\ tools}= 2.310$ vs. $M_{one\ communication\ tool}= 1.705$, $F(1,216)= 18.058$, $p<0.01$). Specifically, individuals who were exposed to eWOM followed by an advert declared a higher intention to adopt the new product than individuals who saw only eWOM ($M_{WOMM+Advertising}= 2.445$ vs. $M_{WOMM\ only}= 1.848$, $F(1,112)=6.611$, $p<0.05$) or only the advert ($M_{WOMM+Advertising}= 2.445$ vs. $M_{Advertising\ only}= 1.333$, $F(1,113)=30.642$, $p<0.01$). Similarly, individuals who were exposed first to advertising followed by WOMM showed a higher intention to adopt the new product than consumers who were exposed only to advertising ($M_{Advertising+WOMM}= 2.156$ vs. $M_{Advertising\ only}= 1.333$, $F(1,102)=18.856$, $p<0.01$). However, intention to adopt was similar for consumers exposed to advertising and then WOMM compared to individuals exposed to WOMM only ($M_{Advertising+WOMM}= 2.156$ vs. $M_{WOMM\ only}= 1.848$, $F(1,101)=1.865$, $p>0.10$). Moreover, consumers who were exposed only to WOMM had a higher intention to adopt than consumers who were exposed only to advertising ($M_{WOMM\ only}= 1.848$ vs. $M_{Advertising\ only}= 1.333$, $F(1,45)=4.505$, $p<0.05$).

Table 2: Results of the control conditions and comparison with the main results

Intention to adopt				
Communication strategy	N	Mean Value	F	p-value
Two communication tools	171	2.310	22.587	0.000
One communication tool	47	1.585		
WOMM only	23	1.848	4.505	0.039
Advertising only	24	1.333		
WOMM+advertising	91	2.445	6.611	0.011
WOMM only	23	1.848		
WOMM+advertising	91	2.445	30.642	0.000
Advertising only	24	1.333		
Advertising+WOMM	80	2.156	1.865	0.175
WOMM only	23	1.848		
Advertising+WOMM	80	2.156	18.856	0.000
Advertising only	24	1.333		

2.3.3 Discussion of study 1

We demonstrated in study 1 that a communication campaign which aims to launch a new product should start with WOMM. The use of WOMM as the first communication tool in a new product launch generates more product awareness than a communication campaign that starts with advertising. This result goes against the findings in previous literature, which established that advertising is the best communication tool to introduce a new product into the market (Mancharanda et al., 2008; Narayanan et al., 2005; Van den Bulte and Lilien, 2001).

This study also confirms the results of previous research that has shown that the integration of several sources of information exerts a greater impact on consumers than using only one communication tool (Anderson, 1971; Collins and Stevens, 2002; Kim et al., 2010). We have demonstrated that a communication strategy composed of WOMM and advertising has more impact than using only one communication tool. However, the potential of WOMM is so high at early stages of the diffusion process that has obtained similar results to a communication strategy that starts with advertising and is then followed by WOMM. This result corroborates the importance of starting a new product communication campaign with WOMM, and highlights the fact that WOMM has become a critical communication tool. It also reaffirms the decline of advertising as an effective communication tool (Nielsen, 2012; Rust and Oliver, 1994). Advertising complements WOMM only when WOMM has previously created a strong prior impression in consumers. In addition, we have shown that WOMM has a greater impact on consumers compared to advertising. This result confirms previous studies that have demonstrated the higher impact of WOM on consumer behaviour over commercial information in both offline (Arndt, 1967; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955) and online contexts (Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Trusov et al., 2009).

In addition, starting the communication campaign with WOMM produces more new product conversations than starting with advertising. The importance of this result stems from the fact that the more conversation there is about a product, the more likely someone is to be informed about it, thus promoting consumer awareness and increasing adoption speed (Godes and Mayzlin, 2009; Shen and Hahn, 2008). Interestingly, in study 1 most of the conversations generated about the new product were face-to-face. This result is consistent with the study developed by Toubia et al. (2009), who found that most social interactions still take place offline, although new marketing programmes involve a strong online component. We also observed that some individuals exposed to eWOM at the awareness stage searched for additional information about the new product, although these individuals were actually very few. This result could be due to the fact that only two days had passed between the two sessions (Carson et al., 2007). Another explanation could be that at the awareness stage, the consumer gains knowledge of the existence of the innovation, but may not fully comprehend it, nor be motivated to seek further information. Van den Bulte and Lilien (2001) established that consumers search for information about a product when they show some interest in it. Thus, it is possible that consumers at the awareness stage do not still think about searching for information about the new product.

Study 1 has a common limitation: the use of a student sample. It has been noted by some researchers that studies using student samples suffer from a lack of external validity. Thus, the aim of study 2 is to overcome this limitation by replicating study 1 with a sample composed of real consumers.

2.4 Study 2. Replication of study 1.

2.4.1 Methodology

a) Objective and design

The purpose of study 2 was to replicate study 1 using a non-student sample, in order to bolster the external validity of the findings. The second study used a similar scenario-based design. A between-subjects experimental study was developed in which a communication strategy for launching a new product was manipulated. As in study 1, in one of the conditions participants were exposed to eWOM first, and then to an advert. In the other condition, the order was reversed.

b) Product

We also used a wristwatch mobile phone from LG in the second study. We considered that the use of another product could affect the results, by introducing bias when comparing the results between the two studies. Since more than one year had passed

between the studies an updated version of the wristwatch mobile phone from LG was used, in order to ensure its perception as a genuinely new product.

c) Stimuli, and subjects and procedure

The two web-based stimuli for the experiment were very similar to those used in study 1, though all the mobile phones were updated in study 2. Stimuli are shown in appendix 3 and 4. Participants were recruited from a Spanish online consumer panel and were randomly assigned to the two groups. The sample was composed of individuals between 18 and 35 years old, because this is the target group of the wristwatch mobile phone. As in study 1, the data collection was developed in two sessions. In the first session product awareness was measured, while in the second product adoption was assessed (Cronbach's alpha of intention to adopt is acceptable, Cronbach's alpha =0.844). The questionnaires were the same as those used in study 1. Data collection was obtained through an online survey, the invitation to which was sent via email. Initially, 210 emails were sent. Individuals who wished to participate completed the first part of the study. Three days after individuals answered the first questionnaire, a second email inviting them to participate in the second part of the study was sent. The delay between the two parts of the study was longer in study 2 than in study 1, in order to facilitate the information search. As individuals do not always answer the questionnaire as soon as they receive it, a mean of four days passed between both answers. There were 198 questionnaires returned, however 28 of these participants did not complete the second part of the study. Thus, we obtained a total of 170 valid questionnaires, 91 of which were from individuals who were exposed to eWOM first, and 79 were from individuals who saw the advert first. As in study 1, the difference in group sizes is due to some individuals not answering the second part of the study. Data were collected in March 2012.

2.4.2 Results

Individuals were aged between 18 and 35, of which 52.4% are males, and 46.6% are females, with a mean age of 28. .

A chi-squared test was used to test the first three hypotheses. As Table 3 shows, more individuals remembered either the product only ($\chi^2=31.405$, $p<0.01$), or both the product and the brand ($\chi^2=16.309$, $p<0.01$), when exposed to eWOM rather than to the advert. The result for suggested awareness is consistent with the results obtained for spontaneous awareness. More individuals remembered the product when the communication strategy started with WOMM, compared to when it started with advertising ($\chi^2=26.729$, $p<0.01$). Thus, H1 is also supported in study 2.

Table 3: Hypotheses testing. Main results. Study 2

Spontaneous awareness (only product)¹					
Communication strategy	N	%	χ^2	p-value	Hypotheses
WOMM+advertising	91	48.4	31.405	0.000	H1
Advertising+WOMM	79	8.9			
Spontaneous awareness (product and brand)¹					
Communication strategy	N	%	χ^2	p-value	Hypotheses
WOMM+advertising	91	33.0	16.309	0.000	H1
Advertising+WOMM	79	7.6			
Suggested awareness¹					
Communication strategy	N	%	χ^2	p-value	Hypotheses
WOMM+advertising	91	72.5	26.729	0.000	H1
Advertising+WOMM	79	32.9			
WOM about the new product²					
Communication strategy	N	%	χ^2	p-value	Hypotheses
WOMM+advertising	91	23.1	3.973	0.035	H2
Advertising+WOMM	79	11.4			
Information searched for²					
Communication strategy	N	%	χ^2	p-value	Hypotheses
WOMM+advertising	91	16.5	0.493	0.315	H3
Advertising+WOMM	79	12.7			
Intention to adopt³					
Communication strategy	N	Mean Value	F	p-value	Hypotheses
WOMM+advertising	91	2.550	5.446	0.021	H4
Advertising+WOMM	79	2.190			

¹These variables were measured after the first session.

²These variables were measured just before the second session.

³This variable was measured after the second stimulus in the second session.

Regarding H2, more than 20% of individuals who were exposed first to eWOM told other people about the wristwatch mobile phone. However, only 11% of the subjects first exposed to the advert told others about the target product ($\chi^2=3.973$, $p<0.01$). Thus, communication campaigns initiated with WOMM generate more interpersonal communication than those initiated with advertising, supporting H2 (as occurred in study 1). Most of the conversations generated after the eWOM exposure took place face-to-face (66.7%); 19% occurred online, and 14.3% of individuals told others about the new product using both communication channels. For individuals who were exposed to the advert first, all conversations generated were face to face (100%).

As table 3 shows, 16.5% of individuals who saw the eWOM stimulus first looked for information about the target product, while this was true for 12.7% of participants exposed to the advert first ($\chi^2=0.493$, $p>0.10$). These differences are not significant, and thus H3 cannot be supported.

We used ANOVA test for H4 (see Table 3). As expected, individuals who were first exposed to WOMM followed by advertising showed a higher intention to adopt the new product, compared to consumers who were exposed to the communication campaign initiated with advertising ($X_{\text{WOMM+Advertising}} = 2.550$ vs. $X_{\text{Advertising+WOMM}} = 2.190$, $F(1,168) = 5.446$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, H4 is accepted.

2.4.3 Discussion of study 2

Study 2 confirms the study 1 results using a sample composed of real young consumers. In new product launches, WOMM stands out as the communication tool which works best at the awareness stage. WOMM generates more product awareness than advertising; in addition, when followed by advertising, the intention to adopt will be higher than if the communication campaign starts with advertising and is then followed by WOMM.

Additionally, study 2 confirms that starting a new product campaign with WOMM provokes more people to spread the word about the new product. As in study 1, most conversations generated were face-to-face. Due to the longer delay between the sessions, more people sought information about the wristwatch mobile phone than in study 1. However, non-significant differences were found in this regard between participants who were first exposed to WOMM compared to advertising. This result could be explained because this variable was measured just after awareness stage. According to Van den Bulte and Lilien (2001), at the awareness stage, the consumer gains knowledge of the existence of the innovation, but may not fully comprehend it, nor be motivated to seek further information.

2.5 Extension to other product categories. Studies 3 and 4.

2.5.1 Methodology

a) Objective

The purpose of studies 3 and 4 is to externally validate the results obtained in study 1 and 2 for different product categories. Previous studies have shown that the persuasiveness of the information sources may depend on the type of product (Murray, 1991; Peck and Childers, 2003). In addition, previous studies have shown that depending on the relevance of the situation for consumers, a primacy or recency effect can occur (Brunel and Nelson, 2003; Buda and Zhang, 2000). Thus, we extend studies 1 and 2 using two different types of products. Considering that a gadget was used in study 1 and 2 and that it may be considered a high-involvement product, in the next studies we will use a low-involvement product and a service.

b) Products

We have chosen a new make-up from Max Factor as a relatively low-involvement product. Make-up may be considered a product with a lower level of involvement in comparison to a wristwatch mobile phone. A product with a lower level of involvement such as beverages or groceries was not chosen due to the lack of realism they may have introduced into the experiment. Consumers do not usually search for information about these type of products on the Internet, thus, the situation in which they find a forum about these products and read the opinions would not be very realistic. In addition, the selected brand is not a high-quality cosmetic brand, it is rather a relatively economic mass-consumption brand and may be found in many non-specialised shops. The novelty of the make-up consisted of throw away papers that add colour instantly to the face being useful to touch up the make-up wherever the consumer is. As it happened with gadgets, cosmetics were one of the most new product categories purchased in 2011 (Nielsen, 2012).

For the service condition a tourism service was chosen as this category is also among the most sold on the Internet (Nielsen, 2012). Specifically, we selected for the study a sun-and-sand unknown destination called Tuamotu Island from French Polynesia because of its lack of awareness and remoteness from our sample. This selection ensures the novelty of the offer and allows us to evaluate both awareness and adoption stages of the diffusion process.

c) Procedure and subjects

Participants were recruited from a Spanish online consumer panel and were randomly assigned to the two conditions for each product category. Different groups of people participated depending on the target product. Only women between 20 and 45 years old participated for the make-up product category study, and both women and men of a broader age participated in the service study. The procedure and the questionnaire were the same as in study 2. Initially, 150 emails with the link of the questionnaire were sent for the make-up and another 150 for the unknown destination. Regarding the make-up, 120 women participated but 6 of them did not answer the second part of the study. Thus, 114 valid questionnaires were obtained from which 57 participants saw the opinion first and the other 57 individuals saw the advert first. For the unknown destination, 147 individuals participated in the study. However, only 131 questionnaires were valid (64 were first exposed to the eWOM and 67 to the advert). Data for both studies were collected in October 2012.

The two web-based stimuli for each product category were very similar to those used in studies 1 and 2 (stimuli are shown in appendix 5-8). Measurement used was the same than that in previous studies. Cronbach's alphas for intention to adopt were acceptable for both measures (Cronbach's $\alpha_{\text{make-up}}=0.854$; Cronbach's $\alpha_{\text{destination}}=0.854$). The assessment of intention to adopt the unknown destination slightly varies in order to adapt it to the product category. Following previous studies in the tourism field (Pritchard and Morgan, 1998), we assessed the intention to visit the destination as the intention to adopt it.

2.5.2 Results

The sample for the make-up product is composed of women between 20 and 45 years old with a mean age of 33. For the unknown destination, there are 51% of males, and 49% of females between 18 and 40 years old with a mean age of 30.

Before testing the hypotheses, we tested the normality of the data for each product category. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that the p-value of variables in the two samples had a level of significance lower than 0.05. As the normality assumption was rejected, we used a non-parametric approach to test the hypotheses.

Table 4 shows the results for the make-up and the unknown destination as well as for the gadget in order to compare between product categories. A chi-squared test was used to test the first three hypotheses. As it occurred for the wristwatch mobile phone, more individuals remembered either the product ($\chi^2_{\text{make-up}}=5.229$, $p<0.05$; $\chi^2_{\text{unknown destination}}=4.573$, $p<0.05$) or the brand ($\chi^2_{\text{make-up}}=15.550$, $p<0.01$; $\chi^2_{\text{unknown destination}}=22.309$, $p<0.01$) for both product categories when exposed to eWOM rather than to the advert. The result for suggested awareness is consistent with the results obtained for spontaneous awareness and also with the results obtained for the wristwatch. For all product categories, more individuals remembered the product when the communication strategy started with WOMM, compared to when it started with advertising ($\chi^2_{\text{make-up}}=18.934$, $p<0.01$; $\chi^2_{\text{unknown destination}}=22.139$, $p<0.01$). Thus, H1 is fully supported regardless of the product category used.

Regarding H2, the results for the make-up were very similar than the results obtained for the wristwatch mobile phone. More women who saw first the opinion spread the word about the make-up than women who saw first the advert ($\chi^2_{\text{make-up}}=3.605$, $p<0.05$). For the unknown destination, more individuals talked about the destination when they were exposed to the advert first than when they were exposed to eWOM. However, this difference did not reach significance ($\chi^2_{\text{service}}=2.010$, $p>0.10$). Thus, H2 is supported for make-up and for the wristwatch mobile phone. Regarding the diffusion on channel, the

results for the unknown destination resemble those obtained for the wristwatch mobile phone. A third part of individuals who were exposed first to eWOM spoke face-to-face about the unknown destination, 16.7% through the Internet and the rest using both channels, while nearly 90% of individuals who saw first the advert about the unknown destination spread the word offline. In contrast, for the make-up, more online conversations were generated with advertising than with eWOM (28.6% vs. 6.7%). The majority of people who were exposed first to the opinion spread the word face-to-face (93.3%). Thus, WOMM generates more online conversations for high-involvement products and for services whereas for low-involvement products more eWOM is generated by advertising.

As table 4 shows, for the unknown destination the percentage of individuals who searched for information about the destination was slightly higher when consumers were exposed first to the advert (13.4% vs. 9.4%), but the differences are not significant ($\chi^2_{\text{unknown destination}}=0.532$, $p>0.10$). For the wristwatch mobile phone, although the percentage of individuals who searched for information about the product is higher for individuals who were exposed to the eWOM first (in line with H3), the differences are also not significant. For the make-up, more women who were exposed to the opinion first looked for information about the make-up than women who were exposed to the advert first ($\chi^2_{\text{make-up}}=3.881$, $p<0.05$). Therefore, H3 is only supported for the make-up study.

Lastly, we used ANOVA test for H4 (see Table 4). Unlike the results found in studies 1 and 2 for the wristwatch mobile phone, consumers who were exposed first to the advert of the unknown destination and then to eWOM showed a higher intention to visit the destination than individuals who saw the communication tools in the opposite order ($M_{\text{WOMM+Advertising}}= 2.758$ vs. $M_{\text{Advertising+WOMM}}= 3.097$, $F(1,129)=4.220$, $p<0.05$). Therefore, a redency effect appears for this type of product. For the make-up, the results obtained are more similar to those obtained for the wristwatch mobile phone, although the differences in the intention to adopt are most statistically different ($M_{\text{WOMM+Advertising}}= 3.360$ vs. $M_{\text{Advertising+WOMM}}= 3.184$, $F(1,112)=0.976$, $p>0.05$).

Table 4: Hypotheses testing. Comparison of the main results of studies 2, 3 and 4

Spontaneous awareness (only product/destination)¹						
Product category	Wristwatch mobile phone		Make-up		Unknown destination	
Communication strategy	N	%	N	%	N	%
WOMM+advertising	91	48.4	57	8.8	64	6.3
Advertising+WOMM	79	8.9	57	0.0	67	0.0
	χ^2		31.405***		5.229**	
Spontaneous awareness (brand/country)¹						
Product category	Wristwatch mobile phone		Make-up		Unknown destination	
Communication strategy	N	%	N	%	N	%
WOMM+advertising	91	33.0	57	64.9	64	31.9
Advertising+WOMM	79	7.6	57	28.1	67	2.7
	χ^2		16.309***		15.550***	
Suggested awareness¹						
Product category	Wristwatch mobile phone		Make-up		Unknown destination	
Communication strategy	N	%	N	%	N	%
WOMM+advertising	91	72.5	57	77.2	64	63.9
Advertising+WOMM	79	32.9	57	36.8	67	25.3
	χ^2		26.729***		18.934***	
WOM about the new product²						
Product category	Wristwatch mobile phone		Make-up		Unknown destination	
Communication strategy	N	%	N	%	N	%
WOMM+advertising	91	23.1	57	26.3	64	9.4
Advertising+WOMM	79	11.4	57	12.3	67	17.9
	χ^2		3.973**		3.605**	
Information searched for²						
Product category	Wristwatch mobile phone		Make-up		Unknown destination	
Communication strategy	N	%	N	%	N	%
WOMM+advertising	91	16.5	57	24.6	64	9.4
Advertising+WOMM	79	12.7	57	10.5	67	13.4
	χ^2		0.493		3.881**	
Intention to adopt						
Product category	Wristwatch mobile phone		Make-up		Unknown destination	
Communication strategy	N	Mean Value	N	Mean Value	N	Mean Value
WOMM+advertising	91	2.550	57	3.360	64	2.758
Advertising+WOMM	79	2.190	57	3.184	67	3.097
	F		5.446**		0.976	

¹These variables were measured after the first session.

²These variables were measured just before the second session.

³This variable was measured after the second stimulus in the second session.

***p<0.01, **p<0.05

2.5.3 Discussion of studies 3 and 4

Studies 3 and 4 replicate the results obtained in studies 1 and 2 for product/brand awareness. The results corroborate that in new product launches, WOMM stands out as the communication tool which works best at the awareness stage. WOMM generates more product awareness than advertising. This result is confirmed for all the product categories used in the studies: a high-involvement product (student and non-student sample), a low-involvement product and a service. As shown previous studies (Arndt, 1967; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955; Bickart and Schindler, 2001) opinions by other consumers are more influential than advertising regardless of the product category.

Study 3 confirms that starting a new product campaign with WOMM provokes a higher diffusion of the new product in low-involvement product category. However, for services (study 4), the intention to spread the word about the unknown destination is the same regardless of the communication tool used. This result could be explained by the novelty and originality of the product. Previous studies have shown that the higher the novelty and the originality perceived by the consumers, the higher their intention to speak about it (Bone, 1992; Moldovan et al., 2011). It is very difficult that a sun-and-sand destination could be seen as original as the other products used in the study. In fact, if we compare the percentages of individuals who spread the word about the different products, fewer individuals spoke about the destination compared to the other products. In addition, consumers can perceive risk to speak about products if the information that they transmit is wrong, or even if the receiver does not like the product (Mazzarol et al., 2007; Stephen and Lehman, 2009). Thus, the perceived risk to speak about a sun-and-sand destination to other consumers compared to the other products used in the study will not be high, thus consumers do not need know about the destination through a credible source in order to start a conversation about it. As study 1 and 2 have showed, except for services (study 4) for all product categories most conversations generated were face-to-face.

In addition, the information searched for about the unknown destination was the same regardless of the communication tool that consumers saw first. In contrast, for the low-involvement product more individuals looked for information about it when they were exposed to eWOM. The reason behind this difference may relay on the risk consumers perceive when adopting a new product. For example, economic risk is very relevant in this case (Ram and Sheth, 1989). As economic risk increases, the diffusion rate and the adoption level decrease (Rogers, 1995). As low-involvement products are cheaper, consumers perceive a less economic risk. Therefore, the higher economic risk of adopting either the high-involvement product or the service may discourage the purchase, also discouraging the information searched regardless of the communication

tool used to create awareness, in contrast to the economic risk perceived with a low-involvement product. In addition, consumers will need more time between awareness and adoption in high-involvement and expensive products than in low-involvement products (Rogers, 1995). Therefore, consumers do not need to fully comprehend the new low-involvement product to adopt it, and may show earlier interest about a low-involvement product than about a high-involvement product.

Although eWOM has shown a great importance to create awareness for all products analyzed, the results evidence that the effectiveness of the communication strategy chosen on adoption depends on the product category. The service presents the opposite results than the high-involvement product at this stage. The intention to visit the destination is higher when consumers saw first the advert and then the opinion than when they were exposed to these stimuli in the opposite order.

In addition, for a low-involvement product, the order in which the communication tools were presented does not affect to the intention to adopt the product. These results should be discussed under the primacy-recency theory. The results for a high-involvement product in which the communication campaign starts with WOMM has a highest effect could be explained because in high involvement situations, when the consumers' interest and motivation are high, a primacy effect is more likely to occur (Buda and Zhang, 2000; Haugtvedt and Wegener, 1994). In contrast, under low involvement situations in which interest and motivations are low, a recency effect is more likely to appear (Buda and Zhang, 2000; Haugtvedt and Wegener, 1994). The reason behind this recency effect is that in case of low motivation, the attention is directed at all information equally and consumers remember more the last information (Hendrick and Costantini, 1970). However, the absence of recency effect in the results obtained for the low-involvement product may be due to the fact that when a distraction task is presented between the product presentation and the recall task the recency effect tends to disappear (Atkinson and Shiffrin, 1968). Thus, the presence of information about more brands of make-up could have blurred the recency effect. In addition, as the complexity of the decision increases, it is more likely that the recency effect prevails (Arnold et al., 2000). Previous studies have shown that buying a service has a higher risk than a product because consumers are not able to try it before the purchase (Murray, 1991). In addition, the risk and the complexity of the decision could be even higher in the situation proposed in which consumers have to decide to visit an unknown and very far destination whose trip is likely to be very expensive. Planning a trip to another country involves a relatively high perceived risk of making a bad decision and a considerable monetary outlay (Sirakaya and Woodside, 2005). Moreover,

consumers perceive greater risk in adopting new services than new products as result of lack of information to evaluate quality before purchase (Atuahene-Gima, 1996). This may be the reason why WOM is the most important information source for consumers when they are going to buy a service, and more specifically, a trip (Litvin et al., 2008; Murray, 1991). According Spiggle and Sewall (1987) a potential traveller first develops a set of destinations from his/her early consideration or awareness set. The number of alternatives is then reduced to shape his/her late consideration and finally one destination is selected from this set. The final decision to visit a destination will depend on the quality of information available to and used by the tourist (Fodness and Murray, 1997, 1998). Thus, eWOM can be useful to include the destination in the awareness set, however, consumers will need higher quality information to take the final decision to visit the destination than advertising offers. At the adoption stage, consumers will prefer to take their final decision to visit a destination based on a more credible source such as eWOM. In addition, literature has shown that WOM it is more influential for services than for products (Murray, 1991). This evidence has been demonstrated in both stages, awareness and adoption stages. When WOM was shown first, awareness was enhanced, and when it was shown just before asking about the probability of visiting the unknown destination, WOM was also more effective than advertising.

2.6 Conclusions

The work developed contributes to both communication and new products literature by showing the extent to which diffusion is enhanced when WOM is promoted before than commercial communication. It also determines which strategy is more appropriate at each stage of the diffusion process (awareness and product adoption). This distinction between awareness and product adoption is theoretically very interesting because, to the best of our knowledge, the impact of differential communication strategies on product launch success had not previously been established yet. A first study examines the effectiveness of WOM in the diffusion process. A second study is then developed to replicate the results of the first one; and finally, studies 3 and 4 extend the results obtained to different product categories.

The most interesting conclusion is that the four studies provide consistent support for the proposition that firms should start new product communications with WOMM. This strategy generates higher levels of consumer awareness regardless of the product category examined. Results obtained have also demonstrated that starting a communication strategy with WOMM in a new product launch generates more new product-related WOM than starting with advertising for tangible product categories. This result is important since the higher the volume of WOM, the faster consumers' adoption

of the new product (Shen and Hahn, 2008). Recent research also supports the supremacy of WOM at early stages of the diffusion process. For example, Dellarocas et al. (2007) demonstrated that an early volume of WOM exhibits a strong correlation with the corresponding box office revenues in cinemas. Starting the communication campaign with WOMM will therefore speed up the adoption process. Adoption speed is very important for firms because adoption delay indicates product failure (O'Connor et al., 1990). For a service, starting with WOMM creates more service awareness but does not increase the speed of the adoption process compared to starting with advertising. Regarding the channels individuals used to talk about the new product, most of the conversations generated about it were face-to-face. However, starting the communication campaign with WOMM generates more conversations through the Internet than starting with advertising. This is very important, since online conversations can be read by a multitude of consumers around the world (Kiecker and Cowles, 2001; Steffes and Burgee, 2009), thereby increasing the potential reach of the communication campaign. The four studies have also shown that the communication strategy does not provoke significant differences with regards to information searches about the new product at the awareness stage. Starting a new product launch with WOMM does not significantly encourage information searches about the new product, compared to starting with advertising. Only for low-involvement products consumers seem to search for more information when the communication campaign starts with WOMM. The importance of these results resides in the fact that they contrast those of previous studies which had shown that advertising was the best communication tool to be used in a new product launch (Manchanda et al. 2008; Narayanan et al., 2005; Rogers and Adhikarya, 1979; Van den Bulte and Lilien, 2001). The argument supporting these studies was that advertising is necessary for people to start talking about the new product (Hogan et al., 2004). However, nowadays firms can easily promote WOM communication. The Internet provides numerous avenues through which to share consumers' views, preferences or experiences with others (Trusov et al., 2009), and companies need to be aware of these. This study is in line with the surprising results of Delre et al. (2007), who showed that a strong mass advertising campaign taking place at the beginning of the diffusion process had negative effects on diffusion.

Additionally, we have also demonstrated that the communication strategy that the companies should use in order to persuade consumers to adopt the product depends on the type of product they have launched. For high-involvement products, WOMM should be followed by advertising to increase the consumers' intention to adopt. A first study using students and a second using real consumers confirm this evidence. However, in a

service context, WOMM is also very important in the final decision to adopt the service. For example, an unknown destination is more likely to be visited when WOMM is used at the adoption stage whereas the destination is more likely to be aware of when the marketer uses WOMM rather than advertising at the awareness stage. In contrast, for a low-involvement product, although the communication campaign that starts with WOMM creates more awareness, the adoption of the product is similar regardless of the communication campaign used.

Finally, this research also contributes to the existing experimental studies that have been developed in new product diffusion, which are currently very few because it is very difficult to conduct controlled experiments in this field (Delre et al., 2010). However, recent research has highlighted the need for experimental designs which should help to inform about the effectiveness of different communication strategies in new product adoption (Iyengar et al., 2011). This methodology to measure spontaneous and suggested awareness make possible to overcome the limitations to obtain data in the awareness stage as these data are usually hard to obtain as they do not involve overt behaviour (Van den Bulte and Lilien, 2001). Furthermore, the experimental approach we have followed may appear to offer an alternative to the traditional econometric approach to studying WOM effects, where it is very difficult to get a deep understanding of the underlying process (Hartmann et al., 2008). The two-phase procedure also solves the problem of asking respondents for retrospective accounts, which does not produce reliable data because becoming aware of an innovation is hardly memorable (Snyder, 1991).

2.7 Managerial implications

This study strongly recommends firms to start new product communication campaigns with WOMM in order to take advantage of the greater impact of early WOM. Regardless of the product category the company introduces into the market, WOMM should be the first communication tool used in a new product launch. Firms should make contact with opinion leaders, current customers or other general consumers through social media and motivate them to spread the word. Contacts with consumers who usually post opinions on the Internet should be planned in order to generate both eWOM and traditional WOM, increasing the campaign scope. This strategy will also increase the WOM generation about the new product accelerating the adoption process. In addition, the communication tool that should follow WOMM and then, should be used in the adoption stage of the product depends on the type of product that has been launched. Companies that have introduced a high-involvement product should develop an advertising campaign at the awareness stage. Companies in the service industry should continue using WOMM at

the adoption stage in order to create a higher intention to adopt the service. An interesting option for increasing campaign effectiveness could be to use WOM differently depending on the stage where the new product is at each moment. For example a viral campaign that used hubs as a seed could propagate faster the information about the new product. This WOMM strategy should be used first. This campaign could be followed by another one in which the company uses opinion leaders as a seed to influence consumers at the adoption stage. In addition, for low-involvement products, companies should work hard in enhancing eWOM at the awareness stage because it increases the searches of the product hereby overcoming the resistance to the innovation. For this product category the communication tool used at the adoption stage is not so determinant because product adoption is similar regardless of the tool used.

Results obtained consistently support the notion that WOMM communication should start before the product is available on the market, and the strategy may be undertaken using one or more of the following ideas. (1) Companies could encourage consumers to participate in new product development by asking them their opinion about it. This campaign could be developed in the company's virtual community, in the social section of the website or in social network sites. (2) Firms could create a viral marketing campaign about the new product and encourage hubs or other consumers to spread it using email, chats, uploading videos on the web or also through social network sites. (3) Firms could develop a product seeding campaign by sending the new product directly to opinion leaders and/or bloggers or other consumers, allowing them to be the first to try it, and later encouraging them to talk about it. This strategy will generate awareness before the new product is launched, speeding up the adoption process. In summary, companies need to find new ways to involve consumers and to generate hype around the product before commercial communication has been even initiated.

2.8 Limitations and future research

Future research should address the limitations apparent in the current study. We have measured information search for the new product very early on, only two-four days after consumers have known about the new product. Some consumers may not yet have considered looking for information about the new product at this stage, especially for more expensive products. Thus, it would be interesting to measure this concept giving consumers more time to comprehend the new product and letting them show some interest about it.

The use of make-up as a low-involvement product could be also a limitation of the study. Although we chose this product to develop the study in a more realistic setting, the make-

up has a higher involvement than other products such as beverages or groceries. Thus, the results could be different for these products. In addition, the service chosen for the study could be also considered as a high-involvement option since going to that kind of trip may be interesting to check if the results of the study are stable across product with a lower level of involvement than a make-up as well as for a low-involvement services.

The scenario created is very simplistic as it assumes that the company has to decide whether to use one communication tool or another at a particular stage of the diffusion process whereas more than one tool may be used jointly in the real market. Therefore, relaxing this assumption could serve to investigate which combination of tools are more efficient at each stage of the diffusion process.

Additionally, future research could also analyze how other commercial communication tools or combinations work best at early stages of the diffusion process. For instance, sales promotions have been frequently used at this stage, and this tool may also have interesting interactions with WOMM in new product diffusion. Recent research has recommended the use of different sales promotions such as new product trials and samples, in order to create WOM about the new product (Godes and Mayzlin, 2009; Song and Parry, 2009), therefore it would be very interesting to analyze how this communication tool interacts with advertising and WOMM.

Appendix 1: Stimulus of study 1. Advertising.

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¿Cuáles son los nuevos móviles para el 2010?

El año pasado los consumidores compraron millones de iPhones y móviles Nokia Xpressmusic. ¿Cuáles son los móviles de moda este año? Un nuevo iPhone, si saliera alguno, sería un éxito seguro. Aquí ofrecemos nuestra opinión de esa posibilidad y echamos un vistazo a nuevos móviles anunciados que darán mucho que hablar.

¿APPLE IPHONE 4G?
Abundan los rumores de que el próximo iPhone—el "iPhone 4G", como está siendo llamado—podría aparecer tan pronto como esta primavera. Los diseños especulativos como este de Isamu Sanada aparecen en la Internet mientras aumenta la presión sobre Apple para que mejore su popularísimo teléfono a fin de competir mejor con los nuevos teléfonos inteligentes de Android.

HTC NEXUS ONE
Aunque el Nexus One no es más "teléfono de Google" que el HTC G1, es el mejor teléfono de Android disponible hoy. Y Google ha hecho tan buen trabajo en la mente de los consumidores y en los medios asociándose con el Nexus One que el teléfono se va a vender como pan caliente.

NOKIA N98/N99
La distinguida Nokia ha manifestado que en el año 2010 elaborara equipos con cámaras de 12 megapíxeles y zoom óptico, acompañados de un excelente diseño. Los nombres que se postulan para dichas adquisiciones serían el Nokia N98 o Nokia N99.

MOTOROLA NIAGRA
Recordemos que Motorola hace un par de meses manifestó que en el año 2010 sacaría la renovación del V3 (Motorola Niagra), que dispondría al parecer de una pantalla tipo touch de 32 millones de colores con resolución de 230 x 120 píxeles, memoria interna con una capacidad de almacenamiento de hasta 8 GB.

WINDOWS PHONE KIN
Microsoft ha presentado su nueva serie de teléfonos móviles, los Windows Phone KIN. Se lanzarán dos dispositivos, el KIN ONE y el TWO. Ambos tendrán pantalla táctil y teclado desplegable, pero el ONE tendrá un tamaño inferior. Los dos dispositivos contarán con cámara, de 5 y 8 megapíxeles respectivamente, y un flash "ocho veces más brillante que cualquier flash en un teléfono móvil actual", según Microsoft.

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Appendix 2: Stimulus of study 1. EWOM.

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20/02/2010, 15:45

Roko

Chicos he leído que Apple va a sacar el iPhone 4G!!! estoy deseando verlo... aunque el HTC Nexus One tampoco tiene que estar mal. Pero el que tiene que ser una pasada es el reloj-móvil de LG, lo habéis visto????

21/02/2010, 17:26

Josek

Ni idea tío... yo los únicos móviles nuevos que he visto que van a sacar son el Nokia N98 y el Motorola Niagra que no están nada mal. También he oído que Windows va a sacar un móvil!!

24/02/2010, 10:08

Monn

Yo ya me he pillado un reloj-móvil LG, está muy chulo!! Tiene todas las características de un móvil normal pero con forma de reloj, ya nunca se me va a olvidar el móvil en casa!! Jaja. Os dejo unas fotos para daros envidia, jeje

25/02/2010, 13:33

Sistem

Sí sí, Windows va a sacar un móvil, esperemos a ver cómo es. Yo también estoy deseando que saquen el nuevo iPhone. Madre mía Monn, yo quiero otro!! Jeje.

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E-WOM about the wristwatch mobile phone from LG

Appendix 3: Stimulus of study 2. Advertising.

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¿Cuáles son los nuevos móviles para el 2012?

El año pasado los consumidores compraron millones de iPhones y móviles Samsung. ¿Cuáles son los móviles de moda este año? Un nuevo iPhone sería un éxito seguro. Aquí ofrecemos nuestra opinión de esa posibilidad y echamos un vistazo a nuevos móviles anunciados que darán mucho que hablar.

APPLE IPHONE 5

Abundan los rumores de que el próximo iPhone (el iPhone 5) pudiera ser lanzado esta primavera. Ya se está especulando en Internet sobre las posibles características técnicas del nuevo terminal mientras aumenta la presión sobre Apple para que mejore su popularísimo teléfono a fin de competir mejor con los nuevos teléfonos inteligentes de Android.

SAMSUNG GALAXY S III

La firma coreana ha batido todos los récords en España gracias a la familia de terminales Galaxy y de cara al próximo año esperamos novedades muy importantes. El primer Smartphone que estamos esperando es el Samsung Galaxy S III, un equipo de gama alta que competirá contra todos los colosos del sector. De momento han aparecido fotos que pueden ser montajes perfectamente pero que reflejan la apuesta de la compañía. Diseño, potencia y versatilidad.

NOKIA LUMIA


El Lumia 800 ha acaparado la atención del sector por su diseño y sobre todo por el rendimiento aunque todavía no se conocen las cifras oficiales de ventas. Este año se espera que la firma lance nuevos terminales con Windows Phone, de hecho el pasado mes de febrero se anunció el Nokia Lumia 900 con una pantalla más grande que la de su hermano pequeño. También veremos móviles con Symbian Belle en la gama media. Un nicho de mercado importantísimo donde Nokia domina.

MOTOROLA RAZR

La firma estadounidense ha vuelto y lo hizo en parte gracias a Android. Comenzó su andadura con el Motorola Dext y ha ido lanzando modelos que le han permitido recuperar la confianza de sus seguidores. Primero llegó el Milestone, después el Defy, Atrix y ahora el Razr que destaca por su diseño y potencia.

HTC ONE

La compañía tecnológica taiwanesa HTC, el quinto fabricante mundial de teléfonos inteligentes, va a lanzar una nueva serie de modelos, con la esperanza de que los nuevos dispositivos la ayuden a recuperar parte de la cuota de mercado que ha perdido. Los nuevos modelos son el One X, One S y One V, que corren con la más reciente versión del software Android.



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Appendix 4: Stimulus of study 2. EWOM.



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20/02/2012, 15:45

Roko


Chicos he leído que Apple va a sacar el iPhone 5!!! estoy deseando verlo... aunque el nuevo Samsung Galaxy S III tampoco tiene que estar mal. Pero el que tiene que ser una pasada es el reloj móvil de LG, lo habéis visto????



21/02/2012, 17:26

Josek


Ni idea tío... yo los únicos móviles nuevos que he visto que van a sacar son el Nokia Lumia 900 y el Motorola Razr que no están nada mal. También he oído que HTC va a mejorar su modelo One!!




24/02/2012, 10:08

Monn

Yo ya me he pillado un reloj móvil LG, está muy chulo!! Tiene todas las características de un móvil normal pero con forma de reloj, ya nunca se me va a olvidar el móvil en casa!! Jaja. Os dejo una foto para daros envidia, jeje






25/02/2012, 13:33

Sistem

Sí sí, HTC va a mejorar sus modelos, esperemos a ver cómo van. Yo también estoy deseando que saquen el nuevo iPhone. Madre mía Monn, yo quiero otro!! Jeje.



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Appendix 5: Stimulus of study 3. Advertising.



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Austria

10 excursiones para realizar a pie

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5. Playas

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Envía una postal personalizada desde el espacio a cualquier lugar del mundo...

CRÉALA AQUÍ

NATGEO Adventure

Ben Southall
Masculino, 34, Hamilton Island, Australia

Fotos
Video

Mountain Climber, Ultra-Marathon Conqueror, African Adventurer and Island Caretaker who had the 'Best...
Más

¿CÚALES SON LOS NUEVOS DESTINOS TURÍSTICOS PARA 2013?

El mundo del turismo es cada vez más dinámico y si bien existen destinos que nunca dejarán de estar en la más alta consideración de los viajeros -ciudades como Río de Janeiro o Roma, monumentos como la Torre Eiffel o la Gran Muralla China- también están aquellos que surgen como novedad y poco a poco van imponiendo tendencias. Se les llama destinos emergentes y cada año la lista se enriquece con sitios que para muchos de nosotros son totalmente desconocidos.

Wuzhen (China)

Wuzhen (provincia de Zhejiang) es llamado "la Venecia de China". Este pueblo milenario está enlazado con ríos y arroyos por puentes de piedra, y punteado por viejas casas a las orillas con corredores exteriores. El lugar se vuelve más mágico con la niebla que le envuelve durante las épocas de lluvia.

Marinduque (Filipinas)

Marinduque, una isla volcánica que presenta la forma de corazón si lo observas desde el aire, dispone de la perfecta arena, las cuevas submarinas, los gigantescos arrecifes de coral y manantiales de azufre ofreciendo un paradisiaco refugio que te aleja de la ruidosa sociedad.

Bahía de Fundy (Canadá)

La bahía de Fundy es un brazo de mar situado en la costa atlántica de Canadá. Allí se pueden contemplar la formación de remolinos y las mareas más grandes del mundo, de unos 16 m de altura, ante un paisaje sobrecogedor de acantilados, estatuas de arenisca, marismas y saladares.

Fukuoka (Japón)

Orgullosa de sus 2.000 años de historia, la ciudad de Fukuoka ha sido siempre una puerta de entrada a Asia. Situada frente a Corea y China, es por aquí por donde penetró la cultura continental al archipiélago. Hoy en día, esta ciudad moderna es la octava ciudad de Japón, pero ha sabido preservar su herencia cultural e histórica. Cerca podemos encontrar montañas, balnearios, hermosas costas marítimas y numerosos parques.

Masai Mara (Kenya)

El destino ideal para los amantes de la vida silvestre, para quienes no quieran perderse el espectáculo de la vida salvaje africana. Masai Mara en Kenya es el lugar perfecto para avistar leones, leopardos, rinocerontes, elefantes y búfalos, además de la migración anual de bestias salvajes que puede observarse desde excursiones en globos aerostáticos.

Islas Tuamotu
Polinesia Francesa

Un paraíso por descubrir

Advert for the Tuamotu Island from the French Polynesia

Appendix 6: Stimulus of study 3. EWOM.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

¿QUÉ PASA SI METES A MARC GASOL EN UNA TIENDA LLENA DE LÁMPARAS?

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CREALA AQUÍ

NATGEO Adventure

Ben Southall
Masculino, 34, Hamilton Island, Australia

Fotos
Video

Mountain Climber, Ultra-Marathon Conqueror, African Adventurer and Island Character who had the 'Best...'
Miss

10/10/2012, 15:45

Clin

He leído que la Bahía de Fundy en Canadá es impresionante!!! estoy deseando ir... aunque Marinduque en Filipinas tampoco tiene que estar mal. Pero lo que tiene que ser una pasada son las islas Tuamotu de la Polinesia Francesa, habéis estado????

Citar

11/10/2012, 10:14

Gonz

Ni idea, yo los destinos que he mirado para hacer una escapada son Wuzhen en China y Fukuoka en Japón. Y también estoy mirando Masai Mara (Kenya) que dicen que puedes avistar animales salvajes!!

Citar

11/10/2012, 12:33

Ben

Yo estuve este verano en las islas Tuamotu de la Polinesia Francesa y son espectaculares!!! Playas paradisíacas, aguas cristalinas, arena blanca, un auténtico paraíso!! Os dejo una foto para daros envidia. :)

Citar

EWOM about the Tuamotu Island from the French Polynesia

11/10/2012, 18:26

Toe

Si, sí, en Kenya puedes ver animales salvajes, tiene que estar muy chulo. Aunque donde tengo ganas de ir es a la Bahía de Fundy. Madre mía Ben, eso existe??? Pedazo de viaje te pegaste....

Citar

Appendix 7: Stimulus of study 3. Advertising.

The image shows a screenshot of the website **enfemenino.com** with a focus on beauty content. The main article is titled **¿CÚALES SON LAS NUEVAS BASES DE MAQUILLAJE PARA EL OTOÑO-INVIERNO 2012-2013?**. The article text describes the need for new makeup bases and lists several products:

- Skinmatch Fusion Make Up de Astor**: A base that melts like a second skin, is invisible, and has a uniform tone.
- Invisible Fluid Make-up de Estée Lauder**: A product that perfects the skin without leaving any trace, allowing for a natural and radiant appearance.
- Fit Me de Maybelline**: A product that promises to equalize and adapt to the skin color, creating a natural finish.
- Mat Morphosed de L'Oréal**: A product with a soufflé texture that allows for the benefits of three products in one: reducing pores, smoothing wrinkles, and unifying skin tone.
- PhotoReady Primer de Revlon**: A light gel makeup base that corrects pigments, neutralizes redness, and illuminates the skin.

At the bottom of the page, there is an advertisement for **MAX FACTOR** featuring the product **Maquillaje en papel** (powder makeup), described as "perfecta en todas partes" (perfect everywhere). An arrow points from a text box on the right to this advertisement.

Advert for the Make-up from Max Factor

Appendix 8: Stimulus of study 4. EWOM.

The screenshot shows the website enfemenino.com with a forum thread titled "nuevas bases de maquillaje otoño-invierno 2012-2013". The forum contains four posts:

- Post 1 (10/10/2012, 15:45):** A user asks about Astor's Skinmatch Fusion Make Up, noting its water-gel texture and questioning the use of paper-based makeup from Max Factor.
- Post 2 (11/10/2012, 10:15):** User Mymme responds, mentioning L'Oréal's Morphosede and Maybelline's Fit Me as other new bases, and notes that Estée Lauder is also launching a new base.
- Post 3 (11/10/2012, 11:23):** User Bea shares her experience with Max Factor's paper-based makeup, highlighting its portability and ease of use. She includes a photo of the product.
- Post 4 (11/10/2012, 14:52):** User Oly confirms that Estée Lauder is launching a new base and mentions that Astor's product is very natural, encouraging Bea to try it.

A callout box on the right side of the image points to the photo of Max Factor makeup products in the third post, with the text: "EWOM about the Make-up from Max Factor".

Appendix 9: Questionnaire that individuals filled out in the first session (Study 1).

1. Please, write down the name of the products that appear in the website (the products that you remember):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

1. Please, mark the products that appeared in the website:

Apple iPhone 4G	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nokia 5800	<input type="checkbox"/>
HTC Nexus One	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nokia N98	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sony Ericsson Satio	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reloj móvil LG	<input type="checkbox"/>
Samsung my Touch	<input type="checkbox"/>
LG KU990	<input type="checkbox"/>
Windows Phone Kin	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blackberry Storm	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reloj móvil Samsung	<input type="checkbox"/>
Motorola Niagra	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 10: Questionnaire that individuals filled out in the second session in study 1.

1. Since you saw the website of PC World, have you searched for information about the wristwatch mobile phone from LG?

Yes No

2. ¿Have you spoken about the wristwatch mobile phone from LG?

Yes No

3. If you answered affirmatively the previous question, through which channel have you speak about the wristwatch mobile phone from LG?

Face-to-face	Through the Internet	Both, face-to-face and through the Internet
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Please, answer the following items regarding the wristwatch mobile phone from LG:

It is unlikely that I buy this wristwatch mobile phone	1 2 3 4 5	It is likely that I buy this wristwatch mobile phone
It is impossible that I buy this wristwatch mobile phone	1 2 3 4 5	It is possible that I buy this wristwatch mobile phone

5. Genre:

Male Female

6. Age: _____

CHAPTER 3:

“CLICK LIKE IF YOU LIKE IT”. THE EFFECT OF PROMOTING EWOM IN SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

3.1 Introduction

Social network sites (SNSs) such as Facebook and Google+ have become extremely popular among Internet users across the globe. Recent research shows that 7 out of 10 Internet users are members of at least one SNS, and 6 out of 10 visit a SNS at least once a day (InSites Consulting, 2012). SNSs allow consumers and brands to share information, and facilitate individuals' desire to interact with others. Continuous interactions among consumers permit fast diffusion of information, and allow for the possibility of exponential growth of the number of consumers aware of a product or brand (Stephen and Lehmann, 2012). Thus, companies are interested in using marketing techniques to encourage consumers to spread the word about their products and brands (Kozinets et al., 2010, Verlegh et al., 2013). They are working especially hard on how to stimulate eWOM through SNSs. Such intentional mechanisms that stimulate the diffusion of eWOM are especially appropriate for new product launches (Godes and Mayzlin, 2009) and other situations in which firms have limited timeframes for achieving their objectives (Stephen and Lehmann, 2012). According to previous studies, the most suitable seed to reach this objective are hubs due to their high connectivity (Hinz et al., 2011; Goldenberg et al., 2009). Therefore, it is important that companies find out how to engage hubs in eWOM.

Companies and academics alike are still working on how and what to communicate through these channels, and how to trigger consumers to share, post or comment on brands (de Vries et al., 2012; Weman, 2011). They can directly encourage consumers to "share" or "like" a brand post, sometimes accompanied by sweepstakes or other incentives. They can also use sentences such as "click like if you like it" to persuade consumers to spread the word in SNSs. However, the impact of these strategies on consumers remains unknown. In addition, it is very difficult to engage hubs in eWOM (Bakshy et al., 2011). They will perceive more social risk in spreading eWOM as this information can be seen by lot of people. Therefore, more research is needed about what strategies marketers should use in order to encourage consumers, specially hubs, to spread the word about products and brands.

Consumers' responses to persuasion attempts have been widely analyzed in previous studies. When consumers notice that marketers have tried to persuade them, the persuasion strategy could have negative behavioral and attitudinal outcomes (Ahluwalia and Burnkrant, 2004; Barone et al., 2004; Brown and Krishna, 2004; Campbell and Kirmani, 2008). These negative outcomes will be more likely to occur if the persuasive message is very salient (Campbell and Kirmani 2000). Thus, the effectiveness of encouraging directly consumers to spread the word in SNSs may be reduced by

consumers' reactance to persuasion attempts (Dillard and Shen, 2005). Our thought here is that such a reaction may be dependent on the perceived success of the brand post. Perceived success may be inferred from the level of previous post diffusion. If the post has not been highly diffused, it will reinforce the negative impact of the persuasive message because receivers may have the impression that other consumers have not followed it. In contrast, if the brand post has been previously shared, commented and liked, it could mean that others approve the message, which, in turn, will prompt consumers to follow the behavior of others. Therefore, in this paper we analyze consumers' responses to brand posts on SNSs as a function of (1) the extent to which the post was previously diffused by others, and (2) marketers' encouragements to share the information. The interaction between these two factors and their impact on hubs are also examined.

3.2 Theoretical background

3.2.1 Stimulating eWOM in social network sites (SNSs)

SNSs are defined as "web based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, view and traverse their list of connections and those made by other within the system" (Boyd and Ellison, 2008, p. 211). SNSs much facilitate the contact between the company and the consumer. They allow people to create a profile on the site, choose other users whom to connect with and view their list of connections on the site (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). The core of SNSs consists of personalized user profiles (Trusov et al., 2009) to which consumers add personal information, photos, videos, and information about what they like and dislike. Companies can also build brand profiles on SNSs, and create what is called as a brand page, from which to establish direct contact with their customers. Any person interested may join these brand pages in order to receive product-related information and to interact with the brands he/she likes.

Companies can stimulate WOM by writing posts about products on their brand pages that can be seen by many individuals. A recent study has analyzed the effect that brand post characteristics have on the number of likes and comments received (de Vries et al., 2012). This study has shown that a brand post will be more commented and liked as a function of its location on the brand page, and also as a function of its interactivity. It will be also more liked if the brand post is vivid. However, the effect of directly promoting eWOM by the company and the influence of previous post diffusion are yet unknown.

Several spreading options are available for the receivers of the message: writing a comment on the brand post, sharing the brand post, or clicking the "I like" button. In case

a consumer decides to share, comment or like the brand post, all his/her contacts will see this action and they will be able to comment, share and/or like it again. As consumers have on average 229 contacts on SNSs such as Facebook (Techcrunch.com, 2012) and a brand page could come to have millions of fans (Socialbakers, 2013), a brand post written by a company can be diffused very quickly through these platforms. Therefore, it is very interesting to figure out when a brand post written by a company on SNSs will be shared, commented or liked.

3.2.2 Brand post diffusion. Social Influence Theory

Consumer decisions may be public or private. Previous research has shown that public decisions are taken much more careful than private ones due to the perception of social risk (Kaplan et al. 1974). Decisions that are expressed in public are more susceptible to social influence (Bearden and Etzel, 1982; Wood, 2000). Chi and Kim (2011) have demonstrated that consumers are affected by social influence spreading eWOM in SNSs (Chi and Kim, 2011). A negative outcome would result in embarrassment or disapproval among other individuals whereas a positive outcome would result in approval or esteem among others (Mandel, 2003).

Social influence can be divided into normative and informational influence (Burnkrant and Cousineau, 1975). Normative influence refers to the tendency to conform to the expectations of others. It motivates behaviours, attitudes, norms and values (Miller and Grush, 1986). Informational influence denotes the tendency to accept information from knowledgeable others and be guided in product and brand decisions (Bearden et al., 1989).

According to normative influence, consumers follow the expectations of other people or groups to achieve rewards or avoid punishment (Homans, 1961). Punishment refers to social disapproval which occurs when individuals fail to convey desired impressions or when they convey impressions that are undesired by their target audiences (Wooten and Reed, 2004). When a behavior is accompanied by beliefs that the behaviour results in significant social negative reactions, individuals are less likely to engage in this behaviour (Rimal and Real, 2005). Individuals could not lead in this behaviour in order to avoid punishments. Normative influence depends on the size of the group. The larger the group that can see the consumers' actions, the greater its influence, because of the majority's power to reward and punish the individual (Latané, 1981; Latané and Wolf, 1981).

Regarding informational influence, an internalization process occurs when an individual perceives others' information as enhancing his or her knowledge (Kelman, 1961). In this vein, consumers may perceive others' opinions as proof of a product's quality or

characteristics (Burnkrant and Cousineau 1975). Both of them, normative and informational influence may affect consumer behavior in SNSs because the SNSs are under the gaze of the online community.

The decision to have a conversation online about a product or brand is an example of a public decision. Individuals may be motivated to spread the word by different reasons. The decision to spread the word may be made with certain social benefits or social consequences of the conversation in mind (Stephen and Lehman, 2009). Consumers may succeed and satisfy their need of social interaction and friendship sharing opinions about products on the Internet (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). They could also engage in eWOM due to the desire for positive recognition of others (Engel et al., 1993). Giving recommendations allow transmitters to gain attention, status, give the impression of possessing inside information, and assert superiority (Henning-Thurau et al., 2004). However, this action may be subject to normative influence. Not only rewards are possible but also punishment on social disapproval. Therefore, individuals may be prevented of spreading the word for avoiding social disapproval.

In SNSs interactions usually take place among consumers who have also a relationship offline. Then, information liked, shared or commented in these platforms will be noted by consumer's friends, relatives and acquaintances. In fact, previous studies in SNSs have demonstrated that variables related with the personal relationship between transmitter and receiver affect eWOM behavior (Chi and Kim, 2011). According to normative influence, when consumers engage in eWOM by sharing or liking brand information, others (i.e., the consumers' "contacts" in the SNS) will assume that they like that product or brand. As a consequence, spreading eWOM involves a certain risk if the information transmitted does not conform to the expectations of their contacts. In addition, as Venkatesh and Davids (2000) have shown, normative influence has an effect on status, and therefore, consumers could also lose status or reputation among their contacts transmitting wrong or low quality information.

Social risk has been already acknowledged by the literature on WOM, and it has been suggested that consumers may try to reduce it by following the behavior of others (Folkes 1984; Stephen and Lehmann, 2009). This conformity with others' behavior offers the opportunity to gain social approval (Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004). In SNSs like Facebook, information about the behavior of others may be inferred by the number of times that a post has been "shared", "liked" or "commented." Thus, consumers may perceive less social risk when they spread eWOM about a post that has been much diffused, that is, when it has many likes, shares and comments. In this case, the lower risk perception will facilitate eWOM diffusion. A recent study has found support to this

idea (De Vries et al., 2012). According to this study, a brand post will be more commented and liked as a function of the number of positive comments it has received.

An alternative explanation to that behavior relies on the popularity inference that may appear when exposed to a post with many shares, likes or comments. Previous studies have shown that the volume of eWOM about a product is an adequate indicator of product popularity (Park and Lee, 2009), a signal of high quality (Camainal and Vives, 1996) and good performance of a product in the market (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004). This popularity inference may exert some kind of social influence. According to informational influence, if a brand post has many likes, comments or has been very much shared, the audience could assume that the brand post is very popular. If the brand post is product-related, the audience could infer that many people like the product or the product has a high quality. On the basis both types of influences, normative and informational, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: A consumer's intention to spread eWOM is higher for high-diffused brand posts than for low-diffused brand posts.

H2: Consumers will show a more favourable attitude toward products that are featured in high-diffused posts than toward products that are featured in low-diffused posts.

3.2.3 Companies strategies to encourage eWOM. Persuasion Knowledge Model

In SNSs it has become common that companies promote eWOM by encouraging consumers to share or like their posts, or to make comments on them, using phrases such as "share this post if you like it!" or "click like if you agree." Although consumers who have a generally favourable attitude toward a brand or product may be inclined to follow such suggestions, this promotion may also induce reactance. Such a reaction could be explained by the Persuasion Knowledge Model.

This Model is very related to advertising and persuasion literature. Persuasion Knowledge Model proposes that consumers develop knowledge about persuasion and others' persuasion attempts and delineates how people develop and use this knowledge (Rule et al., 1985). Persuasion knowledge involves beliefs about motives, tactics and how persuasion works (Friestad and Wright, 1994). The consumer must recognize the persuasion in order to use persuasion knowledge within a particular interaction or after a marketing message (Campbell and Kirmani, 2008; Friestad and Wright, 1994).

Persuasion knowledge is not chronically activated after its acquisition; instead, it is available for activation when a consumer believes a message is intended to persuade (Cowley and Barron, 2008). Message cues that increase the salience of the marketer's

manipulative intent are likely to activate persuasion knowledge (Brown and Krishna, 2004; Campbell and Kirmani 2000; Kirmani and Zhu, 2007). Using messages such as “click like if you like it” to encourage consumers to spread the word may be considered as very salient, and may therefore provoke the activation of persuasion knowledge.

The activation of persuasion knowledge may have consequences on subsequent behavior. Once an action is identified as a persuasive tactic, consumers may begin to think about the appropriateness of the marketer’s motive and specific tactic use (Brown and Krishna, 2004; Campbell and Kirmani, 2008). When consumers infer that a marketer’s action is driven by ulterior motives, and inferences of manipulative intent, there is greater resistance to persuasion (Campbell and Kirmani, 2000, Verlegh et al., 2013). People resist to the persuasion because they feel these marketing actions threaten their freedom. When a person senses that someone else is limiting his or her freedom to choose or act, an uncomfortable state of reactance results, creating motivation to reassert that freedom. This intention to limit consumers’ freedom provokes oppositional feelings and behaviors. Consumers may try to restore their freedom by behavioral intentions in opposition to the message (Buller et al., 1998). These behavioral intentions could lead to a boomerang effect in which the perception of coercion is met with an equal but opposite influence (Clee and Wicklund, 1980). In such a case, consumers will engage in a behavior directly opposite to the one advocated in the message (Brehm, 1966). Consumers could also restore their freedom by negative attitude change (Dillard and Shen, 2005; Rains and Turner, 2007). In summary, most of the work that draws upon the Persuasion Knowledge Model finds negative persuasion outcomes arising from the consumers’ use of persuasion knowledge (Campbell and Kirmani, 2008). Therefore, promoting eWOM may have a negative effect on both consumer attitudes and intentions to spread WOM, by invoking resistance to persuasion. Thus, we propose:

H3: A consumer’s intention to spread eWOM is lower for promoted brand posts than for non-promoted brand posts.

H4: Consumers will show a less favourable attitude toward products that are featured in promoted brand posts than toward products that are featured in non-promoted brand posts.

3.2.4 The effect of companies strategies to encourage eWOM as a function of brand post diffusion

As we have explained before, consumers may resist to companies’ attempts to persuasion. The level of resistance to persuasion may be dependent on several factors.

If consumers have high confidence in their attitudes and behaviors, they will be more willing to defend their attitudes towards the persuasion (Petty and Wegener, 1999). Assuming H2 holds, consumers will show a more favourable attitude towards products that appear in high-diffused brand posts in comparison to products displayed in low-diffused posts. Thus, the negative impact of promoting eWOM will be reinforced when few consumers have been previously influenced by the brand post. In addition, Schultz et al. (2007) have shown that boomerang effects can be eliminated by adding a cue that indicates that others approve of the message. In a SNS context, such a cue may consist of a high number of shares, likes or comments as they indicate that the message has been followed by many people. Thus, in terms of consumers' intention to spread WOM, high post diffusion may eliminate the negative effect that promoting a post has on consumers' intention to spread eWOM.

In terms of consumers' attitudes, the effect of promoting eWOM may be similar from that on intention to eWOM. In a high-diffused brand post, the negative effect that promoting eWOM may have on product attitudes according Persuasion Knowledge Model (Campbell and Kirmani, 2008) could be counteracted by social approval inferred from the high volume of shares, comments and likes. Therefore, the high diffusion of the brand post may eliminate the negative effect of the promotion. In contrast, for a low-diffused brand post the negative effect of a promoting strategy will remain intact. Therefore, we propose:

H5a: For a low-diffused brand post, promoting eWOM leads to a lower intention to spread eWOM than non-promoting eWOM.

H5b: For a high-diffused brand post, promoting eWOM has no effect on consumers' intention to spread eWOM.

H6a: For a low-diffused brand post, promoting eWOM leads to a less favourable attitude toward the featured product than non-promoting eWOM.

H6b: For a high-diffused brand post, promoting eWOM has no effect on consumers' product attitude.

3.2.5 Hubs vs. fringes

Companies that want to create a great diffusion of information about their products and brands through WOMM campaigns should know what type of seed they should encourage. Highly connected consumers are crucial in information diffusion (Goldenberg et al., 2009). Thus, it is important to know what to do for engaging highly-connected people successfully. Literature has referred to highly-connected people as "hubs"; and people who are connected to a few number of others as fringes (Hinz et al., 2011).

Previous studies have demonstrated the importance of higher-connectivity people in spreading information widely and quickly (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Hinz et al., 2011; Zubcsek and Sarvary, 2011). However, recruiting hubs to spread the word may be very costly (Bakshy et al., 2011). Traditionally, marketers did not usually have detailed information on the consumers' degrees of social connectivity. This limitation may be overcome in SNSs as previous studies have categorized hubs in these platforms based on the number of contacts they have (Stephen and Lehmann, 2012).

The selection of hubs as seeds may present an additional problem. Hubs may be difficult to persuade. They are exposed to lots of information through their multiple social links, and could likely suffer from information overload (Porter and Donthu 2008; Simmel 1950). Because of their potential use as conversation-starting consumers, it is crucial to determine what may motivate hubs to spread the word. By having this knowledge, we could give companies ideas about how to approach hubs for contributing to product and brand information diffusion.

Hubs represent the most subject to normative influence consumers in SNSs. They will perceive more social risk in spreading eWOM as their contribution can be seen by lots of people. In fact, the larger the group that can see a hub's actions, the greater its influence, because of the majority's power to reward and punish the individual (Latané, 1981; Latané and Wolf, 1981). Hubs will thus be more susceptible to social influence needing social approval to share information, and will be more critical toward marketers' attempts to influence their eWOM behaviour. As a result, the previously described effects on spreading WOM and on product attitudes will be stronger for hubs than for fringes. Thus, it will be more likely that hubs (vs. fringes) activate their persuasion knowledge and resist to the persuasion. When the act of promoting eWOM is not followed by other people, they will resist to persuasion and a boomerang effect is likely to occur. In contrast, when the post in which eWOM has been promoted has been previously highly diffused, hubs will respond by spreading the word. According to resistance to persuasion literature, when people are very involved with the outcome, persuasion in the direction of the message occurs with strong arguments (Johnson and Eagly, 1989). Hubs will be much involved with the outcome because their decision may be seen by a lot of people. In addition, hubs may perceive a strong argumentation of the message derived from the high number of likes, shares and comments it has received, as a high volume of eWOM about a product is an adequate indicator of product popularity (Park and Lee, 2009). For that reason, persuasion may be likely to occur for hubs and they may wish to like, share or comment the post in order to reach objectives such as self-enhancement or building social capital. Therefore, when the act of promoting a brand post is reinforced by lot of

likes, comments and shares, hubs will respond by spreading the word. As a result, the interactions between the strategy of promoting eWOM and brand post diffusion described in H5 and H6 are expected to be stronger for hubs than for fringes:

H7: Interaction effects described in H5a and H5b on the intention to spread eWOM will be stronger for hubs than for fringes.

H8: Interaction effects described in H6a and H6b on the attitude toward featured products will be stronger for hubs than for fringes.

3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 Design and stimuli

A 2 brand post diffusion (high vs. low) x 2 communication strategy (promoting eWOM vs. non-promoting eWOM) between-subjects experimental study was developed using Facebook users. Facebook was used because is the most popular SNS with 1.23 billion users around the world, and more than 757 million daily active users (Facebook, 2014). As many posts are about new products, we chose a new TV that Samsung had just launched into the market at the time of data collection (October, 2012). Technology is one of the preferred product categories of consumers in social media (The Cocktail Analysis, 2013). We used a real brand and the actual image of the product in order to create a more realistic scenario. The stimuli are shown Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4.

For the experiment, we created a Facebook site that simulated the actual Samsung profile. The brand post presented the new TV and an image of it. We manipulated the extent to which it was diffused (low/high) and whether eWOM was actively promoted by the company or not. To manipulate the extent to which the post had been previously diffused, we simultaneously varied the number of likes, comments and shares it had. In the low-diffusion condition, the brand post had received 6 likes, 4 comments, and 2 shares. In the high-diffusion condition ($p < 0.01$), the brand post had 5,541 likes, 848 comments, and 224 shares. A pretest ($N=40$) confirmed that these brand posts were perceived as low- versus high-diffused. In order to manipulate eWOM promotion, we either included a sentence promoting eWOM ("Click like if you like it!") or not. The pretest included a yes/no question asking participants about the recall of the inclusion of that sentence. Results also confirmed that this manipulation was successful as most individuals exposed to the post containing eWOM promotion recalled it ($p < 0.01$).

3.3.2 Procedure and measurement

Participants were recruited from an online consumer panel and were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. We conducted an online survey among 369 panel members

who belonged to the target group of the product, which consisted of men between 25 and 45 years old (Mean: 34.6; SD: 5.5).

We measured participants' intention to spread eWOM with three items by asking participants how likely they were to (1) click like, (2) share the post, or (3) comment on the post. Product attitudes were measured using two items based on Bruner's (1998) scale, by asking participants how they felt about the product (bad/good; dislike/like)(Cronbach's $\alpha=0.815$). The manipulation of brand post diffusion was checked with three items, in which we asked consumers how likely they considered that the post had many likes, comments and shares (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.946$). All these items were measured using ten-point semantic differential scales. Finally, we asked participants about the number of friends they had on Facebook, in order to classify them as "hubs" (high number of friends) or "fringes" (low number of friends). We used a median-split to create these two groups. Questionnaire is shown in Appendix 5.

3.4 Results

We developed an ANOVA test in order to check whether there were any differences between the four groups. The results show that the groups are not statistically different in terms of age ($F(3,365) = 0.458, p > 0.10$). Additionally, the manipulation check confirmed that the high-diffused brand post was perceived to be more diffused than the low-diffused brand post ($M_{\text{high-diffused}}=5.91$ vs. $M_{\text{low-diffused}}=4.73$; $F(1,367)=34.482, p < 0.01$).

As attitude toward the product and intention to eWOM were highly correlated ($p < 0.01$), a MANOVA approach was used to test the proposed hypotheses. We also ran independent ANOVAs on each of the dependent variables in order to better illustrate the results obtained. As we expected in H1, we found that intention to eWOM was higher for the high-diffused brand post than for the low-diffused brand post ($M_{\text{high-diffused}} = 4.97$ vs. $M_{\text{low-diffused}}=4.40$; $F(1,367)=4.530, p < 0.05$). However, our second hypothesis was not confirmed, as attitude toward the product was not affected by the extent to which the brand post was more or less diffused ($M_{\text{High diffused}} = 7.45$ vs. $M_{\text{Low diffused}} = 7.29$; $F(1,367)=0.681, p > 0.10$).

As we can see in table 1, promoting eWOM has no effect on the intention to spread eWOM ($M_{\text{promoting eWOM}}=4.64$ vs. $M_{\text{non-promoting eWOM}}=4.74$; $F(1,367)=0.121, p > 0.10$) or in the attitude toward the product ($M_{\text{promoting eWOM}} = 7.59$ vs. $M_{\text{non-promoting eWOM}} = 7.70$; $F(1,367)=0.500, p > 0.10$). Thus, H3 and H4 are not supported.

Table 1: The effect of post diffusion and eWOM promotion on the intention to eWOM and attitude toward the product

VD: Intention to spread eWOM						
Brand post diffusion	N	Mean	F	p-value	Hypothesis	
High	183	4.971	4.530	0.034	H1	
Low	186	4.401				
VD: Attitude toward the product						
Brand post diffusion	N	Mean	F	p-value	Hypothesis	
High	183	7.449	0.681	0.410	H2	
Low	186	7.287				
VD: Intention to spread eWOM						
Communication strategy	N	Mean	F	p-value	Hypothesis	
Promoting eWOM	184	4.641	0.121	0.728	H3	
Non-promoting eWOM	185	4.735				
VD: Attitude toward the product						
Communication strategy	N	Mean	F	p-value	Hypothesis	
Promoting eWOM	184	7.587	0.500	0.480	H4	
Non-promoting eWOM	185	7.698				

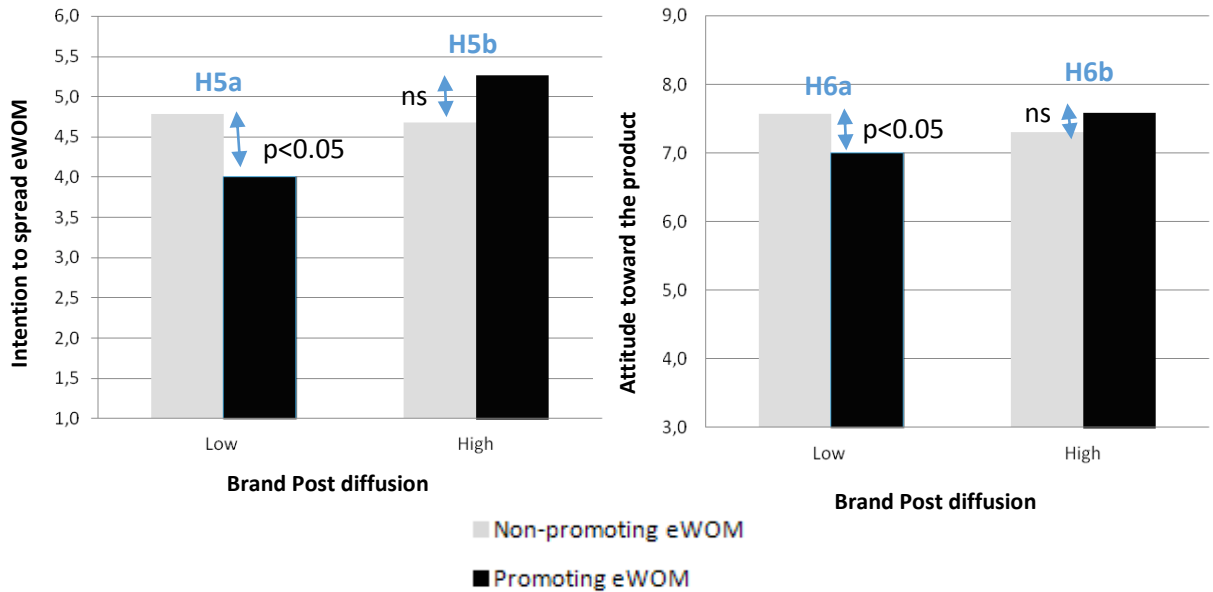
Together, H5 and H6 suggest a two-way interaction between brand post diffusion and company strategy about eWOM promotion. This interaction was significant for eWOM intention ($F(1,365)=6.546$; $p<0.05$) and for attitude towards the product ($F(1,365) = 4.789$; $p<0.05$). Follow-ups revealed that for the low-diffused brand post, promoting eWOM had a negative effect on eWOM intentions compared to non-promoting ($M_{\text{promoting eWOM}}=4.01$ vs. $M_{\text{no-promoting eWOM}}=4.79$; $F(1,181)=4.535$; $p<0.05$). A similar result was obtained for attitude toward the product ($M_{\text{promoting eWOM}}=7.00$ vs. $M_{\text{no-promoting eWOM}}=7.57$; $F(1,181)=4.005$; $p<0.05$). These results confirm H5a and H6a. For the high-diffused brand post, promoting eWOM had a similar effect on consumers' intentions to spread eWOM than non-promoting ($M_{\text{promoting eWOM}}=5.26$ vs. $M_{\text{no-promoting eWOM}}=4.68$; $F(1,184)=2.269$; $p=0.134$). For attitude toward the product, the difference was also non-significant, in line with our expectations ($M_{\text{promoting eWOM}}=7.59$ vs. $M_{\text{non-promoting eWOM}}=7.31$; $F(1,184)=1.132$; $p=0.289$). Thus, H6b and H5b are both supported. The results are summarized in Figure 1 and table 2.

Table 2: Interaction effect between post diffusion and strategy on the intention to e-WOM (H5) and the attitude toward the product (H6)

VD: Intention to eWOM						
Brand post diffusion	Communication strategy	N	Mean	F	p-value	Interaction
High	Promoting eWOM	93	5.26	2.269	0.134	F=6.546 (p=0.011)
	Non-promoting eWOM	93	4.68			
Low	Promoting eWOM	91	4.01	4.535	0.035	
	Non-promoting eWOM	92	4.80			

VD: Attitude toward the product						
Brand post diffusion	Communication strategy	N	Mean	F	p-value	Interaction
High	Promoting eWOM	93	7.59	1.132	0.289	F=4.789 (p=0.029)
	Non-promoting eWOM	93	7.31			
Low	Promoting eWOM	91	7.00	4.005	0.047	
	Non-promoting eWOM	92	7.57			

Figure 1. Interaction effects between brand post diffusion and communication strategy on intention to eWOM (H5) and attitude toward the product (H6)



In order to test H7 and H8, we examined the three-way interaction between connectivity (hubs vs. fringes), brand post diffusion (high vs. low) and communication strategy (promoting eWOM vs. non-promoting eWOM). As we can observe in table 3, the interaction was significant for both eWOM intentions ($F(1,361)= 7.762$; $p<0.01$) and for attitude toward the product ($F(1,361) = 4.001$; $p<0.05$). As we can see on Figure 2, for hubs exposed to high-diffused posts, an eWOM promotion strategy leads to higher eWOM intentions than a non-promotion strategy ($M_{\text{promoting eWOM}}=5.67$ vs. $M_{\text{non-promoting eWOM}}=4.49$; $F(1,86)=4.272$; $p<0.05$) and a more favourable attitude toward the product ($M_{\text{promoting eWOM}} =7.94$ vs. $M_{\text{non-promoting eWOM}}=7.13$; $F(1,86)=4.585$; $p<0.05$). In contrast, for exposed to low-diffused posts, analyses revealed that promoting eWOM (vs. non-

promoting) significantly lowers eWOM intentions ($M_{\text{promoting eWOM}}=3.52$ vs. $M_{\text{non-promoting eWOM}}=5.22$; $F(1,84)=12.088$, $p<0.01$), as well as attitude toward the product ($M_{\text{promoting eWOM}}=6.81$ vs. $M_{\text{non-promoting eWOM}}=7.63$; $F(1,84)=4.731$, $p<0.05$). For fringes (Figure 3), brand post diffusion and eWOM communication strategy had no effect on any of the dependent variables (all F-values <0.645 ; $p>0.10$).

Table 3. Interaction effect between post diffusion and strategy on intention to eWOM and the attitude toward the product for hubs and fringes

DV: Intention to eWOM (H7)							
The seed	Brand post diffusion	Communication strategy	N	Mean	F	p-value	Interaction
Hubs	High	Promoting eWOM	52	5.67	4.272	0.042	F=7.762 (p=0.006)
		Non-promoting eWOM	36	4.49			
	Low	Promoting eWOM	44	3.52	12.088	0.006	
		Non-promoting eWOM	42	5.22			
Fringes	High	Promoting eWOM	41	4.75	0.010	0.921	
		Non-promoting eWOM	57	4.80			
	Low	Promoting eWOM	47	4.43	0.006	0.938	
		Non-promoting eWOM	50	4.47			
DV: Attitude toward the product (H8)							
The seed	Brand post diffusion	Communication strategy	N	Mean	F	p-value	Interaction
Hubs	High	Promoting eWOM	52	7.942	4.585	0.035	F=4.009 (p=0.046)
		Non-promoting eWOM	36	7.125			
	Low	Promoting eWOM	44	6.807	4.731	0.032	
		Non-promoting eWOM	42	7.631			
Fringes	High	Promoting eWOM	41	7.146	0.523	0.471	
		Non-promoting eWOM	57	7.421			
	Low	Promoting eWOM	47	7.181	0.645	0.424	
		Non-promoting eWOM	50	7.520			

Results shown in Table 3 confirm our prediction that the effects described in hypotheses 5 and 6 are stronger for hubs (consumers with a high number of contacts on SNSs) than for fringes (consumers with a low number of contacts). In fact, the negative expected pattern was found for hubs when companies actively promote eWOM and previous brand post diffusion is low. Moreover, attitudes toward the product and intention to spread eWOM are even enhanced for hubs when the company promotes eWOM and the level of post diffusion is high (non expected results in H5b and H6b). In summary, hubs seem to be more conscious of what is happening around them in SNSs, therefore they look for social acceptance and approval when social risk is low and they activate persuasion knowledge when it is high.

Figure 2. Interaction effect between brand post diffusion and communication strategy on intention to eWOM (H7)

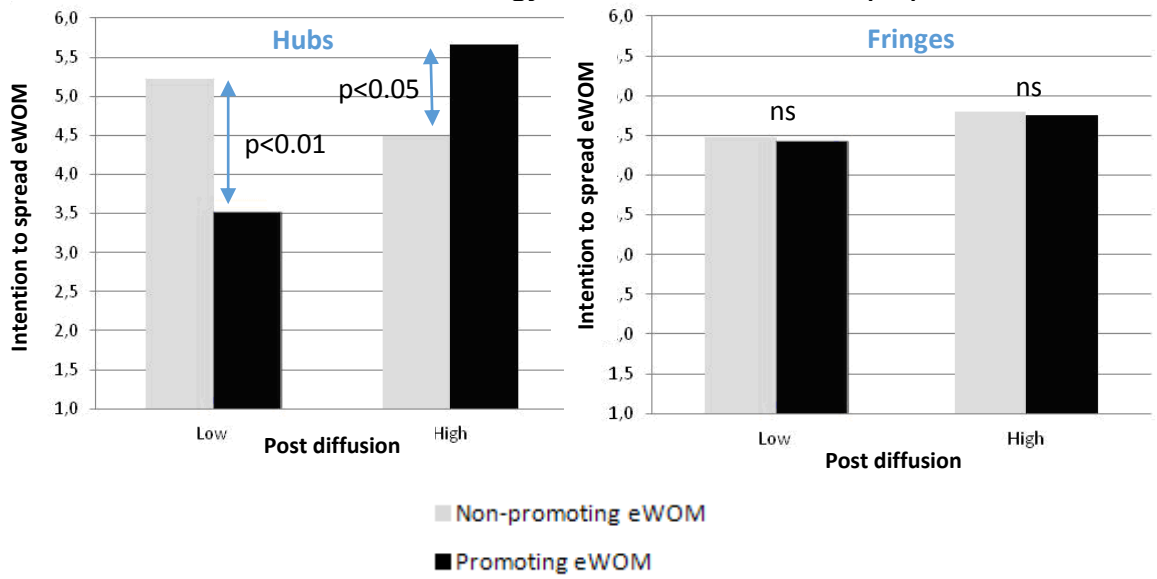
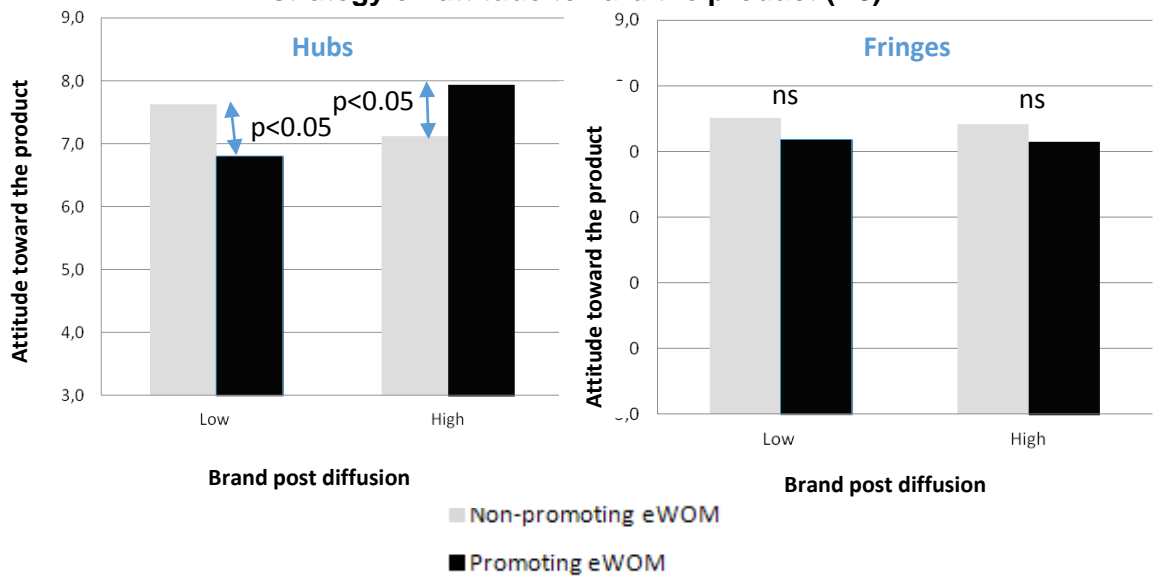


Figure 3. Interaction effect between brand post diffusion and communication strategy on attitude toward the product (H8)



3.5 Discussion

SNSs have become an important part of consumers' social relationships, and companies have enthusiastically seized the marketing opportunities that are offered by these platforms. This study answers the need for more empirical research on marketing communications on SNSs. Specifically, we analyse how the strategy of actively promoting eWOM in a brand post affects consumers' evaluations of the featured post, and their intentions to endorse, share, or comment it. It also explores whether the level of previous diffusion of that post determines consumer reactions and behaviours. How communication strategy affects hubs is also examined with the aim of finding out the best way to encourage this type of seed.

We have shown an informational social influence mechanism that causes a higher eWOM intention for high-diffused brand posts. Informational influence provokes consumers accept this information as true following the behaviour of others (Bearden et al., 1989). A high-diffused brand post serves to transmit the popularity of the product (Park and Lee, 2009), what further contributes to post acceptance. Next, normative influence leads receivers of the brand post to spread the word about it. The reason behind this behaviour is that consumers will perceive less social risk to spread eWOM if this information has been very shared or commented by many consumers. This result is in line with previous studies that have shown volume of eWOM affects consumer behaviour (Duan et al., 2008; Liu, 2006; López and Sicilia, 2014a).

More importantly, we have demonstrated that some strategies used to promote the diffusion of the post may not be always effective, and can even have negative effects on spreading eWOM and on product attitudes. This result is based on the Persuasion Knowledge Model. It posits that when consumers can see ulterior motives in marketers' actions, they can defend against companies' persuasive intents as they perceive their freedom of choice is attacked (Campbell and Kirmani 2000, Verlegh et al., 2013). Consumers can restore their freedom acting against the marketers' message (boomerang effect) (Clee and Wicklund, 1980) and generate negative attitudes (Dillard and Shen, 2005; Rains and Turner, 2007). This is what happens when the level of previous brand post diffusion is low. By itself, promoting eWOM has not effect on the intention to spread eWOM and the attitude toward the product. Consumers need to activate their persuasion knowledge to identify a marketing tactic as an intention to persuasion (Campbell and Kirmani, 2008). Therefore, to the extent that consumers are not aware about persuasion intentions, they will not activate their persuasion knowledge, and will not resist to persuasion (Campbell and Kirmani, 2008). This study shows that low level of previous brand post diffusion may help them activate persuasion knowledge. In

other words, consumers will be aware of marketers' intentions when they notice that other consumers have not followed their recommendation to "click like", inducing reactance to the persuasion attempt.

More interestingly, we have shown this negative effect can be eliminated through social approval, that is, if many consumers have followed the recommendation of the company diffusing the post. This result is in line with a previous study that showed people adopt positions when they can easily have supportive arguments (Rothman and Schwarz, 1998). Persuasion Knowledge Model also gives support to this result. According to this model, consumers do not merely react against marketers, they may use persuasion behaviours to respond to marketers in order to attain their own goals (Kirman and Campbell, 2004). In this case, the strategy of the company of promoting vs. non-promoting eWOM would not be relevant because consumers' intention to eWOM would be determined by social approval goals. Since they perceive the post as popular because lots of consumers have previously diffused it, they may wish to like, share or comment it in order to reach objectives such as self-enhancement or building social capital, but not because the company told them.

We have also demonstrated that the negative effect of promoting eWOM in case of low brand post diffusion turns into a positive one for hubs when the post has been previously highly diffused. Hubs are highly-connected individuals, thus their contributions can be seen by lots of people being the most suitable seed to enhance the diffusion of new product information (Hinz et al., 2011; Stephen and Lehmann, 2012). The importance of this result relies on the fact that highly-connected individuals are crucial to product information diffusion (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Hinz et al., 2011), but previous studies have suggested the difficulty to persuading hubs for this task (Porter and Donthu, 2008). Thus, WOMM campaigns aimed at reaching hubs for them to spread the word about products or brands could not have the expected results. But hubs could feel more social risk to like, share and comment a brand post than fringes because their contributions will be seen by many people. Hubs are not as influential as opinion leaders or market mavens (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Hinz et al., 2011), thus their contacts could question the information they share experiencing social disapproval if the brand or the post is not liked by their peers. In contrast, according to Johnson and Eagly (1989), hubs could perceive that people have approved this message, reinforcing it, and thus persuading them. Following informational influence (Bearden et al., 1989), in case of high post diffusion could mean either that the post is very popular or the product has high quality. In any case, the social risk that hubs perceive to like, share or comment the brand post will be

reduced. Once resistance to persuasion is beaten, brand post diffusion may have a clear path towards success since the participation of hubs will accelerate the process.

3.6 Managerial implications

Results obtained in this study have several implications for marketers. SNSs allow companies to write brand posts that can be easily diffused by consumers. Quick information diffusion is important, for example, in creating awareness of new products or in viral marketing campaigns. The question is what strategy companies should use in order to encourage consumers to share, like and comment these brand posts. Marketers usually encourage consumers to spread eWOM in SNS with sentences such as “click like if you like it”. However, marketers should be aware of the potential downsides of this strategy, especially since these effects are largest for hubs, who play a critical role in information diffusion due to their huge number of contacts. Actively promoting eWOM may also have a positive effect on hubs, but it is important to carefully estimate and predict the popularity a post may get among Facebook users (“fans”). Either pretesting or looking at acceptance of past posts should be done before deciding what strategy to follow. If a pretest has indicated that the post is estimated to be successful in terms of diffusion, companies should then include sentences such as “Click like if you like it” in order to further contribute to its diffusion. In contrast, if the post is not expected to be very successful, companies should avoid actively promoting as a means of reducing reactance. An alternative strategy may be to look at the previous history of brand posts. If a brand post was very liked, shared and commented, the company could encourage eWOM in the next similar brand post. Using this strategy could exponentially increase the diffusion of the post.

3.7 Limitations and future research

Future research should address the limitations apparent in the current study. We assume that people with many contacts are hubs. Indeed, the main characteristic of hubs is they are highly-connected. However, hubs have also a low influence in other consumers (Hinz et al., 2011). Thus, in our classification of hubs as discussed in chapter 1, can also be included other seeds such as opinion leaders with many contacts may be included. Thus, a more restrictive measurement of hubs is necessary to deeper analyse how to engage hubs and to better understand their role in the diffusion of information. In addition, the scale used to measure the intention to spread eWOM in Facebook has not been previously validated. Although Cronbach-alpha was very high, the intention to click like may be somewhat different from the intentions to share or comment a brand post. Future research should address the different among the three behaviours: like, share and comment.

Moreover, study has been developed in only one SNS, Facebook. The different characteristics that other SNSs may have such as the restriction of giving information in a message of 140 characters in Twitter or the groups in Google+ could alter the results obtained. Future research should seek to replicate this study in different SNSs. In addition, researchers should examine alternative forms of promoting eWOM on SNSs in order to determine the optimal strategies. For example, the inclusion of pictures or videos is a very popular strategy to enhance post diffusion. The use of incentives should also be explored. Developing a promotion related to post diffusion in SNSs or giving an economic incentive in reward for clicking on the "I like" bottom may have different effects on hubs and fringes. It will be also interesting to replicate the results in other social media platforms such as blogs or using other product categories and target groups.

Appendix 1: Stimuli for the experimental condition promoting eWOM and high brand post diffusion

The image shows a Facebook page for Samsung España. The main banner features the text "LLENA TU CASA DE SAMSUNG" and "En el Mes Samsung participa, gana y llena tu casa con la mejor tecnología." Below this is the Samsung logo and the page name "Samsung España". The post content includes the text "Nueva TV Led 10000 de Samsung de 75 pulgadas. Dale ya a like si te gusta!!!!" and a large image of a Samsung LED TV displaying a sunset scene. The post has 5,480 likes, 853 comments, and 237 shares. A callout box points to the text "Dale ya a like si te gusta!!!!" with the text "New 75' TV Led 10000 of Samsung. Click like if you like it!!!!". Another callout box points to the engagement metrics with the text "853 comments, 5,480 likes and 237 shares".

Appendix 2: Stimuli for the experimental condition no promoting eWOM and high brand post diffusion

The image shows a Facebook page for Samsung España. At the top, there is a banner for a promotion: "LLENA TU CASA DE SAMSUNG" with the text "En el Mes Samsung participa, gana y llena tu casa con la mejor tecnología." Below the banner is the Samsung logo and the page name "Samsung España". The page features several tabs: "Información", "Fotos", "Productos Samsung", "Concurso Smart TV", and "Galaxy S III". A post from Samsung España is highlighted, titled "Nueva TV Led 10000 de Samsung de 75 pulgadas". The post features a large image of a Samsung LED TV displaying a sunset scene. Below the image, the post has 5,480 likes, 853 comments, and 237 shares. Two blue callout boxes with arrows point to the post title and the engagement metrics.

Nueva TV Led 10000 de Samsung de 75 pulgadas

New 75' TV Led 10000 of Samsung

Me gusta · Comentar · Compartir

A 5.480 personas les gusta esto.

Ver los 853 comentarios

853 237

853 comments, 5,480 likes and 237 shares

Appendix 3: Stimuli for the experimental condition promoting eWOM and low brand post diffusion

The image shows a Facebook post from the official page of Samsung España. The post is titled "Nueva TV Led 10000 de Samsung de 75 pulgadas. Dale ya a like si te gusta!!!!!" and features a large image of a Samsung LED TV displaying a sunset scene. The post has 8 likes, 3 comments, and 2 shares. A callout box on the right side of the post highlights these engagement metrics: "3 comments, 8 likes and 2 shares".

LLENA TU CASA DE SAMSUNG
En el Mes Samsung participa, gana y llena tu casa con la mejor tecnología.

Samsung España
A 146.034 personas les gusta esta página

Computadoras/Tecnología
Bienvenidos a la página oficial de Samsung España. Únete, conversa con otros fans y consigue la última información sobre productos, promociones, eventos y mucho más.

Productos Samsung
Concurso Smart TV
Galaxy S III

Samsung España compartió un enlace a través de Samsung.
Hace 4 horas

Nueva TV Led 10000 de Samsung de 75 pulgadas. Dale ya a like si te gusta!!!!!

New 75' TV Led 10000 of Samsung. Click like if you like it!!!!!

Me gusta · Comentar · Compartir

A 8 personas les gusta esto.

Ver los 3 comentarios

3 2

3 comments, 8 likes and 2 shares

Appendix 4: Stimuli for the experimental condition no promoting eWOM and low brand post diffusion

The image shows a Facebook page for Samsung España. The main banner features the text "LLENA TU CASA DE SAMSUNG" and "En el Mes Samsung participa, gana y llena tu casa con la mejor tecnología." Below this is the Samsung logo and the page name "Samsung España" with 146,034 likes. A navigation bar includes "Computadoras/Tecnología", "Fotos", "Productos Samsung", "Concurso Smart TV", and "Galaxy S III".

The main post is titled "Nueva TV Led 10000 de Samsung de 75 pulgadas" and features an image of a Samsung LED TV displaying a sunset scene. A blue box highlights the headline with the text "New 75' TV Led 10000 of Samsung".

At the bottom of the post, the engagement statistics are shown: "Me gusta · Comentar · Compartir", "A 8 personas les gusta esto.", and "Ver los 3 comentarios". A blue box highlights these statistics with the text "3 comments, 8 likes and 2 shares".

Appendix 5: Questionnaire

1. Please, answer the following items regarding how likely it is that you do this actions after seeing the post about the new TV Led 10000 of Samsung in its brand page on Facebook:

I would not click "I like" in the post about this product	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	I would click "I like" in the post about this product
I would not comment the post about this product	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	I would comment the post about this product
I would not share the post about this product	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	I would share the post about this product

2. Please, indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the TV Led 10000 of Samsung:

The product is bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	The product is good
I dislike the product	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	I like the product

3. Please, indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the post of TV Led 10000 in Facebook brand page of Samsung:

4. How many "friends" do you have on Facebook?

	Strongly disagree										Strongly agree
The TV 10000 of Samsung has lot of "likes" on Facebook	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
The TV 10000 of Samsung has lot of comments on Facebook	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
The TV 10000 of Samsung has been very shared on Facebook	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

CHAPTER 4:

**“MY POSTS CANNOT BE
BOUGHT”. STRATEGIES TO
ENCOURAGE BLOGGERS TO
SPREAD THE WORD**

4.1 Introduction

Blogs have experienced an increasing importance in last years. They are defined as social media platforms with a form of diary where individuals, called bloggers, provide information with journal style entries in a reverse chronological order (Thevenot, 2007; Wenger, 2008). Bloggers post information about several topics on a frequent basis (Zhu and Than, 2007). Nowadays, there are more than 180 million of blogs around the world, up from 36 million only five years earlier (Nielsen, 2012). Blogs reached 58 millions of unique visits in 2012 (Nielsen, 2012). Interestingly, there are blogs that have more audience than some online newspapers (Kanlli, 2012). The most visited blog in the world has 46 million U.S. unique visitors monthly and 78 million global unique visitors (ComScore, 2013), while the online publication of one of the most popular newspapers in US, The New York Times, has “only” 31 million unique visitors each month (New York Times, 2013).

Blogs are not just relevant for the great audience they have but also for the influence they exert on consumers (Hsiao and Lu, 2013). Consumers judge blogs as more credible than other media such as TV or newspapers (Johnson and Kaye, 2004). They may talk about products and brands generating electronic word of mouth (eWOM). Besides the higher influence of eWOM over firm-generated sources of information (Bickart and Schindler, 2001), eWOM in blogs has shown more influence on consumers purchases than eWOM in other social media platforms (Technorati, 2013). In fact, bloggers have been related with opinion leaders (Droge et al., 2010). According to a survey developed by Technorati (2013) using 2.5 million of people that exert influence on others over the average, 86% of influencers have a blog. As a consequence of their potential influence, companies are more and more interested in engaging bloggers in their WOMM campaigns (Kozinets et al., 2010). They may serve as potential “seeds” for enhancing WOM about products and brands.

However, it is not clear how to encourage bloggers to spread the word. Previous studies have shown that monetary incentives increase the intention to generate both traditional WOM (Ryu and Feick, 2007; Wirtz and Chew, 2002) and eWOM (Hansen and Lee, 2013; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). However, this result may not be valid for bloggers because they could lose their reputation if their readers knew that they are recommending a product due to a monetary incentive. To the best of our knowledge, the use of monetary incentives has been previously studied in referral programmes (e.g. Ruy and Feick, 2007; Verlegh et al., 2013) and in sales promotions (Palazón and Delgado-Ballester, 2013) but not in blogs. Non-monetary incentives may be also used to enhance WOM (Libai et al., 2013). However, very little is known about the effects of using non-monetary

incentives to enhance eWOM in a blog context. Thus, companies may use of products or information about them as non-monetary incentives with the aim of engaging bloggers in eWOM. Therefore, this study analyses the effects of monetary incentives on bloggers' behaviour and contributes to WOM marketing literature by showing how to increase the probability of engaging bloggers in eWOM. The results obtained will be useful for companies in order to approach bloggers to spread the word about their products. They will provide valuable information about the strategies that best work with this type of seed.

Once we have shown (in Chapter 3) the strategies to engage hubs in eWOM that may contribute to the diffusion of product information, this study investigates how companies can build a successful strategy to persuade consumers to buy the product. Opinion leaders, adopting the form of bloggers on the Internet, may become the most influential seed. Thus, engaging bloggers, companies can indirectly persuade consumers to buy the product.

4.2 Bloggers as seeds of WOMM campaigns

Given the great influence that bloggers may exert in consumers, companies are very interested in using bloggers as seeds in WOMM campaigns. However, companies should be aware that the role of bloggers in eWOM is different from the role of general consumers in spreading the word about products and brands. Consumers usually write opinions as anonymous people or using a nick name on platforms that collect opinions from other consumers. However, in the blogosphere, the sender is usually known and acts as an influencer or opinion leader. Thus, strategies used to engage consumers in eWOM could not work for bloggers. In addition, not all blogs work the same way. The vast majority of blogs are usually managed by one person only, but they can be also a collective blog written by several individuals or even by a company (Singh et al., 2008). Blogs written by a company, also called corporative blogs, are not considered in this study because their opinions and recommendations cannot be considered as eWOM as they are written by a company. The main objective of blogs is improving the corporate image, rather than expressing independent and personal opinions, a more common goal among the other blogs (Ahuja and Medury, 2010).

Bloggers have a duty with their audience, the readers. As readers can post comments and interact with the blogger; the blogger may develop contents looking for interaction with readers, thereby facilitating the formation of bloggers-readers relationships (Tan et al., 2009). Readers can even subscribe to the blog in order to receive the blog's updates by email (Thevenot, 2007). Some readers may be bloggers at the same time, and blogs may be also linked to other blogs (Kumar et al., 2004). As a result, it is very likely that a

community will be built around the blog composed of its readers and other bloggers (Kozinets et al., 2010; Nardi et al., 2004).

Blogs serve as a channel for the blogger to express his/her own opinions and experiences (Zhu and Than, 2007). The blog is usually a form of self-representation for its author/s, providing considerable information about the authors' real life identities (Gilly and Schau 2003). Blogs are the social media equivalent of personal websites and can come in a multitude of different variations, from personal diaries describing the author's life to summaries of all relevant information in one specific content area (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). The main motivation to blog is related with the self (Nardi et al., 2004; Herring et al. 2005; Huang et al., 2007). Previous studies have shown that consumers have a blog to satisfy their needs to self-expression such as documenting one's life, providing commentary and opinions, expressing deeply felt emotions and articulating ideas through writing (Herring et al. 2005; Huang et al., 2007; Nardi et al., 2004).

The need of self-fulfillment and recognition are also satisfied through blogging (Papacharissi, 2004). As bloggers get more and more into writing their experiences on a particular product or industry, they become experts on it building credibility (Merriweather, 2013). As a consequence, more readers interested in the product category will visit the blog increasing the size of the community. In fact, bloggers are not just motivated to express themselves through blogging, but they would also like to receive feedback from others about themselves (Huang et al., 2007). Bloggers feel satisfied sharing themselves to others and always envision the presence of readers when they write (Kawaura et al., 1999). Therefore, blogging is related to social embeddedness in the sense that the creation and consumption of content are carrying out through social interactions (Huang et al., 2007). In order to facilitate this aim, blogs contain tools for readers to make comments and enter into a dialogue not only with the blog author, but also with other readers (Wijnia, 2004).

The size and credibility of the blogs are aspects very appreciated by bloggers. Bloggers are currently worried about the trade-off between increasing readers without losing credibility or reputation. The credibility and reputation of the blog are tightly linked with the independence of the blogger (Huang et al., 2007). Similarly, honesty, authenticity and openness are crucial for blogs (Wright, 2006). Blogs are also seen as a community that is not only about the sharing of information but also about building trust, friendship, and alliance (Kozinets et al., 2010). This blogs' singularity could affect how bloggers face WOMM campaigns. The common techniques used by companies to engage consumers to spread the word could be not effective for bloggers. Therefore, it is necessary to

research on what would be the best strategy to approach bloggers when developing WOMM campaigns.

4.3 Strategies to engage bloggers in eWOM. Social Influence Theory and Persuasion Knowledge Model

When bloggers are selected as “seeds” for WOMM campaigns a great tension may appear between the blogger and the company (Kozinets et al., 2010). Bloggers are recruited as a type of marketer transforming interpersonal communication into an intended persuasion effort (Zhu and Than, 2007). The blogger is asked to act both as a continuing community member and as a marketing agent. Thus, the traditional social contract that maintains market-place relationships at a distance from communities may be violated (Kozinets et al., 2010). The traditional role of the blogger (e.g. give advice about products and brands without companies’ intervention) may become blurred. The selection of a blogger for this type of activity could suppose a risk for his/her reputation. Therefore, it is very important to carefully consider how to approach bloggers for commercial purposes.

Companies can motivate bloggers to spread the word about their products using several strategies. Firstly, companies may directly pay bloggers to post about products and brands. A less aggressive strategy could consist of giving bloggers some information about the characteristics of the product waiting for them to write something about it. Finally, they can use a product seeding campaign in which a product is given to bloggers in order to spread the word about it (Libai et al., 2013). As the reader may imagine, the effect of the campaign on bloggers’ behaviour could be different depending on the selected strategy.

The differential effects these campaigns may have on bloggers could be explained through several theories. First, bloggers’ reaction to a WOMM campaign could be explained by the Social Influence Theory. Chi and Kim (2011) have observed that people are affected by social influence when spreading eWOM. Bloggers can be particularly affected by normative influence which refers to the tendency to conform to the expectations of others (Burnkrant and Cousineau, 1975). Normative influence may be especially salient in case of monetary incentives. Due to the duty that bloggers have with their readers, if they receive money from writing about a product or brand, bloggers may be suspicious about spreading this intended eWOM. According to normative influence, consumers follow the expectations of other people or groups to achieve rewards or avoid punishment (Homans, 1961). In this particular case, the punishment could be social disapproval which may occur when bloggers fail to convey desired impressions or when

they convey impressions that are undesired by their target audiences (Wooten and Reed, 2004). Thus, when a company approaches bloggers for a WOMM campaign they could avoid participating in it due to the normative influence they perceive from their readers.

Second, the Persuasion Knowledge Model may be useful to analyse what effects may be derived from each of these strategies. Persuasion knowledge involves beliefs about motives, tactics and how persuasion works (Friestad and Wright, 1994, 1995; Rule et al., 1985). The consumer (or the blogger) must recognize the persuasion in order to use persuasion knowledge within a particular interaction or after a marketing message (Campbell and Kirmani, 2008; Friestad and Wright, 1994). Persuasion knowledge is not chronically activated after its acquisition; instead, it is available for activation when the consumer believes a message is intended to persuade (Cowley and Barron, 2008). Therefore, the probability of activation may depend on the type of strategy the company has selected for approaching bloggers.

Message cues that increase the salience of the marketer's manipulative intent are likely to activate persuasion knowledge (Brown and Krishna, 2004; Campbell and Kirmani 2000; Kirmani and Zhu, 2007). Once an action is identified as a persuasive tactic, bloggers may begin to think about the appropriateness of the marketer's motive and specific tactic use (Brown and Krishna, 2004; Campbell and Kirmani, 2008). Previous studies have shown that when consumers infer that a marketer's action is driven by ulterior motives, there is greater resistance to persuasion (Campbell and Kirmani, 2000, Verlegh et al., 2013). The reason behind this resistance is that people may feel these marketing actions threaten their freedom. Therefore, when a blogger senses that someone else is limiting his or her freedom to choose or act, an uncomfortable state of reactance may result, creating motivation to reassert that freedom. This intention to limit individuals' freedom provokes oppositional feelings and behaviors (Buller et al., 1998).

4.3.1 Using monetary incentives

Giving a monetary incentive to bloggers in reward for blogging about the product could be the most salient and aggressive strategy to encourage eWOM. Companies can pay bloggers if they write about the product, while no reward will be obtained if they do not write anything. Thus, this strategy can be seen as a mean of buying bloggers' opinions about products. When bloggers write a post as a result of a WOMM campaign, readers receive the text-based advertisement in an intimate, friendly, engaging, and relatively informal way, probably without realizing that it is an advertisement or a marketing message (Zhu and Than, 2007). Thus, bloggers are acting against the implicit norms of the community that are built around trust and friendship. According to normative

influence, since this action goes against the expectation of readers, it is very likely that bloggers perceive some kind of negative reactions from their readers (Burnkrant and Cousineau, 1975). A backlash may be expected from readers when they feel that the contents in the blog cross the line into traditional advertising. The audience may feel they are being 'fooled'. The blogger may then expect that readers will no longer trust the blog as it contains ulterior commercial motives and serves as a marketing tool instead of a personal motivation (Zhu and Than, 2007). In fact, some readers have rejected their favourite bloggers because they do not longer approve the commercialization of blogs (Matikainen, 2012). Thus, bloggers will perceive that their readers could react against them if they write a post in exchange of a monetary incentive. On the basis of the above reasoning, we propose the following:

H1: Bloggers will perceive a more negative reaction from their readers when a monetary incentive is offered than when it is not.

Previous studies have shown that individuals' intention to generate both traditional WOM and eWOM is higher when the company pay consumers to spread the word (Hansen and Lee, 2013; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Ryu and Feick, 2007; Wirtz and Chew, 2002). However, as we have explained before, bloggers play a different role in eWOM compared to general consumers as they have created a community around the blog and have to conform to the expectations of others (Burnkrant and Cousineau, 1975). Thus, the impact of monetary incentives cannot be extrapolated to eWOM generation in the blogosphere. Given the salience of paying for opinions, it is likely that bloggers activate persuasion knowledge and resist to the persuasion of the company. In fact, the payment in exchange for a post could be considered a bribery as a bribe implies reciprocity (Tanzi, 1998). Thus, bloggers can suffer from the "bribe effect". The term bribe effect was developed in the public goods context, and describes the negative feeling that appears within individuals as soon as they are offered money to accept hosting a waste disposal facility within their community (Claro, 2007). This effect may occur when people feel they are being bought off and/or perceive that it is morally inappropriate (Elster, 1992; Gerrard, 1994). The effect is therefore very likely to occur in case of monetary compensation (Frey et al., 1996). According to the bribe effect, people will reject a monetary compensation when they perceive the bribery as larger than the benefit obtained (Claro, 2007). Thus, in the bloggers' context, the lost in reputation that may occur when accepting the participation in a WOMM campaign may be higher than the benefits obtained with it. As credibility and reputation are related with the independence and honesty of bloggers (Huang et al., 2007; Wright 2006), they can lose credibility and reputation by writing a post in exchange for money (Tan et al., 2009). In such a case, the

cost assumed would not compensate the money received. In bribe effect situations, the main reason that people have to reject a proposal is that they feel as they are bribed (Claro, 2007; Frey et al., 1996). Therefore, bloggers can feel both the risk of reputation lost and the feeling of being bribed when the company offers them a monetary incentive. Thus, we proposed:

H2: Bloggers will show a lower intention to generate eWOM when a monetary incentive is offered than when it is not.

Once bloggers decide to write a post about a product motivated by a monetary incentive, they may reveal they have obtained a monetary incentive or not. This action is called as disclosure (Tuk et al., 2009). According to the Word of Mouth Marketing Association Ethics Code (2009), individuals that express their opinions due to a company incentive should disclose the compensation received. However, not all individuals (including bloggers) follow these recommendations.

When bloggers receive a monetary incentive, a conflict of interest may arise. Conflict of interests occurs when individuals' professional responsibilities diverge from their personal interests (Cain et al., 2005). Individuals face a conflict of interests between their professional ethic and their personal gains (Dana and Loewenstein, 2003). These conflicts of interest occur, for example, in the relationship between medical practitioners and pharmaceutical industry. Pharmaceutical industry rewards medical practitioners to prescribe their products. Therefore, in some cases, practitioners may contribute to inappropriate prescribing practices. It is also a common problem in consulting. Accounting firms and their employees face conflicts of interests when they audit the same companies to which they provide consulting services (Cain et al., 2011). In our domain, bloggers could also face a conflict of interests when they are trying to maintain their professionalism as bloggers offering their independent opinion and a company offers them a monetary incentive for writing a post. Bloggers may reduce this conflict by giving information to their readers, that is, by disclosing they have been approached by a company. In fact, the most important response to conflicts of interests is disclosure (Cain et al., 2005). As people are averse to being viewed as biased, individuals are motivated to avoid conflict of interests disclosing that they have been contacted by a company (Sah and Loewenstein, 2013). Disclosure may reduce the perceived immorality of giving possible biased advice by signaling that bias is widespread and therefore less aberrant (Schultz et al., 2007). Disclosure also offers benefits to the advisor diminishing his/her responsibility for the adverse outcomes of the advices (Cain et al., 2011). Based on this reasoning, we can infer that bloggers will show a higher propensity to disclose

that they have been approached by a company when a monetary incentive is offered than when it is not. Therefore, we propose:

H3: Bloggers will show a higher intention to disclose when a monetary incentive is offered than when it is not.

Readers expect that the opinion of the blogger will be unbiased (Hung et al., 2007). Thus, bloggers know that any suspect about the commercial interferences in their posts may imply a lost of reputation and harm the community around which the blog is built. As one of the motivation of bloggers is social interaction (Huang et al., 2007), they could decide to sacrifice any action of commercialism to retain the community. In fact, feedback from readers affects the intention to continue blogging (Kawaura et al., 1999). According to normative influence, individuals follow the expectations of other people or groups to avoid punishment (Homans, 1961). As receiving a monetary incentive in exchange for a post could be considered as a bribery, bloggers will have a lower intention to write about a product in order to avoid the punishment from their readers. Therefore, perceived negative reactions of readers will mediate the effect proposed in H2. Thus, we propose:

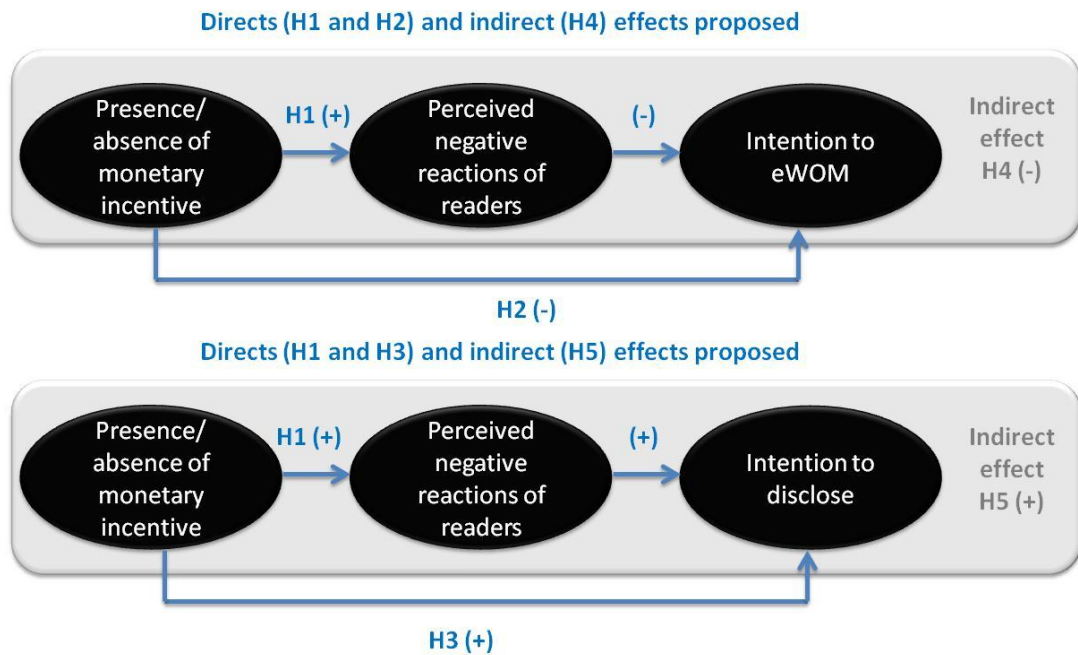
H4: Perceived negative reactions of readers will mediate the relationship between the presence/absence of monetary incentives and the intention to eWOM.

Previous studies have shown that early disclosing leads to more favourable evaluations of the sender in comparison to knowing that the sender has received an incentive to spread the word after the conversation (Tuk et al., 2009). The senders will be rated as more credible when they reveal that they are giving an opinion about a brand or product because a company has approached them (Carl, 2008). Therefore, bloggers will have a higher intention to disclose in order to avoid a possible negative reaction from readers. In other words, they will show a higher tendency to disclose as a means of attenuating the negative reaction they expect from their readers. On the basis of this reasoning, we propose the following:

H5: Perceived negative reactions of readers will mediate the relationship between the presence/absence of monetary incentives and the intention to disclose.

Figure 1 shows the direct and indirect effects proposed in previous hypotheses.

Figure 1: Direct and Indirect effects proposed in H1-H5



4.3.2 Using non-monetary incentives

Companies can also give bloggers some information about products or even the product in order to spread the word about it. When companies follow the strategy of giving the product to bloggers, they have two options. They can either allow bloggers to keep it, or ask them to return it once they have tried it. The perception of the blogger may differ depending on the strategy the company has decided to use. Receiving a product or some valuable information could be considered by bloggers as less aggressive than receiving a monetary incentive, being less likely that they activate persuasion knowledge. Companies will send information or the product to bloggers without knowing if bloggers are going to blog about the product or not. After receiving the information or the product, bloggers will decide about post or not about the product. Because reward is already obtained in these cases, bloggers may better react to non-monetary incentives than to monetary incentives. Thus, non-monetary incentive may be perceived as less risky than monetary one.

A common practice of bloggers is searching for information susceptible of being in their blogs (Huang et al., 2007). According to Technorati (2011), bloggers use several sources of information such as other bloggers, conversations with friends, print media and social media. Thus, companies may facilitate the bloggers' job by offering them information about their products or even the product itself. Bloggers very much value this type of information or product trial, especially if products have not been launched yet into de market (Kanlli, 2012). They appreciate exclusive information because it keeps readers

popping in, reading up the blog (Merriweather, 2013). Thus, bloggers could feel proud to receive information about products or even the product itself. In addition, bloggers can feel that they are performing a service for their community because they offer some information and their own opinion about a new product (Kozinets et al., 2010). They do not feel that this behavior may be punished. Offering a product could be seen as less ethical by readers than offer information about the product. Indeed, when the company sends the product to bloggers, it could be seen as an incentive. However, this strategy allows bloggers to try the product and write a more accurate review. Thus, this WOMM campaign allows readers to be aware of new products and the opinion of bloggers about them. Therefore, bloggers may feel that readers will not react against the blogger if they write about a product when they have received a product. Thus, we propose:

H6: Bloggers will perceive a similar negative reaction from their readers when receiving a product than when receiving only information about the product.

As we have explained before, when the company gives a product to the blogger they can choose between allowing the blogger to keep it or asking the blogger to return it. Although both giving a product to bloggers and allowing them to keep it can be seen as rewarding them, they may perceive any of them as being bribed by the company. For example, Tanzi (1998) suggests that a bribe implies reciprocity while a gift should not. Similarly, Okada (2005) demonstrates that passively receiving rewards does not require the same justification than receiving money that is more difficult to justify. In addition, people are deterred from bribery because the society signals that this behavior is unacceptable. In contrast, giving and receiving gifts are seen as good things to do (Ben-Ner and Putterman, 1999). Thus, bloggers will not perceive that their readers can react against them when they write a post about a product that a company has given them as a gift. Since gifts are well considered, their reaction will not differ from a strategy in which they have to return the product. Therefore, we propose:

H7: In case of a product seeding campaign, bloggers will perceive a similar negative reaction from their readers when they can keep the product and when they have to return it.

If bloggers receive some information about the product, the post about the product will be limited to this information. However, if the company sends the product to them, they will be able to try it and post their experience with the product with a more accurate point of view. Previous studies have shown that as the confidence in one's ability to provide interesting or useful information to others increases, individuals will have a higher intention to share information (Lu and Hsiao, 2007). Thus, the blogger will have a higher

intention to share information in the blog when the company gives the product to them than when it sends only information about it. Besides being able to post a more accurate opinion about the product, bloggers may perceive more social risk in giving an opinion based just on information than in expressing their opinion based on a product trial. Previous literature has consistently shown that product trial reduce perceived risk (Smith, 1993). If a reader buys the product as a result of a blog post and it is not what he/she expected, the relationship between blogger and reader will suffer (Folkes 1984; Stephen and Lehman, 2009). According to normative influence (Wooten and Reed, 2004), this punishment will try to be avoided by bloggers. Thus, it is more likely that bloggers write about the product in the blog when the company gives the product to them than when they only send them information:

H8: Bloggers will show a higher intention to generate eWOM when receiving a product than when receiving only information.

Initially, as bloggers may not consider the product as an incentive, their intention to blog should be the same regardless of the strategy used in a product seeding campaign. However, previous studies have demonstrated the difficulty showed by individuals in taking a neutral and objective perspective when they have a personal interest in arriving at a specific behaviour (Bacock et al., 1995). This issue has been broadly studied in the relationship between medical practitioners and pharmaceutical industry when pharmaceutical industry rewards the prescription of products (Dana and Loewenstein, 2003). Previous studies in this context have shown that medical practitioners view that gifts do not influence them (Hume, 1990). However, research has shown that when individuals try to be objective, their judgments are subject to an unconscious and unintentional self-serving bias. When individuals have a stake in reaching a particular behaviour, they weigh arguments in a biased fashion that favors a specific conclusion (Bacock et al., 1995; Loewenstein et al., 1992). Individuals are generally unaware of the bias that generate the gifts, so they do not make efforts to correct for them (Dana and Loewenstein, 2003). A similar reasoning may be applied to bloggers. When a company allows them to keep the product, they may perceive they are free to decide if posting about it or not. Nevertheless, they unintentionally and unconsciously will succumb to bias showing a higher intention to spread the word when they can keep the product than when they cannot. Therefore, we propose:

H9: In case of a product seeding campaign bloggers will show a higher intention to generate eWOM when they can keep the product and when they have to return it.

As we have explained before, bloggers mainly blog by satisfying their need of self-expression, self-fulfillment (Nardi et al., 2004; Herring et al. 2005; Huang et al., 2007; Papacharissi, 2004) and social interactions (Huang et al., 2007). Thus, they will desire to create a high community around their blog. This community is based on honesty and trust (Wright 2006). Therefore, they may not want to assume any risk that could damage their community. Previous studies have shown that when the sender does not disclose the reward, there is uncertainty and unclearness about the real motives (Tuk, 2008). In addition, the sender is rated as more credible when they reveal that they are giving an opinion about a brand or product because a company has approached them (Carl, 2008). Thus, although bloggers may not consider the product as an incentive, they may want to make sure that their readers are aware of reward obtained, in this case the received product. In contrast, when they have only received information, their intention to disclose may be lower since no risk is perceived. If they hide that a company has given them a product, it could be thought that bloggers have ulterior motives to not disclose it. In order to do not damage their reputation, bloggers will prefer to disclose that the company has given them a product, regardless of the need of returning it. Thus, we propose:

H10: Bloggers will show a higher intention to disclose when receiving a product than when receiving only information about the product.

H11: Bloggers will show a similar intention to disclose when they can keep the product than when they have to return it.

4.4 Methodology

4.4.1 Study design and product selection

A 2 monetary incentive (yes vs. no) x 3 non-monetary incentive (only product information vs. keep the product vs. return the product) between-subjects experimental study was developed using bloggers. A control condition in which the blogger is aware of the product without the company intervention was also introduced. Seven scenarios were created for the study (see appendix 1).

First, we have to select the topic of the blog. According to Technorati (2011), the topic most blogged is technology. Thus, the study is just focused on technological blogs. As it is important that the product fits with the type of blog because the reaction of bloggers to the campaign can vary, we chose a technological blog for the study. For example, if a gadget is offered to a blogger of fashion her/his intention to spread the word about the product could be lower than if the gadget is offered to a tech blogger regardless of the type of strategy the company uses. Thus, we selected a tablet as a target product. We

did not provide any information about the brand and characteristics of the tablet in order not to bias the results.

4.4.2 Sample, data collection and procedure

We created a data base for developing the study including Hispanic technological blogs. We used the two most important Hispanic blog directories, “Bitácoras” and “La Blogoteca” for this purpose. “Bitácoras” has more than 250,000 blogs registered of which 1,700 are about technology. “La Blogoteca” has more than 35,000 blogs registered of which 6,260 are about technology, science and Internet. We visited these nearly 8,000 blogs about technology.

The following information was registered for each blog: URL of the blog, name/s of the blogger/s, nationality and contact information. Contact information consists of an email, the URL of the contact form located in the blog or the Facebook/Google+ profile of either the blog or blogger (see Table 1). Unfortunately, we could not register all technological blogs in the data base for different reasons. There were many blogs that did not exist. Other blogs were excluded because they did not provide contact information. In addition, in “La Blogoteca” directory we did not registered the blogs about science and the Internet in order to ensure the target product fitted well with the blog. Duplicity between both data base were controlled. In addition, not updated blogs were not considered by excluding blogs without any post in 2013. The final data base includes 1,153 Hispanic blogs about technology. Data base was created from October to December 2013. Two trained undergraduate students developed the task.

Data were collected through an online survey. Contact information provided by bloggers was used to invite them to participate in the study. The link of the survey was accompanied by a message explaining the aim of the study. In order to be more accessible and inviting, we personalized the message with the name of the bloggers and wrote the message in a colloquial language. The message also invited the bloggers to express their opinion about WOMM campaigns and we offered the possibility of contacting with the researchers in order to solve doubts about the study. All respondents were also offered a summary of the results. Bloggers showed a positive reaction to the investigation as demonstrated by the fact that more than 90% of those who participated in the study sent an email back to the researchers showing their interest about the study. As we had seven experimental conditions (six experimental conditions and the control condition), we created different scenarios accessed through links (see the scenarios in appendix 1). The questionnaire was the same for all participants in the six conditions except for the manipulation checks. The questionnaire for the control condition had to be

adapted to the absence of company approach. Bloggers were randomly assigned to the seven conditions.

Table 1: Information collected in the data base

Blog address
Contact information: Email URL of the contact form located in the blogs Facebook/Google+ of the blog/blogger
Blogger's name
Blogger's nationality

We sent 1,120 messages to bloggers. 33 messages could not reach their corresponding bloggers because their contact information was wrong or communication failed. Following this procedure, 262 valid questionnaires were collected which indicates a response rate of 23.39%. A second message was sent between one and two weeks after the first one as a reminder obtaining 97 additional valid questionnaires. Altogether, 359 valid questionnaires were collected with a final response rate of 32.05%. The high response rate along with their positive reaction to the study indicates that the issue under research was very interesting for bloggers.

4.4.3 Measurement

We measured the intention to eWOM in the blog using a 11-point semantic differential scale asking participants how likely they would blog about the product. The manipulation of the use of monetary incentives was checked by asking individuals whether the company had offered them a monetary incentive to blog about the new tablet or not. We also asked bloggers if company allowed them to keep the tablet once tested or not. Both manipulation checks were yes/no questions. Finally, bloggers in conditions in which the product was not given were asked if the company gave them some information about the product. Regarding the reaction of readers, we asked bloggers about their perceived negative reactions of readers using the scale of Tan et al. (2009) composed of four items (Cronbach's alpha=0.919). We use a three items scale to assess intention to disclose (Cronbach's alpha=0.864). All these concepts were measured on 11-point likert scales. Some information about the blog was requested at the last part of the questionnaire. Number of readers was measured by asking how many unique readers per month their blogs have. Bloggers also provided information about the number of times they have been approached by a company for participating in a WOMM campaign, the frequency they blog, and how long they had been blogging. Blog address was also requested in order to avoid the same blogger participated twice in this study. The questionnaire is shown in Appendix 2.

4.5 Results

4.5.1 Sample characteristics

Table 2. Sample characteristics (N=359)

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	SD			
Number of Readers	46,242	20	1,500,000	166,764.37			
Years posting	5.5	0	17	2.94			
		N	%	N	%		
Post frequency	Several times per day	37	10.3				
	Everyday	38	10.6				
	Several times per week	74	20.6				
	Every week	34	9.5				
	Several times per month	84	23.4				
	Every month	27	7.5				
	Less than every month	65	18.1				
Previous experience in WOMM campaigns	Companies that have never been approached	108	30				
	Companies that have been previously approached by companies			Once	15	4.2	
				Two times	31	8.6	
			251	70	Three times	30	8.4
					More than three times	175	48.8
Country	Spain	251	70				
	Latin America			México	25	7	
				Argentina	25	7	
			101	28	Colombia	11	3
					Perú	11	3
					Venezuela	11	3
					Others	18	5
Others	7	2					

The final sample is composed of 70% Spanish bloggers, 28% are from Latin America while the resting 2% come from other nationalities. A half of American bloggers are from México and Argentina. As we can see in Table 2, blogs have a mean of more than 46,000 unique readers per month and their authors have been blogging for five years and a half on average. Nearly 40% of the sample blog at least once a week. More than two-thirds of the sample had ever been previously approached by a company to participate in a WOMM campaign, while a half of those who were contacted had been more than three times.

4.5.2 Comments on the feedback received by respondents

A total of 18 bloggers expressed their personal opinions about WOMM campaigns. These opinions may be relevant for understanding and interpreting the main results obtained in this study. Therefore, we have considered that some comments on this feedback would be interesting before moving to the main results section. We have organized the opinions into four different topics: self-enhancement for having a blog, blog

content, incentives, and honesty. Firstly, regarding bloggers' motivations of having a blog that are related with the self:

"My interest in writing in a blog is motivated by a mix of looking forward to be important for someone and sharing my experiences or things that I consider interesting".

"I participate in blogosphere motivated by self-esteem. I have the aim of helping the community"

Secondly, some opinions highlighted how important it is that the product fits with the topic of their blog:

"If the product is not related with the topic of my blog, I will not blog about it although the company sends the product to me"

"I am very loyal to my blog topic, if a company offers me some product that does not fit with the posts I usually write, I will not blog about it, even though they offer me some money".

Bloggers also manifested their favourable attitude towards the use of non-monetary incentives consisting of product trials. They may feel flattered by the company and it is important for them to try the product before writing about it:

"If an important company sends a product to you for analysing it, it must be because you have a high number of readers and the company wants to reach them through your analysis, so this is favourable."

"If a company gives you a product to test it, you will feel very excited"

"You can feel in debt with the company, but it is psychological"

"In general, bloggers always thanks companies that send a product to them"

"If the company sends the product to me and I can try the product, I will blog about it. If I cannot try it, I will not write about the product".

However, regarding monetary incentives, there was not consensus among their responses. Some bloggers think that it is ethical and correct the strategy in which companies offer monetary incentives to bloggers, but there are other bloggers who will not accept this proposition:

"If companies pay bloggers the money agreed on, they would be glad to analyze the product and blog about it. It is only a matter of previously agreeing on the value of the opinion"

“The fact that a company pays in reward for blogging about a product is as if ethical as you blog about it for self-esteem. We have to remember that a good post, and a good product analysis needs time, and time should be rewarded.”

“I have received this proposition a vast number of times...and my policy is simple: I do not receive money blogging, if I did it, it would affect how I should write as well as my credibility”

“A post written due to monetary incentive could harm your reputation as a blogger. Anything you do in this direction could damage the community created around your blog”.

Finally, most bloggers posit that regardless of the type of WOMM campaign used to approach them, the most important thing is to be honest. They will blog the positive characteristics of the product but also the negative ones. They are also against any kind of conditioning on what they write:

“I always analyse the positive and negative product characteristics in order to let my readers draw their own conclusions about the product. Even when a company has approached me to blog about a product, I have also shared and commented about the negative aspects.”

“Honesty is the most important thing in my blog and I would never lie in exchange for money. The company that pays should also accept praises and bad reviews about its products. In case of requests about the content of the post, I would not accept the offer.”

“Our approach is always to be honest, if a product has a low quality but a nice design we should highlight the good job done in design, but we should never say that the product is fast when we know that it is not true. We would lose credibility and waste our reputation.”

“I have no problems in blogging about a product when companies give an incentive to me, however, it is unacceptable that the company wants to guide my opinion about the product”.

4.5.3 Main results

Manipulation checks confirmed that the majority of individuals in each condition remembered the scenario correctly (see Table 3). Most individuals remembered that they were not offered any incentive (91% vs. 9%), whereas nearly 32% of those who were offered an economic incentive failed to recall it. Regarding the use of non-monetary incentives, recall of the scenario was higher when bloggers were offered a product as

incentive than when they were only given information about the product. In summary, results provide support for the manipulations undertaken. Therefore, main results are reported on the basis of all respondents. Nevertheless, an inspection of results considering only those respondents who correctly remember the scenario (N=249) did not substantially altered the subsequent reported results.

Table 3. Manipulation check

	Condition	Remember the scenario (%)		χ^2	p
		Yes	No		
Monetary incentive	Yes	68.1	31.9	21.356	0.000
	No	91.0	9.0	112.389	0.000
Non-monetary incentive	Only product information	64.5	35.5	10.452	0.001
	Return the product	83.2	16.8	44.446	0.000
	Keep the product	82.9	17.1	45.343	0.000

Analyses of variance were performed to test the proposed hypotheses. As bloggers' perception of negative reaction of readers, intention to eWOM and intention to disclose were highly correlated, a MANOVA approach was used to test the proposed hypotheses. We also ran independent ANOVAs on each of the dependent variables in order to better explain proposed hypotheses.

As the size of the community of each blog may affect the results, we developed a MANCOVA test introducing the number of readers as a covariable. Number of readers had a great range, and therefore it was previously transformed into a logarithmic variable as Weisberg (2005) recommends. The MANCOVA tests shows that the number of readers of the blog has no effect on the perceived negative reaction of readers ($F=0.688$, $p=0.407$), nor on the intention to eWOM ($F=0.000$, $p=0.998$). The effect of the convariate is also non-significant on the intention to disclose ($F=1.018$, $p=0.314$).

As we can see in Table 4, bloggers perceive a higher negative reaction of readers when the company offers them a monetary incentive than when monetary incentive is not offered ($M_{\text{Monetary Incentive}}=2.83$ vs. $M_{\text{Non-Monetary Incentive}}=2.24$; $F=4.745$, $p<0.05$), supporting H1. However, as we observe in Tables 5 and 6, there are not differences between the strategy in which a monetary incentive is given to bloggers and the one in which a monetary incentive is not given on bloggers' intention to eWOM ($M_{\text{Monetary Incentive}}=6.84$ vs. $M_{\text{Non-Monetary Incentive}}=6.76$; $F=0.059$, $p>0.10$). Intention to disclose the WOMM campaign in the blog is neither affected by the use of a monetary incentive ($M_{\text{Monetary Incentive}}=6.14$ vs. $M_{\text{Non-Monetary Incentive}}=6.00$; $F=0.132$, $p>0.10$). Thus, H2 and H3 are not supported. In addition, bloggers perceive that their readers will have similar negative reactions regardless the type of non-monetary incentive used ($M_{\text{Product}}=2.45$ vs. $M_{\text{Only Information}}=2.67$;

F=0.632, $p>0.10$). Among those who were offered a product, the need for returning it did not affect the expected reaction of readers ($M_{\text{Keep the Product}}=2.66$ vs. $M_{\text{Return the product}}=2.22$; $F=1.625$, $p>0.10$). Thus, H6 and H7 are both supported. In addition, bloggers show a higher intention to eWOM when the company offers them a product compared to when they give them only information ($M_{\text{Product}}=7.42$ vs. $M_{\text{Only Information}}=5.77$; $F=23.066$, $p<0.01$). When the company offers the product to bloggers they show a higher intention to eWOM when being allowed to keep it than when not being allowed ($M_{\text{Keep the Product}}=7.87$ vs. $M_{\text{Return the product}}=6.96$; $F=4.714$, $p<0.05$). These results support H8 and H9. Finally, bloggers have a higher intention to disclose the WOMM campaign when they receive a product than when they receive only information about it ($M_{\text{Product}}=6.43$ vs. $M_{\text{Only Information}}=5.47$; $F=6.774$, $p<0.01$). Thus, H10 is also supported. In contrast, when bloggers receive the product, their intention to disclose is similar when they have to return it than when they do not have to ($M_{\text{Keep the Product}}=6.09$ vs. $M_{\text{Return the product}}=6.78$; $F=2.322$, $p>0.10$). Therefore, H11 is supported.

Table 4. Cell means for bloggers' perceived negative reaction of readers

		Monetary incentive		Total
		No	Yes	
Non-monetary incentive	Keep the Product	2.33 ^{ab}	3.04 ^{ab}	2.66
	Return the product	2.17 ^b	2.27 ^{ab}	2.22
	Only Product Information	2.22 ^b	3.10 ^a	2.67
		2.24	283	

Note: ^{abc}:

Means with different subscripts differ significantly ($p<0.05$) according to post-hoc DMS tests. Means with same subscripts are not significantly different.

Table 5. Cell means for intention to eWOM

		Monetary incentive		Total
		No	Yes	
Non-monetary incentive	Keep the Product	8.09 ^a	7.62 ^{ab}	7.87
	Return the product	7.02 ^{ab}	6.90 ^{cb}	6.96
	Only Product Information	5.97 ^c	5.57 ^c	5.77
		6.00	6.76	

Note: ^{abc}: Means with different subscripts differ significantly ($p<0.05$) according to post-hoc DMS tests. Means with same subscripts are not significantly different.

Table 6. Cell means for intention to disclose

		Monetary incentive		Total
		No	Yes	
Non-monetary incentive	Keep the Product	6.15 ^{ab}	6.02 ^{ab}	6.09
	Return the product	7.03 ^a	6.53 ^a	6.78
	Only Product Information	5.01 ^b	5.92 ^{ab}	5.47
		6.00	6.00	

Note: ^{abc}: Means with different subscripts differ significantly ($p < 0.05$) according to post-hoc DMS tests. Means with same subscripts are not significantly different.

Additionally, we calculated the interaction effect between the monetary and non-monetary conditions on the three dependent variables. The interaction effects on the perceived negative reaction of readers ($F=0.747$; $p > 0.475$), on the intention to eWOM ($F=0.600$; $p > 0.10$) and on the intention to disclose ($F=1.463$; $p > 0.233$) were all non-significant. The absence of interaction suggests that the strategies of giving monetary incentives are independent from the strategies of giving non-monetary incentives.

As there are not interactions between the different strategies, we then compared conditions in twos in order to check possible differences between them. We developed post-hoc DMS tests to compare the effect of the different strategies in twos. Results are shown in the subscripts of Tables 4, 5 and 6. As we can see in Table 4, bloggers perceive their readers will have more negative reactions when the company offers them a monetary incentive regardless of the non-monetary incentive used. The strategy that generates highest intention to eWOM consists of offering the product to bloggers and allowing them to keep it. The condition in which bloggers have to return the product but a non-monetary incentive is offered also provoke a high intention to eWOM. In addition, the strategies with the worst results are those in which the product is not given regardless of offering a monetary incentive to bloggers or not. With respect to the intention to disclose, all six strategies generate a similar intention except for the case in which the company gives only some information about the product without monetary incentive. In such a case, the intention to disclose is lower than the strategies in which bloggers have to return the product. Assuming the campaign should not be noticed, the strategy of giving only information may be the most suitable in terms of bloggers intentions to the reveal the company contact.

We also compared the intention to eWOM derived from these strategies with the control condition in which the company does not take part and the blogger is aware of the product through other channels. The two strategies that obtained worst results (those in

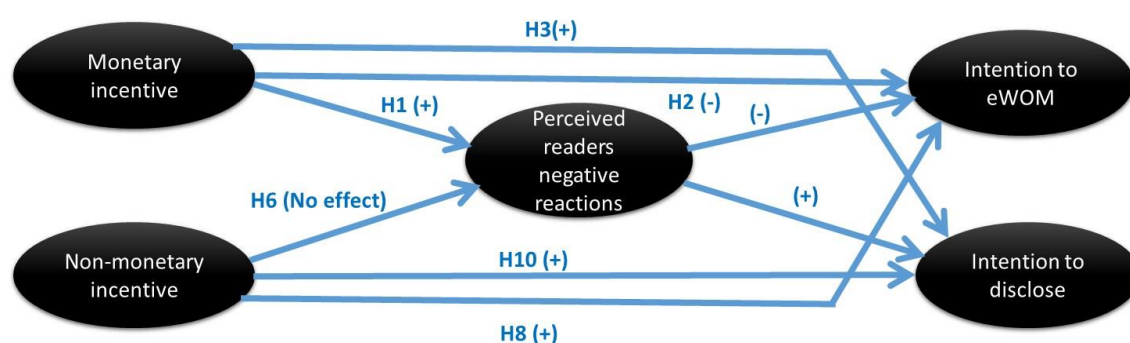
which only product information is provided) generate a similar intention to eWOM than the control condition ($M_{\text{Only Product Information+Monetary Incentive}}=5.57$ vs. $M_{\text{Control Condition}}=5.59$, $p>0.10$; $M_{\text{Only Product Information+Non-Monetary Incentive}}=5.97$ vs. $M_{\text{Control Condition}}=5.59$, $p>0.10$). In contrast, the strategies in which the product is given generate a higher intention to eWOM than the control condition ($M_{\text{Keep the Product+Non-Monetary Incentive}}=8.09$ vs. $M_{\text{Control Condition}}=5.59$, $p<0.01$; $M_{\text{Keep the Product+Monetary Incentive}}=7.62$ vs. $M_{\text{Control Condition}}=5.59$, $p<0.05$; $M_{\text{Return the Product+Non-Monetary Incentive}}=7.02$ vs. $M_{\text{Control Condition}}=5.59$, $p<0.05$; $M_{\text{Return the Product+Monetary Incentive}}=6.90$ vs. $M_{\text{Control Condition}}=5.59$, $p<0.10$).

In summary, it is interesting to note that monetary incentives have no effect on the intention to eWOM and intention to disclose, and that bloggers perceive that writing a post in exchange for money can provoke negative reactions of their readers. In contrast, the use of non-monetary strategies engages the intention to eWOM. Giving a product to bloggers enhances their intention to eWOM, and also their intention to disclose they have been approached by a company. When a company gives a product to bloggers they should allow them to keep it in order to increase their probability of generating eWOM. Bloggers perceive that their readers will not react negatively if a company gives them a product with the aim of bloggers to write about it.

4.5.4 Additional test of hypotheses

In order to further confirm the results obtained, we have proposed a model with the hypotheses that have been tested previously with MANOVA tests. The proposed model (see Figure 3) is to be tested using structural equation modeling (SEM).

Figure 3: Proposed Model



We tested the model using 330 questionnaires. We did not include individuals in the control condition because they were not exposed to any WOMM campaign. In order to introduce the experimental conditions in the model, we coded the presence/absence of monetary incentive and the type of non-monetary incentive as dummy variables. As a

consequence, the model does not take into account the differences between bloggers who could keep and those who had to return the product once tested.

First of all, we assessed the validity of the scales by performing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOSv18.0. The model was found to have acceptable fit indices as the χ^2 ratio to degrees-of-freedom is lower than the suggested value of 3 (Carmines and McIver, 1981); NFI, IFI and CFI are higher than 0.9 (Bentler and Bonnet, 1980; Hu and Bentler, 1999) and RMSA is lower than 0.08 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993) (χ^2 (28) = 62.316, $p < 0.01$; $\chi^2/df = 2.23$; NFI=0.966; IFI=0.981; CFI=0.981; RMSA=0.061).

As Table 7 shows, each item has a significant factor loading ($p < 0.01$) for its theorized construct. All values are over 0.60 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). These results assure the convergent validity of the multi-item measures used. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients are all greater than 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). In fact, the lowest alpha value is 0.864. The composite reliability is above the standard of 0.60 suggested by Bagozzi and Yi (1988). In addition, we tested the average variance extracted (AVE) for each factor. The test showed that the 0.50 minimum suggested by Fornell and Larker (1981) is exceeded by all constructs. These findings widely support the reliability of the multi-item measures used in the study.

Table 6: Measurements of convergent validity and reliability

	Standardized loadings	t	α -Cronbach	CR	AVE
Perceived negative reactions of readers			0.919	0.921	0.747
It would be likely to discourage readers from visiting my blog	0.950***	22.957			
It would be likely to result in readers boycotting my blog	0.973***	23.974			
It would be likely to deter readers from visiting my blog	0.788***	17.019			
It would be likely to receive negative responses from my readers	0.719***	14.967			
Intention to disclose			0.864	0.871	0.696
I would disclose on the blog that the company approached me	0.689***	13.710			
I would report on the blog if and how the company rewarded me	0.963***	21.420			
I would tell my readers exactly what the company had asked me	0.829***	17.349			

We assessed discriminant validity using two approaches. First, we compared the AVE for each of our constructs with the squared correlation between construct pairs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Table 7 shows that AVE exceeds the squared correlations for all measures. Second, the confidence interval was calculated at plus or minus two standard errors around the correlation between the factors, and whether this interval includes 1.0 was examined (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). None of the confidence intervals includes 1.0 in the analysis. These two tests provide evidence for the discriminant validity of all our measures.

Table 8: Measurement of discriminant validity

	Perceived readers negative reactions	Intention to disclose	Monetary incentive	Non-monetary incentive	Intention to eWOM
Perceived readers negative reactions	0.747	(0.114,0.334)	(0.010,0.230)	(-0.166,0.058)	(-0.425,-0.225)
Intention to disclose	0.050	0.696	(-0.119,0.109)	(0.027,0.251)	(-0.289,-0.069)
Monetary incentive	0.014	0.000	N/A	(-0.132,0.088)	(-0.123,0.097)
Non-monetary incentive	0.003	0.019	0.000	N/A	(0.152,0.360)
Intention to eWOM	0.106	0.032	0.000	0.066	N/A

Note: Matrix shows AVE (diagonal), squared correlation (below the diagonal) and confidence intervals (above diagonal)

The model proposed in Figure 3 was tested using a structural equation model (SEM). As can be observed from Table 9, the results show that all parameters are significant except three of them. In addition, the structural model fit to the data is acceptable ($\chi^2=70.326$ (29), $p<0.01$; $\chi^2/df=2.43$; NFI=0.962; IFI=0.977; CFI=0.977; RMSA=0.066).

The use of monetary incentive has a significant effect on perceived negative reactions of readers ($\beta=0.119$; $p<0.05$). However, this variable has no effect on the intention to eWOM ($\beta=0.030$; $p>0.10$) nor the intention to disclose ($\beta=-0.030$; $p>0.10$). Thus, as shown previously, H1 is supported but H2 and H3 are not. Additionally, the relationships between the use of a product as incentive and the perceived negative reaction of readers is negative but not significant ($\beta=-0.052$; $p>0.10$). Giving the product has a positive effect on the intention to eWOM ($\beta=0.240$; $p<0.01$) as well as on the intention to disclose ($\beta=0.152$; $p<0.01$). Therefore, these results confirm H6, H8 and H10. As a whole, results obtained using SEM are consistent with the results using MANOVAs as we can see in Table 11.

Table 9: Results of the model

	Direct Effects	Standardized Coefficient	t
H1	Monetary incentive → Perceived readers negative reactions	0.119	2.132**
H2	Monetary incentive → Intention to eWOM	0.030	0.585
H3	Monetary incentive → Intention to disclose	-0.030	-0.540
H6	Non-monetary incentive → Perceived readers negative reactions	-0.052	-0.932
H8	Non-monetary incentive → Intention to eWOM	0.240	4.739***
H10	Non-monetary incentive → Intention to disclose	0.152	2.726***
	Perceived readers negative reactions → Intention to eWOM	-0.317	-6.999***
	Perceived readers negative reactions → Intention to disclose	0.239	4.088***

***p<0.01; **p<0.05; *p<0.10

4.5.5. Mediation test

Indirect effects of using a monetary incentive on intention to eWOM and intention to disclose were tested (Table 8). The direct, indirect and total effects were calculated using SEM. Significance levels were based on bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals proposed by Preacher and Hayes (2004). Previous studies recommend bootstrapping over the Baron and Kenny's (1986) test, because the former has a higher level of power and reasonable control over the Type 1 error rates (Cheung and Lau, 2008; Shrout and Bolger, 2002)

The bootstrapping tests whether it is possible (with 95% confidence) that the indirect effect would be zero (basically, no mediation). The bootstrapping provides a 95% bias corrected bootstrapped confidence interval. If zero is not included between the lower limit and the upper limit and the estimated effect lies between these two values then we can conclude that the indirect effect for this mediator is significant. In contrast, if zero lies in between these lower and upper limits the mediation will not be significant (Hayes, 2009; Preacher and Hayes, 2008; Preacher and Hayes; 2004). Results show a significant and negative indirect effect of using a monetary incentive on intention to eWOM through perceived negative reactions of readers ($\beta = -0.117$, [-0.261, -0.041]). Thus, H4 is supported. Perceived negative reactions of readers also mediate the relationship between using a monetary incentive strategy and the intention to disclose ($\beta = 0.084$, [0.009, 0.181]) supporting H5.

This procedure gives additional support to H2 and H3. Three different tests have provided consistent results.

Table 10: Indirect effects

Indirect Effects	Standardized Coefficient	Bias Corrected Bootstrapped Confidence Interval
Monetary incentive → Intention to eWOM		
Total effect	-0.008	
H2 Direct effect	0.030	
H4 Indirect effect	-0.117**	(-0.261, -0.041)
Monetary incentive → Intention to disclose		
Total effect	0.002	
H3 Direct effect	-0.030	
H5 Indirect effect	0.084**	(0.009, 0.181)

***p<0.01; **p<0.05; *p<0.10. Significance levels of Indirect effects are based on bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals.

Table 11. Comparison between analysis developed to test the hypotheses

		MANOVA test	SEM	Bootstrapping
H1	Bloggers will perceive a more negative reaction from their readers when a monetary incentive is offered than when it is not.	Supported	Supported	Not tested
H2	Bloggers will show a lower intention to generate eWOM when a monetary incentive is offered than when it is not.	Not supported	Not supported	Not supported
H3	Bloggers will show a higher intention to disclose when a monetary incentive is offered than when it is not.	Not supported	Not supported	Not supported
H4	Perceived negative reactions of readers will mediate the relationship between the presence/absence of monetary incentives and the intention to eWOM.	Not tested	Not tested	Supported
H5	Perceived negative reactions of readers will mediate the relationship between the presence/absence of monetary incentives and the intention to disclose.	Not tested	Not tested	Supported
H6	Bloggers will perceive a similar negative reaction from their readers when receiving a product than when receiving only information about the product.	Supported	Supported	Not tested
H7	In case of a product seeding campaign, bloggers will perceive a similar negative reaction from their readers when they can keep the product and when they have to return it.	Supported	Not tested	Not tested
H8	Bloggers will show a higher intention to generate eWOM when receiving a product than when receiving only information.	Supported	Supported	Not tested
H9	In case of a product seeding campaign bloggers will show a higher intention to generate eWOM when they can keep the product and when they have to return it.	Supported	Not tested	Not tested
H10	Bloggers will show a higher intention to disclose when receiving a product than when receiving only information about the product.	Supported	Supported	Not tested
H11	Bloggers will show a similar intention to disclose when they can keep the product than when they have to return it.	Supported	Not tested	Not tested

4.6 Discussion

Blogs have become an important information source for consumers. Many blogs have more audience and are more credible than other mass media such as newspapers or TV (Johnson and Kaye, 2004; Kanlli, 2012). In addition, information provided by blogs is more influential than information provided by other social media platforms (Technorati, 2013). Thus, companies are interested in encouraging bloggers to post about their products and brands (Du and Li, 2011). However, very little is known about how to engage them to spread the word. Bloggers are not like other consumers that write on the Internet. They have created a community around their blog composed of their readers and other bloggers (Kozinets et al., 2010). Bloggers build trust, friendship, and alliance with their community (Zhu and Tan, 2007). Therefore, when a company approaches bloggers for a WOMM campaign a great tension may be generated (Kozinets et al., 2010).

Generally speaking, results of this study confirm that WOMM campaigns using bloggers as seeds are effective. This result is in line with previous studies that have highlighted the effectiveness of WOM marketing (Hinz et al., 2011; Libai et al., 2013). However, not all WOMM campaigns that approach bloggers are successful. A campaign in which only information is offered to bloggers does not generate more eWOM than being aware of the product without the company's intervention. This result could be explained by the fact that this type of campaign does not allow bloggers to try the product, thus, they cannot write an accurate review about it. This result supports previous studies that have shown a higher intention to share information as confidence in one's ability to provide interesting or useful information to others increases (Lu and Hsiao, 2007). Thus, bloggers may think they will not be able to offer useful information about a product if they cannot try it first.

We have also demonstrated that the strategy in which a company gives a monetary incentive to bloggers in order to post about the product has no effect on their intention to eWOM. Interestingly, this result is against previous results found on WOM and eWOM literature that established a positive relationship between a monetary incentive and the intention to spread the word (Hansen and Lee, 2013; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Ryu and Feick, 2007; Wirtz and Chew, 2002). According to the personal opinions received from bloggers, some bloggers would accept a monetary incentive and others would not, thus the effect of using a monetary incentive on the intention to eWOM may be explained by additional factors that should be explored in future research. Although giving money to bloggers do not have a direct effect on their intention to eWOM, it does have a negative indirect effect on their intention to eWOM through the perceived negative reaction of readers. Such a result implies that bloggers perceive that if they write a post about a

product in exchange for money, their readers may react against them. Readers hope the opinion of bloggers is not biased (Huang et al., 2007). In fact, some readers have rejected their favourite bloggers for considering they were commercializing (Matikainen, 2012). Thus, bloggers will perceive a higher negative reaction of their readers if they accept money in exchange for a post. As a means of avoiding the negative reaction of their readers, their intention to eWOM will be lower. This indirect effect should be explained under the Social Influence Theory. Bloggers feel a normative influence from their readers, and to the extent that they do not fulfill with their expectations, readers may react negatively. Such a reaction is compensated by showing a lower intention to eWOM (Burnkrant and Cousineau, 1975; Homans, 1961).

Regarding the intention to disclose, we have demonstrated that giving a monetary incentive does not have effect on the intention to disclose that the company has approached bloggers to spread the word. The absence of effect between the use monetary incentives and intention to disclose could be explained by the diverse opinions expressed by bloggers. Based on their personal opinions, some bloggers consider this type of campaign as correct and others do not. Similarly, some bloggers do not see this type of campaign as unethical but others do. Thus, the formers do not have conflict of interests and the need to disclose that they have written an opinion in exchange for a monetary incentive. This diversity of opinions suggests that this relationship may be qualified by other factors. This study reveals that one of those factors is the expected reaction of readers. We have shown that a monetary incentive strategy has an indirect effect on the intention to disclose through the perceived negative reactions of readers. Bloggers that write a post in exchange for money will have a higher intention to disclose it to avoid a possible negative reaction of readers as they may notice that the post was written due to a monetary incentive. This interesting result may be complemented with that found by Tuk et al. (2009). They showed early disclosing leads to more favourable evaluations of the sender in comparison to knowing after the conversation that the sender has received an incentive to spread the word. Taking both results altogether would suggest that in order to avoid the negative reaction of readers, bloggers will be tempted to quickly disclose they were offered a monetary incentive in exchange for their opinion about the target product.

In contrast, we have shown that the strategy of giving the product to bloggers has better results than giving them only information about the product. Bloggers feel that companies make their work as a blogger easier by offering them the opportunity to try the product (Kanlli, 2012). This result is in line with previous studies that have shown product trial influences consumer behaviour, even more than commercial information (Smith, 1993).

The possibility of trying the product has a stronger effect on the intention to eWOM and strongly leads bloggers to spread the word about the product. However, although the strategy to give the product is more successful than giving only information, if companies do not want that their campaign were disclose, to offer only information leads bloggers the lowest intention to disclose.

If the company decided to give a product as incentive, they should allow bloggers to keep it. Their intention to post would be higher than the intention to blog when they have to return the product. This result may be explained by the self-serving bias. Since individuals are generally unaware of the bias that the gift generates, they do not make efforts to correct for it (Dana and Loewenstein, 2003). Applied to this context, gifts may affect bloggers' decisions although they are not aware of it.

In sum, we have shown that most WOMM campaigns that approach bloggers to spread the word are effective. However, not all of them are equally successful. Giving only information to bloggers has not enhanced the likelihood to spread the word about the product. In constrast our expectations, to expectations, giving money to bloggers has a negative impact on the intention to write a post about the product. However, giving a product to bloggers enhances the likelihood of posting about it. The highest intention to post about the product is observed when bloggers can keep the product. Most of these results are explained by the trade-off between how ethical the monetary incentive is versus a gift. People are deterred from monetary incentives because the society signals that this behavior is unacceptable, however giving and receiving gifts are seen as good things to do (Ben-Ner and Putterman, 1999) and people generally strive to present themselves in a favorable light (Kunda, 1990; Sedikides, 1993). This result is in line with previous studies done with blogs readers about this issue. For example, some readers have rejected their favourite bloggers when they have started to commercialize their blogs (Wijnia, 2004). In addition, 76% of consumers trust in bloggers who have received a free product, while only 45% of them trust in bloggers who were paid for writing a post (Social Media Link, 2013). As we stated at the beginning of the chapter, the blogosphere is all about reputation and trust. And bloggers seem to behave according to this evidence.

4.7 Managerial Implications

The results obtained in this study have several interesting implications for marketers. Blogs have become an important information source for consumers, however, it is not clear how a company should approach bloggers to spread the word about its products. WOMM campaigns to bloggers seem to be effective, and this study help manages to decide what to do. Companies must take into account that blogs do not work like mass

media. Bloggers write on the Internet to gain attention and create a community of readers. Thus, the actions of the company should not go against bloggers' objectives. This research strongly discourages giving monetary incentives to bloggers in exchange for their posts. This strategy may have a negative impact on their intention to post about the product. Giving only information about a product is also ineffective in terms of engaging bloggers in WOM. Thus, companies should give the product to bloggers in order to spread the word about it. Companies should also allow bloggers to keep the product once tested in order to create a higher intention to post about it. This strategy will generate more eWOM about the product in blogs. However, if companies do not want to their campaign will be disclose, the strategy to generate less intention to disclose in the blogger is offering only information. Companies should also be aware of the fact that giving a product to bloggers does not mean that bloggers will write a positive review about it. Honesty and reputation are very much appreciated by bloggers. Therefore, companies should be prepared for receiving not only praises from bloggers but also critics. Finally, companies should acknowledge that WOMM campaigns may enhance the number of posts written about their products but not the valence of such posts. Thus, it is very important that the product that will be given to bloggers has a high quality in order to enhance positive eWOM.

4.8 Limitations and future research

This study has a number of limitations that should be recognized. This study uses an experimental methodology and many experiments may suffer from external validation about the study purposes. The experiment may have artificially increased the negative reaction of bloggers to receiving monetary incentives. It is likely that bloggers exposed to monetary conditions have made inferences. Since their reputation and honesty has been put into question with the study, they may not react the same way in real life.

In addition, we do not know the opinion of the reader about this issue. Bloggers manifest that their readers will not react against them if they write a post because a company has given them a product. However, the opinion of readers can be different. We would like to complement this study by analysing the opinion of readers about these strategies to engage bloggers in eWOM.

The study is focused on a specific product category, a technological product. Thus, it will be interesting to replicate the study using a different product category. For example, nowadays fashion blogs have become very important in women decisions to buy clothes or cosmetics. Travel blogs are also very popular for deciding where to go in a vacation. The tourism industry is currently using several approaches to bloggers. Taking bloggers

to different destinations and covering all their expenses during their stays have been already documented.

We have not measured the honesty of the blogger in writing about the product. It will be interesting to know whether the WOMM campaign would affect the intention to spread the word as well as the valence of the opinions. According to the opinion of bloggers that participated in the study, it seems that the campaign would not affect the direction of the opinions, however, a more quantitative approach is necessary to investigate this issue.

Appendix 1. SCENARIOS

SCENARIO 1: Return the product-non-monetary incentive

A company has launched a new tablet into the market. Imagine this company sends a package with the new tablet for you to test it and spread the word about it on your blog. The package also contains a letter in which the company indicates you should **return the product once tested**.

SCENARIO 2: Return the product-monetary incentive

A company has launched a new tablet into the market. Imagine this company sends a package with the new tablet for you to test it and spread the word about it on your blog. The package also contains a letter in which the company **offers you some money** if you decide to post about the product on your blog. The letter also indicates you should **return the product once tested**.

SCENARIO 3: Keep the product-non-monetary incentive

A company has launched a new tablet into the market. Imagine this company sends a package with the new tablet for you to test it and spread the word about it on your blog. The package also contains a letter in which the company indicates you can **keep the product once tested**.

SCENARIO 4: Keep the product-monetary incentive

A company has launched a new tablet into the market. Imagine this company sends to you a package with the new tablet for you to test it and spread the word about it on your blog. The package also contains a letter in which the company **offers you some money** if you decide to post about the product on your blog. The letter also indicates you can **keep the product once tested**.

SCENARIO 5: Only product information-monetary incentive

A company has launched a new tablet into the market. Imagine this company sends a letter to you with some information about the tablet with the purpose of you to spread the word about it on your blog. The company also **offers you some money** if you decide to post about the new product on your blog.

SCENARIO 6: Only product information-no monetary incentive

A company has launched a new tablet into the market. Imagine this company sends a letter to you with some information about the new tablet with the purpose of you spread the word about it on your blog.

CONTROL CONDITION

A company has launched a new tablet into the market. Imagine you see this product in a store and are able to test it.

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

1. Please, answer the following items regarding how likely it is that you would blog about the product:

I would not blog about the tablet 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 I would blog about the tablet

2. Imagine you finally decide to post about the tablet. Please, indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree
I would disclose on the blog that the company approached me	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
I would report on the blog if and how the company rewarded me	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
I would tell my readers exactly what the company had asked me	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

3. Regarding the reaction of your readers if you finally decide to write the post about the tablet, indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree
It would be likely to discourage readers from visiting my blog	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
It would be likely to result in readers boycotting my blog	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
It would be likely to deter readers from visiting my blog	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
It would be likely to receive negative responses from my readers	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

4. In the situation you were exposed at the beginning, did the company offers any monetary incentive to blog about the new tablet?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Did the company allow you to keep the new tablet once tested?/Did the company give you some information about the product?*

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

*This question differed depending on the experimental condition

6. Have you ever been approached by a company to blog about a product?

Yes	
No	

7. Approximately how many times has it happened?

Once	
Two times	
Three times	
More than three times	

8. How long have you been blogging for? _____ years

9. How often do you usually blog?

Several times per day	
Everyday	
Several times per week	
Every week	
Several times per month	
Every month	
Less than once per month	

10. Approximately, how many unique readers per month does your blog has? _____ unique readers/monthly

11. Please, write down your blog address _____

CHAPTER 5:

FIELD STUDY. HUBS VS.
OPINION LEADERS. WHO
CONTRIBUTES THE MOST TO
EWOM DIFFUSION?

5.1 Introduction

An important issue in creating awareness is the scope that the communications about a product or brand can reach. The more conversations there are about a product, the more likely someone is to be informed about it, thus promoting consumer awareness (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004). A series of 4 studies developed in chapter 2 have demonstrated the key role of WOMM in creating awareness about a new product. In addition, as the volume of WOM grows, adoption speed increases (Shen and Hahn, 2008). Thus, eWOM highly contributes to information diffusion. As we have previously discussed, WOMM can reach a great scope through the Internet, however, it remains unknown who may be the best type of “seed” to be used in order to enhance information diffusion. Results are not consistent at this respect. Some studies consider hubs as the best seed whereas others bet for opinion leaders.

On the one hand, previous research has shown that hubs are the best seed to transmit information (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Hinz et al., 2011; Libai et al., 2013). Targeting hubs in WOMM campaigns speeds up its diffusion (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Hinz et al., 2011) and increases the social value generated by the campaign (Libai et al., 2013). Given their great number of contacts, the information hubs generate or transmit can be seen by many people, enhancing the diffusion of the information. Therefore, they have been strongly recommended as seeds for WOMM campaigns.

On the other hand, opinion leaders literature has demonstrated the importance of opinion leaders in the diffusion of new products (Coleman et al., 1966; Iyengar et al., 2011; Nair et al., 2010; Valente, 1995). According to these studies, opinion leaders will come to know about the new product through advertising and then transmit the information to other consumers via WOM (Coleman et al., 1966; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). Therefore, opinion leaders are especially important at adoption stage (Manchanda et al. 2008; Narayanan et al., 2005; Van den Bulte and Lilien, 2001). This stream of research assumes that advertising is necessary to create awareness and inform opinion leaders about the existence of the product. Since we have demonstrated (Chapter 2) that WOMM can be also used to create awareness, opinion leaders play a key role at early stages of the diffusion of product/brand information. As a result, opinion leaders should be considered as potential seeds for WOMM campaigns.

Once we have shown how to engage hubs (Chapter 3) and opinion leaders (Chapter 4) in WOMM campaigns, this last study has the objective of comparing both types of seeds in the diffusion of product/brand information. Chapter 5 aims to investigate what seed is the best one to enhance information diffusion, either hubs or opinion leaders. The selected seed would be then the most appropriate to be used in creating awareness.

Because the Internet can enhance the scope of WOM communications, we focus on online media to address this issue.

5.2 Hypotheses formulation

Two aspects should be taken into account for selecting the most appropriate seed, the extent to which a person is able to generate brand or product-related content, referred to as eWOM generation and the extent to which his/her contributions are transmitted or shared by others, referred to as diffusion of the generated eWOM. A high level of eWOM generation but a low level of diffusion would imply that the seed is good for soliciting conversations about the product/brand but bad at getting a high diffusion of the initiated conversation. In contrast, a low level of eWOM generation but a high level of diffusion means that the selected seed does not generate too much brand-related content but such content is very interesting because it gets a high level of diffusion (it is very much shared or commented by others). The ideal seed would be that good at the two aspects, eWOM generation and diffusion.

According to previous literature on opinion leaders, the effect of opinion leadership on the generation of eWOM should be positive. Opinion leaders have a higher propensity to generate eWOM (Sun et al., 2006; Yeh and Choi, 2011), thus they will write more tweets about the brand. In addition, compared to general consumers, opinion leaders possess more knowledge, experience, expertise, and involvement with the product category (Lyons and Henderson, 2005). Thus, their opinions could be considered as high quality contributions and may be more interesting than opinions from other consumers. As a result, opinion leaders' opinions about products and brands will be more shared. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Opinion leadership has a positive effect on eWOM generation.

H2: Opinion leadership has a positive effect on diffusion of the generated eWOM.

The expected effect for hubs may be somehow different from that expected for opinion leaders. Based on social influence theory (Burnkrant and Cousineau, 1975; Miller and Grush, 1986), individuals with many contacts may show a lower intention to generate eWOM because they will perceive more social risk in spreading eWOM. As their contributions can be seen by many people, they may be more careful when providing opinions about products and brands. Unlike opinion leaders, they are not experts in any topic in particular nor have a great influence on others. Therefore, hubs may think well in advance of publishing their opinions. The level of eWOM generation is expected to be reduced as the number of contacts of the individual increases. The more contacts, the more limited that person will be for expressing his/her personal opinions regarding

products and brands. However, regarding the diffusion they may reach, the results may be different. As hubs have many contacts, the higher the level of hub propensity, the more diffusion will the eWOM generated by hubs reach, as more people can have access to their contributions. On the basis of the above reasoning, we propose the following:

H3: Hub propensity has a negative effect on eWOM generation.

H4: Hub propensity has a positive effect on diffusion of the generated eWOM.

5.3 Methodology

5.3.1 Field study

According to recent research in consumer behavior (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013; May and Monga, 2014; Pham, 2013) a field study may be a good approach to investigate the diffusion of eWOM as real data can be obtained about it. Field studies are conducted in naturalistic settings, real contexts of use. Therefore, some of the limitations of the previous studies (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) may be overcome by using this methodology. The need for field studies has been consistently solicited by researchers since they may greatly contribute to the development of consumer behaviour field (for a discussion see Kollat et al., 1970). Nevertheless, nowadays, the problem still remains as most consumer behavior studies are done in lab experiments or using students samples with an important lack of external validation. This field study also reflects the intent of the author of being connected to real business and real marketplace.

5.3.2 Platform selection

The field study was developed in Twitter. Objective data from Twitter users have been extracted from this SNS. Twitter was selected due to its huge growth in recent years. According to data published by Twitter, its number of users increased by 30% in 2013; it reached a rate of 400 million messages (called as tweets) sent daily, and 500 million users in 2013 (Twitter, 2013). In addition, it is the social media platform most used by companies (Burson-Marsteller, 2012). Another advantage of Twitter is that the majority of the profiles, and hence their data are public. Thus, this platform makes easier the development of a field study easier.

5.3.3 Product category and brand communities chosen

The product category chosen for this study was technology. Technological products are one of the preferred product categories among consumers in social media, and the most preferred in Twitter (The Cocktail Analysis, 2013). In addition, technology is the product category that most people speak about through the Internet (Technorati, 2011). Therefore, it seems to be the ideal product category for a field study. We chose the ten

Spanish brand communities of technology developed in Twitter with higher rates of growth (see Table 1). Socialbakers website (www.socialbakers.com) was used to identify these brand communities. It provides up-to-date information about social media.

Table 1. Spanish ranking of technological brand communities in Twitter

	Brand community
1	Xbox Spain (@Xbox_Spain)
2	PlayStation Spain (@PlayStationES)
3	Nintendo Spain (@NintendoES)
4	BlackBerry Spain (@BlackBerryEP)
5	HTC Spain (@htc_es)
6	HP Spain (@HP_Espana)
7	LG Spain (@LG_ES)
8	GHD Spain (@ghdspain)
9	Toshiba Spain (@ToshibaEspana)
10	Huawei Device Spain (@HuaweiDevice_es)

Note: Data obtained December 1st 2013

5.3.4 Sample selection

We identified the Twitter accounts that most conversations generated in Twitter about the 10 selected brands in Spain in the last year (from November 30, 2012 to December 1, 2013). Topsy Pro software was used for this purpose. Among accounts both individuals and companies such as magazines were identified through their profile information. As our objective is the analysis of the diffusion of eWOM, that is, conversations among real consumers about these brands, company profiles were not considered. We selected 50 individuals for each brand. Relevance was the indicator chosen for the selection. It is developed by Topsy Pro and it is based on several criteria including the number of brand-related messages and the number of contacts the individual has (called as followers in Twitter). Following this procedure, a data base composed of 500 individuals (ten brands, 50 individuals per brand) was created. Two independent judges were employed for this task in order to increase the reliability of the extracted information.

It is a common practice that companies buy fake followers in Twitter in order to artificially increase their brand communities in this platform as well as to create conversations about the brand (Thomas et al., 2013). Indeed, more than 20 millions of Twitter accounts are fake (De Micheli and Stroppa, 2013). The two independent judges also analysed the profiles of the individuals in order to identify fake profiles. They coded independently all profiles and data were afterwards double checked to avoid any error during the inspection on codification of the required information. Fake profiles are characterized by being incomplete profiles and accounts with no picture or avatar and by using

different language than the information retweeted (De Micheli and Stroppa, 2013). After their analysis, judges suspected that all profiles from LG brands were fake because these profiles and also the tweets they wrote were in Russian language. Thus, they were all excluded from the data base. As the next profiles with more relevance in LG conversations were also in Russian, we decided to exclude this brand from the study. Judges also identified nearly 10 profiles of the other brands in Russian language. These profiles were replaced for the next profiles with more relevance. As a result, the final data base included information of 450 individuals.

5.3.5 Measurement

The following information was collected from each individual. First, the number of tweets written about the brand in the last year, that is, the amount of eWOM generated by each individual. This variable is called as eWOM generation. When individuals write a brand-related tweet, other individuals can transmit this tweet to their contacts in Twitter. The transmission of the tweet is referred to as a “retweet” in this SNS. In order to measure the diffusion of eWOM generated by the individual, the number of times that brand-related tweets were retweeted by other individuals was also computed. This indicator corresponds with diffusion of the eWOM generated by the individual. The more times the tweets about the brand are retweeted, the more eWOM will be transmitted, thereby increasing the diffusion of brand-related information. The number of brand-related tweets and retweets for each individual were obtained from Topsy Pro. In order to measure the degree of influence of each individual, the Klout Score was calculated. Klout is a number from 1 to 100 that measures the influence of people in SNSs. The higher the Klout Score, the more influential the individual is. This indicator was obtained from the website of Klout (www.klout.com). As opinion leaders are known by the influence they have on others, we used this indicator as a proxy of opinion leadership. The number of followers individual has on Twitter was collected too. From this information we can infer how likely it is that the individual be a hub. We call this indicator hub propensity. All this information was directly obtained from Twitter. A summary of the measures used in the study is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Variables used in the field study

Variables	Operationalization	Source
eWOM generation	Number of brand-related tweets	Topsi Pro
Diffusion of eWOM generated	Number of brand-related tweets retweeted by others	Topsi Pro
Hub propensity	Number of followers that the sender has	Twitter
Opinion leadership	Klout score of the sender	Klout

5.4 Results

According to the empirical log rule in linear regression modeling (Weisberg, 2005), we need to replace the variables that are strictly positive and ranging over more than one order of magnitude by their logarithm. As we can see in Table 3, all variables are positive and have a great range, thus, following the log rule, all variables of the study were log transformed. In addition, as for some individuals the diffusion of eWOM generated by the individual was 0, before the log transformation we added 1 to the previous values of this variable, as Weisberg (2005) recommend.

Table 3. Descriptives

Variable	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximun
eWOM generation	67.25	111.80	1	1,000
Diffusion of eWOM generated	70.18	215.52	0	2,900
Opinion leadership	50.57	9.78	25	80
Hub propensity	14,611.34	69,222.06	114	849,639

Equations 1 and 2 represent the models we estimated to compare the role of opinion leaders and hubs in the diffusion of eWOM:

$$(1) \text{Log}(eWOMS) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \log(OL) + \beta_2 \text{Log}(HUB) + \beta_3 \text{Log}(OL)*\text{Log}(HUB) + e$$

$$(2) \text{Log}(DeWOMS) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \log(OL) + \beta_2 \text{Log}(HUB) + \beta_3 \text{Log}(OL)*\text{Log}(HUB) + e$$

(Where eWOMS is eWOM generation; DeWOMS represents the diffusion of the eWOM generated; HUB is hub propensity; OL represents opinion leadership)

We have included the moderation of opinion leadership on the relationships between hub propensity and the two dependent variables in order to compare between hubs and opinion leaders. For this comparison we assume that if an individual has many contacts as well as high influence, he/she should be classified as an opinion leader. This assumption relies on the conceptualization of opinion leaders and hubs reviewed in Chapter 1. Opinion leaders have a great influence (Rogers and Cartano, 1962) and may have many contacts or may not (Valente, 1996). In contrast, hubs are characterized by their high-connectivity but they are not more persuasive than other people (Hinz et al., 2011). Thus, individuals with a high number of contacts will be classified hubs when they do not exert a great influence. When they have a great influence, they will be rather classified as opinion leaders. Those individuals who are poorly-connected and who do not have a great influence will be classified as fringes, explained in Chapter 3. Following this assumption, we have compared the effect hub propensity has on the two dependent variables for high levels of opinion leadership (opinion leaders) and for low levels of opinion leadership (either hubs or fringes).

Figure 1 shows the model proposed for eWOM generation, while Figure 2 shows the model proposed for diffusion of eWOM generated by the individual. Proposed hypotheses and moderation effects are also included in the figures.

Figure 1. Model 1

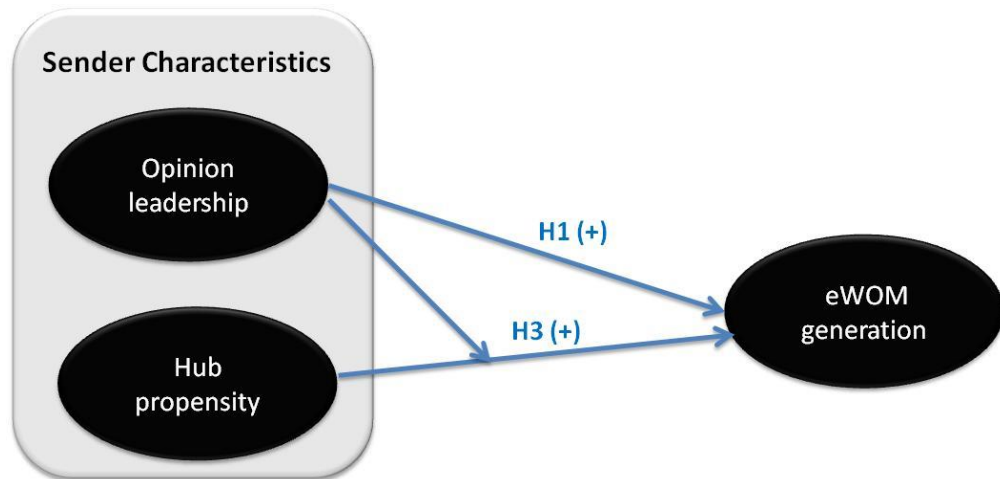
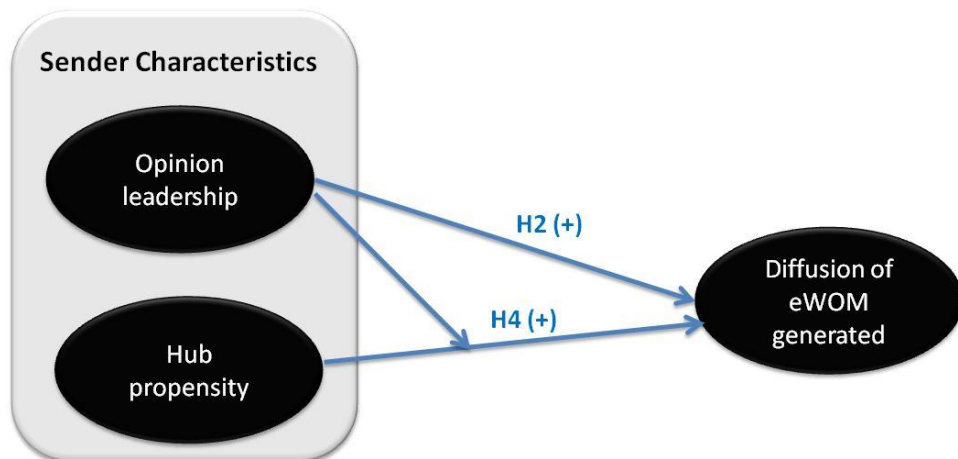


Figure 2. Model 2



In order to test the models, three hierarchical regressions were conducted. The constructs were mean-centered to overcome potential problems arising from multicollinearity (Aiken and West, 1993). We estimated two regressions for each equation. The first regression only includes the proposed hypotheses and the second also incorporates the interaction term. The second regression was used to test the interaction effects, as Aiken and West (1993) recommend. Results obtained from the hierarchical regression analyses are summarized in Tables 4, 5 and 6.

Table 4. Results for Model 1

VD: eWOM generation (number of brand-related tweets)	Regression without interaction term			Regression with interaction term		
	β	t	p	β	t	p
H1 Opinion leadership (β_1)	0.197	2.733	0.007	0.207	2.838	0.005
H3 Hub propensity (β_2)	-0.277	-3.832	0.000	-0.322	-3.716	0.000
Opinion leadership*Hub propensity (β_3)				0.063	0.942	0.347
R^2	0.040			0.042		
Adjusted R^2	0.035			0.035		
ΔR^2				0.002		
				0.347		

Note: Reported β are standardized

As we can see in Table 4, Model 1 shows a positive impact of opinion leadership on the amount of eWOM generated by the individual ($\beta_1=0.197$; $p<0.01$). However, the impact of hub propensity on eWOM generation by the sender is negative ($\beta_2=-0.277$; $p<0.01$). According to the results obtained, opinion leaders are more likely to write brand-related tweets whereas individuals with a high number of followers are less likely to generate contents about those brands. Therefore, H1 and H3 are both supported. Results also show (see regression with interaction term) that there is no interaction effect between opinion leadership and hub propensity on eWOM generation ($\beta_3=0.063$; $p>0.10$). The increment in R^2 is not significant ($\Delta R^2=0.002$; $p>0.10$).

Table 5. Results for Model 2

VD: Diffusion of the eWOM generated (number of brand-related retweets)	Regression without interaction term			Regression with interaction term		
	β	t	p	β	t	p
H2 Opinion leadership (β_1)	0.394	5.048	0.000	0.410	5.287	0.000
H4 Hub propensity (β_2)	-0.064	-0.856	0.393	-0.202	-2.149	0.032
Opinion leadership*Hub propensity (β_3)				0.186	2.527	0.012
R^2	0.123			0.142		
Adjusted R^2	0.116			0.133		
ΔR^2				0.019		
				0.012		

Note: Reported β are standardized

Model 2 shows a positive effect of opinion leadership ($\beta_1=0.410$; $p<0.01$) and a negative effect of hub propensity ($\beta_2=-0.202$; $p<0.05$) on the diffusion of the previously generated eWOM. That is, brand-related tweets written by individuals will have a higher diffusion as their degree of influence increases. In contrast, the more contacts individuals have, the less diffusion their opinions will reach. Thus, H2 is supported but H4 is not. There is also a significant interaction effect on the diffusion of the eWOM generated ($\beta_3=0.186$; $p<0.05$; $\Delta R^2=0.019$; $p<0.05$). Results obtained for this dependent variable resemble

those obtained for eWOM generation except for the interaction term. It is also interesting to note that the potential of opinion leaders is higher in the diffusion of brand-related information than in its generation, although both effects are very significant.

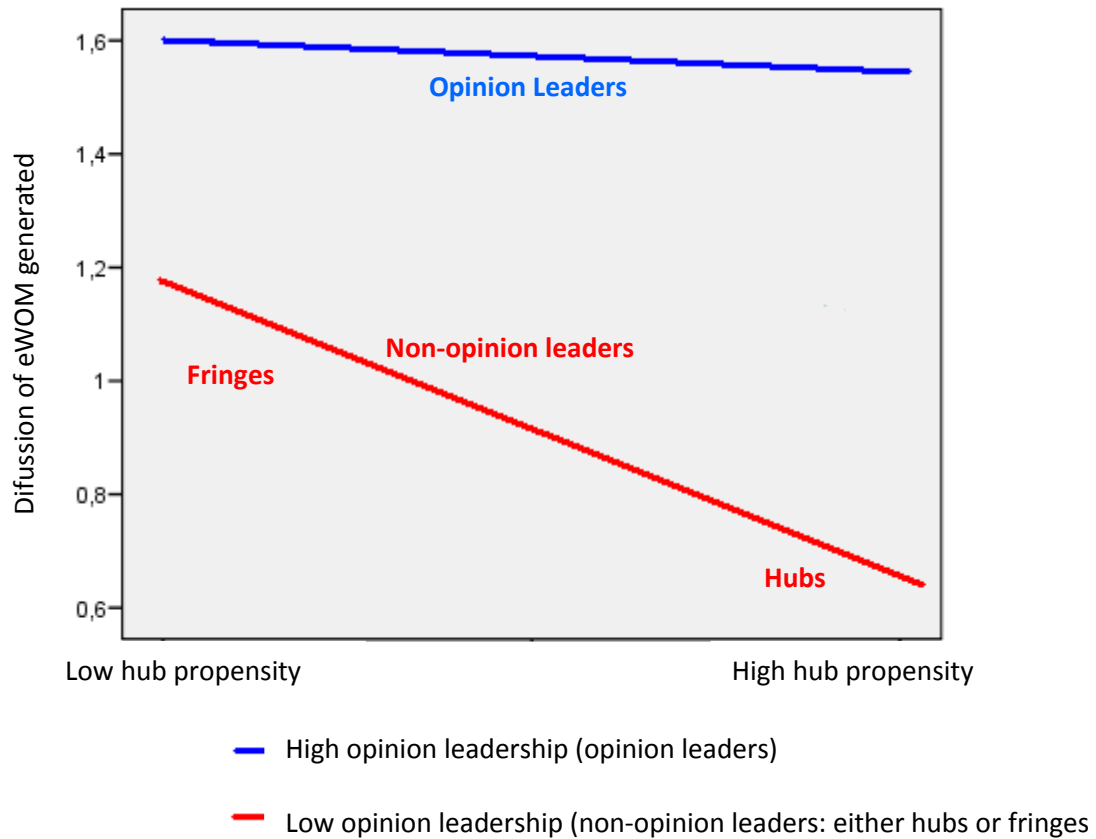
In order to further examine the interaction effect, we conducted a simple slope analysis. This method is designed for the interpretation of the interaction effect of two continuous predictor variables (Aiken and West, 1993). To better illustrate the significant interaction effect, separate regression lines are computed, plotted, and tested for individuals, one standard deviation below the mean on the mediator, and one standard deviation above the mean of the mediator (Aiken and West, 1993).

Table 6. Simple slope test for Model 2

	Interaction	Levels of the moderator	β	t	p
Model 2 VD: Diffusion of eWOM generated	Opinion leadership*Hub propensity	High opinion leadership	-0.03	-0.44	0.660
		Low opinion leadership	-0.33	-2.56	0.011

As we can see in Table 6, for low levels of opinion leadership, the effect of hub propensity on the diffusion of eWOM generated is negative and significant ($\beta=-0.33$; $p<0.05$); however, when opinion leadership is high, hub propensity has not effect on the dependent variable ($\beta=-0.03$; $p>0.10$). That is, the diffusion of eWOM generated by opinion leaders will be similar regardless of their number of contacts. They may not have high numbers of contacts, but because of the quality of their contributions, the diffusion reached is high. Surprisingly, the contributions of non-opinion leaders (low levels of opinion leadership) will have more diffusion as fewer contacts they have. In other words, the tweets written by fringes will have higher diffusion than brand-related tweets written by hubs (see Figure 3).

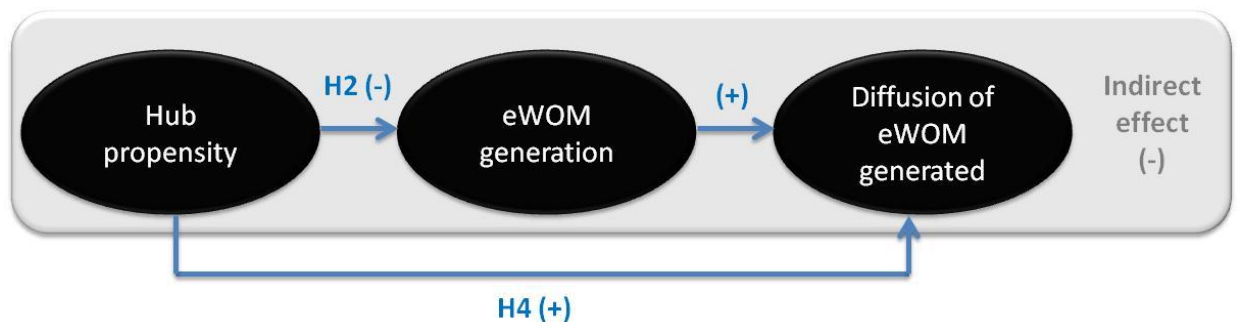
Figure 3. Interaction effect between opinion leadership and hub propensity (model 2)



It is interesting to note that the relationship between hub propensity and the diffusion of eWOM generated is negative (indirect contrast to expectations). That is, the higher the hub propensity, the lower the diffusion of brand-related tweets written by the individual (operationalized as number of brand-related retweets). In Model 2, a mediation model is proposed in order to provide a rationale for the results obtained in H4. Since Model 1 has demonstrated a negative effect of hub propensity on eWOM generation (as expected in H3), this dependent variable could play a key role for explaining the results of Model 2 regarding H4. Therefore, we further analyse these relationships by testing the mediation effect of eWOM generation on the relationship between hub propensity and the diffusion of eWOM generated (see Figure 6). Indirect effect was tested using a bootstrapping procedure calculated using Preacher and Hayes (2008) macro for multiple mediator models. The bootstrapping investigates whether it is possible (with 95% confidence) that the indirect effect would be zero (basically, no mediation). The bootstrapping provides a 95% bias corrected bootstrapped confidence interval. If zero is not between the lower limit and the upper limit and the estimated effect lies between these two values, then we can conclude that the indirect effect for this mediator is significant. In contrast, if zero lies in between these lower and upper limits, the mediation will not be significant (Hayes,

2009; Preacher and Hayes, 2008; Preacher and Hayes, 2004). Results confirm the negative relationship observed between hub propensity and eWOM generation ($\beta=-0.229$; $p<0.01$) while demonstrating a positive relationship between the eWOM generated by the individual and diffusion ($\beta=0.861$; $p<0.01$). This latter result is very logical. The more you write about a brand, the more probability you will have of obtaining brand-related retweets. Interestingly, a significant and negative indirect effect is observed between hub propensity and the diffusion of eWOM generated through the eWOM generation ($\beta=-0.197$ [-0.324,-0.117]; $p<0.05$). Once the indirect effect is introduced into the model, the direct effect of hub propensity on diffusion of eWOM generated turns into positive ($\beta=0.443$; $p<0.01$) as proposed in H4. The total effect is also positive and significant ($\beta=0.253$; $p<0.01$). Such results imply that in general, the more contacts an individual has, the more diffusion of his/her brand-related tweets. However, such diffusion could be reduced because highly-connected people write very few messages.

Figure 6. Indirect effect proposed



As we have seen in the mediation effect analysis, the relationship between hub propensity and diffusion of eWOM could depend on the eWOM generated by the individual. Thus, we will try to remove the effect of eWOM generation in order to better understand the extent in which the number of contacts impacts on the diffusion of eWOM. In order to reach this purpose, we have replicated Model 2 by using as a dependent variable the diffusion of each tweet instead of the global diffusion. The ratio between the number of brand-related retweets and brand-related tweets has been calculated for each individual. This ratio indicates the extent to which each brand-related tweet has been diffused, and we have called it relative diffusion of eWOM generated. Figure 4 and equation 3 illustrate the proposed model:

$$(3) \text{Log(RDeWOMS)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{log(OL)} + \beta_2 \text{Log(HUB)} + \beta_3 \text{Log(OL)*Log(HUB)} + e$$

(RDeWOMS is the relative diffusion of eWOM generated; HUB is hub propensity; OL represents opinion leadership)

Figure 4. Model 3

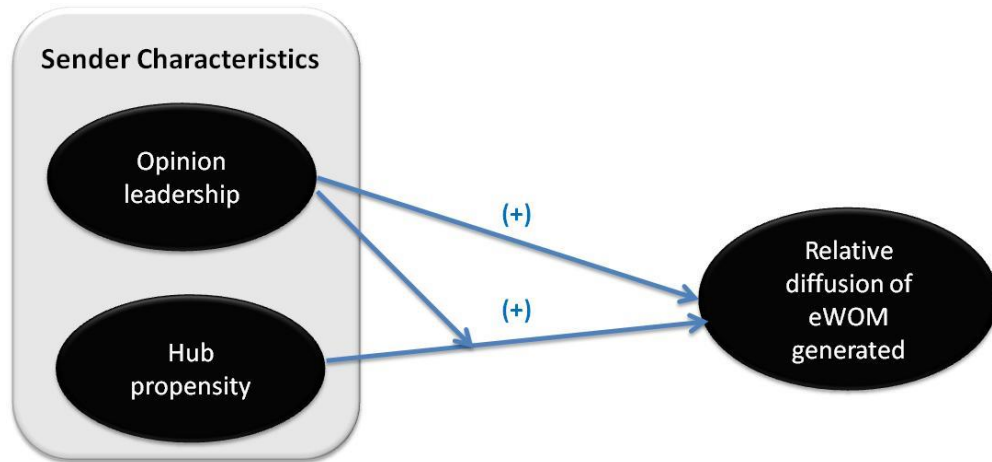


Table 7. Results for Model 3

VD: Relative diffusion of eWOM generated (retweets/tweets)	Regression without interaction term			Regression with Interaction		
	β	t	p	β	t	p
Opinion leadership (β_1)	0.167	2.891	0.004	0.209	3.716	0.000
Hub propensity (β_2)	0.494	8.540	0.000	0.298	4.467	0.000
Opinion leadership*Hub propensity (β_3)				0.274	5.322	0.000
R^2	0.385			0.431		
Adjusted R^2	0.382			0.426		
ΔR^2				0.046		0.000

Note: Reported β are standardized

Model 3 (see Table 7) shows that both, opinion leadership and hub propensity have a positive impact on the relative diffusion of eWOM generated ($\beta_1=0.209$; $p<0.01$; $\beta_2=0.298$; $p<0.01$). Thus, each opinion will be highly diffused when it is written by an individual with a high degree of influence or who has many contacts. Interestingly, results also show a significant and positive interaction effect between opinion leadership and hub propensity on the relative diffusion of eWOM generated ($\beta_3=0.274$; $p<0.01$; $\Delta R^2=0.046$; $p<0.01$).

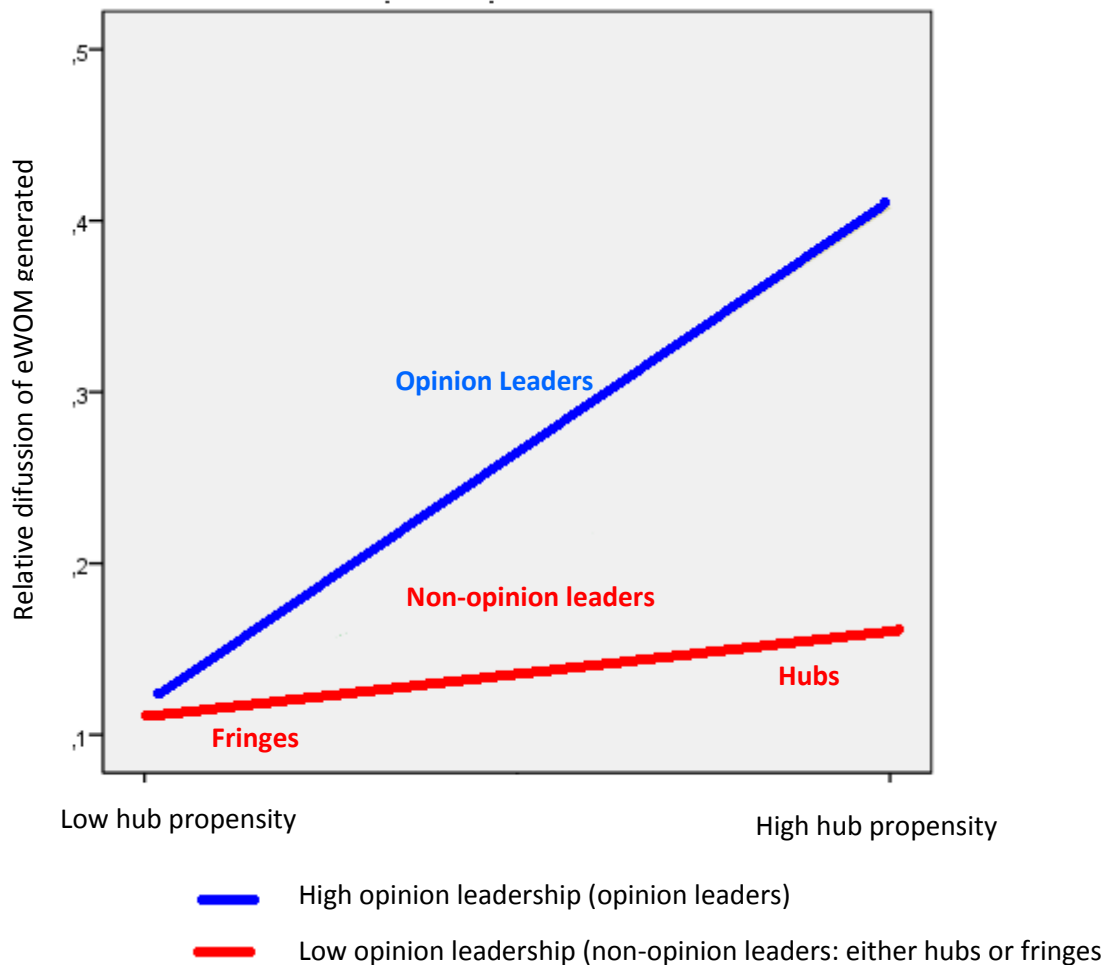
Table 8. Simple slope test for Model 3

VD: Relative diffusion of eWOM generated	Interaction	Levels of the moderator	β	t	p
			Opinion leadership*Hub propensity	High opinion leadership	0.51
		Low opinion leadership	0.09	0.91	0.363

A simple slope test was also conducted for Model 3 in order to explain the interaction. For low levels of opinion leadership, the relationship between hub propensity and relative

diffusion of eWOM generated is not significant ($\beta=0.09$; $p>0.10$). In contrast, for high levels of opinion leadership this relationship is positive and significant ($\beta=0.51$; $p<0.01$). Therefore, each brand-related opinion generated by an opinion leader will have higher diffusion as more followers he/she has. In contrast, an opinion written by a hub will reach a similar diffusion than an opinion written by a fringe (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Interaction effect between opinion leadership and hub propensity (Model 3)



5.5 Discussion

First of all, it is worthy to mention that results obtained are derived from a field study, so they come from real brand-related behaviours of real consumers. Objective data directly extracted from Twitter have been obtained regarding and how connected they are (hub propensity). They represent the actions of 450 consumers over one year period. Two softwares, Topsis Pro and Klout have been also used to complement the information from Twitter for each individual. Topsis Pro has provided information about brand-related behavior and Klout about the individual's degree of influence. Researched behaviour has been restricted to their brand-related behaviour without taking into account any kind of

personal or intimate behaviour. The objective of the study was to select the most appropriate seed for creating awareness, either opinion leaders or hubs.

Previous studies have shown that hubs are crucial in information diffusion because of they are highly-connected (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Hinz et al., 2011; Libai et al., 2013). Hubs influence the speed of adoption and the market size (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Libai et al., 2013). They are also the best seed to pass on information in viral marketing campaigns (Hinz et al., 2011). Thus, hubs represent the best suitable seed to pass on information. However, whether eWOM generated by hubs can have a relevant reach is not clear. Opinion leaders can have also many contacts (Valente, 1996) and previous studies have demonstrated their crucial role in new product adoption due to their great influence (Manchanda et al. 2008; Narayanan et al., 2005; Van den Bulte and Lilien, 2001). Thus, the debate is served, the question is who (either hubs or opinion leaders) may reach a broader scope.

Through a field study research, we have demonstrated that opinion leaders generate more eWOM about brands than non-opinion leaders. This result is in line with previous studies that have obtained consumers with a high degree of opinion leadership are more likely to generate both WOM (Engel et al., 1993; Richins and Root-Shaffer, 1988) and eWOM (Sun et al., 2006; Yeh and Choi, 2011). In contrast, we have shown that the higher the hub propensity the individual has, the less eWOM he/she will generate. The reason behind this result was discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. Hubs may perceive more social risk in generating eWOM as this information can be seen by many people. They will thus be more susceptible to normative influence. In fact, the larger the group that can see the consumers' actions, the greater its influence, because of the majority's power to reward and punish the individual (Latané, 1981; Latané and Wolf, 1981). Therefore, hubs may not be very prone to write tweets about products and brands.

We have shown that the more contacts an individual has, the greater diffusion his/her posts will reach. This result is in line with previous studies that have demonstrated that the use of highly-connected individuals as seeds speed up the diffusion of information (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Hinz et al., 2011; Libai et al., 2013). However, as hubs write very few brand-related messages, their total diffusion could be reduced. Surprisingly, if we compare between individuals according to their influence, we can observe that hubs (individuals with many contacts and low opinion leadership) have the lowest level of diffusion of their own eWOM. This result is explained because hubs may feel they have a duty to their audience. They generate less eWOM because they feel a lot of pressure from their contacts. Thus, it is some form of normative influence what drives the effect. As they write very few opinions due to that pressure, the total diffusion that their opinions

may reach will be lower than the potential reach an individual with less contacts but who writes more often could obtain. In contrast, eWOM generated by opinion leaders have a great reach. The higher the influence of the individual, the higher the reach of his/her brand-related opinions. The diffusion of eWOM generated by opinion leaders is greater than that generated by hubs, regardless of the number of contacts the opinion leader has.

If we look at the diffusion reached by each single brand-related message generated by individuals, results are similar. The diffusion of one single opinion will be higher when it is written by an individual with many contacts. This result is also confirmed by previous studies that have demonstrated that the use of highly-connected individuals as the best seeds to diffuse information (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Hinz et al., 2011; Libai et al., 2013). When individuals with many contacts generate eWOM, these opinions can be seen by many consumers enhancing their diffusion. However, our study also shows that the diffusion generated by opinion leaders for a single opinion is higher than that generated by non-opinion leaders. A brand-related opinion written by an opinion leader will obtain more diffusion than a brand-related opinion written by a hub. In addition, the opinions written by opinion leaders with many contacts will be the most diffused. In fact, compared with general consumers, opinion leaders possess more knowledge, experience, expertise, and involvement with the product category (Lyons and Henderson, 2005). Thus, their opinions could be considered as higher quality and more interesting than opinions of fringes and hubs. In contrast, although hubs have many contacts, they may not show more influence or knowledge than the average consumers (Van den Bulte, 2010) and their opinions will not be as diffused as the opinions of opinion leaders.

In sum, eWOM generated by opinion leaders will have greater diffusion than eWOM generated by hubs. The greatest diffusion will be reached by opinion leaders with many contacts. These results go against previous studies that have shown that the seed who generates the greatest diffusion are hubs (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Libai et al., 2013). These studies measure hubs as a highly-connected people. However, for being considered as hubs they should not have a great influence (Hinz et al., 2011). Thus, among those highly connected people, there may be individuals with a great influence, that is, opinion leaders. Therefore, to the best of our knowledge, previous studies not allow to compare between hubs and opinion leaders. In addition, previous studies have mainly analysed the role of hubs in passing on information, but have not studied the diffusion of eWOM generated by hubs.

Finally, these results also complement studies developed in Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation. From the field study we have learnt that opinions of individuals with many

contacts may reach a high diffusion, however, it is difficult for them to contribute to eWOM, that is, to the diffusion of product information as they feel social risk in generating or transmitting opinions. Chapter 3 helps with this aim by proposing strategies to engage individuals in spreading the word about products and brands. In addition, this field study shows that brand-related opinions written by opinion leaders reach the highest scope. Chapter 4 complements this finding by recommending how to engage bloggers, the main opinion leaders on the Internet, in generating eWOM about products and brands.

5.6 Managerial Implications

Companies that want to reach a great diffusion of information about their products and brands should engage opinion leaders in their WOMM campaigns. This strategy can gain a greater global diffusion as well as a higher diffusion per opinion than approaching hubs. The greatest diffusion can be reached when engaging opinion leaders with many contacts. For example, companies can develop WOMM campaigns in which a product is offered as Chapter 4 recommends. This strategy, besides reaching a high scope, generates eWOM with a great influence. Engaging opinion leaders in eWOM could be also easier than engaging hubs, in the sense that opinion leaders show a greater propensity to write opinions about products and brands while it is more difficult that hubs write this kind of opinions. In addition, recruiting hubs to spread the word may be very costly due to the social risk they perceive in transmitting information (Bakshy et al., 2011).

Although nowadays it is relatively easy to identify opinion leaders on the Internet, it is even easier to identify people with a high hub propensity. Companies can see the contacts consumers have in social network sites in order to identify this type of seed. Thus, when companies are not able to identify or persuade opinion leaders, they can still approach consumers with many contacts. This strategy will allow companies to obtain a high diffusion at the micro-level, but whether hubs' contributions will be able to reach a high global diffusion should be put into question. If they want to increase the global diffusion using this type of seed, they should use any of the strategies proposed in Chapter 3 to enhance the eWOM generated by these individuals. For example, promoting brand-related messages that are expected to be successful can help hubs spread the word.

5.7 Limitations and future research

The main limitations of this study are the following. First, we have only considered some variables in this field study, and another non-controlled variables may affect the results obtained. In addition, the data about eWOM generation and eWOM diffusion were

obtained for one year period, whereas indicators of opinion leadership and hub propensity were collected at the end of that year. Thus, the period of time is not equivalent. The mentioned indicators may have suffered changes along the year. It would have been more appropriate to collect the information about hub propensity and opinion leadership throughout the year. A mean value calculated for weeks or months could have been a better option for these measures. Moreover, the measurement of opinion leadership (Klout) only considers the activity in social media to assess influence. Therefore, individuals with a high potential influence but who are not heavy users of social media, will show a lower Klout, that is, will be ranked as low influential whereas that may not be true.

Finally, this field study was developed in Twitter, so it would be interesting to replicate it in another social media platform. Additionally, we have only considered the diffusion of eWOM generated by opinion leaders, hubs and fringes. It would be also interesting to analyze the diffusion of eWOM generated by other people or even by the company but transmitted by any of these seeds (opinion leaders, hubs or fringes).

CONCLUSIONS

1. Conclusions

Word of mouth is considered the most important information source for consumers, being more influential than firm-generated information (Arndt, 1967; Engel et al., 1969; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). The development of the Internet has increased the scope of this communication process (Henning-Thurau et al., 2004). One single opinion can be seen by many consumers around the world. Thus, companies are increasing their interest in using WOM as a communication tool (Hinz et al., 2010; Verlegh et al., 2013). This intended use of WOM is called WOM Marketing (Kozinets et al., 2010). However, very little is known about how to engage consumers to spread the word about products and brands (de Vries et al., 2012). In order to cover this gap, in this dissertation we have analysed the suitability and the best way to use WOMM combined with advertising. Then, we have studied the effectiveness of several strategies addressed to engage consumers to spread the word. The objective of the company could be either: diffusion or persuasiveness has to be considered before making any recommendation.

First, in Chapter 1 the literature related to WOM has been extensively reviewed from early studies to most recent research. The antecedents and consequences of WOM and eWOM have been reviewed. In addition, we have contributed to eWOM literature by proposing a new definition of eWOM that comprise eWOM transmission. Previous eWOM definitions only include the generation of eWOM (e.g. Henning-Thurau et al., 2004; Litvin et al., 2008). This chapter ends by explaining how WOMM works and showing the previous studies that deal with this recent concept.

The second chapter, composed of four studies, provides consistent support for the proposition that firms should start new product communications with WOMM. This evidence is clear for the three product categories analysed: a high-involvement product, a low-involvement product and a service. Traditionally, WOM has been as the result derived from other communication tools in the sense that a company promotes a product or service, and consumers who have bought or tried it spread the word about it (Bass, 1969; Rogers, 1983). However, this chapter shows that WOM marketing should be used even before other communication tools. The importance of these results resides in the fact that they contrast those of previous studies which have shown that advertising is the best communication tool to start a new product launch (Manchanda et al. 2008; Narayanan et al., 2005; Rogers and Adhikarya, 1979; Van den Bulte and Lilien, 2001). The argument supporting these studies is that advertising is necessary for people to start talking about the new product (Hogan et al., 2004). However, nowadays firms can easily promote WOM communication. Starting the communication campaign with WOMM will therefore speed up the adoption process for low and high-involvement products

generating more conversations about them. Thus, WOMM increases the potential reach of the communication campaign. The four studies have also shown that starting with advertising or WOMM does not provoke any significant difference with regards to information searches about the new product at the awareness stage. Only for low-involvement products consumers search for more information when the communication campaign starts with WOMM. Additionally, we have also demonstrated that a communication strategy that the company should use in order to persuade consumers to adopt the product depends on the type of product to be launched. For high-involvement products WOMM should be followed by advertising to increase consumers' intention to adopt. In a service context, WOMM is also very important in the final decision to adopt the service. Finally, for a low-involvement product, although starting with WOMM creates more awareness, product adoption is not affected by the communication campaign used.

An important lesson has been learnt in Chapter 2, that eWOM is critical to create awareness of the product. The next question is who should a company contact first in order to speed up the adoption process. The ideal seed to propagate information seems to be hubs. Previous studies have corroborated their importance in new product information diffusion (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Hinz et al., 2011; Libai et al., 2013). However, it has been recognized the difficulty of involving hubs in WOMM campaigns as they can suffer from information overload because of their central position in the social network (Porter and Donthu, 2008). With this purpose in mind, we develop Chapter 3. It deals with how to engage hubs in social network sites. The empirical study shows that promoting eWOM in a brand post using sentences such as "click like if you like it" engages hubs to spread the word, but only when the post has been previously highly-diffused. Hubs could feel more social risk to like, share and comment a brand post than fringes due to normative influence. Hubs are not so high influential consumers as opinion leaders or market mavens (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Hinz et al., 2011), thus their contacts could question the information they share experiencing social disapproval if they do not like the brand post that hubs have shared. They need social approval signals to stimulate their intention to spread eWOM. Therefore, it is very important that companies anticipate the success of a brand post before trying to encourage hubs in the information diffusion process.

Chapters 2 and 3 have demonstrated the importance of WOMM in creating awareness and that of hubs in speeding up the diffusion of product information, but the relevance of WOM carries on being crucial at the adoption stage (Narayanan et al., 2005; Rogers and Adhikarya, 1979; Van den Bulte and Lilien, 2001). At this stage the figure of the opinion

leader gains strength. They can be crucial at the final decision to buy a product due to their high level of persuasiveness. In fact, Van Eck et al. (2011) have demonstrated that opinion leaders increase the maximum adoption percentage. Traditional literature has also shown their potential in transmitting this information to other consumers (Bass, 1969; Rogers and Adhikarya, 1979). However, nowadays companies can accelerate this process engaging opinion leaders in WOMM campaigns from the beginning. Thus, Chapter 4 analyses how to engage bloggers, who are related with opinion leaders on the Internet (Droge et al., 2010), in a WOMM campaign. Bloggers are not like other consumers that write on the Internet. They create a community around their blog composed of their readers and other bloggers (Kozinets et al., 2010). Honesty and reputation are critical for the survival of blogs (Huang et al., 2007). Thus, when a company approaches bloggers through a WOMM campaign a great tension is generated (Kozinets et al., 2010; Matikainen, 2012). The study developed with bloggers has demonstrated the effectiveness of this type of seed. However, not all WOMM campaigns are equally effective. Campaigns in which only information is given to bloggers have no effect on their intention to eWOM. Interestingly, campaigns in which a monetary incentive is offered to bloggers could have a negative effect in the intention to spread the word of bloggers. They perceive that their readers can react against them if they write a post in exchange for money. This effect is due to a normative influence. To the extent to which they do not fulfill with readers' expectations, bloggers can perceive negative reactions from their community (Burnkrant and Cousineau, 1975; Homans, 1961). We have therefore demonstrated that the best strategy to approach bloggers is a product seeding campaign, that is, companies should use "the product" as a non-monetary incentive. By following this strategy, bloggers feel that companies make their work as a blogger easier giving them the opportunity to try the product (Kanlli, 2012). In order to generate a higher eWOM about the product, companies should allow bloggers to keep the product once tested. This result is explained by the self-serving bias. Individuals are generally unaware of the bias that generates the gifts, so they do not make efforts to correct for it (Dana and Loewenstein, 2003). It is also worthy to mention that although a product seeding campaign generates more eWOM about the product, bloggers will also have a higher intention to disclose in their blogs that they have been approached by a company.

Once we have shown how to engage hubs and opinion leaders on the Internet in WOMM campaigns, the final study (Chapter 5) analyses the role of both types of seeds in the diffusion of information. A field study developed with real consumers tries to clarify which seed is the best one to enhance information diffusion, either hubs or opinion leaders. Although previous studies have shown that hubs are crucial in information diffusion

because they are highly-connected (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Hinz et al., 2011; Libai et al., 2013), it is not clear whether eWOM generated by opinion leaders can reach the same scope. Opinion leaders can also have many contacts (Valente, 1996) and previous studies have demonstrated their crucial role in new product adoption due to their great influence (Manchanda et al. 2008; Narayanan et al., 2005; Van den Bulte and Lilien, 2001). We analyse this issue through a field study using objective data from Twitter. Results indicate that eWOM generated by opinion leaders will have a greater reach than opinions generated by hubs. The greatest diffusion will rely on opinion leaders who also have many contacts. These results are against previous studies that have shown that the seed who generates highest diffusion are hubs (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Hinz et al., 2011; Libai et al., 2013). However, they measure hubs as a highly-connected people, but hubs also characterized by not having a high influence (Hinz et al., 2011). Thus, among these highly connected people individuals with a great influence may be included, that is, opinion leaders. Therefore, this study helps researchers clarify conceptual and empirical inconsistencies found in previous literature. In addition, previous studies have mainly analysed the impact of hubs in passing on information, rather than the diffusion of eWOM generated by hubs.

This dissertation contributes to literature by showing the importance of eWOM in creating awareness and diffusion about a new product. We have developed a series of 7 empirical studies (4 in chapter 2 and 1 in chapters 3-5) using three different methodologies (lab experimentation, online experimentation and field study), different analysis (analyses of variance, structural equation modeling, and regressions) and different type of samples (students, Internet users, Facebook users, bloggers, Twitter users). We have studied strategies to engage seeds to increase diffusion of product/brand information. These strategies may help companies ensure a great persuasiveness of the information generated and also a great reach.

SUMMARY IN SPANISH

1. Resumen en Español

La literatura de marketing ha sido testigo de la influencia que tienen otras personas en el comportamiento del individuo. Lo que opinen o recomienden otros consumidores afecta al comportamiento de compra (Chatterjee, 2001; Money et al., 1998). Estudios previos han comprobado que las opiniones de otros consumidores juegan un papel más influyente, más creíble y más fiable que la información generada por la propia empresa, ya sea a través de la publicidad o de otras herramientas de comunicación, como la venta personal (Engel et al., 1969; Katz y Lazarsfeld, 1955).

Las nuevas tecnologías de la información no han hecho sino incrementar la importancia de esta influencia interpersonal. Recientes estudios así lo corroboran (De Bruyn y Lilien, 2008; Fan et al., 2013; Hansen and Lee, 2013; Kozinets et al., 2010; Lim y Chung, 2011; López y Sicilia, 2014; Stephen y Lehmann, 2012; Zhu y Zhang, 2010). El boca a boca electrónico constituye una fuente de información cada vez más importante para los consumidores (Chevalier y Mayzlin, 2006; Fan et al., 2013; Park y Kim, 2008). El 88% de los individuos que suelen comprar en Internet leen opiniones de otras personas en Internet antes de tomar una decisión de compra (Reevo, 2012). Cerca del 70% de usuarios de Internet confía en esta información (Nielsen, 2013) siendo más influyente que la información generada por la empresa (Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Trusov et al., 2009). La gran importancia que está adquiriendo el boca a boca electrónico contrasta con la pérdida de confianza que los consumidores tienen en la publicidad (GroupM, 2013; Nielsen, 2012).

Dada la gran importancia que está adquiriendo este proceso de comunicación, algunas empresas empiezan a interesarse por la planificación y el desarrollo de campañas de boca a boca electrónico como una nueva herramienta de comunicación (Kozinets et al., 2010; Verlegh et al., 2013). A este intento de las empresas por influir en el consumidor para que hable sobre sus productos o marcas se denomina marketing boca a boca (Kozinets et al., 2010). A día de hoy las empresas están aprendiendo a utilizar esta nueva herramienta de comunicación. Aunque cada vez hay más estudios que analizan cómo hacer que el consumidor hable sobre los productos de la empresa, muy poco se conoce sobre cómo llevar a cabo campañas de marketing boca a boca (de Vries et al., 2012; Feng y Papatla, 2014; Kumar y Rani, 2013). Por lo que nos planteamos como objetivo de esta tesis doctoral responder a la pregunta de cómo una empresa puede hacer que el consumidor hable sobre sus productos o marcas. Para ello primero se analiza la idoneidad de combinar boca a boca electrónico con publicidad para influir en la toma de conciencia del individuo y en su intención de adoptar un nuevo producto. Una

vez realizado este estudio, mediante la realización de otros 2 estudios, se analizan diferentes estrategias para hacer que el consumidor genere o transmita boca a boca electrónico en función del objetivo que quiera conseguir la empresa: difusión de la información (relacionado con la toma de conciencia) o influir al consumir para que compre el producto (relacionado con la adopción del mismo). Finalmente se realiza un estudio de campo en el que se compara la difusión de información de diferentes tipos de consumidores.

Si bien, estudios previos han mostrado que el boca a boca es crucial en la adopción de un nuevo producto (Goldenberg et al., 2001; Manchanda et al., 2008; Narayanan et al., 2005; Van den Bulte y Lilien, 2001), aún no se había analizado el efecto del boca a boca en la fase de toma de conciencia sobre el mismo. El primer estudio de esta tesis doctoral, compuesto por cuatro experimentos demuestra que el marketing boca a boca es la mejor herramienta de comunicación para generar una mayor toma de conciencia del consumidor sobre el producto. Estos resultados son consistentes en las tres categorías de producto: productos de alta implicación, de baja implicación y servicios. La importancia de este resultado reside en que va en contra de estudios previos que establecen que la publicidad es la herramienta de comunicación que mejor funciona para generar toma de conciencia de un producto (Manchanda et al. 2008; Narayanan et al., 2005; Rogers y Adhikarya, 1979; Van den Bulte y Lilien, 2001). De hecho, estudios previos establecen que el consumidor necesita tomar conciencia sobre el producto a través de la publicidad para poder hablar sobre el mismo (Goldenberg et al., 2001). Sin embargo, dado el gran alcance que se puede conseguir con el boca a boca electrónico al poder una opinión ser vista por personas de todo el mundo (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), y una vez que la empresa puede llevar a cabo una campaña de marketing boca a boca, el consumidor puede tomar conciencia del producto a través de las opiniones de otros consumidores incluso antes de que la campaña de publicidad haya comenzado. Además, empezar la campaña de comunicación con marketing boca a boca acelera el proceso de adopción de un nuevo producto, dado que genera más conversaciones sobre el mismo en Internet. Esto incrementa el alcance de la campaña.

A pesar de lo positivo de los resultados anteriores, los cuatro experimentos también muestran que esta herramienta de comunicación no genera más búsquedas de información sobre el producto que las generadas por una campaña de publicidad. De hecho, tan solo para productos de baja implicación el consumidor buscará más información después de tomar conciencia sobre el mismo a través de opiniones de otros consumidores en Internet. Así, una vez que el consumidor ha tomado conciencia del

producto, los resultados demuestran que la herramienta de comunicación que la empresa debería utilizar para incrementar la adopción del mismo dependerá de la categoría de producto que haya lanzado la empresa al mercado. Por un lado, para productos de alta implicación, la campaña de marketing boca a boca debería ir acompañada de una campaña de publicidad. Por otro lado, dado que en los servicios se percibe un gran riesgo en la decisión de adquirir un servicio por el hecho de no poderse probar antes de su compra (Murray, 1991), el boca a boca electrónico también es clave en la adopción de un servicio. Por último, la intención de adoptar un producto de baja implicación será la misma independientemente del tipo de campaña de comunicación que la empresa lleve a cabo tras la toma de conciencia.

Como hemos demostrado en el estudio 1, el boca a boca electrónico es importante en la toma de conciencia del consumidor de un producto nuevo. Para generar toma de conciencia es clave que la información consiga un gran alcance (Stephen y Lehmann, 2012). El consumidor ideal para conseguir dicho objetivo es una persona con muchos contactos. La literatura denomina a estas personas “hubs”. Estudios previos han corroborado la importancia de estos individuos en la difusión de información de un nuevo producto (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Hinz et al., 2011; Libai et al., 2013). Sin embargo, es difícil implicar a las personas que tienen muchos contactos en las campañas de marketing boca a boca dado que pueden sentir riesgo social al compartir información que puede ser vista por muchas personas (Porter y Donthu, 2008; Stephen y Lehmann, 2009). Con este objetivo en mente proponemos el segundo estudio de esta tesis doctoral. Este estudio analiza la estrategia que debe seguir la empresa para hacer que individuos con muchos contactos hablen sobre sus productos o marcas en redes sociales.

Los resultados de este estudio demuestran que animar al consumidor para que comparta un post publicado por la empresa en su página en redes sociales utilizando frases como “dale a like si te gusta”, puede ser efectivo para las personas con muchos contactos. De hecho, esta estrategia tan solo será efectiva cuando el post haya sido previamente compartido por muchas personas. En este sentido y, tal y como mencionábamos anteriormente, estos individuos con gran número de contactos pueden sentir un gran riesgo social al compartir información dado que esta puede ser vista por muchas personas. No obstante, los hubs no ejercen una gran influencia en el consumidor como puede llegar a hacer un líder de opinión (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Hinz et al., 2011), por lo que sus contactos podrían cuestionar la información que comparten. Así, estos individuos pueden sentir rechazo por parte de sus contactos si la información

que comparten no les gusta o es errónea. Por lo tanto, los hubs necesitan señales de aprobación social para estimular su generación de boca a boca electrónico. Sin embargo, estas estrategias no siempre son efectivas, y pueden incluso tener efectos negativos en la intención de transmitir información o en las actitudes hacia el producto del que versa dicha información. Es por ello que este efecto negativo puede ser eliminado a través de la aprobación social, es decir, si muchos consumidores previamente han seguido la recomendación de la empresa de compartir el post.

Si bien es cierto, y así lo hemos demostrado, que el boca a boca electrónico tiene una gran relevancia en la toma de conciencia de un producto, no lo es menos que este proceso de comunicación también es crucial en la fase de adopción (Narayanan et al., 2005; Rogers y Adhikarya, 1979; Van den Bulte and Lilien, 2001). En esta fase la figura del líder de opinión gana importancia dada la gran influencia que ejerce sobre el consumidor. De hecho, Van Eck et al. (2011) han demostrado que los líderes de opinión incrementan el porcentaje de adopción de un nuevo producto. La literatura tradicional afirma que los líderes de opinión toman conciencia de un nuevo producto a través de los medios de comunicación, para después transmitir dicha información a otros consumidores (Bass, 1969; Rogers y Adhikarya, 1979). Sin embargo, actualmente las empresas pueden acelerar este proceso identificando líderes de opinión en campañas de marketing boca a boca. Esto nos lleva a plantear el estudio 3 de esta tesis. En él se analiza cómo hacer que el bloguero, el cual está relacionado con el líder de opinión en Internet (Droge et al., 2010), hable sobre los productos de la empresa.

Los blogueros no son como el resto de consumidores que escriben en Internet pues han creado una comunidad alrededor de su blog compuesta por sus lectores y otros blogueros similares (Kozinets et al., 2010). Estas comunidades están construidas en base a la confianza y ciertos lazos de amistad desarrollados entre sus miembros (Kozinets et al., 2010). Por lo que cuando una empresa identifica a un bloguero para que participe en una campaña de marketing boca a boca se crea una gran tensión (Kozinets et al., 2010). Este estudio analiza diferentes estrategias que puede usar la empresa para hacer que el bloguero escriba sobre los productos de la misma. Sin embargo, los resultados demuestran que no todas consiguen su objetivo. En este sentido, las campañas en las que le proporciona al bloguero información sobre el producto no tienen efecto en su intención de hablar sobre el mismo. Es más, las campañas en las que se le ofrece un incentivo económico podrían tener un efecto negativo en su intención de escribir sobre el producto en su blog. Esto viene explicado por el hecho de que los blogueros perciben que sus lectores pueden reaccionar en su contra si escriben un post a cambio de dinero. Ellos sienten influencia normativa

proveniente de sus lectores, saben que si no cumplen sus expectativas sus lectores pueden reaccionar de manera negativa (Burnkrant y Cousineau, 1975; Homans, 1961). Por último, los resultados demuestran que la mejor estrategia para hacer que el bloguero escriba sobre el producto es ofrecerle el producto para que lo pruebe. De esta manera el bloguero percibe que la empresa le está facilitando el trabajo dándole la oportunidad de probar el producto (Kanlli, 2012). Por un lado, el bloguero tendrá una mayor intención de escribir sobre el mismo si la empresa le permite quedarse el producto una vez que lo ha probado. Este resultado viene explicado por la llamada “parcialidad interesada”. Los individuos no son generalmente conscientes de la parcialidad que les puede generar un regalo, por lo que no hacen esfuerzos en corregirla (Dana and Loewenstein, 2003). Por otro lado, aunque las campañas de marketing boca a boca en las que se le ofrece el producto generan más boca a boca electrónico sobre el mismo, hemos visto que el bloguero tendrá una mayor intención de revelar en su blog que ha sido contactado por la empresa.

Una vez mostradas las estrategias dirigidas a hubs y líderes de opinión en Internet con el objetivo de que generen o transmitan boca a boca electrónico, el último estudio de la tesis analiza el rol de cada uno de estos tipos de individuos en la difusión de información sobre marcas. Estudios previos han demostrado que los hubs son clave para la difusión de información dada su gran conectividad (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Hinz et al., 2011; Libai et al., 2013). Mientras, un líder de opinión también suele tener muchos contactos (Valente, 1996). De hecho, estudios previos han demostrado su importancia en la adopción de un nuevo producto debida a su gran influencia (Manchanda et al. 2008; Narayanan et al., 2005; Van den Bulte y Lilien, 2001). Por ello, el boca a boca electrónico generado por un líder de opinión podría llegar a tener un gran alcance. Sin embargo, no está claro si el boca a boca electrónico generado por los hubs tiene más alcance que el generado por los líderes de opinión. Como consecuencia de esto, este último estudio intenta clarificar qué tipo de individuos es mejor identificar en campañas de marketing boca a boca que tengan como objetivo conseguir una gran difusión de la información: hubs o líderes de opinión. Es decir, quiénes son más apropiados para generar una mayor toma de conciencia en el consumidor. Este estudio analiza esta cuestión mediante un estudio de campo donde se han utilizado datos objetivos obtenidos de Twitter. Hemos demostrado que el boca a boca electrónico generado por los líderes de opinión tendrá una mayor difusión que el generado por hubs. Los líderes de opinión con muchos contactos conseguirán una mayor difusión de sus opiniones. Estos resultados contradicen estudios previos que han demostrado que los hubs son los consumidores que más difusión de la información generan (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Hinz et al., 2011;

Libai et al., 2013). Sin embargo, estos estudios clasifican a los individuos con muchos contactos en función de su conectividad, sin tener en cuenta otra característica de estos individuos, su baja influencia en la decisión de otros consumidores. Por lo que, entre los individuos con muchos contactos nos podemos encontrar tanto consumidores con mucha influencia, es decir, líderes de opinión, como consumidores con poca influencia, es decir hubs. Además, estudios previos han analizado principalmente el impacto de los hubs en el proceso de pasar información sobre productos y/o marca y no en la difusión de sus propias opiniones.

Las principales conclusiones del trabajo desarrollado son las siguientes. En primer lugar se trata de un tema muy actual e interesante no solo para los académicos sino también para las empresas. De la exhaustiva revisión de la literatura (desde los primeros estudios realizados sobre este proceso de comunicación hasta los trabajos más recientes) se ha elaborado un marco teórico sobre el cual realizar los 7 estudios empíricos. Es más, para el desarrollo de dicho marco teórico y el planteamiento de las hipótesis se ha recurrido a diferentes perspectivas teóricas (Modelo del Conocimiento de la Persuasión, Teoría de la Influencia Social, Teoría de la Información Integrada, Efectos de Orden) que enriquecen la calidad del trabajo. Por otra parte, en los diferentes estudios empíricos realizados no solo se ha recurrido a diferentes muestras (estudiantes, usuarios de Internet, usuarios de Facebook, blogueros, usuarios de Twitter), sino también a diferentes metodologías (experimentación en laboratorio, experimentación en Internet y un estudio de campo), y análisis (análisis de la varianza, ecuaciones estructurales, regresiones) lo que otorga un mayor valor a los resultados alcanzados en esta tesis. Esta tesis contribuye a la literatura de boca a boca, y más concretamente a la de marketing boca a boca, mostrando la importancia de este proceso de comunicación en la toma de conciencia de un nuevo producto, así como estrategias para hacer que diferentes tipos de consumidores (hubs y líderes de opinión) hablen sobre productos o marcas.

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