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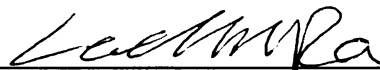
MOTIVATIONS FOR PROVIDING AND SEEKING EWOM:  
A CROSS CULTURAL COMPARISON OF U.S. AND KOREAN  
COLLEGE STUDENTS

presented by

Sung Mi Han

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**MOTIVATIONS FOR PROVIDING AND SEEKING EWOM: A CROSS  
CULTURAL COMPARISON OF U.S. AND KOREAN COLLEGE STUDENTS**

By

Sung Mi Han

A THESIS

Submitted to  
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MASTER OF ARTS

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## **Abstract**

### **MOTIVATIONS FOR PROVIDING AND SEEKING EWOM: A CROSS CULTURAL COMPARISON OF U.S. AND KOREAN COLLEGE STUDENTS**

By

Sung Mi Han

This study investigated consumers' underlying motivations to engage in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communication through online and their relationships with eWOM behavior. The study also examined cross-cultural differences in motivations for providing and seeking eWOM between Americans and Koreans. The analysis found five motivation factors for providing eWOM: social interaction benefits/self-enhancement, helping the company (or brand), vengeance upon the company (or brand), concern for others, and economic incentive. Also, four motivations were identified for seeking eWOM: risk reduction, social interaction benefits, social-oriented product information, and product usage information. These motivations had diverse effects on consumers' frequency of posting comments regarding a product or service on the Internet and visits of different platform types to provide and seek comments. Lastly, results indicate that the cultural characteristics of individualism and collectivism significantly influence motivations for providing and seeking eWOM. Implications of these findings for researchers, marketers and online platform operators are further discussed.

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**With much thankfulness to God,**

**I dedicate this thesis to my parents for their unconditional love and support.**

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The Internet has become one of the major interpersonal communication channels for consumers, enabling them to exchange abundant information with fellow consumers. This online interpersonal communication of a product, a service, or a company is called electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM). According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project (2004), 26 percent of American internet users, accounting for more than 33 million people, had rated a product or a person on the Internet. In 2007, a survey conducted by iCrossing revealed that 49 percent of the 1,094 adult Internet users have searched online for consumer product reviews prior to purchase, which has increased, since 2005, by nine percent (Larson 2007). Consumers' demand of interpersonal communication has been increasing as product attributes are becoming more complex and the credibility of advertising has declined (Godes et al. 2005). In addition to this, the advances of Internet technologies have made eWOM a growing social phenomenon.

Traditional WOM has been known as one of the most influential information sources for consumers (Buttle 1998). It is perceived as more reliable and consumer-oriented than marketer-generated information (Arndt 1967a). Along with these merits, Internet technology has provided unique characteristics to eWOM communication. Unlike traditional face-to-face WOM, which is limited to an individual's social boundaries, eWOM is rapidly and easily exchanged among a multitude of consumers regardless of time or geographical restrictions.

As the importance of eWOM has been increasing, researchers have paid attention to the role of eWOM in consumers' decision making processes. Studies have found that

eWOM communication is considered as more credible and relevant to consumers than marketer-generated information on the Internet (Bickart and Schindler 2001) and helpful to reduce perceived risk in e-commerce (Ha 2002). In addition, a positive eWOM communication about a product can improve the overall value of the product, enhance loyalty intentions (Gruen, Osmonbekov, and Czaplewski 2006), and increase product sales (Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006).

While numerous eWOM studies have placed emphasis on the effects of eWOM on consumer behavior, only limited studies have investigated why consumers engage in eWOM communication. Hennig-Thurau and his colleagues (2004a; 2004b) have identified different consumer motivations to engage in providing and seeking eWOM activities in Germany. However, there may be limitations in generalizing Hennig-Thurau and his colleagues' (2004a; 2004b) dimensions of eWOM motivations to American consumers due to significant cultural differences of value systems (e.g., de Mooij 2004; Hofstede 1980) and goal orientation (Schmuck, Kasser, and Ryan 2000) between the U.S. and Germany. More recently, an exploratory study regarding consumer motivations for seeking eWOM was carried out in the U.S. by Goldsmith and Horowitz (2006). However, the exploratory nature of Goldsmith and Horowitz' (2006) study makes it difficult to draw solid conclusions about eWOM *seeking* motivations. Thus, a comprehensive examination of American consumers' motivations in providing and seeking eWOM is inevitable for an accurate understanding of their use in eWOM communication.

Furthermore, previous eWOM motivation studies have overlooked an important issue: the influence of culture on eWOM motivations. Culture is the sum of shared values, beliefs, and norms in a society (de Mooij 2004). Numerous studies have found that

culture has a significant impact on consumer behavior (Hempel 1974; Lee 2000; Takada and Jain 1991). For example, some cultures have shown higher preference for and susceptibility to WOM information than others (Dawar, Parker, and Price 1966; Doran 2002; Gilly et al. 1998). The frequency of engaging in eWOM (Fong and Burton 2006) has also been found to vary by culture. Consequently, investigating motivations for providing eWOM in respect to cultural influences is important to more fully understand and predict consumers' eWOM behavior.

Therefore, the purpose of the present study is two-fold. First, this study strives to further explore eWOM providing and seeking motivations and their influences on eWOM behaviors. Second, this study also seeks to investigate how culture may affect consumers' motivations for providing and seeking eWOM in the light of the individualism and collectivism cultural dimension from Hofstede's (1980) work. Consumers in the U.S. and South Korea will be compared to investigate whether and how consumers in these two countries show different tendencies toward certain types of eWOM motivations. The U.S. and South Korea are different in the individualism and collectivism dimension, yet both countries have comparable levels of Internet development, given that the Internet penetration level of South Korea (66.5%) is almost as high as that of the U.S. (69.7%) (InternetWorldStats 2007). Thus, by comparing the U.S. and South Korea, one is able to reduce the influence of technology variables and distinctively show the cultural influences on eWOM motivations.

This research provides several implications for marketers who are eager to harness the power of eWOM. First, having an adequate knowledge about consumers' motivations for providing and seeking eWOM can help marketers encourage consumers



to spread messages about their products by stimulating certain eWOM motivations that are more likely to drive eWOM activities. Second, eWOM platform operators (e.g., Epinions.com, eBay, and Yahoo!) can use such knowledge to improve the information value of their Web sites by providing functions and services that better motivate consumers to provide and seek eWOM. Lastly, international marketers can effectively benefit from the impact of eWOM in different countries by implementing particular strategies to satisfy consumers' culture-specific eWOM motivations.

This study is organized as follows. Chapter 2 reviews the background literature on traditional WOM and eWOM communications. Chapters 3 through 5 review the literature on consumers' eWOM motivations and report the findings of survey research regarding eWOM motivations and their influences on eWOM behavior among U.S. college students. Chapters 6 through 8 review the literature on the role of culture in eWOM and discuss the findings of survey research regarding the cross-cultural comparison of eWOM motivations between U.S. and Korean college students. Finally, chapter 9 discusses the findings and provides implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Background**

#### **Traditional WOM: Characteristics and Impact on Consumers**

Word-of-mouth (WOM) communication has been known as a major influence on what people know, feel, and do (Buttle 1998). Arndt (1967a) defines WOM as oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a non-commercial communicator regarding a brand, product, or service. Stern (1994) states that WOM is different from advertising in that it is face-to-face, interactive, ephemeral, spontaneous,

and does not have clever turns of phrases or jingles. WOM has significant influences on consumers' decision-making processes (Bone 1992). WOM can be a stimulus for need recognition and the source of pre-purchase information to evaluate alternatives. Further, it can influence post-purchase evaluation by shaping consumers' expectations towards product quality. Depending on whether product quality meets expectations, satisfaction or dissatisfaction can be generated (Oliver 1997; Webster 1991). Researchers have found that WOM plays a critical role in the adoption of new products and diffusion of innovation (Brooks 1957; Brown and Reingen 1987; Richins 1983; Richins and Root-Shaffer 1988; Rogers 1995; Webster 1991; Whyte 1954). Whyte (1954) found that the clusters of air-conditioner (innovation in 1954) ownership in Philadelphia corresponded to friendship patterns, indicating that the adoption of innovation was related to the flow of interpersonal influence. Consumers tend to rely on WOM information for buying new products (Arndt 1967b; Sheth 1971); WOM information from friends or reference groups help them learn the consequences of purchase decisions and thus decreases the tension that can be generated from the trial of new products (Dichter 1966).

Three aspects of WOM contribute to dominant impacts on consumers: consumer orientation, credibility, and interactivity. These characteristics become more distinctive when they are compared with those of mass media-generated commercial information. Unlike commercial messages, WOM is operated by consumers who voluntarily engage in information providing and seeking activities; therefore, WOM information is consumer-oriented. In addition, WOM participants are supposed to have no self-interest in product sales and are independent of marketers' selling intent (Arndt 1967b). Thus, WOM information is considered more credible than marketer-generated sources, which are often

biased to companies' perspectives (Arndt 1967a; Bickart and Schindler 2001; Brooks 1957; Silverman 2001). Lastly, WOM is a two-way interpersonal communication, which is distinguished from the one-way communication of mass media. Since information receivers can inquire and gain feedback about particular product details from information communicators in face-to-face situations, consumers can obtain more flexible and custom-tailored information from WOM communication than from mass media (Arndt 1967a; Gilly et al. 1998; Silverman 2001).

Numerous studies have revealed that WOM has a more powerful influence on consumers' decision making than other marketing sources. Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) found that WOM is more likely to affect consumers to switch brands in household goods and food product categories, compared to newspapers, magazines, personal selling, and radio advertising. Day (1971) found that WOM was nine times as persuasive than advertising in changing consumers' attitudes toward a product from negative to positive. Additionally, Herr, Kardes, and Kim (1991) found that face-to-face WOM was more influential to consumers in evaluating brands than printed sources (e.g., *Consumer Reports*); the vivid presentation of face-to-face information allows it to be more successfully received by consumers. On the other hand, some studies have found that advertising and WOM can complement and stimulate each other's effects. Smith and Vogt (1995) found that advertising alleviated the influences of negative WOM. Hogan, Lemon, and Libai (2004) found that positive WOM increased the value of advertising up to two to three times.

The influences of WOM on consumers' purchase decisions are more noteworthy in some conditions than others. First, the degree of WOM influence may vary by

purchase circumstances or product categories. It has been found that consumers are more likely to be affected by WOM information when their involvement with the purchase decision is especially high during the information search and evaluation processes (File, Judd, and Prince 1992; Richins and Root-Shaffer 1988). Studies have also found that WOM information becomes particularly important for the purchase of products or services with higher perceptible risk (Bansal and Voyer 2000; File, Cermak, and Prince 1994; Murray 1991). In addition, Richins and Root-Shaffer (1988) have discovered that consumers who have high enduring involvement with particular product categories tend to become active communicators about the product.

Second, differences in individual characteristics may affect consumers' susceptibility for WOM information (Bearden, Netemeyer, and Teel 1989; McGuire 1968). For example, some studies came to the conclusion that individuals' self-confidence impacts their susceptibility to the influences of others. Cox and Bauer (1964) found that individuals with low self-confidence were more likely to conform to others' opinions to avoid social disapproval than those with high self-confidence. Arndt (1967b) found that individuals with high self-confidence sought more WOM information than those with low self-confidence because they have a higher tendency to discuss products freely with others. Furthermore, an individual's knowledge about product category can also affect the susceptibility of WOM information. Kiel and Layton (1981) found that consumers with low product knowledge were more likely to depend on interpersonal information sources than those with high product knowledge.

Finally, the degree of social ties between a receiver and a communicator of WOM, which represents the strength of a consumer's relationship with others (Bone 1992), is

another factor that manipulates the impact of WOM information. Depending on “the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy, and reciprocal services” invested in the given relationship, tie strength is characterized from strong ties (e.g., family and close friends) to weak ties (e.g., fellow consumers) (Granovetter 1973, p.1361). It has been found that the receiver considers the information from the communicator as highly credible when tie strength between the two is high (Bansal and Voyer 2000); thus consumers are more likely to be influenced by WOM information from strong tie sources (versus weak tie sources) for decision making (Bansal and Voyer 2000; Brown and Reingen 1987). On the other hand, it is suggested that a weak tie has a bridging function that spreads information from one subgroup to another in the broader social system, facilitating the flow of WOM information (Brown and Reingen 1987; Granovetter 1973).

### **Electronic WOM (eWOM): Characteristics and Impact on Consumers**

The growth of the Internet and E-commerce industries has changed consumption patterns and empowered consumers by providing easier and faster access to massive product information. Faber, Lee, and Nan (2004) argued that online information is distinguished from traditional mass media-generated information; the Internet can provide incomparably larger amounts of information with combined video, text, and sound in a single presentation and comparative information on numerous brands at the same time. Furthermore, the Internet has allowed consumers to interact with other consumers from different cultures and regions through its various platforms of communication. This new form of WOM generated in the online environment is called electronic WOM (eWOM). Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) define eWOM as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former consumers about a product or

company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet” (p.39).

The characteristics of the Internet have made eWOM distinctive from traditional WOM. First of all, the Internet has removed the time and geographical constraints of WOM. Therefore, eWOM can be provided or sought at any time and at any place, increasing the accessibility of consumer-to-consumer communication. Second, eWOM can be exchanged among an unlimited number of individuals through the Internet, while traditional WOM is limited to an individual’s social contact boundaries (Ellison and Fudenberg 1995). Thus, the volume of information from eWOM is greater than that from traditional WOM. Third, eWOM allows an individual to receive various viewpoints (positive and negative) about a product from multiple sources, while traditional WOM generally provides a single perspective of information at a time (Chatterjee 2001). Therefore, eWOM information is more dense and diverse compared to traditional WOM information. Fourth, eWOM is also distinguished from traditional WOM in that eWOM can be anonymously generated. Therefore, social pressure or restrictions that might be unavoidable in face-to-face communication can be eased in eWOM communication (Gelb and Sundaram 2002). For example, consumers can freely express their negative comments about a product without concern about others’ judgements, or they can inquire about products or services that may solve their personal problems while protecting their privacy. Finally, traditional WOM and eWOM are also different in the way communication is expressed. Traditional WOM involves verbal communication, while eWOM is processed through written language. It is suggested that written communication

tends to be more formal and logical than oral communication (Sun et al. 2006), so a written endorsement is regarded to have more authority (Gelb and Sundaram 2002).

Recognizing these unique characteristics of eWOM, researchers have examined the effects of eWOM on consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and decision making. Bickart and Schindler (2001) found that consumers who gathered product information from online forums showed higher interest in a product category than those who searched for information from corporate Web sites. They speculated that this result may stem from the fact that eWOM information is more credible, relevant, and able to generate empathy for consumers than marketer-generated information. In addition, Gruen, Osmonbekov, and Czaplewski (2006) found that engaging in eWOM activities positively increased the overall value of the product and loyalty intentions because consumers could receive additional information about product benefits during the discussion. Finally, Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) investigated the relationship between consumer product review content and relative sales of books at two leading online book sellers. They found the growth of positive reviews of a book increased its sales compared to no reviews at all.

Furthermore, several researchers have found that the impact of eWOM can vary by the characteristics of its receivers. Xue and Phelps (2004) indicate that eWOM information provided on an online forum was not always more persuasive than the eWOM information provided on corporate websites; however, the influence of an eWOM platform might be moderated by receivers' product involvement and experiences with offline WOM communication. Chatterjee (2001) examined the impact of a consumer's familiarity with the retailer on acceptance of negative reviews and patronage intentions. The results showed that consumers who patronized a retailer based on familiarity were

less receptive to negative reviews about the retailer and less likely to switch retailers; on the other hand, consumers who chose a retailer based on price were more likely to believe negative information about the retailer and to switch retailers.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Study 1: Literature Review**

In the preceding discussions, the characteristics of WOM and eWOM, and their roles in consumers' purchase decision processes have been reviewed. In Study 1, consumers' motivations to engage in WOM and eWOM communication are discussed in order to investigate which factors drive consumers to provide or seek eWOM information and how these motivations are connected with certain eWOM behaviors.

#### **Motivations for Engaging in eWOM**

Motivation is the force that drives individuals to take an action (Schiffman and Kanuk 1991); therefore, identifying underlying motivations is critical in predicting and understanding an individual's behavior. Motivation is generated from tension-systems which create a state of disequilibrium (Bayton 1958). Individuals have a basic desire for balance in their lives. Therefore, when their state becomes unbalanced, they will make an effort to restore equilibrium by selecting a goal, which will release themselves from the tensions, and then by taking patterns of action to achieve the goal (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). An unbalanced consumption experience originates from either satisfaction or dissatisfaction toward a product or a service (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). When the quality of a product exceeds expectations, consumers become satisfied and delighted. On the contrary, when the product quality is below expectations, consumers become dissatisfied and frustrated (Oliver 1997). These strong positive and negative emotions



build a psychological tension for consumers, so they may engage in positive or negative WOM activities to reduce this imbalance (Sundaram, Mitra, and Webster 1998). Richins (1983) states that providing negative WOM about a product is positively related to the seriousness of the problem with the product. Consumers may not pass along negative WOM about a product when there is minor dissatisfaction with it, but as the severity of the problem becomes higher, consumers tend to put more effort in responding to the problem and spreading negative WOM about the product.

Although satisfaction or dissatisfaction toward a product is considered as the general and basic stimulus of WOM communication (e.g., Anderson 1998; Richins 1983), researchers have also identified more specific and divergent factors that motivate consumers to provide or seek traditional WOM information (e.g., Dichter 1966; Engel, Kegerreis, and Blackwell 1969; Sundaram, Mitra, and Webster 1998). Since eWOM communication is an expanded form of traditional face-to-face WOM, it is expected that WOM and eWOM share the core motivations to engage in peer-to-peer communications regarding a product or service (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). Thus, drawing on the previous research in both traditional WOM and eWOM, this study identifies motivations to provide and seek eWOM, which have been most commonly found in the literature.

### ***Motivations for Providing eWOM***

The first motivation for providing eWOM is *self-enhancement*. Previous research in traditional WOM has found that consumers tend to talk about products to others in order to achieve their emotional needs, such as gaining attention, suggesting status, or asserting expertise (Dichter 1966; Engel, Kegerreis, and Blackwell 1969; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Sundaram, Mitra, and Webster 1998). Sundaram, Mitra, and Webster (1998)

state that providing product-related information would help consumers enhance their self-image as intelligent shoppers among other consumers. This motivation has also been identified in the eWOM motivation study by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004). More specifically, a factor analysis of eWOM providing motivations in their study found that the self-enhancement motivation for providing eWOM among German consumers was loaded on the same factor with the motivation to express positive feelings of a satisfied purchase experience. The combination of these two motivations implies that consumers may perceive that expressing positive feelings of their satisfied purchase experiences would enhance their image as consumption experts.

The second motivation for providing eWOM is *concern for others*. Previous studies in both traditional WOM and eWOM have found that consumers are motivated to provide product-related information out of concern for others (Dichter 1966; Engel, Kegerreis, and Blackwell 1969; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Sundaram, Mitra, and Webster 1998; Walsh, Gwinner, and Swanson 2004; Ward and Ostrom 2002). The motivation of concern for others is also referred to as altruism by Sundaram, Mitra, and Webster (1998), since the information provider does not expect any reward (e.g., financial reward) in return for helping others. They found that altruism would generate either positive WOM or negative WOM information. Consumers provide positive WOM to assist the information receivers in making satisfying purchase decisions, while negative WOM is offered to warn others about or prevent others from the consequences of buying certain products.

The third motivation for providing eWOM is *helping the company*. Sundaram, Mitra, and Webster (1998) revealed that consumers tend to provide positive WOM about

a company to help the company. When a consumer is highly satisfied with a product, he or she is motivated to engage in positive WOM activities to give a reward to the company. Although the motivation of helping companies is psychologically related to the general altruism motive as the motivation of concern for others (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004), it is distinguished from the concern for others motivation because its main purpose is to do something good for the company rather than other fellow consumers (Sundaram, Mitra, and Webster 1998). In the study of eWOM providing motivations, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) explained this motivation according to the equity theory proposed by Oliver and Swan (1989). Since individuals have a desire to maintain equitable and fair exchanges, if consumers think they have received more benefits than they paid, they try to help the company by recommending its products to other consumers on the Internet to balance the transactions.

The fourth motivation for providing eWOM is *venting negative feelings toward the company or brand*. In contrast to the helping the company motivation, this motivation is associated with dissatisfying purchase experiences. In both traditional WOM and eWOM contexts, consumers tend to provide negative WOM about a brand, product, or company to others to ease their anger and frustration from the consumption experience or to take vengeance upon the company (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Sundaram, Mitra, and Webster 1998; Ward and Ostrom 2002). Sundaram, Mitra, and Webster (1998) have found that when a company does not care about customer complaints, consumers tend to feel that the company should not be allowed to operate and thus, share their negative experiences with others in order to stop them patronizing the company. Ward and Ostrom (2002) have also found that consumers tend to make more effort to elaborate negative

WOM on the Internet for revenge against companies when they are dissatisfied, not only with a product or service failure, but also with the companies' lack of action to the complaints.

The fifth motivation for providing eWOM is *social interaction benefits*. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) have found that consumers tend to articulate themselves on the Internet to have social interactions with others. They have argued that providing comments on online opinion platforms is perceived to help consumers satisfy their emotional needs, such as belonging, by the interaction with other fellow consumers and from community membership. Consumers' eWOM activities may be closely related to their use of the Internet in general. It has been found that people tend to use the Internet to fulfill their social needs by interacting with others who share similar interests and with others who are even outside of their offline social boundaries (Korgaonkar and Wolin 1999; Papacharissi and Rubin 2000; Parker and Plank 2000).

The final motivation for providing eWOM is *economic incentives*. Consumers are motivated to provide product recommendations on the Internet to get economic incentives, such as Web points or coupons, which are often provided by opinion platforms on the Internet to increase consumers' participation in eWOM exchanges and websites' informational value (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). The motivation of economic incentives originates from a distinctive characteristic of eWOM. Unlike traditional WOM, which is directly delivered from one consumer to another consumer, eWOM is exchanged through the assistance of a third party, the online platform operators.

Based on these discussions, the following research question is posed:

**RQ1:** What motivates U.S. consumers to provide comments about a product, service, or company on the Internet?

### ***Motivations for Seeking eWOM***

The first motivation for seeking eWOM is *risk reduction*. Consumers seek WOM or eWOM to decrease the perceived risk in making purchase decisions (Goldsmith and Horowitz 2006; Schiffman and Kanuk 1991). Traditional WOM studies have found that consumers are more likely to rely on interpersonal information sources when the risk of purchasing is high (Bansal and Voyer 2000; File, Cermak, and Prince 1994; Murray 1991), due to the fact that WOM information can provide clarification and feedback opportunities to consumers and thus, effectively decrease prepurchase uncertainty about a product or service (Arndt 1967a; Gilly et al. 1998; Silverman 2001). Ha (2002) also found that collecting WOM information created trust and confidence for the information receivers and thus effectively reduced perceived risks of Internet auctions.

The second motivation for seeking eWOM is *social approval*. This motivation is related to information search processes for the social function of consumption (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2004). Schiffman and Kanuk (1991) proposed that consumers are motivated to seek WOM information in order to purchase a product that is approved or accepted by other people. Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2004) also found that consumers seek other consumers' comments about products on the Internet to be aware of a product's social image, compare their idea about a product with that of others, or get other consumers' approval for their purchase decision.

The third motivation for seeking eWOM is *reduction of search time and effort* in purchase decision making (Goldsmith and Horowitz 2006; Schiffman and Kanuk 1991). Citing from Wiedmann, Walsh, and Mitchell's (2001) study, Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2004) have stated that the excess of information and product types makes it difficult for

consumers to know all the alternatives. In this situation, WOM is a good way to get buying-related information with fewer time-consuming search activities. In addition, as the Internet technology has facilitated the process of eWOM exchanges, the benefits from the convenience and information value of eWOM are even further enhanced.

The fourth motivation for seeking eWOM is *to get product (usage) information*. Studies in both traditional WOM and eWOM contexts have found that consumers seek WOM or eWOM to get product-related information (Goldsmith and Horowitz 2006; Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2004; Schiffman and Kanuk 1991). Consumers can get information for new products, learn how a product is consumed, or solve problems with using the product through seeking others' product-related comments on the Internet. As product features become more complex and technical, consumers are more likely to rely on eWOM as a product information source (Godes et al. 2005). This may be because eWOM is thought to be written by real product buyers and users and thus is more relevant to consumers than the information provided by manufacturers or marketers (Bickart and Schindler 2001). This motivation is distinguished from the motivation to seek eWOM for social orientation through information in terms of the fact that its objective is mainly focused on getting information about product attributes and market trends.

The final motivation for seeking eWOM is *social interaction benefits*, which also drives consumers to provide eWOM. As the Internet serves a role to facilitate interpersonal communication and activities (Korgaonkar and Wolin 1999), consumers can participate in others' shopping experiences or have a sense of belonging to a

community by seeking other consumers' postings on online eWOM platforms (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2004).

Based on these discussions, the following research question is posed:

**RQ2:** What motivates U.S. consumers to seek comments about a product, service, or company on the Internet?

### **Relationship between eWOM Motivations and eWOM Behavior**

The second objective of Study 1 is to investigate the relationship between eWOM motivations and eWOM behavior. Motivation is a critical element for understanding and predicting human behavior. According to Reeve (2005), motivation influences the energy and direction of behavior. He states that energy determines the strength, intensity, and persistence of behavior, and direction leads behavior toward achieving a particular goal or an outcome. Therefore, different motivations for a particular domain should generate different levels of energy and diverse directions of behaviors related to that domain. For example, Korgaonkar and Wolin's (1999) study revealed that people's usage of the Internet varied based on their motivations for using the Internet. The results indicated that heavier Internet users who spent more than one hour per day on the Web compared to users who spent less than one hour were more likely to use the Internet to be entertained or to escape from reality (escapism motivation), to effectively obtain useful information (information motivation), to enjoy the interactive features of the Internet (interactive control motivation), to interact and socialize with others with similar interests (socialization motivation), and to purchase products with lower prices (economic motivation).

In a similar vein, we can expect that eWOM motivations may influence how often consumers engage in providing and seeking eWOM. Hennig-Thurau et al.'s (2004) study

conducted in Germany investigated how motivations for providing eWOM affected the number of comments written on opinion platforms and the frequency of visits to opinion platforms. They found the motivations for social benefits had the strongest positive impact on platform visiting frequency, followed by extraversion/positive self-enhancement and concern for others, while venting negative feelings and platform assistance were negatively related to the frequency of platform visits. The motivation for social benefits also had the strongest influence on the number of comments provided, followed by economic incentives, concern for other consumers, and extraversion/positive self-enhancement, while other factors had no significant influence. These findings indicate that consumers may show different providing or seeking eWOM behaviors according to their eWOM motivations. For example, consumers who are motivated by the interest in social interaction benefits may seek eWOM on a regular basis, while consumers who are motivated by risk reduction in purchase decisions or for solving problems with a product may occasionally seek eWOM only during these particular situations. Thus, the different patterns of consumers' eWOM behaviors, such as the frequency of providing or seeking comments, will be manifested differently depending on their eWOM motivations.

Consequently, this discussion leads to the following hypothesis.

**H1:** Types of eWOM providing motivations will be related to the frequency of providing comments on the Web.

**H2:** Types of eWOM seeking motivations will be related to the frequency of seeking comments on the Web.

Moreover, consumers' motivations for providing and seeking eWOM may affect consumers' use of different eWOM platform types as well. eWOM occurs through a



variety of Internet communication platforms, and each platform has its own characteristics. First, discussion forums indicate discussion board facilities on the Web, and most consumer opinion and review sites (e.g., <http://www.epinions.com> or <http://www.cnet.com>) are classified as discussion forums. On discussion forums, any visitors can simply provide and search for information without an operator's approval. Second, a complaint site is similar to discussion forums. However, it is considered a different type of online platform because of its strong and unique purpose of existence. Complaint sites facilitate negative WOM communication about companies, and consumers can report their complaints or get tips on complaint resolution from other consumers through these Web sites (Bailey 2004). Third, blogs are journal style user-generated Web sites, providing commentary or news on specific topics (e.g., <http://blog.myspace.com>). According to eMarketer (2007), a majority of blog users read others' blogs to be entertained and to keep up with personal interests or hobbies. Fourth, consumer product reviews are also exchanged through portal sites (e.g., <http://www.yahoo.com>), which provide a variety of services from Web search engines to personal communication sources, such as email and message boards (Telang and Mukhopadhyay 2005). Thus, through the characteristic convenience of portal sites, consumers can easily browse various sources of information at once and become more engaged in eWOM communication. Finally, retailers' Web sites and auction sites are another type of eWOM channel. Customer reviews and ratings provided on these sites are considered the most accessible and prevalent forms of eWOM in that they are conveniently provided to consumers along with merchandise information (Chatterjee 2001).

Harrison-Walker (2001) found that numerous consumers chose complaint forums on the Web in their first attempt to officially articulate a negative purchase experience. She further stated that easy access and convenience of Internet complaint forums facilitated consumers' complaint processes. This implies that when consumers engage in eWOM, they may select the particular type of eWOM platform that would better help them to satisfy their eWOM motivations. Therefore, it is expected that the selection of different eWOM platform types may be influenced by different motivations of eWOM. For instance, consumers who are motivated by economic incentives tend to provide comments on Web sites that offer discount coupons for providing product reviews. In addition, consumers who seek eWOM for their interest in product (usage) information may choose newsgroups or discussion forums because more various topics and diverse information are discussed in these types of platforms. Therefore, the following research question was proposed.

**RQ3:** Whether and how will types of eWOM providing motivations be related to the selection of different types of eWOM platforms?

**RQ4:** Whether and how will types of eWOM seeking motivations be related to the selection of different types of eWOM platforms?

## **Chapter 4**

### **Study 1: Method**

#### **Participants and Procedure**

To test the proposed hypotheses and answer the research questions, a self-administered survey was conducted with undergraduate students at a major Midwestern university in the U.S. The use of a student sample is considered appropriate for this study, because college students are not only heavy users of the Internet compared to the general

population, but also more active in online activities. A report by comScore (comScore 2004) indicated that college students' frequency and duration of Internet usage was 20 percent higher than those of average Internet users. The survey research was conducted in university classrooms. After being informed about the definition of eWOM and the purpose of this study, participants were asked to complete the questionnaire.

A total of 469 students participated in the survey, and the 95 who answered that they had neither provided nor sought comments about a product, company, or service on the Web were excluded from the subsequent data analysis. Twenty one participants who identified themselves as non-Americans were excluded as well. As a result, a total of 353 responses were analyzed in Study 1. One hundred thirty four participants were male (38%), while 219 (62%) were female. A majority of the participants described themselves as White/Caucasian (89%), followed by Asian/Pacific Islanders (5%), Black/African-Americans (3%), Hispanic/Latinos (2%), and Others (1%). The participants' mean age was 21.54 (SD = 1.22).

### **Questionnaire Development**

The survey instrument included questions for both providing and seeking eWOM motivations and behaviors. Questions for providing eWOM motivations and behaviors were asked first, and then questions for seeking eWOM followed. The participants were first asked if they had ever provided comments regarding a product, company, or service on the Web. If participants had never provided or sought comments before, they were asked to skip the questions about providing or seeking eWOM and to answer the general questions in the part three.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part measured participants' eWOM providing behaviors and motivations. eWOM providing behaviors were measured by the frequency of providing comments about a product, company, or service and the frequency of visits to each of six eWOM platforms to provide comments within the last 12 months (e.g., consumer review sites, complaint sites, auction sites, retailers' sites, portal sites, and blogs). Specifically, the frequency of providing comments and of visits to each type of eWOM platforms were measured using the following six categories: 'never', 'once or twice a year', 'several times a year', 'once a month', 'once a week', and 'everyday'. Following questions regarding eWOM providing behaviors, the participants were asked to indicate what motivated them to provide comments about a product, service, or company on the Internet. To measure motivations for providing eWOM, 15 items were borrowed from Hennig-Thurau et al.'s (2004) study. This study also created another 16 items based on the conceptual definitions of different types of WOM and eWOM motivations provided in the previous studies. A total of 31 items were generated for eWOM providing motivations. The participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of these items on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

The second part of the questionnaire focused on eWOM seeking behavior and motivations. Questions about eWOM seeking behavior and motivations followed the same procedure as with measuring eWOM providing behavior and motivations. eWOM seeking behaviors were also measured by the frequency of seeking comments about a product, company, or service and the frequency of visits to each of six eWOM platforms to seek comments within the last 12 months. The participants were then asked to indicate

motivations for seeking comments about a product, service, or company on the Internet. Seven items from Goldsmith and Horowitz's (2006) and 11 items from Hennig-Thurau and Walsh's (2004) studies were borrowed to measure motivations for seeking eWOM. Another 13 items were created for this study. A total of 31 items were generated for eWOM seeking motivations.

The third part of the questionnaire asked about participants' general internet usage, susceptibility to interpersonal influence, levels of individualism and collectivism, and demographic information. The participants' susceptibility to interpersonal influence was measured using Bearden, Netemeyer, and Teel's (1989) 12-item scale. The scale examined the level of the need to identify or improve one's image with others through the purchase or use of products and brands (i.e., I often identify with other people by purchasing the same products and brands they purchase), the willingness to conform to others' expectations regarding purchase decision (i.e., If other people can see me using a product, I often purchase the brand they expect me to buy), and the tendency to learn product information by observing or asking others (i.e., I frequently gather information from friends or family about a product before I buy). A seven-point Likert scale was also used (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .87. The participants' levels of individualism and collectivism were measured by Singelis' (1994) Self-Construal Scale. The scale measures the strength of an individual's independent and interdependent self construal. Each dimension is measured with 12 items, on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .66 for the independent self construal and .67 for the interdependent self construal. A sample of the questionnaire is attached in the Appendix.

## Chapter 5

### Study 1: Results

Among the 353 participants, 133 (38%) reported having provided comments about a product, service, or company on the Web, while 345 (98%) participants indicated that they had sought others' comments. Only those responses from the 133 participants and from the 345 participants were included in the subsequent data analyses for examining eWOM providing and seeking motivations and behaviors, respectively.

#### **eWOM Motivation**

*eWOM Providing Motivation.* RQ1 asked about consumers' motivations for providing eWOM. A total of 31 items that measures eWOM providing motivations were factor analyzed through principal components analysis to test the validity of items and to identify the dimensionality of motivations for providing eWOM. Varimax rotation was utilized to examine variables that might suggest possible motivation factors. Factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were extracted, and the minimum values of factor loadings were set at .40. Items that cross-loaded on more than one factor or did not meet the criteria described above were dropped one by one. After these procedures, nine items were eliminated, resulting in 22 remaining items.

The findings of the factor analysis revealed five factors of motivations for providing eWOM, accounting for 72.7% of the total variance: 1) social interaction benefits/self-enhancement, 2) helping the company (or brand), 3) vengeance upon the company (or brand), 4) economic incentives, and 5) concern for others (see Table 1).

The first factor is labeled *social interaction benefits/self-enhancement*, as it represented a combination of two proposed motivations: social interaction benefits and

self-enhancement. It contained six items for social interaction benefits and three items for self-enhancement ( $\alpha = .93$ ). This factor accounted for 28.6% of the variance. The second factor was *helping the company (or brand)*, accounting for 16.5% of the variance. It consisted of five items for helping the company and one for self enhancement (i.e., ‘to tell others about my buying successes’) ( $\alpha = .84$ ). The third factor was *vengeance upon the company (or brand)*, accounting for 11.2% of the variance. It included three items ( $\alpha = .83$ ). The fourth factor, *economic incentives*, explained 8.3% of the variance, containing two items ( $r = .74$ ). The last factor, *concern for others*, accounted for 8.1% of the variance. It included two items ( $r = .54$ ).

**Table 1. Factor Analysis for Motivations to *Provide eWOM***

Factor (Cronbach's alpha)	Items "I <i>provide</i> comments about a product, service, or company on the Internet ....."	Components				
		1	2	3	4	5
Social interaction benefits/ self-enhancement ( $\alpha = .93$ )	- Because I like the social interaction with other consumers	.892				
	- Because it's fun to communicate with other people	.843				
	- To show others that I am a clever shopper	.825				
	- Because it makes me feel that I belong to a group	.821				
	- To communicate with various people sharing similar interest	.798				
	- Because a chat among like-minded people is a nice thing	.796				
	- Because I feel good when others show me some respect for my knowledge.	.759				
	- To get attention for providing recommendations	.752				
	- To meet people	.722				
	Helping the company (or brand) ( $\alpha = .84$ )	- To support the company and the product that I like		.856		
- Because I am so satisfied with a company and its product that I want to help the company to be successful			.840			
- Because I want to encourage the good company			.776			
- To tell others about my buying successes			.715			
- To make more people buy the product of the company that I support			.656			

**Table 1 Continued**

	- Because in my own opinion, good companies (brands) should be supported	.655	
Vengeance upon the company (or brand) ( $\alpha = .83$ )	- To damage the company's reputation	.880	
	- To take vengeance upon the company	.842	
	- Because the company harmed me, now I will harm the company!	.800	
Economic incentives ( $r = .74$ )	- Because of the incentives I receive	.901	
	- To get a discount or coupons from the Website	.876	
Concern for others ( $r = .54$ )	- To prevent others from having the same negative experience as me		.875
	- To warn others of bad products		.813
<hr/>			
<b>Cumulative % of Variance: 72.7%</b>			

***eWOM Seeking Motivation.*** RQ2 asked about consumers' motivations for seeking eWOM. A total of 31 items for measuring eWOM seeking motivations were factor analyzed using the same procedure as the factor analysis of eWOM providing motivations described above. After the item refining procedures, 12 items were eliminated, resulting in 19 remaining items. For motivations to seek eWOM, a total of four factors were identified, accounting for 70.2% of the total variance: 1) social interaction benefits, 2) risk reduction, 3) social-oriented product information, and 4) product usage information (see Table 2).

The first factor was *social interaction benefits*, accounting for 21.7% of the variance after rotation. It contained six items ( $\alpha = .89$ ). The second factor was found to be *risk reduction*. It explained 19.1% of the variance, including five items ( $\alpha = .86$ ). Four items were from reduction motivations, and one item was from social approval (i.e., 'because I can get the confirmation that I made the right buying decision'). The third factor was *social-oriented product information*, explaining 17.8% of the variance. It



consisted of five items ( $\alpha = .84$ ): three items were from getting product (usage) information (i.e., ‘to know which topics are in,’ ‘because I am interested in what is new,’ and ‘because it’s fun to learn and compare the information of products in the marketplace’) and two items were from social approval (i.e., ‘to know if the product is popular’ and ‘to know the product’s social image’). The last factor, *product usage information*, accounted for 11.6% of the variance. This factor included three items ( $\alpha = .74$ ).

**Table 2. Factor Analysis for Motivations to Seek eWOM**

Factor (Cronbach’s alpha)	Items	Components			
		1	2	3	4
	“I seek comments about a product, a service, or company provided by other consumers on the Internet.....”				
Social interaction benefits ( $\alpha = .89$ )	- Because it’s fun to communicate with other people	.873			
	- Because it makes me feel that I belong to a group	.866			
	- Because I like the social interaction with other consumers	.819			
	- Because I really like being part of such a community	.750			
	- To communicate with various people sharing similar interest	.711			
Risk reduction ( $\alpha = .86$ )	- Because I don’t want to end up regretting a decision I make		.846		
	- To avoid making a risky decision		.842		
	- Because I don’t want to buy a bad product		.814		
	- So the chances of me making a bad decision are reduced		.803		
	- Because I can get the confirmation that I made the right buying decision		.539		
Social-oriented product information ( $\alpha = .84$ )	- To know the product’s social image			.814	
	- To know which topics are “in”			.782	
	- To know if the product is popular			.749	
	- Because I am interested in what is new			.704	
	- Because it’s fun to learn and compare the information of products in the marketplace			.545	
Product usage information ( $\alpha = .74$ )	- To know experts’ opinion about my problem				.788
	- To find advice and solutions for my problems with the product				.772
	- Because I find the right answers by seeking others’ comments on the Internet when I have difficulties with the product				.632
<b>Cumulative % of Variance: 70.2%</b>					

## **Relationship between eWOM Motivations and eWOM Behavior**

Hierarchical multiple regressions were performed to test H1, H2, and RQ3. This analytical approach allows us to examine whether a certain predictor additionally explains the criterion variable after other predictors are controlled.

***eWOM Providing Motivations and eWOM Providing Behavior.*** The frequency of providing comments (H1) and the frequency of visits to each of the different platform types (RQ3) were entered as criterion variables in hierarchical multiple regressions. For predictors, Internet usage hours, gender, and ethnicity were entered into the first block. The factors of eWOM providing motivations were then entered into the second block.

H1 predicted that eWOM providing motivations would be related to the frequency of providing eWOM comments. As in Table 3, the model testing the relationship between the frequency of providing eWOM comments and motivations to provide eWOM accounted for 17.9% of the total variance. The first block explained 2.6% of the variance, and no factor was found to influence the frequency of providing eWOM comments. After this block was controlled, motivations to provide eWOM accounted for 15.3% of the total variance. The motivation for *Social interaction benefits/self-enhancement* was found to have the strongest, positive impact on consumers' frequency of providing comments,  $\beta = .21, p < .05$ , followed by *Helping the company*,  $\beta = .19, p < .05$ . On the other hand, the motivation for *economic incentives* was negatively related to consumers' frequency of providing comments,  $\beta = -.17, p < .01$ . Thus, H1 was partially supported.

RQ3 examined whether and how types of eWOM providing motivations would be related to the frequency of visits to each of the different types of eWOM platforms to provide eWOM comments (see Table 3). First, the model predicting the frequency of

visits to consumer review sites accounted for 17.9% of the variance. The first block, accounting for 0.1% of the variance, had no relationship with the frequency of visits to consumer review sites. The second block explained 17.8% of the variance. The motivation for *social interaction benefits/self-enhancement* was found to be a significant predictor of the frequency of visits to consumer review sites,  $\beta = .33, p < .001$ . Second, the model testing the motive importance on the frequency of visits to complaint sites explained 30.9% of the variance. The first block accounted for 9.0% of the variance; ethnicity was a significant predictor of the frequency of visits to complaint sites,  $\beta = .21, p < .01$ . After the first block was controlled, the second block accounted for 21.9% of the variance. It was found that consumers who provide eWOM for *vengeance upon the company (or brand)* motivation were more likely to provide comments on complaint sites,  $\beta = .10, p < .05$ , whereas consumers motivated by *concern for others* were less likely to provide eWOM on complaint sites,  $\beta = -.10, p < .05$ . Third, the model examining the motive importance on the frequency of visits to retailers' sites accounted for 12.5% of the variance overall (the first block: 3.9%, the second block: 8.6%). In the first block, gender was a marginally significant predictor of providing comments on retailers' sites,  $\beta = .34, p < .1$ . In the second block, the motivations for *helping the company (or brand)*,  $\beta = .15, p < .1$ , and *economic incentives*,  $\beta = -.11, p < .1$ , approached, but did not reach significance. Fourth, the model testing the motive importance on the frequency of visits to portal sites explained 19.8% of the variance. The first block accounted for 5.2% of the variance; male (versus female) consumers were found to be more likely to provide comments on portal sites,  $\beta = .39, p < .05$ . After the first block was controlled, the motivation for *social interaction benefits/self-enhancement* was found to be a significant

predictor of the frequency of visits to portal sites,  $\beta = .25, p < .01$ . The second block explained 14.6% of the variance. Finally, the model predicting the frequency of visits to either auction sites or blogs did not reveal any significant relationship.

**Table 3. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting the Frequency of Providing eWOM and the Selection of Platform Types**

	Frequency of posting	Consumer review sites	Complaint sites	Auction sites	Retailers' sites	Portals	Blogs
	Final Beta						
Gender <sup>a</sup>	.20	.06	.11	.39	.34#	.34	-.35
Internet usage hours	.00	.00	-.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Ethnicity	.13	.00	.21**	.04	.10	.06	.11
<b>R<sup>2</sup> Δ</b>	<b>.03</b>	<b>.00</b>	<b>.09</b>	<b>.05</b>	<b>.04</b>	<b>.05</b>	<b>.02</b>
<b>eWOM</b>							
<b>Motivations</b>							
Social interaction benefits/	.21*	.33***	.04	.02	-.02	.25**	.11
Self-enhancement							
Helping the company	.19*	.05	-.01	.10	.15#	-.01	.15
Vengeance upon the company	.05	-.03	.10*	-.05	.07	-.00	.10
Economic incentives	-.17**	-.01	.06	-.00	-.11#	-.04	-.01
Concern for others	-.01	.01	-.10*	.04	-.04	-.06	-.17
<b>R<sup>2</sup> Δ</b>	<b>.15</b>	<b>.18</b>	<b>.22</b>	<b>.07</b>	<b>.09</b>	<b>.15</b>	<b>.07</b>
<b>Total R<sup>2</sup> Δ</b>	<b>.18</b>	<b>.18</b>	<b>.31</b>	<b>.12</b>	<b>.13</b>	<b>.20</b>	<b>.09</b>

a: Coded as 1 = female, 2 = male.

#  $p < .09$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

***eWOM Seeking Motivations and eWOM Seeking Behavior.*** For criterion variables in hierarchical multiple regressions, the frequency of seeking comments (H2) and the frequency of visits to each of the different platform types (RQ4) were entered. For predictors, Internet usage hours, gender, and ethnicity, and susceptibility to interpersonal influence were entered into the first block. The factors of eWOM seeking motivations were then entered into the second block.

H2 predicted that eWOM seeking motivations would be related to the frequency of seeking eWOM comments. The model that tested the relationship between the frequency of seeking comments and motivations to seek eWOM explained 18.7% of the variance (see Table 4). The first block accounted for 5.9% of the total variance. Specifically, Internet hours,  $\beta = .00, p < .01$ , and gender,  $\beta = .46, p < .05$ , were significant predictors of the frequency of seeking comments, indicating that consumers who are male or spend longer hours using the Internet tended to seek eWOM more frequently. After controlling these variables, four motivations to seek eWOM explained 12.8% of the total variance. It was found that *risk reduction* was the only significant, positive predictor of the frequency of seeking comments,  $\beta = .34, p < .001$ . Thus, H2 was partially supported.

RQ4 examined whether and how types of eWOM seeking motivations would be related to the frequency of visits to each of six different types of eWOM platforms to seek eWOM comments (see Table 4). The first model tested consumer review sites, accounting for 21.9% of the variance overall (the first block: 7.7%, the second block: 14.2%). In the first block, gender was found to have a significant relationship with the frequency of visits to consumer review sites to seek eWOM. After controlling the first block, it was found that *social interaction benefits* had the strongest, positive influence on visiting consumer review sites,  $\beta = .22, p < .01$ , followed by *product usage information/problem solving*,  $\beta = .13, p < .05$ . The second model examined the relationship between eWOM seeking motivations and complaint sites, which explained 16.2% of the total variance. The first block accounted for 3.4% of the variance, and the results showed that gender was significantly related to the frequency of visits to complaint sites,  $\beta = .22, p$

< .05, while the effect of susceptibility to interpersonal influence approached but did not reach statistical significance,  $\beta = .07, p < .1$ . After these variables were controlled, *social interaction benefits* showed a significant relationship with the selection of complaint sites,  $\beta = .22, p < .001$ . The third model testing auction sites accounted for 13.9% of the total variance (the first block: 3.7%, second block: 10.2%). In the first block, it is found that consumers who used the Internet for longer times were more likely to visit auction sites,  $\beta = .01, p < .05$ . Also, the effect of gender on the frequency of visits to auction sites approached but did not reach statistical significance,  $\beta = .30, p < .01$ . eWOM motivations to seek eWOM as a second block showed that *product usage information/ problem solving* was a significant predictor of the frequency of visits to auction sites,  $\beta = .22, p < .01$ . In the fourth model, accounting for 18.7% of the variance, retailers' sites were tested (the first block: 6.0%, the second block: 12.7%). In the first block, gender,  $\beta = .39, p < .05$ , Internet usage,  $\beta = .01, p < .01$ , and susceptibility,  $\beta = .13, p < .05$ , were found to be significant predictors of selecting retailers' sites to seek comments. After the first block was controlled, *product usage information/ problem solving* was found to have a significant influence on the frequency of visits to retailers' sites to seek comments,  $\beta = .20, p < .05$ . The influence of *social interaction benefits*,  $\beta = -.15, p < .1$ , and *risk reduction*,  $\beta = .14, p < .1$ , approached the relationship, but they did not reach significance. The fifth model tested portal sites, accounting for 12.9% of the variance. The first block explained 4.6% of the variance, and it was found that consumers who are male,  $\beta = .34, p < .05$ , or have high susceptibility to interpersonal influence,  $\beta = .18, p < .01$ , were more likely to select portal sites. In the second block, accounting for 8.3% of the variance, *product usage information* was found to be a significant predictor of the frequency of visits to

portal sites,  $\beta = .18, p < .05$ . The last model examined blogs, but no significant relationship was found.

**Table 4. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting the Frequency of Seeking eWOM and the Selection of Platform Types**

	Frequency of seeking	Consumer review sites	Complaint sites	Auction sites	Retailers' sites	Portals	Blogs
	Final Beta						
Gender <sup>a</sup>	.46*	.52***	.22*	.30	.39*	.34*	-.13
Internet usage hours	.00**	.00	.00	.00	.00**	.00	.00*
Ethnicity	.10	.05	.01	-.10	-.08	.07	.05
Susceptibility	.12	.16**	.07#	.09	.13*	.18**	.06
<b>R<sup>2</sup> Δ</b>	<b>.06</b>	<b>.08</b>	<b>.03</b>	<b>.04</b>	<b>.06</b>	<b>.05</b>	<b>.02</b>
<b>eWOM Motivations</b>							
Social interaction benefits	-.09	.22**	.22***	.06	-.15#	.00	.11
Risk reduction	.34***	.08	-.06	.12	.14#	.02	.07
Social –oriented product information	-.40	-.03	.03	-.03	-.00	.08	.08
Product usage information	.84	.13*	.04	.22**	.20**	.18*	.13
<b>R<sup>2</sup> Δ</b>	<b>.13</b>	<b>.14</b>	<b>.13</b>	<b>.10</b>	<b>.13</b>	<b>.08</b>	<b>.06</b>
<b>Total R<sup>2</sup> Δ</b>	<b>.19</b>	<b>.22</b>	<b>.16</b>	<b>.14</b>	<b>.19</b>	<b>.13</b>	<b>.08</b>

a: Coded as 1 = female, 2 = male.

#  $p < .09$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

### Summary of Study 1 findings

The findings of Study 1 identified five motivations for providing eWOM: social interaction benefits/self-enhancement, helping the company (or brand), vengeance upon the company (or brand), economic incentives, and concern for others. For motivations to seek eWOM, the following four factors were found: social interaction benefits, risk reduction, social-oriented product information, and product usage information.

Study 1 also showed that, to some degree, types of eWOM motivations had a significant influence on the frequency of providing and seeking eWOM. Specifically, the motivation for *social interaction benefits/self-enhancement* was the strongest, positive

predictor of consumers' frequency of providing comments, followed by *helping the company*. In contrast, the more consumers were motivated by *economic incentives*, the less frequently they provided comments on the Web. For motivations to seek eWOM, consumers who seek eWOM for *risk reduction* more frequently sought comments on the Web.

Study 1 also examined the relationship between eWOM motivations and opinion platform types. The results indicated that consumers who provide eWOM for *social interaction benefits/self-enhancement* were more likely to choose consumer review sites and Web portals to provide comments. Consumers providing eWOM to take *vengeance upon the company (or brand)* were more likely to post comments on complaint sites, while consumers motivated by *concern for others* were less likely to provide eWOM on complaint sites. The motivations for *helping the company (or brand)* and *economic incentives* were found to be marginally significant predictors of selecting online retailers' sites.

In addition, Study 1 found that consumers motivated by *social interaction benefits* were more likely to visit consumer review sites and complaint sites to seek other consumers' comments. This motivation also showed a marginally significant relationship with the frequency of visits to online retailers' sites. Consumers who sought others' comments about products for *product usage information* were more likely to visit consumer review sites, auction sites, retailers' sites, and Web portals. Whereas, *risk reduction* was found to approach the relationship with online retailer's sites, but did not reach significance.



## **Chapter 6**

### **Study 2: Literature Review**

#### **Role of Culture in eWOM Motivations**

The development of communication and transportation technologies has opened the era of globalization. Now, Coca-Cola (<http://www.thecoca-colacompany.com>) is consumed in over 200 countries, and McDonald's (<http://www.mcdonalds.com/corp>) has more than 30,000 local restaurants in over 100 countries. Even though people consume the same global brands and products, their buying motives and usage behaviors are different from culture to culture (de Mooij 2004; Mueller 1996; White 2000). Culture is typically defined as the sum of learned and shared values, beliefs, norms, and attitudes in a society (de Mooij 2004). Culture is also referred to as “the collective programming of the mind,” since it directs cognition, motivation, and behavior of people at both an individual level and a societal level (Hofstede 1980, p.201). This mental programming is developed in the early days of one's life and is constantly reinforced.

Culture influences an individual's self concept, value system, and communication style. Thus, culture affects various aspects of consumer behavior such as shopping and buying behavior (Hempel 1974), complaining behavior (Watkins and Liu 1996), brand loyalty (Lam 2007; Lee 2000), and adoption of innovation (Takada and Jain 1991; Yaveroglu and Donthu 2002). Culture affects consumers' media preference and usage behavior as well. Somasundaram and Light (1994) found significant differences in the media perceptions of consumers in the U.S., Canada, Hong Kong, and India regarding newspaper, magazine, radio, television, direct mail, and outdoor advertising. Kim and La Ferle (2006) found that U.S. consumers tended to use the Internet more for information

sources than Korean consumers, while Korean consumers were more likely to be motivated by the social aspects of the Internet than U.S. consumers. These findings illustrate that it is important for multi-national organizations to take cultural aspects into consideration in developing international marketing strategies in order to decrease risk and increase the effectiveness of marketing and advertising practices (de Mooij 2004).

In the field of cross-cultural consumer behavior, Hofstede's cultural value framework is one of the most influential and commonly used frameworks (Baack and Singh 2007). Hofstede (1980) originally developed four dimensions of national culture: individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity/femininity. Hofstede's dimensions were expanded later by adding Confucian dynamism, which is also referred to as long-term/short-term orientation (Hofstede and Bond 1988). He measured 75 countries and regions on a scale from 0 to 100 for each of his dimensions. Although countries' scores were initially created in the early 1970s, subsequent studies found that the original scores were still valid (de Mooij 2004), which implies that core national values are enduring and not easily changed. Among the five dimensions, this study will focus on the individualism and collectivism dimension only. This dimension is the most distinctive dimension in human social behavior (Hofstede 1980) and thus best captures the variants between different cultures (Laroche, Kalamas, and Cleveland 2005).

The individualism and collectivism dimension measures an individual's degree of dependency on others within a society. Individualism is mostly found in North America, Northern Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, whereas collectivism is found in Asia, Africa, Mediterranean Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America, which account for 70

to 80 percent of the world's population (Hofstede 1980). According to Triandis (1989), individuals' values, self concept, perceptions of others, and patterns of interaction with the environment are significantly influenced by the cultural meaning systems of their society. Markus and Kitayama (1991) define individualism and collectivism as the independent view of self versus the interdependent view of self. Individualistic cultures view an individual as an independent, self-contained, and autonomous entity, who behaves as a result of one's own unique internal attributes such as traits, abilities, motives, and values. On the contrary, collectivistic cultures view the self as interdependent with others. Therefore, an individual is regarded as a part of one's community, and one's behavior is influenced by others' thoughts, feelings, and actions in the relationships (Markus and Kitayama 1991).

#### **Cultural Differences of eWOM Motivations between the U.S. and South Korea**

The U.S. and South Korea have opposite characteristics in the individualism and collectivism dimension. The U.S. is distinctively high on individualism, while South Korea is a highly collectivistic society (Hofstede 1980). Given the role of culture in consumer behavior, this cultural difference between the U.S. and South Korea may also be manifested in consumers' motivations for providing and seeking eWOM communications.

***Role of Culture in eWOM Providing Motivations.*** Study 1 demonstrated that American consumers tend to provide eWOM for *social interaction benefits/self-enhancement, helping the company (or brand), vengeance upon the company (or brand), economic incentives, and concern for others*. These motivations may be differently manifested in Koreans. South Korea is a collectivistic culture in which a group's goal and

needs are more important than those of an individual. According to Markus and Kitayama (1991), other-serving motivations are more important than self-serving motivations in highly interdependent cultures like South Korea than in highly independent cultures like the U.S. People in collectivistic cultures have strong emotional attachment to their group members, while in-groups of individualistic cultures require less mutual obligations and also have less influence on individuals (de Mooij 2004). Consequently, Koreans may be more likely than Americans to provide eWOM information out of concern for others.

**H3:** Korean consumers are more likely to provide eWOM out of *concern for others* than American consumers.

While showing opinions and emotions is restricted by others' reactions in collectivistic cultures, individualistic cultures encourage people to freely express opinions and emotions. People in collectivistic cultures are less likely than people in individualistic cultures to display their emotions – especially negative ones like anger – because negative opinions are considered as threats to a group's harmony (de Mooij 2004; Markus and Kitayama 1991; Triandis 1989). Consumers in collectivistic cultures are also known to be less likely to voice their complaints to the companies than consumers in individualistic cultures (de Mooij 2004; Watkins and Liu 1996). Therefore, we can assume that consumers in South Korea may be less likely to provide eWOM to take vengeance upon a company or a brand than American consumers.

**H4:** American consumers are more likely than Korean consumers to provide eWOM to take *vengeance upon the company (or brand)*.

Collectivistic Koreans have a stronger desire for social interactions than individualistic Americans. Individualistic cultures view an individual as distinctive and independent from others in that discovering and expressing one's characteristics are

critical in these cultures. In contrast, collectivistic cultures consider that individuals are interdependent to each other, and thus people in these cultures have a strong desire to belong to a group and to maintain good relationships with its members (Markus and Kitayama 1991). Previous cross-cultural Internet motivation studies also found that Korean Web users were more likely to be motivated to use the Internet for social interactions than U.S. Web users (Kim and La Ferle 2006; Ko, Robert, and Cho 2006). These findings imply that Korean consumers may have a higher tendency to provide eWOM for social interaction benefits.

On the other hand, the self-enhancement motivation may be stronger for consumers in individualistic cultures than those in collectivistic cultures. In individualistic cultures, positive feelings of oneself are associated with being better than others and self-assertion (Markus and Kitayama 1991). On the contrary, self-enhancement and self-promotion are negatively perceived in collectivistic cultures, while self-control and self-restraint are regarded as morally mature (Yoshida, Kojo, and KaKu 1982). A study by Chung and Darke (2006) revealed that consumers in individualistic cultures showed a greater tendency than consumers in collectivistic cultures to provide more WOM information for products that can better express their self-image than for utilitarian products. Moreover, they found that consumers in individualistic cultures tended to exaggerate the benefits of the products they purchased more than consumers in collectivistic cultures. These findings imply a higher tendency in individualistic consumers of providing eWOM to promote their self-image or to express themselves as intelligent shoppers.

It is interesting to examine how these conflicting cultural propensities in self-enhancement and social interactions will be manifested in the eWOM providing motivation of *social interaction benefits/self-enhancement* between Korean and American consumers. Thus, the following research question is addressed:

**RQ5:** Whether and how will American consumers and Korean consumers be different in their tendencies to provide eWOM for *social interaction benefits/self-enhancement*?

Due to the difficulty of explaining cultural differences of eWOM motivations of *helping the company* and *economic incentives* using the individualism-collectivism dimension, the following research question is proposed:

**RQ6:** Whether and how will American consumers and Korean consumers be different in their tendencies to provide eWOM for *helping the company (or brand)* and *economic incentives*?

**Role of Culture in eWOM Seeking Motivations.** Study 1 showed that American consumers tend to seek eWOM for *social interaction benefits, risk reduction, social-oriented product information, and product usage information*. As with consumers' motivations for providing eWOM, these eWOM seeking motivations may also be differently manifested in Koreans. As discussed above, Koreans have a stronger desire for social interactions than Americans because relationships with others are more emphasized in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures. Therefore, we can assume that Koreans seek eWOM information to communicate with other consumers or to have a sense of belonging to online communities.

**H5:** Korean consumers are more likely to seek eWOM for *social interaction benefits* than American consumers.

In collectivistic cultures, one's behavior is highly influenced by thoughts and actions of others in the relationships. On the other hand, individualistic cultures consider

an individual being an autonomous agency, who acts according to one's own distinctive internal attributes (Markus and Kitayama 1991). Therefore, consumers in collectivistic cultures are more likely to be susceptible to normative influence in purchase decision making. Kropp, Lavack, and Silvera (2005) found that collectivistic Koreans showed stronger needs to conform to others' expectations in making purchase decisions or to enhance one's images through the use of a product or brand (c.f., Bearden, Netemeyer, and Teel 1989) than individualistic Canadians, Australians, and Norwegians. Thus, we can assume that Koreans may have higher tendencies than American consumers to seek information about products' social images or popularity when they make purchase decisions.

**H6: Korean consumers are more likely than American consumers to seek eWOM for *social-oriented product information*.**

In addition, since others' opinions are more important for collectivistic cultures than individualistic cultures, people in collectivistic cultures are more likely to use WOM information as a major information source than people in individualistic cultures. Doran (2002) found that collectivistic Chinese people heavily relied on personal information sources in purchase decision-making, while individualistic North Americans used a variety of information sources, including marketer-generated sources and knowledge from one's past purchase experiences. Thus, we can hypothesize that Korean consumers may be more likely than American consumers to seek others' comments on the Internet to get product feature knowledge or to solve problems with their product usage.

**H7: Korean consumers are more likely than American consumers to seek eWOM for *product usage information*.**

Lastly, due to the difficulty of explaining cultural differences of eWOM seeking motivations of *risk reduction*, the following research question is proposed:

**RQ7:** Whether and how will American consumers and Korean consumers be different in their tendencies to seek eWOM for *risk reduction*?

## **Chapter 7**

### **Study 2: Method**

#### **Participants and Procedure**

To test the role of culture in eWOM providing motivations, the survey data collected in Study 1 were used again in Study 2 as a U.S. sample, and a self-administered survey was carried out in South Korea. Undergraduate students at two universities in Seoul, South Korea, participated in the study. The survey was distributed in a classroom setting, following the same procedure as that of Study 1. The English version of the questionnaire used in Study 1 was translated into Korean and then back-translated into English to assure comparability.

A total of 257 students in South Korea participated in the survey, but 21 of them reported that they had never provided or sought comments about a product, a service, or a company on the Internet. Thus, a total of 236 participants were included as the Korean sample in the subsequent data analyses. One hundred six were male (45%) and 130 were female (55%). The mean age was 21.51 (SD = 2.29), which was similar to that of American respondents ( $M = 20.54$ ).



## Chapter 8

### Study 2: Results

Among the 257 Korean participants, 134 (57%) reported that they had provided comments about a product, service, or company on the Web, while 220 (93%) participants indicated that they had sought others' comments. Only those responses from the 134 participants and from the 220 participants were included in the subsequent data analyses for examining eWOM providing and seeking motivations and behaviors, respectively.

#### **Individualism-Collectivism between American and Korean Consumers**

Before examining the role of culture in eWOM providing and seeking motivations between American and Korean consumers, the participants' levels of individualism and collectivism were compared. This procedure was necessary to verify the basic assumption, regarding the cultural differences between the U.S. and Korea in respect to self construal, used in the development of the hypotheses in this study. As expected, a *t*-test showed that the U.S. participants were significantly more individualistic ( $M = 4.94$ ,  $SD = .77$ ) than Korean participants ( $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = .69$ ) ( $p < 0.001$ ), while Korean participants tended to be collectivistic ( $M = 4.74$ ,  $SD = .67$ ) significantly more than the U.S. participants ( $M = 4.58$ ,  $SD = .74$ ) ( $p < 0.01$ ).

#### **Replications of eWOM Motivations among Korean Consumers**

A factor analysis was conducted to determine whether the Korean data replicated the findings of the American consumers. The factor analysis using the Korean data generated similar factor structures and item loadings to those found in the American data. The reliabilities of items for eWOM providing motivations were as follows: social

interaction benefits/self-enhancement ( $\alpha = .91$ ), helping the company (or brand) ( $\alpha = .82$ ), vengeance upon the company (or brand) ( $\alpha = .80$ ), economic incentives ( $r = .91$ ), and concern for others ( $r = .43$ ). The reliabilities of items for eWOM seeking motivations were as follows: social interaction benefits ( $\alpha = .86$ ), risk reduction ( $\alpha = .83$ ), social-oriented product information ( $\alpha = .78$ ), and product usage information ( $\alpha = .70$ ).

### Hypothesis and Research Question Testing

**Role of Culture in eWOM Providing Motivations.** To test H3, H4, RQ5, and RQ6, a Multivariate Analysis of Co-Variance (MANCOVA) was conducted. Country (the U.S. or South Korea) was treated as the independent variable and five motivations for providing eWOM were treated as dependent variables. Gender and Internet usage hours were included in the analysis as covariates. The results of MANCOVA revealed a significant effect of culture on the eWOM providing motivations, Wilks'  $\lambda = .86$ ,  $F(5, 238) = 7.804$ ,  $p < .001$ . Gender, Wilks'  $\lambda = .88$ ,  $F(5, 238) = 6.434$ ,  $p < .001$ , and Internet usage hours, Wilks'  $\lambda = .94$ ,  $F(5, 238) = 3.171$ ,  $p < .01$ , were found to be significant covariates. See Table 5 for means and standard deviations for all conditions.

**Table 5. Means and Standard Deviation of U.S. and Korean Consumers: eWOM Providing Motivations**

	US		Korea	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<b>Social interaction benefits/self-enhancement</b>	2.24	1.30	2.37	1.07
<b>Helping the company</b>	4.44**	1.33	3.96**	1.17
<b>Vengeance upon the company</b>	2.67**	1.61	3.37**	1.56
<b>Economic incentives</b>	2.90**	1.79	3.63**	1.71
<b>Concern for others</b>	5.05*	1.48	5.42*	1.15

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

H3 predicted that Korean consumers would be more likely to provide eWOM out of *concern for others* than American consumers. The univariate analysis showed that culture had a significant effect on the *concern for others* motivation,  $F(1, 242) = 5.885, p = <.05$ . Specifically, Korean participants ( $M = 5.42$ ) had a significantly higher tendency to provide eWOM for *concern for others* than American participants ( $M = 5.05$ ). Thus, H3 was supported.

H4 predicted that Americans would be more likely than Koreans to provide eWOM to take *vengeance upon the company (or brand)*. The univariate analysis indicated that there was a significant impact of culture on this motivation,  $F(1, 242) = 12.365, p = <.01$ . Inconsistent with our prediction, however, Korean participants ( $M = 3.37$ ) were more likely than American participants ( $M = 2.67$ ) to be motivated by this motivation. Therefore, H4 was rejected.

RQ5 and RQ6 asked whether and how American consumers and Korean consumers would be different in the eWOM providing motivation for *social interaction benefits/self-enhancement, helping the company or brand, and economic incentives*. The results showed that Americans ( $M = 2.24$ ) were similar to Koreans ( $M = 2.37$ ) in their motivation for *social interaction benefits/self-enhancement*,  $F(1, 242) = 1.648, n.s$ . For the motivation for *helping the company (or brand)*, U.S. respondents ( $M = 4.44$ ) showed a higher tendency than Korean respondents ( $M = 3.96$ ),  $F(1, 242) = 7.075, p = <.01$ . Finally, Korean respondents ( $M = 3.63$ ) were more likely than U.S. respondents ( $M = 2.90$ ) to be motivated by *economic incentives*,  $F(1, 242) = 7.739, p = <.01$ .

***Role of Culture in eWOM Seeking Motivations.*** The results of MANCOVA testing motivations for seeking eWOM demonstrated a significant effect for respondents'

culture, Wilks'  $\lambda = .89$ ,  $F(4, 526) = 17.073$ ,  $p = <.001$ . Gender, Wilks'  $\lambda = .98$ ,  $F(4, 526) = 2.714$ ,  $p = <.05$ , and susceptibility to interpersonal influence, Wilks'  $\lambda = .66$ ,  $F(4, 526) = 69.343$ ,  $p = <.001$ , were significant covariates, while Internet usage hours, Wilks'  $\lambda = .99$ ,  $F(4, 526) = 1.614$ , n.s., was not. See Table 6 for means and standard deviations for all conditions.

**Table 6. Means and Standard Deviation of U.S. and Korean Consumers: eWOM Seeking Motivations**

	US		Korea	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<b>Social interaction benefits</b>	2.32	1.20	2.32	1.13
<b>Risk reduction</b>	4.76***	1.24	5.44***	1.07
<b>Social-oriented product information</b>	3.30***	1.37	3.97***	1.25
<b>Product usage information</b>	4.16***	1.32	4.66***	1.25

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

H5 predicted that Korean consumers would be more likely to seek eWOM for *social interaction benefits* than American consumers. Inconsistent with our prediction, the univariate analysis found no significant difference between the American consumers ( $M = 2.32$ ) and Korean consumers ( $M = 2.32$ ),  $F(1, 529) = .641$ , n.s. Thus, H5 was rejected.

H6 predicted that Korean consumers would be more likely than U.S. consumers to seek eWOM for *social-oriented product information*. The univariate analysis found a significant main effect for culture,  $F(1, 529) = 33.256$ ,  $p = <.001$ . Korean respondents ( $M = 4.66$ ) were more likely to be motivated by this motivation than U.S. respondents ( $M = 4.12$ ) when seeking eWOM comments. Therefore, H6 was supported.

H7 predicted that Korean consumers would be more likely than U.S. consumers to seek eWOM for *product usage information*. The univariate test found significant differences between American consumers and Korean consumers,  $F(1, 529) = 17.880, p = <.001$ . Korean respondents ( $M = 3.97$ ) had a higher propensity toward seeking *product usage information* than U.S. respondents ( $M = 3.30$ ). Thus, H7 was supported.

RQ7 asked whether and how American consumers and Korean consumers would be different in their eWOM seeking motivations for *risk reduction*. Korean respondents ( $M = 5.44$ ) were more likely than U.S. respondents ( $M = 4.76$ ) to be motivated by *risk reduction*,  $F(1,529) = 36.342, p = <.001$ .

### **Summary of Study 2 findings**

Study 2 investigated how culture influences eWOM motivations. In general, the results found that, although eWOM providing and seeking motivations between American and Korean consumers are similar in types, significant differences exist in degrees. It was found that U.S. consumers had a significantly higher tendency toward *helping the company (or brand)* than Korean consumers when providing eWOM, while Korean consumers showed stronger motivations than U.S. consumers for *vengeance upon the company (or brand)*, *economic incentives*, and *concern for others*. However, no significant difference was found between these two countries. For motivations to seek eWOM, this study found that Korean *social interaction benefits/self-enhancement* consumers were more likely than U.S. consumers to seek comments for *risk reduction*, *social-oriented product information*, and *product usage information*. On the other hand, Korean consumers and U.S. consumers showed no different tendency in *social interaction benefits*.

## Chapter 9

### Discussion and Conclusion

This study set out to investigate more fully what motivates American consumers to provide and seek eWOM and how these motivations influence eWOM behaviors. Moreover, this study sought to examine how culture influences eWOM providing and seeking motivations, comparing American and Korean consumers.

#### **eWOM Motivations and Their Influences on eWOM Behavior**

Our findings revealed that consumers *provide* eWOM to belong to a group or be recognized for one's excellence by others through the interaction with other consumers (*social interaction benefits/self-enhancement*), to reward the company for quality products (*helping the company*), to ease the tension from an unsatisfying purchase experience by retaliating against the company (*vengeance upon the company*), to prevent others from negative purchase experiences (*concern for others*), and to receive coupons or discounts from online platform operators (*economic incentives*). The motivation for *economic incentives* is differentiated from the other motivations in that it is extrinsically stimulated, while the others are intrinsically driven. Among the intrinsically-driven motivations, *social interaction benefits/self-enhancement* is also distinguished from the other three intrinsic motivations in that it is elicited by the benefits of engaging in eWOM providing activities, while the other motivations are triggered by the consequences of purchase experiences.

The results of this study also found that consumers *seek* eWOM in order to reduce the risk in their purchase decision-making by benefiting from others' buying experiences (*risk reduction*), to interact with other consumers or to obtain a sense of membership in

online communities (*social interaction benefits*), to know a product's social image or market trends (*social-oriented product information*), and lastly, to obtain advice and solutions to their problems with using the product (*product usage information*). The motivation for seeking *product usage information* is different from the motivation for seeking *social-oriented product information*. The former is related to seeking information about technological aspects of product features, while the latter is related to seeking information about symbolic meanings or popularity of a product.

The findings of this study also demonstrated that eWOM motivations influence how frequently consumers provide and seek eWOM. *Social interaction benefits/self-enhancement* was the strongest predictor of the frequency of providing comments about a product or service. The importance of social interaction benefits in eWOM activities is consistent with the popularity of social network sites among college students in both the U.S. (e.g., Facebook or MySpace) and Korea (e.g., Cyworld). *Helping the company or brand* was also positively related to the frequency of providing comments, while *vengeance upon the company or brand* had no influence on the frequency of providing eWOM. This result highlights the role of satisfied consumers as information disseminators, whose impact on other consumers has been estimated as lower than unsatisfied consumers in some studies (e.g., Burson-Marsteller 2001; TARP 1986). Unlike other motivations, the *economic incentives* motivation was negatively related to the frequency of providing comments, indicating that consumers motivated by extrinsic rewards tend not to provide eWOM. As for the frequency of seeking eWOM, *risk reduction* was the only positive predictor of the frequency of seeking comments. It suggests that the desire to reduce the uncertainty or perceived risk in making purchase

decisions increases consumers' involvement with eWOM information search activities.

This study also found that consumers tend to choose platform types that can satisfy their eWOM providing motivations. Consumers motivated by *social interaction benefits/self-enhancement* tend to visit consumer review sites or portal sites to provide comments. These platforms may help consumers satisfy this motivation because they can profoundly discuss their product experiences with others having similar interests on consumer review sites and portal sites. Consumers motivated by *vengeance upon the company (or brand)* were more likely to visit complaint sites, while the *concern for others* motivation was negatively related to the visits to these sites. It implies that consumers consider complaint sites as an effective outlet to express their anger against the companies and take vengeance upon the companies. When a main purpose of providing eWOM is to help other consumers, however, consumers do not turn to complaint sites because these complaint sites are often used by those who have already experienced products.

Regarding consumers' motivations to seek eWOM and their seeking activities, consumers motivated by *social interaction benefits* tend to visit consumer review sites and complaint sites to seek others' comments. Seeking others' comments on consumer review sites for social interaction corresponds with our earlier finding of consumers tending to provide comments on these sites for *social interaction/self-enhancement*. However, the finding that consumers tend to seek eWOM on complaint sites for the social interaction purpose is somewhat intriguing. This may be relevant to strong community memberships of complaint sites. Ward and Ostrom (2006) state that users of complaint sites have a common social identity as they share similar disappointing



purchasing experiences. They argue that fellow consumers' comments on those sites provide emotional support to the site visitors who feel betrayed by companies. Our findings also demonstrated that consumers who are motivated to get *product usage information* tend to visit consumer review sites, auction sites, retailers' sites, and portal sites to seek comments. It implies that consumers seek comments about product usage information from various sources.

### **Role of Culture in eWOM Motivations**

Further, the findings of this study revealed the important cultural differences between Americans and Koreans not in types but in degrees of different motivations to provide and seek eWOM. Consistent with our predictions, Korean participants in collectivistic cultures showed a higher tendency to provide eWOM out of *concern for others* than American participants in individualistic cultures. Also, Koreans had stronger propensities than Americans to seek eWOM for *social-oriented product information* and *product usage information*. This result confirms that consumers in collectivistic cultures are more likely than consumers in individualistic cultures to rely on interpersonal communications as a source of product information.

Unexpectedly, however, Koreans were more likely than Americans to provide eWOM to take *vengeance upon the company (or brand)*. This finding is surprising because venting negative emotions is thought to be regulated in collectivistic cultures (de Mooij 2004; Triandis 1989) and collectivistic consumers are less likely to voice their complaints to companies than individualistic consumers (de Mooij 2004; Watkins and Liu 1996). This result can be explained from two perspectives. First, consumers who provide product-related information on the Internet are often anonymous. As consumers'

identities are concealed in the online environment, Koreans may enjoy restored freedom to uncover their emotions often inhibited in face to face interaction. Kim and Rhee (2006) state that the Internet has become a medium in the Korean society through which an individual or a group's thoughtless and conflicting opinions are expressed. According to de Mooij (2004), the values that are undesirable and restricted to a culture's norms can be more appealing to people. For Korean consumers, this cultural paradox may manifest as a strong motivation to express negative emotions toward companies and to take vengeance upon the companies by providing eWOM on the Internet.

Second, the result can also be explained by the distinction between in-group and out-group. Human nature shows favoritism toward in-group members but exhibits hostile attitudes toward out-group members (Brewer 1979; Tajfel et al. 1971 ). Triandis (1985) argued that collectivistic cultures draw a more extreme distinction between in-group and out-group members than individualistic cultures. Therefore, collectivistic people tend to show negative emotions toward strangers more than do individualistic people (Matsumoto et al. 1988). It is reasonable to assume that Korean consumers may conceive fellow consumers as in-group members but consider companies as out-group members. Thus, their motivation to provide eWOM to take vengeance upon the companies may be stronger than American consumers. The perspective of this in-group and out-group behavior is also relevant to the finding that Korean participants are less likely than American participants to provide eWOM to *help the company (or brand)*.

The findings of this study showed that the *economic incentives* motivation was stronger for Koreans than Americans. This result may be explained by the Confucian dynamism concept proposed by Hofstede and Bond (1988). They have argued that thrift,

as a Confucian value, was one of the important factors that encouraged the dramatic economic growth of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Drawing on this notion, we may consider that Koreans have a stronger desire than Americans to save money by receiving coupons or discounts for providing eWOM from platform operators.

This study also found that Koreans were more likely than Americans to be motivated to seek eWOM for *risk reduction*. This result may be closely associated with the higher tendencies of Koreans than Americans in Hofstede's (1980) uncertainty avoidance dimension. Since high uncertainty avoidance cultures have a high level of anxiety and less tolerance toward unclear or unpredictable situations, consumers in these cultures have a stronger desire to decrease the potential risk in their purchase decisions than consumers in low uncertainty avoidance cultures (de Mooij 2004).

Interestingly, no cultural influence was found for the motivation of *social interaction benefits/self-enhancement* (providing) and for the motivation of the *social interaction benefits* (seeking). It suggests that Americans and Koreans have similar levels of desire to interact with others and desire to enhance their self-esteem by providing eWOM. Researchers have argued that people in individualistic cultures tend to join many in-groups with weak bonds, while people in collectivistic cultures tend to have a few in-groups holding strong membership (de Mooij 2004; Triandis 1985). This indicates that consumers in both individualistic cultures and collectivistic cultures have a similar level of desire for social interactions. The same argument can apply to the self-enhancement motivation. Kobayashi and Brown (2003) found that, although collectivistic Japanese people's presentation of self-esteem was more modest than individualistic Americans'

presentation, they evaluated themselves as better than others, like Americans. They claimed that self-enhancement is a universal desire, but its manifestation is shaped by culture.

Our findings revealed that cultural differences exist in the degrees of consumers' motivations for providing eWOM, rebutting the idea of globalization of consumer culture proposed by Levitt (1983). Particularly, the present research demonstrates culture's impact on young adults, in the context of eWOM, who are considered to have more homogenized needs and values across cultures than other age groups (Mueller 1996). The findings also provide insights into our understanding of the complex influence of culture in eWOM providing motivations. For example, the individualism/collectivism dimension was represented in the motivation of *concern for others* in a predictable way, whereas it was manifested in the motivation of *vengeance upon the company (or brand)* in a more complicated way. These findings suggest that researchers should understand culture's influence on eWOM providing motivations from multiple perspectives.

### **Practical Implications**

The current research also has implications for eWOM platform operators and marketers. Having knowledge about consumers' motivations to provide and seek eWOM will help eWOM platform operators and marketers develop services and strategies that will satisfy consumers' specific wants and needs. Specifically, the finding that consumers who are motivated by economic rewards tend not to provide eWOM is noteworthy. To increase consumers' participation in providing comments about a product or service, platform operators should encourage consumers to voluntarily engage in eWOM communication. In addition, marketers should recognize the importance of satisfied

consumers as positive eWOM disseminators. To benefit from satisfied consumers' positive eWOM communications, marketers should continue not only to improve consumers' satisfaction levels but also to facilitate the process of spreading positive eWOM. For example, marketers can send a hyper link to customers' email accounts that directly connects them to recommendation or rating services of online platforms. Moreover, eWOM platform operators – especially consumer review websites – should use strategies that will satisfy consumers' motivations for *social interaction benefits* by providing them with more opportunities to interact with other consumers. They can provide communication services such as chat rooms for platform users or hold online or offline events where community members can gather and meet. It is also important to know that consumers motivated by the *risk reduction* motivation are active seekers of eWOM information. To satisfy their needs, eWOM platform operators can develop Web site functions that allow consumers to view overall reputation of product quality or to easily compare details of different products.

For international marketers and online platform operators, the evidence of cultural differences in degrees of eWOM providing motivations suggests that eWOM platform services or marketing strategies should be customized depending on consumers' cultural characteristics. For example, marketers in collectivistic cultures such as Korea should recognize the importance of managing negative eWOM. Marketers may need to position themselves as consumers' in-group members to lessen the emotional gap between consumers and themselves. This effort may reduce consumers' motivations to take vengeance upon companies and increase their motivations to help companies. In addition, marketers targeting collectivistic cultures can benefit from the strong needs of seeking

interpersonal information in disseminating eWOM information about their products. On the other hand, marketers in individualistic cultures such as the U.S. should focus on maintaining positive relationships with their satisfied consumers and encourage them to create positive buzz about their products.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Although this study has implications, limitations also exist. Among several dimensions of culture, this study focused only on the individualism-collectivism dimension. Although this dimension is the most distinctive dimension in human social behavior (Hofstede 1980), and thus best captures the differences between different cultures (Laroche, Kalamas, and Cleveland 2005), future research should examine other dimensions of culture as well to understand more thoroughly the role of culture in eWOM providing motivations. Additionally, this study examined consumers' eWOM providing motivations in only two countries—the U.S. and South Korea. Additional studies should examine consumers' eWOM motivations in other countries that range in terms of important cultural dimensions. Finally, this study used a student sample. Additional replications using a different population should be undertaken.

# Appendix

## Questionnaire

### Study of Word-of-Mouth on the Internet

Thank you for participating in a research study on **electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)**. Please read the following questions carefully and answer as best as you can. Before you start answering the questions, please take a minute to read the definitions.

#### Definition of eWOM:

- eWOM indicates any positive or negative comments about a product, a service, or a company made by consumers on the Internet.
- eWOM information is available on various Web sites, such as consumer review/complaint sites (e.g., Epinions.com, CNET, and thiscompanysuck.com), online market places (e.g., eBay and Amazon.com), Web portals (e.g., Yahoo!), and blogs (e.g., Myspace.com), etc.

#### Part 1:

##### I. Questions regarding Providing Comments about a Product on the Internet

1. Have you ever **provided** comments about a product, a service, or a company on the Internet?

Yes.....1

No.....2 (If no, **please skip to Question 9 in page 3**)

2-1. In the **last 12 months**, how often did you **provide** comments about a product, a service, or a company on the Internet?

Never provided

1

2

3

4

5

Regularly provided  
comments

6

7

2-2. In the **last 12 months**, how often did you **provide** comments about a product, a service, or a company on the Internet?

Never..... 1

Once or twice a year ..... 2

Several times a year ..... 3

Once a month..... 4

Once a week ..... 5

Everyday ..... 6

3. In the **last 12 months**, approximately how many comments did you **provide** about a product, a service, or a company on the Internet?

1-5 comments ..... 1

5-10 comments ..... 2

10-15 comments ..... 3

15-20 comments ..... 4

20-25 comments ..... 5

25-30 comments ..... 6

More than 30 comments ..... 7

4. In the last 12 months, how often did you provide comments about a product, a service, or a company at following Web sites?

	Never	Once a year	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month	Everyday
(1) Consumer review sites (e.g., Epinions.com)	1	2	3	4	5	6
(2) Complaint sites (e.g., thiscompanysuck.com)	1	2	3	4	5	6
(3) Online auction sites (e.g., eBay)	1	2	3	4	5	6
(4) Online retailers' sites (e.g., Amazon.com)	1	2	3	4	5	6
(5) Web portals (e.g., Yahoo!)	1	2	3	4	5	6
(6) Blogs (e.g., Myspace.com)	1	2	3	4	5	6
(7) Others (specify: _____)	1	2	3	4	5	6

5. What kinds of product or service categories have you provided comments about on the Internet? (Check all that apply)

- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1) Retail _____               | 2) Restaurant _____                          |
| 3) Financial _____            | 4) Telecommunication/Wireless services _____ |
| 5) Food and Beverage _____    | 6) Alcoholic Beverage _____                  |
| 7) Pharmaceutical _____       | 8) Automotive _____                          |
| 9) Electronic Products _____  | 10) Apparel _____                            |
| 11) Cosmetics _____           | 12) Personal Care _____                      |
| 13) Entertainment _____       | 14) Cleaning Products _____                  |
| 15) Toys and Kids Items _____ | 16) Furniture and Household Items _____      |
| 17) Tobacco _____             | 18) Insurance _____                          |
| 19) Doctors/Lawyers _____     | 20) Others (specify: _____)                  |

6-1. In the last 12 months, how often did you provide **positive** comments about a product, a service, or a company on the Internet?

Never provided \_\_\_\_\_ Regularly provided comments \_\_\_\_\_

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6-2. In the last 12 months, how often did you provide **negative** comments about a product, a service, or a company on the Internet?

Never provided \_\_\_\_\_ Regularly provided comments \_\_\_\_\_

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7-1. Some Web sites or product companies offer incentives (or rewards) for providing comments about a product, a service, or a company on the Internet (e.g., Web points, discounts, coupons etc.). Have you ever received any incentives by providing comments?

Yes.....1  
No.....2

7-2. If yes, what kinds of incentives have you received? (Check all that apply)

- |                      |                             |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| (1) Web points _____ | (2) Discounts _____         |
| (3) Cash _____       | (4) Coupons _____           |
| (5) Gifts _____      | (6) Others (specify: _____) |



8. People vary in why they provide comments about a product, a service, or a company on the Internet. Please indicate **why you provide comments about a product, a service, or a company on the Internet** by circling the number that best describes your agreement or disagreement with each statement. You may think many items are similar. Actually, no two items are exactly alike so be sure to circle one number for each statement.

**"I provide comments about a product, a service, or a company on the Internet ....."**

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
(1) To help others with my own positive experiences.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(2) Because in my own opinion, good companies (brands) should be supported.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(3) To meet people.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(4) To get attention for providing recommendations.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(5) Because the company harmed me, and now I will harm the company!	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(6) To tell others about my great buying experience.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(7) To warn others of bad products.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(8) Because I am so satisfied with a company and its product that I want to help the company to be successful.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(9) To tell others about my buying successes.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(10) To give others the opportunity to buy the right product.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(11) To make more people hear my complaint about a company.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(12) To get a discount or coupons from the Website.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(13) To support the company and the product that I like.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(14) Because I like to tell others my expert knowledge.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(15) Because of the incentives I receive.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(16) Because a chat among like-minded people is a nice thing.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(17) To show others that I am a clever shopper.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(18) Because I want to encourage the good company.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(19) To retaliate against the company for a bad buying experience.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(20) To collect Web points for providing comments.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(21) To prevent others from having the same negative experience as me.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(22) Because it is worthwhile to help others buy the right product.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(23) To damage the company's reputation.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(24) To communicate with various people sharing similar interest.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(25) To make more people buy the product of the company that I support.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(26) Because it's fun to communicate with other people.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(27) To make money for providing product reviews.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(28) So I can give a reward to the good company.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(29) Because it makes me feel that I belong to a group.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(30) To take vengeance upon the company.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(31) Because I like the social interaction with other consumers.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	
(32) Because I receive a reward for giving information.	1 -- 2 -- 3-- 4 -- 5-- 6 -- 7	

- (33) To help others know useful product information. 1 -- 2 -- 3---4 -- 5---6 -- 7
- (34) Because I feel good when others show me some respect for my knowledge. 1 -- 2 -- 3---4 -- 5---6 -- 7
- (35) To voice out my complaint about the company. 1 -- 2 -- 3---4 -- 5---6 -- 7

**Part 2:**

**II. Now, we would like to know your experience regarding Seeking other consumers' comments about a product provided on the Internet**

9. Have you ever **sought** any comments about a product, a service, or a company provided by other consumers on the Internet?

Yes.....1

No.....2 (If no, **please skip to Question 15 in page 5**)

10-1. In the **last 12 months**, how often did you **seek** other consumers' comments about a product, a service, or a company on the Internet?

Never sought						Regularly sought comments
	1	2	3	4	5	6 7

10-2. In the **last 12 months**, how often did you **seek** other consumers' comments about a product, a service, or a company on the Internet?

Never..... 1

Once or twice a year ..... 2

Several times a year ..... 3

Once a month..... 4

Once a week ..... 5

Everyday ..... 6

11-1. How often have you decided to purchase a product or use a service after reading other consumers' **positive** comments about a product, a service, or a company on the Internet?

Never						Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11-2. How often have you decided **not** to purchase a product or use a service after reading other consumers' **negative** comments about a product, a service, or a company on the Internet?

Never						Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12. In the **last 12 months**, how often did you **seek** other consumers' comments about a product, a service, or a company at following Web sites?

	Never	Once a year	A few times a year	Once a month	A few times a month	Everyday
(1) Consumer review sites (e.g., Epinions.com)	1	2	3	4	5	6
(2) Complaint sites (e.g., thiscompanysuck.com)	1	2	3	4	5	6
(3) Online auction sites (e.g., eBay)	1	2	3	4	5	6
(4) Online retailers' sites (e.g., Amazon.com)	1	2	3	4	5	6
(5) Web portals (e.g., Yahoo!)	1	2	3	4	5	6
(6) Blogs (e.g., Myspace.com)	1	2	3	4	5	6
(7) Others (specify: )	1	2	3	4	5	6

13. What kinds of product or service categories have you sought others' comments about on the Internet? (Check all that apply)

- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1) Retail _____               | 2) Restaurant _____                          |
| 3) Financial _____            | 4) Telecommunication/Wireless services _____ |
| 5) Food and Beverage _____    | 6) Alcoholic Beverage _____                  |
| 7) Pharmaceutical _____       | 8) Automotive _____                          |
| 9) Electronic Products _____  | 10) Apparel _____                            |
| 11) Cosmetics _____           | 12) Personal Care _____                      |
| 13) Entertainment _____       | 14) Cleaning Products _____                  |
| 15) Toys and Kids Items _____ | 16) Furniture and Household Items _____      |
| 17) Tobacco _____             | 18) Insurance _____                          |
| 19) Doctors/Lawyers _____     | 20) Others (specify: _____)                  |

14. People vary in why they seek comments about a product, a service, or a company provided by other consumers on the Internet. Please indicate **why you seek comments about a product, a service, or a company provided by other consumers on the Internet** by circling the number that best describes your agreement or disagreement with each statement. You may think many items are similar. Actually, no two items are exactly alike so be sure to circle one number for each statement.

**"I seek comments about a product, a service, or company provided by other consumers on the Internet....."**

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
(1) Because contributions by other customers help me to make the safe buying decisions.	1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7	
(2) Because I wonder how many people are using the product.	1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7	
(3) So I can save a great deal of time during shopping.	1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7	
(4) Because I really like being part of such a community	1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7	
(5) To find advice and solutions for my problems with the product.	1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7	
(6) To know which topics are "in."	1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7	
(7) To know the product's social image.	1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7	
(8) Because I can get the confirmation that I made the right buying decision.	1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7	
(9) To know experts' opinion about my problem.	1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7	
(10) To compare different products easily.	1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7	
(11) Because I enjoy participating in other community members' shopping experiences.	1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7	
(12) Because I heard about something new and I want to find out more about it.	1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7	
(13) To benefit from others' experiences before I buy a product or use a service.	1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7	
(14) Because I am able to research the product conveniently from home, work, or school.	1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7	
(15) So the chances of me making a bad decision are reduced.	1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7	
(16) To get information on the quality of products faster than elsewhere.	1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7	
(17) Because it's fun to learn and compare the information of products in the marketplace.	1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7	

- (18) Because others' opinion about a product is important for me. 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7
- (19) To know if the product is popular. 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7
- (20) To learn how to use the product. 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7
- (21) Because it's fun to communicate with people in the community. 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7
- (22) Because I don't want to end up regretting a decision I make. 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7
- (23) To communicate with various people sharing similar interest. 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7
- (24) Because I find the right answers by seeking others' comments on the Internet when I have difficulties with the product. 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7
- (25) Because saving my time and effort in the product search is important for me. 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7
- (26) To know what kinds of people generally buy the product. 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7
- (27) Because it makes me feel that I belong to a group. 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7
- (28) Because it's a good way to get a plenty of product information. 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7
- (29) Because I am interested in what is new. 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7
- (30) To avoid making a risky decision. 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7
- (31) To get a variety of information from people who have positive and negative opinions. 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7
- (32) Because I don't want to buy a bad product 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7
- (33) Because the amount of effort I have to make to find information is small. 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7
- (34) To get the product's user tips. 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7
- (35) Because I like the social interaction with other consumers. 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7

**Part 3:**

**▲ Questions for Every Participant**

15. How many hours do you usually spend **using the Internet** on an average **day**?

\_\_\_\_\_hour(s) \_\_\_\_\_minutes

16. People vary in why they use the Internet. Please indicate **why you use the Internet** by circling the number that best describes your agreement or disagreement with each statement using the scale below. Many items might seem similar; however no two items are exactly alike so be sure to circle one number for each statement.

**"I use the Internet....."**

- |                                | <b>Strongly disagree</b>          | <b>Strongly agree</b> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) To e-mail other people     | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (2) To connect with my friends | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (3) To make a purchase         | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (4) To do research             | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (5) To explore new sites       | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (6) To buy things              | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (7) To communicate with others | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| (8) To get information I need               | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |
| (9) To surf for fun                         | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |
| (10) To find interesting web pages          | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |
| (11) To purchase a product I've heard about | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |
| (12) To find out things I need to know      | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |

17. The following questions ask about **your shopping tendencies**. Please indicate yourself in general by circling the number that best describes your agreement or disagreement with each statement using the scale below.

- |  | <b>Strongly disagree</b>          | <b>Strongly agree</b> |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) When buying products, I generally purchase those brands that I think others will approve of.     | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (2) If I have little experience with a product, I often ask my friends about the product.            | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (3) I like to know what brands and products make good impressions on others.                         | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (4) I frequently gather information from friends or family about a product before I buy.             | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (5) To make sure I buy the right product or brand, I often observe what others are buying and using. | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (6) If other people can see me using a product, I often purchase the brand they expect me to buy.    | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (7) I often consult other people to help choose the best alternative available from a product class. | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (8) I often identify with other people by purchasing the same products and brands they purchase.     | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (9) I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same products and brands that others purchase.  | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (10) I rarely purchase the latest fashion styles until I am sure my friends approve of them.         | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (11) It is important that others like the products and brands I buy.                                 | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (12) If I want to be like someone, I often try to buy the same brands that they buy.                 | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |

18. The following questions ask about **your tendencies in relationships with others**. Please indicate yourself in general by circling the number that best describes your agreement or disagreement with each statement using the scale below.

- |  | <b>Strongly disagree</b>          | <b>Strongly agree</b> |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group.                  | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (2) I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards.               | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (3) I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I've just met. | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (4) It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group.                | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (5) I am the same person at home that I am at school.                            | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (6) Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid an argument.       | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (7) I'd rather say "No" directly, than risk being misunderstood.                 | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (8) Speaking up during a class is not a problem for me.                          | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |
| (9) My happiness depends on the happiness of those around                        | 1 -- 2 -- 3 --- 4 -- 5 --- 6 -- 7 |                       |

- me.
- (10) If my brother or sister fails, I feel responsible. 1 -- 2 -- 3---4--5---6--7
- (11) I act the same way no matter who I am with. 1 -- 2 -- 3---4--5---6--7
- (12) I respect people who are modest about themselves. 1 -- 2 -- 3---4--5---6--7
- (13) I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact. 1 -- 2 -- 3---4--5---6--7
- (14) Having a lively imagination is important to me. 1 -- 2 -- 3---4--5---6--7
- (15) I would offer my seat in a bus to my professor. 1 -- 2 -- 3---4--5---6--7
- (16) Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me. 1 -- 2 -- 3---4--5---6--7
- (17) I will stay in a group if they need me, even when I'm not happy with the group. 1 -- 2 -- 3---4--5---6--7
- (18) I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects. 1 -- 2 -- 3---4--5---6--7
- (19) I should take into consideration my parents' advice when making education/career plans. 1 -- 2 -- 3---4--5---6--7
- (20) I value being in good health above everything 1 -- 2 -- 3---4--5---6--7
- (21) I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are more important than my own accomplishments. 1 -- 2 -- 3---4--5---6--7
- (22) My personal identity independent of others is very important to me. 1 -- 2 -- 3---4--5---6--7
- (23) I feel comfortable using someone's first name soon after I meet them, even when they are much older than I am. 1 -- 2 -- 3---4--5---6--7
- (24) I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in. 1 -- 2 -- 3---4--5---6--7

◆ Please answer the following questions about yourself.

19. Please indicate your gender. (1) Female (2) Male

20. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_ years old

21. What is your ethnicity?

- (1) White/Caucasian
- (2) Black/African-American
- (3) Hispanic/Latino(a)
- (4) Asian/Pacific Islander
- (5) Other

22. What is your nationality? \_\_\_\_\_

23. What is your major? \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your participation!**

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