Motives behind positive electronic Word-of-Mouth on social networking sites

- So, why do you “like” that?

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Abstract

Consumers are increasingly engaging with brands on social networking sites (SNS) through activities such as sharing, commenting, liking and recommending products or brands to other consumers. These types of recommendations are referred to as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and are proven to have a significant influence on consumers’ purchasing decisions. Previous research has investigated motives for traditional WOM and motives for eWOM on opinion platforms. This study proposes that eWOM on SNSs is a combination of traditional WOM and eWOM on opinion platforms. By using a sample of 154 Swedish Facebook users, this study explores why consumers engage in positive eWOM communication on SNSs. This is done by testing 6 validated motives that are identified in previous research in the new context. The resulting analysis suggests that consumers’ need for social interaction and desire to express positive emotions are the primary drivers behind engagement in positive eWOM communication on SNSs. The findings confirm that eWOM on SNSs contains elements of both traditional WOM and eWOM on opinion platforms and should thus be considered as a unique context where eWOM takes place.

Key words: word-of-mouth; WOM; electronic word-of-mouth; eWOM; motives for eWOM; social networking sites; SNS; Facebook
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Christine Jansson and Polina Zakharkina

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1. Background
Once upon a time, a consumer could tell ten of his or her friends about a product or service. Today, the effect has amplified and one single consumer can tell hundreds or even thousands of people about a product or service thanks to social media. The increased use of the Internet has revolutionized the way Word-of-Mouth (WOM) processes occur. (Mangold & Faulds, 2009) Consumers increasingly use social media as a platform for electronic WOM communication (referred to as eWOM hereafter) by engaging with brands or recommending products. In the “olden days” of the Internet, people utilized brands’ official websites as their main online source for getting information about brands and products. (Ipsos Socialologue, 2013a) Today, 44% of people say they follow and engage with brands on social networking sites. People actively connect with brands through activities such as “liking” a brand or product, commenting on it, recommending it, entering contests and/or sharing the brand’s posts or links. This number is as high as 55% among those aged under 35. (Ipsos Socialologue, 2013b) Such recommendations have an influence on consumers’ purchasing decisions and as many as one in four people have bought a brand because a friend recommended or followed the brand online (Ipsos Socialologue, 2012).

Current research supports the claim that eWOM can have more influence on consumers’ purchasing decisions compared to company generated persuasive messages. This is mainly due to higher source reliability and trustworthiness of an independent third party. (Buttle, 1998) The significance of eWOM as a marketing tool therefore makes an investigation of the phenomenon very timely and needed (Shu-Chuan & Yoojung, 2011).

While the effect of WOM communication on consumers’ purchasing behavior is well known, it is still much that needs to be explored about what makes consumers want to spread the word about a brand. (Shu-Chuan & Yoojung, 2011) This study will explore consumers’ engagement in spreading brand- and product related information and recommendations to their friends online. This is done in order to identify the motives for positive eWOM communication on social networking sites.

1.1 Problem discussion
WOM and eWOM communication is proven to have more significant impact on consumers’ purchasing decisions than traditional marketing campaigns (cf. Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels, 2009). It is therefore important both to
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prevent negative WOM/eWOM, as well as encourage positive WOM/eWOM. Much research has focused on negative WOM, however the opportunity for companies to influence consumers’ purchasing behavior by encouraging positive WOM and eWOM has been largely neglected in literature. It is of high importance for practitioners to develop marketing strategies that will increase consumers’ engagement in positive eWOM communication, as this will provide more trustworthy and influential marketing compared to traditional company generated persuasive messages. Companies cannot assume that satisfied consumers will naturally spread positive eWOM, rather the motives for this behavior must be examined further. By understanding the motives behind consumers’ engagement in positive eWOM communication, marketers are better able to develop strategies that encourage positive eWOM. (Gremler, Gwinner & Brown, 2001)

Previous research within the field of traditional WOM as well as eWOM has mainly focused on its impact on for instance product sales and attitudes towards a brand (Shu-Chuan & Yoojung, 2011). Only a limited amount of research has been carried out in order to investigate the underlying motives as to why consumers engage in WOM communication (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004; Sundaram, Mitra & Webster, 1998). There are primarily four prominent publications that have addressed the motives for WOM communication. Dichter (1966) and Sundaram et al. (1998) identifies the underlying motives to why consumers engage in traditional WOM communication by using a qualitative approach. By reviewing existing literature Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (1993) verifies and modernizes Dichter’s (1966) findings. The most influential study up to date on motives behind consumers’ willingness to engage in eWOM is conducted by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) by applying a statistical method. Their study was carried out by examining consumers who share their experiences and opinions about products or brands in an opinion platform. The results of these research studies suggest that some motives are corresponding for both traditional WOM and eWOM, however additional motives are included when examining the phenomenon in an online context.

Traditional WOM occurs in a social context when consumers recommend products or share consumption-related experiences with friends or acquaintances. A similar social context exists on social networking sites (hereafter referred to as SNSs) such as
Facebook, where the main objective is social interaction between friends. This suggests that the motives identified in earlier research for engaging in traditional WOM should be applicable in this setting as well. On the other hand, the online setting of the SNS creates an amplifying effect, allowing eWOM to spread to a multitude of people simultaneously, as it encourages sharing experiences through providing various facilitating tools to spread eWOM, for instance by liking or sharing content. This suggests that the motives for eWOM on SNSs will differ from traditional WOM. (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004)

The motives behind spreading eWOM on SNSs also ought to be different to the motives for eWOM communication on other platforms, such as opinion platforms, even though both types take place online. Consumers that engage in eWOM communication on an opinion platform do this by sharing their experiences and opinions about products or brands, i.e. post comments on a recommendation website such as tripadvisor.com. Opinion platforms provide product reviews from strangers, which are solely distributed to other consumers searching for information of that kind. This is in contrast to SNSs, which revolve around the social interaction between friends and acquaintances. It is therefore reasonable to believe that different motives drive eWOM in SNS environments compared to opinion platforms due to the different nature of the online platforms.

We argue that an SNS, such as Facebook, is an environment that contains elements from both traditional WOM and eWOM. An SNS is the kind of online environment that is most closely mimicking the real life situations where traditional WOM naturally occurs between friends and acquaintances, however this takes place in an online context. This creates wholly different conditions for eWOM to spread as the online platform creates the opportunity to reach a multitude of people at once. We therefore argue that eWOM on SNSs needs to be investigated as a new phenomenon in contrast to traditional WOM and eWOM on opinion platforms. For this reason it is important to include the motives to traditional WOM as well as making it necessary to consider the factors that are specific to an online context. (see Figure 1)
Figure 1: This study proposes that eWOM on SNSs is a combination of traditional WOM and eWOM on other platforms such as opinion platforms.

Drawing on the conclusions of Dichter (1966), Engel et al. (1993), Sundaram et al. (1998) and Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) this study will test the identified motives for spreading positive WOM/eWOM by using an SNS, more specifically Facebook, as the focal social media platform. As a result, this study contributes to the development of existing theory about motives for eWOM communication by exploring how previously identified motives for positive WOM and eWOM apply in a new setting, SNSs. Hence, adding to the growing body of research within the field of eWOM communication. In addition, this study also provides guidance for companies regarding what to do in order to increase the possibility to create positive eWOM communication on SNSs.

1.2 Purpose and research question
The purpose of this study is to explore how previously validated motives behind positive WOM communication as well as positive eWOM communication applies in a new setting, namely social networking sites.

The research question is therefore:

- What drives consumers to engage in positive eWOM communication on social networking sites?
2. Literature review

In order to study the motives for consumers’ willingness to participate in positive eWOM communication on SNSs, one must first understand WOM in general, eWOM in particular as well as the SNS context. These three areas will therefore be addressed in this section.

2.1 WOM

The main idea behind word-of-mouth (WOM) is that information about products, brands or companies can spread from one consumer to another. WOM communication thus takes place when consumers share their personal experiences with a certain company or product with other consumers. (Brown, Barry, Dacin & Gunst, 2005) Arndt (1967) was one of the earliest researchers investigating the influence of WOM and defined WOM as “oral, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver concerning a brand, a product or a service offered for sale” (Arndt, 1967:190). Research has shown that WOM has an effect on the majority of all purchasing decisions (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki & Wilner, 2010). WOM has been shown to have an influence on the awareness, expectations, perceptions, attitudes and behavior of consumers. It has been found that WOM is more influential on consumer behavior than company generated persuasive messages, which is mainly explained as being due to the independence of the source in the case of WOM. (Buttle, 1998) While WOM can both be positive or negative, marketers are naturally interested in promoting positive WOM, such as recommendations to others (Brown et al., 2005).

2.2 eWOM

eWOM is WOM communication in an online context and is defined by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004:39) as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet.” Nowadays, the Internet provides numerous of different ways for consumers to share their views, preferences or experiences with other consumers and the number of people one single consumer can reach out to have increased massively. eWOM communication can take place through various platforms, such as web-based opinion platforms, discussion forums and social networking sites. (Trusov et al., 2009) Communication through the Internet has several distinct characteristics. The communication can be directed towards multiple individuals at once, it is made available to others for an indefinite period of time and the user can stay
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relatively anonymous. (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004) Furthermore, the Internet facilitates for consumers to share links, pictures and information, making it easier to pass along marketing messages between consumers. It is therefore more likely for eWOM than traditional WOM to contain references to advertising. (Keller & Fay, 2009) The ease of spreading content between consumers makes WOM especially suited to take place on the Internet and new opportunities for firms to take advantage of WOM marketing have therefore also arisen (Trusov et al., 2009). Companies are for instance allowed to engage in direct consumer contact for a lower cost and at a higher level of efficiency compared to when using traditional marketing strategies (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

2.3 Motives for WOM and eWOM communication

There are only a limited amount of published studies that explicitly address the motives underlying WOM and eWOM behavior. According to, among others, Dellarocas (2006) as well as Tong, Wang and Teo (2007) the most dominant publications in this field up-to-date are published by Dichter (1966), Engel et al. (1993), Sundaram et al. (1998) and Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004). The following paragraphs will provide an overview of each research’s findings respectively. The development and relatedness of the identified motives for positive eWOM communication will thereafter be explained more in detail.

The earliest research on motives as to why consumers engage in positive WOM communication is published by Dichter (1966). This study still serves as a foundation within the field and is considered to be one of the most prominent studies concerning motives for WOM. (cf. Sundaram et al., 1998; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Keller & Fay, 2012) In-depth interviews were conducted with 255 consumers where the respondents were asked to recall their WOM experiences. The findings show that consumers are motivated to speak about a product or service in order to gain satisfaction and that these rewards always are purely psychological and not material. Dichter (1966) group the findings in four main categories of motives to why consumers talk about products and services in a positive manner. These categories are Product involvement, Self-involvement, Other-involvement and Message-involvement. (Dichter, 1966)

The factors originally identified by Dichter (1966) were later updated by Engel et al. (1993) in their review of WOM literature. The authors re-named the same factors referring to them as Involvement, Self-enhancement, Concern for Others and Message Intrigue. In their publication, Dichter’s (1966) typology is modernized in order to better
capture the underlying meaning of the factors. Engel et al. (1993) confirm Dichter’s (1966) original findings and refine the motives by explaining them in a more comprehensive and modern way, thus showing that Dichter’s (1966) framework is still applicable several decades later.

The most comprehensive study to date on motives for WOM communication is published by Sundaram et al. (1998). The authors examine the underlying motives for consumers to engage in word-of-mouth communication. The study was exploratory and done by conducting critical-incident interviews with 390 consumers. The findings from the interviews were analyzed by using a content analysis procedure and resulted in four motives to why consumers engage in positive WOM behavior (altruism, product involvement, self-enhancement and helping the company). Three of these motives, with the exception of helping the company, correspond with factors that are originally suggested in previous research by Dichter (1966), namely other-involvement, product involvement and self-involvement, which were later confirmed by Engel et al. (1993). In contrast to Dichter (1966) and Engel et al. (1993), the motive message intrigue was not identified in the study by Sundaram et al. (1998).

Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) examines the motives behind consumers’ decision to engage in eWOM on web-based consumer-opinion platforms. This was one of the first studies to address motives for eWOM communication and is one of the most influential studies within the field. The study builds on identified motives for WOM in previous research as well as integrates economic and social activity from a model developed by Balasubramanian and Mahajan (2001) in order to capture the specific features of the online context. Building on the motives for traditional WOM and deriving motives for eWOM in particular, the authors propose 11 potential motives for eWOM. The motive structure was tested with a principal component analysis and as a result, eight factors were extracted of which five measure positive eWOM. The five positive factors are as follows; positive self-enhancement, concern for others, social benefits, economic incentives and helping the company. The results of the study confirm that social benefits, economic incentives, concern for others and self-enhancement are the primary reasons to why consumers engage in positive eWOM on opinion platforms, with social benefits being the motive that has the greatest impact. (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004) Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) are thus the first to confirm social benefits and economic
incentives as motives for positive eWOM. The factors concern for others and positive self-enhancement correspond with the factors identified by Dichter (1966), i.e. other-involvement and self-involvement, Engel et al. (1993), i.e. concern for others and self-enhancement, and Sundaram et al. (1988), i.e. altruism and self-enhancement. In contrast to Sundaram et al.’s (1998) findings, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) does not confirm helping the company as a motive for positive eWOM.

The factors that have been identified as motives for positive WOM and eWOM communication in previous studies published by Dichter (1966), Engel et al. (1993), Sundaram et al. (1998) and Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) will be further explained in the following paragraphs.

**Product involvement**

The factor *product involvement* regards situations where the consumer has experienced a product or service that leads to such strong feelings that he or she feels a need to express the excitement. Talking about the product/service is a way for the consumer to relieve and dispose the pleasure that is obtained. Product involvement thus concerns excitement that is created by products that are perceived highly important to the consumer and WOM takes place in order to vent the positive feelings. (Dichter, 1966; Engel et al., 1993; Sundaram et al., 1998) This motive has been identified in a traditional setting.

**Self-enhancement**

*Self-enhancement* is found to be a motive for positive WOM when the consumer for instance wants to gain attention, feel like a pioneer, gain confirmation of his or her judgment from others or in order to reach status. Overall it means that some kind of self-confirmation plays a major role in motivating consumers to engage in WOM. (Dichter, 1966; Engel et al., 1993) Self-enhancement is thus a motive for positive WOM when consumers want to enhance their image by projecting themselves as intelligent shoppers in front of others and is based on one’s desire for positive recognition from others (Sundaram et al., 1998; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). This motive has been found both in a traditional and online setting.
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Concern for others

The motive concern for others is related to the need and intent by consumers to help others and to share experienced benefits with others in order to assist them in making better purchasing decisions (Dichter, 1966; Engel et al., 1993). Similar to Dichter (1966) and Engel et al. (1993), Sundaram et al. (1998) identifies altruistic motive as a motive for positive WOM communication. Altruistic motive is described as “the act of doing something for others without anticipating anything in return” and thus helping the receiver to make a satisfying purchase decision (Sundaram et al., 1998:529). Closely related to the concept of altruism discussed by Sundaram et al. (1998), Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) conclude that eWOM may be initiated because of a desire to help other consumers with their buying decisions or to save others from negative experiences. Thus, this motive has been confirmed in both a traditional as well as an online setting.

Message intrigue

Message intrigue is a motive to positive WOM when the message in itself is the reason to why consumers engage in WOM communication. This motive takes place for instance when the entertainment value or originality of a commercial, “clever” ads or verbal play of ads is the topic of the conversation. (Dichter, 1966) The factor message intrigue is thus a motive to positive WOM communication when consumers find it entertaining to talk about certain ads or company generated persuasive messages (Engel et al., 1993). This motive has been found in a traditional setting.

Social benefits

The factor social benefits suggests that when consumers post their opinions on a social media platform they are actively participating in and becoming part of a virtual community. Consumers are therefore motivated to engage in positive eWOM communication for social integration and belongingness in a virtual community of platform users. This factor is derived by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) building on Balasubramanian and Mahajan’s (2001) focus-related utility, which concerns the utility the consumer gains when providing value to a community through his or her own contributions. Social benefits is thus a motive to positive eWOM communication when people want to strengthen social ties and gain benefits from socializing with others. (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004) This motive is found in an online setting.
Economic incentives

The factor *economic incentives* is distinct for positive eWOM communication and means that consumers can receive rewards for sharing brand-related content. Economic incentives thus concern the motivational effect a reward can have on positive eWOM communication. This factor suggest that the possibility to receive a reward, for instance win a contest, can motivate consumers to engage in positive eWOM communication. This factor is derived by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) building on Balasubramanian and Mahajan’s (2001) approval utility, which concerns a consumer’s satisfaction when others approve of his or her own contributions. An economic reward for eWOM is argued to be a form of approval by others, which motivates the consumer to engage in positive eWOM communication. (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004) This motive is identified in an online setting.

Helping the company

The factor *helping the company* is a motive to positive WOM when consumers are satisfied with a product and have a subsequent desire to help the company by sharing their positive experience (Sundaram et al., 1998). The consumers are thus motivated to engage in WOM communication in order to support the company after a good experience. Building on the results of Sundaram et al. (1998), Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) tested the factor, however their results do not confirm helping the company as a motive to eWOM communication. Hence, this motive is found in a traditional setting, however it is rejected as a motive for eWOM when tested in an online context.

Table 1 summarizes the most dominant research that have been published concerning motives for positive WOM and eWOM communication up to date (see Table 1). Fields marked as green are factors that have been validated as motives to positive WOM/eWOM in the studies. The field marked as red has been identified as a motive, however later became discarded as a motive to eWOM communication in more current research. The table illustrates that findings from previous research studies have served as a foundation for subsequent studies and that several of the tested factors are corresponding to each other.
This study will explore how the motives identified in previous research for positive WOM/eWOM communication apply in an SNS setting. The following paragraphs will describe the context in further detail.

### 2.4 Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

Social Networking Sites are websites that encourage social interaction by allowing users to establish and maintain a network of friends for social or professional interaction. The core of SNSs is built around personalized user profiles and in contrast to several other Internet platforms, SNSs rely on user-generated content to retain its users. (Trusov et al., 2005) Boyd and Ellison (2008:1) define SNSs as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system." According

Table 1 – Summary of identified motives for positive WOM and eWOM communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motives for positive WOM</th>
<th>Motives for positive eWOM</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product-involvement</td>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>Product-involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-involvement</td>
<td>Self-enhancement</td>
<td>Self-enhancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-involvement</td>
<td>Concern for others</td>
<td>Altruism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message Involvement</td>
<td>Message Intrigue</td>
<td>Social Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Economic Incentives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helping the company</td>
<td>Helping the company*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The motive “Helping the company” was not found to have a significant impact on positive eWOM communication in the study by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)*
to a recent report published by Nielsen, SNSs represent the most popular online activity among Internet users today (Nielsen, 2011).

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) SNSs allow the users to reveal personal information such as thoughts, feelings, likes and dislikes to a high degree. This suggests that the users are able to project a desired image to others through SNSs. The level of intimacy and immediacy of the communication that takes place on SNSs further suggests that users have an influence on each other’s behavior to a certain degree through interaction with each other (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Hence, SNSs represent an ideal tool for eWOM to occur, as consumers are allowed to freely create and spread brand-related information within their social networks composed of friends and acquaintances. An important characteristic that differentiates SNSs from other online platforms is that the users’ contacts on the SNS are members of the users’ existing real-life social networks and are therefore perceived as more trustworthy and credible than unknown strangers. This makes SNSs an important source of product information for consumers, which facilitates and accelerates eWOM. (Shu-Chuan & Yoojung, 2011) According to Shu-Chuan and Yoojung (2011), eWOM on SNSs occur when consumers provide or search for informal product-related information through the applications of these sites.

2.5 Facebook
The most popular social networking site is Facebook with over 150 million unique visitors (Nielsen, 2011). Facebook brings the user’s existing social network online. The emphasis is on using the user’s real identity and allows information sharing primarily between people who the user has approved as friends. Sociability on Facebook thus becomes an extension of the user’s real life connections. (Keenan & Shiri, 2009) In addition to creating a private and familiar social environment, Facebook offers a variety of interactive services that facilitate information sharing. The users can for instance post status updates, upload pictures, “like” brands and check-in at real life locations online. (Keenan & Shiri, 2009) These information-sharing tools allow people to spread eWOM that appears on all their Facebook friends’ newsfeed. The private social environment and built-in information sharing tools makes Facebook an ideal channel for spreading eWOM. The presence of company profiles and advertising on SNSs further enable consumers to engage in social interactions by commenting, liking or passing
along the brand-related information to their social connections. Through these interactions, consumers voluntarily display their brand preference, which can stimulate eWOM communication. (Shu-Chuan & Yoojung, 2011) One difference between Facebook and other types of online forums is that an individual’s liking of a product or company by “liking”/joining the specific company page becomes knowledge that can be seen by everyone in the newsfeed of the SNS. For instance, every time an individual post/share/like/check-in on Facebook it is automatically forwarded to their network of friends by showing up in the newsfeed. (Coulter & Roggeveen, 2012)

2.6 Definition of eWOM on Facebook
There is no pre-existing definition of eWOM on Facebook. The concept of traditional WOM is clear and well defined. This definition however cannot be directly translated into an SNS setting as eWOM on Facebook can occur in a number of different ways. Building on Hennig-Thurau et al.’s (2004) definition of eWOM on opinion platforms as well as Shu-Chuan & Yoojung’s (2011) argument that any voluntary display of brand preference online stimulates eWOM communication we propose our own definition. In this paper we will define positive eWOM on Facebook as any positive public statement (post content/share/like/check-in) made by a Facebook user involving a company or brand which is made available to a multitude of people via the social networking site. Hence, all activities on Facebook where an individual publicly displays his or her brand preferences will be regarded as positive eWOM because it will automatically be published in the newsfeed of that person’s connections. Thus, making the brand preference visible for all contacts in the individual’s social network.

2.7 Conceptual model
Our review of previously published literature on WOM and eWOM communication has led us to suggest 6 motives for consumers to engage in positive eWOM communication on SNSs: concern for other consumers, self-enhancement, economic incentives, expression of positive emotions, social benefits received and message intrigue (see Table 2). This is due to the fact that these motives have been identified and validated in previous research studies. We have chosen to exclude the factor helping the company which was identified by Sundaram et. al. (1998) as it was discarded in more current research by Hennig-Thurau et.al. (2004), where it was tested using a statistical method. The motive is excluded in order to minimize the risk of negative impact on the results.
from problematic variables. For this reason we only chose to include those variables that have been confirmed statistically as well as testing two variables, which have not yet been tested statistically, i.e. message intrigue and product-involvement. In this study we have chosen to refer to the motive product-involvement as expressing positive emotions in order to better describe the underlying meaning of the motive.

**Table 2 – Conceptual model of the study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motives</th>
<th>Theoretical origin</th>
<th>WOM</th>
<th>eWOM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concern for others</strong></td>
<td>Dichter (1966); Engel et al. (1993); Sundaram et al. (1998); Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-enhancement</strong></td>
<td>Dichter (1966); Engel et al. (1993); Sundaram et al. (1998); Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Incentives</strong></td>
<td>Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expressing positive emotions</strong></td>
<td>Dichter (1966); Engel et al. (1993); Sundaram et al. (1998)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social benefits</strong></td>
<td>Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Message intrigue</strong></td>
<td>Dichter (1966); Engel et al. (1993)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study published by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) constitutes the basis for the conceptual model of the current study as it is theoretically sound and uses a comprehensive set of factors to statistically explore motives for eWOM communication by building on previous influential studies on motives for WOM communication (see Appendix III). In addition to validated motives in the research conducted by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), motives from traditional WOM communication literature will be included in the model. While not having been statistically tested up-to-date, these motives ought to be highly relevant in an SNS setting, as this setting contains elements much alike traditional WOM.
3. Methodology

3.1 Research design
The following section will classify the research design of this study. The aim of this study is to explore how previously validated theory applies in a new setting, namely motives for positive eWOM communication on SNSs. This research is therefore of an exploratory type, as there are no previous studies regarding motives to eWOM that have been conducted in this particular context, i.e. SNSs and specifically Facebook. A deductive reasoning is applied and previously validated factors for participation in positive WOM and eWOM communication serves as a foundation for our research study. A quantitative data collection method was used in order to enable us to statistically examine the relationship between the identified motives for eWOM communication and actual eWOM communication behavior, through an online survey. A quantitative method is appropriate as it allows us to verify and/or discard the previously identified motives for eWOM communication in a new setting. Furthermore, it gives us access to a large data set, which increases the reliability of our results. A factor analysis, which identifies the underlying factors that explain the correlation within a set of survey items, was performed. This was done in order to screen the factors prior to subsequent analysis to ensure that the items measure what they set out to measure. (Pallant, 2005)
In order to confirm the factor structure that was extracted in the factor analysis a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted. The CFA is necessary in order to establish convergent and discriminant validity as well as reliability. If the extracted factors do not demonstrate acceptable reliability and validity the model is inadequate for moving on to the following analysis. (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham, 2006)
Once the factors have been thoroughly screened, a regression analysis was performed. The regression analysis tests if the identified motivational factors for engagement in eWOM communication have an influence on actual eWOM communication behavior. Hence, in the analysis, the motivational factors are used as the independent variables and eWOM communication is represented by the two dependent variables, eWOM activities and eWOM frequency. This will be explained in further detail in the following section.

3.2 Construct measurement
In this section the items for measuring the variables will be defined. All identified motives for eWOM communication are measured on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from
Motives behind positive electronic Word-of-Mouth on SNSs

1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The respondents are asked to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement with each item. All items used in the study by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) were measured with a Likert scale, which is why a Likert scale will be applied also in this study. The 7-point scale is also chosen in order to secure a good discrimination among levels of agreement, as many people tend to avoid selecting choices at each end of the scale (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Four of the six constructs representing the motives are measured with three items, while two of the constructs are measured with two items, which corresponds to Hennig-Thurau et al.’s (2004) items. As the construct measurements in this study are built on Henning-Thurau et al.’s (2004) research it is thus advantageous to stay as close as possible to the items tested and confirmed in their study. Using previously tested scales increase the reliability of the construct measurements as it has been confirmed in previous research that they measure what they are supposed to measure (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

Concern for others
We argue that concern for others (originally other-involvement) is applicable in an SNS setting as the message will be spread among a social network consisting of friends and acquaintances, who the consumers are likely to care for. This construct assesses the influence of consumers’ desire to assist and help others on their eWOM behavior. Concern for others is measured with two items originally developed by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) (see Appendix II). The first item assesses the consumer’s engagement in positive eWOM communication because of their wish to help other consumers by sharing their own positive experiences, while the second item assesses the influence of consumers desire to help other consumers to buy the right product on their eWOM behavior.

Self-enhancement
Self-enhancement (originally self-involvement) ought to be highly relevant in an SNS context as consumers are able to express their identity and uphold a particular image by posting brand-related messages. Self-enhancement is measured by three items originally developed by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) (see Appendix II). The construct measures the effect of personal benefits the consumers expect to gain from engaging in eWOM communication on their behavior. The first item assesses engagement in positive eWOM communication due to a feeling of satisfaction of telling others about the
consumer’s buying success. The second item assesses the consumer’s inclination to tell others about a great experience, while the third item measures the influence of consumers’ desire to show others that they are clever consumers on their eWOM behavior.

**Economic incentives**
We argue that the presence of company profiles on Facebook makes the construct economic incentives applicable in an SNS setting as consumers are given economic incentives by the companies to share content, by for instance entering contests. Economic incentives is measured with two items originally developed by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) (see Appendix II). This construct measures the influence that economic incentives have on eWOM communication. The first item measures engagement in positive eWOM due to an incentive, while the second item assesses engagement in eWOM communication in exchange for a reward.

**Expressing positive emotions**
We argue that the construct expressing positive emotions (originally product-involvement) is applicable in an SNS setting because Facebook provides facilitating tools that encourage users to display their likes and dislikes. Expressing positive emotions is measured with three items. As no previously validated items for this motive exist, we have developed items using wordings as close as possible to the wording of the items used by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004). The three items are based on how the motive is described by Dichter (1966), Engel et al. (1993) and Sundaram et al. (1998) (see Appendix II). The construct measures the influence of product or purchase experiences that are above expectation on the consumer’s eWOM behavior. The first item measures engagement in positive eWOM due to a desire to express joy about a good purchasing experience. The second item assesses eWOM communication due to a wish to share enthusiasm after a satisfactory purchase. The third item measures the influence that excitement to share positive feelings following a pleasant purchasing experience has on eWOM behavior.

**Social benefits**
The construct social benefits ought to be relevant in an SNS setting as eWOM communication is an easy way to uphold and maintain relationships with friends and
acquaintances. “Social benefits” is measured with three items originally developed by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) (see Appendix II). This construct is meant to measure the influence of the social benefits that consumers expect to gain from eWOM communication on their behavior. The first item measures engagement in positive eWOM communication due to pleasure from engaging in conversations with friends in the social network. The second item assesses engagement in eWOM communication due to the entertainment from communicating with friends in this way. The third item measures engagement in positive eWOM because it is a good way to maintain relationships with friends and acquaintances.

**Message intrigue**

The construct *message intrigue* (originally message involvement) suggests that the entertainment value of the ad, its originality or cleverness can become the topic of the conversation between consumers. This motive ought to be particularly relevant in an SNS setting as Facebook provides facilitating tools for sharing company generated persuasive messages. Message intrigue is measured with three items. As there are no previously validated items for this motive, we have constructed original items using wordings as close as possible to the wording of the items used by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004). The three items are based on how the motive is described by Dichter (1966) and Engel et al. (1993) (see Appendix II). This construct is meant to measure the effect of the advertising message on eWOM communication. The first item measures engagement in positive eWOM communication due to the entertainment value of an ad. The second item assesses engagement in eWOM communication because of the originality of an ad. The third item measures the influence that the cleverness of an ad has on eWOM behavior.

**eWOM Communication**

Engagement in eWOM communication is represented by the two dependent variables *eWOM activities* and *eWOM frequency*. eWOM activities measures how many eWOM communication activities on Facebook the respondent engages in, i.e. post/share/like/check-in. Engagement in one type of activity receives an assigned value of 1; engagement in two types of activities receives an assigned value of 2 and so forth with a maximal value of 4. eWOM frequency measures the frequency of engagement in eWOM communication on an ordinal scale, adapted from Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004).
The categories range from one or more contributions per week (assigned a value of 4), one contribution every two weeks (3), one contribution a month (2) and less than one contribution per month (1) (see Appendix II).

3.3 Survey design
We have chosen to conduct the survey with Swedish respondents, in order to minimize the effect cultural differences potentially could have on the results. For this reason the questionnaire is phrased in Swedish. In addition, the survey is designed to be non-specific to any particular industry as our aim is to explain eWOM behavior on a general level. Furthermore, while there is a possibility that there might be differences in the motives for eWOM communication depending on the activity of brand preference display, i.e. post content/share/like/check-in, we are not making any distinctions between the different activities, as this is not within the scope of this study. The purpose of this research study is to see why consumers engage in positive eWOM behavior on Facebook on a general level.

Structure of the questionnaire
In order to ensure that the respondents understand the definition of positive eWOM communication on Facebook in this study, the questionnaire begins with an instruction page. This page consists of written instructions asking the respondent to think of a situation where he or she engages in positive eWOM communication about a product/service/brand. To ensure that the respondent always answers the questions from a positive eWOM perspective these instructions are repeated on every page of the questionnaire. In addition, to clearly illustrate the applied definition of positive eWOM on Facebook, examples of actual Facebook eWOM posts are included. These examples showcase all defined eWOM activities on Facebook, i.e. posting content (photo, status update etc.), sharing content, liking a page and checking in. (see Appendix I) Moreover, the purpose of the study is unknown for the respondents in order to minimize the influence this knowledge could have on their responses. The initial part of the survey consists of background questions that serve as screening variables to ensure that the respondent is part of the targeted sample and engages in eWOM communication on Facebook. The screening variables include age, frequency of Facebook usage, the type of eWOM activities the respondent engages in, if any, as well as frequency of engagement in these activities. In case the respondent does not pass the screening questions, the
respondent is disqualified from further participation in the questionnaire. Once the respondent has passed the screening questions, access is gained to the main questionnaire that consists of the items for the independent variables. (see Appendix II) The position of each item in the questionnaire is randomized in order to make the respondent assess each item on its own without it becoming apparent that the item belongs to a certain construct, e.g. concern for others etc. This increases the reliability of the theoretical model if the subsequent analysis shows that the items belonging to a certain underlying construct have internal consistency despite being assessed separately in the questionnaire.

Translation

All items were carefully translated from English to Swedish. In order to ensure that the original meaning is preserved in the Swedish version, a back-translation technique was used. The source questionnaire was first translated to Swedish by the authors and thereafter translated back into English by a native English speaker who is not involved in the research study. The result showed no significant difference in meaning between the translated items and the original wordings of the items. (Saunders et al., 2009) Where slight difference was detected the wordings were adjusted to better preserve the original meaning.

3.4 Data Collection Method

This section will describe the data collection method in more detail, specifying the characteristics of the targeted sample and distribution of the survey.

3.4.1 Target sample

As the aim of the study is to understand what motivates consumers to engage in positive eWOM on Facebook, the sample must fulfill one requirement; the respondents have to be active users of Facebook. For this reason the targeted respondents of this study are in the age group 18-34, with the personal habit of using Facebook. This age group is chosen, as it is the age group that is most concentrated on SNSs (Nielsen, 2011). In order to ensure that the sample is active on Facebook, the online survey is distributed through this platform. To further ensure that the respondents fulfill our selection criteria the screening questions measuring age and engagement in eWOM communication disqualifies those participants that are not part of our targeted sample. Respondents that are not in the age group 18-34 or do not engage in any type of eWOM
communication on Facebook are thus disqualified. Consequently, only respondents that meet our selection criteria are allowed to participate in the study.

A combination of a convenience sample and chain referral sample is used as a selection tool for respondents to this study. This technique is likely to be prone to bias, as the cases appear in the sample based on the ease of obtaining them. This problem is however less significant when there is little variation in the population, i.e. the population is relatively homogenous. (Saunders et al., 2009) As we study a clearly defined population of Facebook users, in terms of age and eWOM frequency, this sampling method is valid in this particular case. The screening questions ensure that a relatively homogenous sample participate in the study, thus minimizing the variation among the respondents.

### 3.4.2 Distribution

A pilot study with 12 selected respondents, both within and outside of the academia, was conducted in order to test the online survey for comprehensibility and potential flaws. The results of the pilot study suggested some minor adjustments to the control variables, e.g. adding more frequent visits on Facebook as a response option. After ensuring that the wordings of the survey items were clear and comprehensible, the actual online survey was distributed to the both authors’ respective social networks on Facebook through a Facebook event. Initially 330 individuals were invited to participate in the study. In addition to this, several individuals in the authors’ social networks on Facebook were identified and asked to spread the online survey to their respective social networks. These individuals were chosen based on different backgrounds and representation of different age groups. A good spread in backgrounds and ages of respondents suggests that the questionnaire can reach multiple social networks and consequently a larger number of respondents that are unrelated to the authors. As a result, a total of 770 respondents were invited to participate in the survey through the Facebook event.

The respondents were ensured that their responses would be treated anonymously. This was done in order to encourage them to express their honest opinions and actual behavior, thus mitigating the risk of the respondents answering in a “socially appropriate” way.
4. Results

4.1 Sample size
A total of 255 responses were received, providing a response rate of 33% given that all 770 respondents invited to participate in the study through the Facebook event in fact acknowledged the survey. The response rate is deemed satisfactory for an online survey. This is due to the fact that self-completion questionnaires are commonly prone to have low response rates (Bryman & Bell, 2007). 42 of the 255 responses received were disqualified due to not falling within the range of the targeted respondents. Another 39 responses were only partially completed and thus were removed from the sample. As a result, 174 complete responses were retained. A common guideline for performing a factor analysis is that the sample size should have a ratio of at least five cases for each of the items, i.e. 5*16 items require a sample of at least 80 respondents. Thus our sample size is satisfactory for this type of analysis. (Pallant, 2005)

4.2 Data cleansing
Prior to conducting an analysis of the collected data, outliers that may affect the results of the analysis were removed from the data set (Pallant, 2005). This was done by assessing the normality of the data. The skewness and kurtosis measures are below 1 for all variables, which suggests that the data is suited for a regression analysis. In addition, histograms and normality plots were examined in order to identify and remove outliers. As a result 20 cases were removed as outliers, leaving us with 154 responses for the analysis.

4.3 Demographics and engagement in eWOM communication
Of the retained responses, 35% of the respondents are male, while 65% are female. The majority, 89%, of the respondents are between the ages 23 and 30, with fewer respondents at the ends of the age-scale. Concerning Facebook usage, 84% of the respondents use Facebook more frequently than once a day, 13% use Facebook once a day and 3% use Facebook more frequently than once a week. When it comes to eWOM activities, 74% of the respondents usually post brand-related content on Facebook, 54% checks-in at real-life locations, 81% like brand-related content and 37% share brand-related content with their friends. Regarding frequency, 36% of the respondents engage in these eWOM communication activities at least once a week, 33% engage in such activities at least every two weeks, 22% engage in eWOM communication once a month and 9% perform these activities less frequently than once a month.
4.4 Factor analysis

After assessing the normality of the data, a factor analysis was performed in order to ensure that the questions that are asked relate to the construct that they are intended to measure. Factor analysis is an exploratory tool, which serves as a guide for researchers to identify relationships between the variables and is used as a tool for decision-making. (Pallant, 2005)

To begin with, the inter-correlation between the variables was examined. Variables that are highly correlated make it impossible to establish the unique contribution each variable has to a factor and one of the problematic variables should therefore be eliminated from further analysis. No high multicollinearity or singularity was found in the correlation matrix. Hence, no variables were excluded at this stage. (Field, 2005)

A Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was performed, in order to ensure that factor analysis is appropriate for these data. The KMO measure for our dataset was 0.792, which exceeds Kaiser’s recommendation, i.e. values that are greater than 0.5 are acceptable. A value close to 1 shows that the patterns of correlations among the items are relatively compact, which means that the factor analysis will result in distinct and reliable factors. (Field, 2005)

In addition, Bartlett’s test of sphericity was conducted, which tests whether the correlation matrix is an identity matrix. If this is the case, all correlation coefficients are zero. For the analysis to be appropriate it is necessary that some relationships exist between the variables. For our data, the Bartlett’s test of sphericity was highly significant at 0.000, which means that our data is appropriate for the factor analysis. (Field, 2005)

A principal component analysis was used when extracting the factors. A principal component analysis establishes which linear components exist within the data and how a particular variable contributes to that component (Field, 2005). We chose to retain factors using the cumulative proportion of variance explained, which is recommended to be 70%-80% (Pallant, 2005). 5 of the factors explain 71% of the total variance, whereas 6 factors explain 78% of the total variance. This led us to retain 6 factors, as a meaningful amount of variance is explained by the 6th factor. Retaining a 6-factor solution also provides us with a better fit with the theoretical model. 4 of the extracted
factors correspond perfectly to the theoretical model, while the variables belonging to the construct self-enhancement loaded both on the factor expressing positive emotions and self-enhancement. In order to test the stability of the model with 6 factors, we conducted an additional factor analysis using only the problematic variables expressing positive emotions and self-enhancement, extracting a 2-factor solution. The analysis confirmed that self-enhancement is a separate factor that should be retained. (see Table 3)

**Table 3: Rotated Component Matrix\(^a\) – Two-factor solution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I share because:</th>
<th>Component 1</th>
<th>Component 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I’m so satisfied with the product/service I purchased that I want to share my enthusiasm</td>
<td>0.816</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to express my joy about a good purchasing experience</td>
<td>0.790</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel good when I can tell others about my buying success</td>
<td>0.744</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the product/service gives me so much positive feelings that I can’t wait to tell others about it</td>
<td>0.732</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can tell others about a great experience</td>
<td>0.712</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my contributions show others that I’m a clever customer</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.944</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
\(a\). Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

To improve the interpretability of the factors, a rotated solution was used, as rotation maximizes the loading of each item on one of the extracted factors while minimizing the loading of the item on all other factors. As the factors are theoretically independent, we performed an orthogonal rotation, using the varimax rotation method, which makes it easier to understand and interpret the results. This illustrates the factor loadings for each item onto each item, i.e. how the items cluster. (Pallant, 2005) We have chosen to exclude factor loadings that are less than 0.4, in order to facilitate interpretation by not displaying insignificant factor loadings. (see Table 4) By interpreting the factor loadings on each extracted factor, we are able to determine whether the items measure what they are intended to measure (Field, 2005). In this process, one of the items was removed, i.e. *I share because I can tell others about a great experience*, due to cross-
loadings on two factors, expressing positive emotions (0.428) and concern for others (0.466), as it does not contribute meaningfully to just one factor.

Table 4: Rotated Component Matrix\textsuperscript{a} – Six-factor solution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I share because:</th>
<th>Component (1)</th>
<th>Component (2)</th>
<th>Component (3)</th>
<th>Component (4)</th>
<th>Component (5)</th>
<th>Component (6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I want to express my joy about a good purchasing experience</td>
<td>0.836</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m so satisfied with the product/service I purchased that I want to share my enthusiasm</td>
<td>0.805</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel good when I can tell others about my buying success</td>
<td>0.727</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the product/service gives me so much positive feelings that I can’t wait to tell others about it</td>
<td>0.678</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an ad is clever</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.896</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think an ad is funny</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.848</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am intrigued by an ad (it is so different/original)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.819</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is fun to communicate this way with friends in my social network</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.837</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe a chat with friends in my social network is a nice thing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.813</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is a good way to maintain my relationships with friends and acquaintances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get a reward for writing (money off-coupon)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the incentives I receive (possibility to win a competition)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to help others with my own positive experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.823</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to give others the opportunity to buy the right product</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.818</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my contributions show others that I’m a clever customer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.886</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
\textsuperscript{a} Rotation converged in 5 iterations.
4.5 Reliability of factors
In order to assess the stability of the model a confirmatory factor analysis was performed, which tests whether the data fit the theoretically derived model. The goodness-of-fit measures show that an acceptable fit exists between our data and the proposed model. Values close to 1 generally indicate a good fit. (goodness-of-fit index = 0.910, normed fit index = 0.891, adjusted goodness-of-fit = 0.860, comparative fit index = 0.953) The RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) value should be below 0.1. For our data the RMSEA value is 0.065, which indicates an acceptable fit. The chi-square/degrees of freedom ratio is below 2 (CMIN/DF = 1.642) and thus represents an adequate fit. (Hair et al., 2006)

The extracted factors were then checked for convergent and discriminant validity, which is necessary in order to establish the validity and reliability of the constructs. Convergent validity means that the variables correlate well with each other within the construct they set out to measure. This is tested by calculating Cronbach’s Alpha, composite reliability, as well as average variance extracted (AVE). Discriminant validity means that the variables belonging to the same construct do not correlate more highly with variables outside the construct they are set out to measure. This is done by assessing the square root of the AVE in relation to the correlation of the constructs. (Hair et al., 2006) As the factor self-enhancement is only measured by one item, a check for convergent and discriminant validity is not necessary. In order to confirm the reliability of the extracted factors, they were first checked for internal consistency using Cronbach’s alpha. All factors show a value larger than 0.7, which means that they show strong intercorrelations among the items and thus have an appropriate degree of reliability. In addition, composite reliability was calculated for each construct, which show values larger than 0.7 for all constructs. This confirms the reliability of the extracted factors. (Hair et al., 2006) To further confirm that the constructs have convergent validity, average variance extracted (AVE) was measured. The value of AVE for each construct should be greater than 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All tested constructs meet this criterion and thus have convergent validity. (see Table 5)
Table 5: Internal Consistency assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Cronbach’s α</th>
<th>Composite Reliability</th>
<th>AVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concern for Others</td>
<td>0.744</td>
<td>0.739</td>
<td>0.586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing Positive Emotions</td>
<td>0.863</td>
<td>0.859</td>
<td>0.604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Incentives</td>
<td>0.799</td>
<td>0.983</td>
<td>0.971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Benefits</td>
<td>0.736</td>
<td>0.749</td>
<td>0.506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message Intrigue</td>
<td>0.885</td>
<td>0.885</td>
<td>0.720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Enhancement</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition a test of discriminant validity was conducted, which assesses whether the constructs are unrelated to each other. Discriminant validity exists when the square root of the AVE is greater than the correlation the construct shares with other constructs. (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) All tested constructs meet this criterion. (see Table 6) Our constructs thus have discriminant validity, meaning that they measure different motives.

Table 6: Discriminant Validity assessment with square root of AVE on the diagonal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Social Benefits</th>
<th>Expressing Positive Emotions</th>
<th>Concern for Others</th>
<th>Economic Incentives</th>
<th>Message Intrigue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Benefits</td>
<td>0.711</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing Positive Emotions</td>
<td>0.183</td>
<td>0.777</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for Others</td>
<td>0.103</td>
<td>0.726</td>
<td>0.766</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Incentives</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
<td>0.145</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>0.986</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message Intrigue</td>
<td>0.119</td>
<td>0.606</td>
<td>0.419</td>
<td>0.161</td>
<td>0.849</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This table shows the factor correlation matrix with the square root of the AVE on the diagonal. The factor self-enhancement is not included as it is only measured by one item.

4.6 Regression analysis

Following the factor analysis and the subsequent test of reliability and validity, we computed composite scores for each factor using the mean value. The composite scores for each of the extracted factors were used as independent variables in the regression equation. Two regression models were conducted using eWOM activities and eWOM frequency as the dependent variables. The regression functions were significant for both regression models. (see Table 7)

The model using eWOM activities as a dependent variable was highly significant at 0.000 and explains 19% of engagement in eWOM activities. Standardized regression
coefficients were significant for two of the six motives. The strongest positive impact on consumers’ engagement in eWOM activities was by the motive expressing positive emotions ($\beta= 0.31$). The motive social benefits ($\beta= 0.16$) was also found to have a significant positive impact on engagement in eWOM activities. Standardized regression coefficients for the remaining motives: concern for others, economic incentives, message intrigue and self-enhancement were not found to have a significant impact on eWOM activities. Interesting to note is that the impact of two of the motives, economic incentives and message intrigue, was negative. This suggests that consumers that are driven by these motives tend to engage in fewer eWOM activities.

The model using eWOM frequency as a dependent variable was significant at 0.014 and explains 10% of eWOM frequency. The standardized regression coefficient was found to be significant for one of the six factors, social benefits ($\beta= 0.26$). The standardized regression coefficients for the remaining motives: expressing positive emotions, concern for others, economic incentives, message intrigue and self-enhancement were not found to have a significant impact on eWOM frequency. The impact of two of the motives, economic incentives and message intrigue, suggests a negative impact also in this case, indicating that consumers driven by these motives tend to engage less often in eWOM communication. In addition, self-enhancement suggests a negative impact on eWOM frequency as well.

Table 7: Regression results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor 1: Expressing Positive Emotions</th>
<th>Regression Coefficient (Standardized)</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Regression Coefficient (Standardized)</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Factor 2: Concern for Others</td>
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<td>,123</td>
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<td>,161</td>
<td>,034*</td>
<td>,260</td>
<td>,001**</td>
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<td>Factor 5: Message Intrigue</td>
<td>-0.045</td>
<td>,616</td>
<td>-0.125</td>
<td>,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 6: Self-Enhancement</td>
<td>,113</td>
<td>,180</td>
<td>-0.078</td>
<td>,381</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| R²                                     | ,190                                  |      | ,101                                  |      |
| Model sig.                             | ,000**                                 |      | ,014*                                 |      |

** Significant at $p < .005$

* Significant at $p < .05$
The results show that social benefits have a strong impact on both eWOM activities and particularly eWOM frequency. This shows that the same independent variable, social benefits, has an impact on both the dependent variables. This suggests that consumers driven by the motive social benefits engage the most in eWOM communication on SNSs. However, consumers driven by the motive expressing positive emotions are the ones that engage in eWOM communication in the most kinds of ways, i.e. uses the most types of activities such as post, share, like and check-in.
5. Discussion
The results of this study have provided insight into which motives lead to engagement in positive eWOM communication in an SNS setting. The findings confirm social benefits and expressing positive emotions as motives for engagement in positive eWOM communication on SNSs. The motives concern for others, self-enhancement, economic incentives and message intrigue were not found to have a significant impact on eWOM behavior on SNS. While not significant, the latter two motives did however show a negative relationship to eWOM communication. The following paragraphs will discuss the findings in further detail.

5.1 eWOM in an SNS context
The results of this study show clear differences between motives for positive eWOM on SNSs compared to motives for both positive WOM in a traditional setting and positive eWOM on opinion platforms. The two motives that were found to have an impact on positive eWOM communication on SNSs in this study are social benefits and expressing positive emotions. According to theory, expressing positive emotions is identified as a motive when researching traditional WOM communication (Dichter, 1966; Engel et al., 1993; Sundaram et al., 1998). The motive social benefits is added when the motives are tested in an online setting and have been found to lead to eWOM on opinion platforms (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). The results thus strengthen the argument that eWOM on SNSs contains elements of both traditional WOM and eWOM on opinion platforms and should therefore be considered as a unique context where eWOM takes place.

SNSs closely mimic real-life social interactions and focuses on communication between the users real-life connections. However, eWOM on SNSs takes place in an online setting, which creates more opportunities for consumers to share brand-related content. This leads to increased possibilities for companies to tap into the conversations that take place between friends in their social environment and encourage positive eWOM communication. The results show that companies should not think of eWOM on SNSs as neither the same as traditional WOM nor eWOM on opinion platforms. Rather they have to consider the specific nature of the SNS context, which will be explained in detail in the following paragraphs.

The main difference of the SNS setting compared to traditional WOM is that what you post on Facebook remains there for an infinite period of time. In addition it reaches a
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multitude of people simultaneously, in an instant. The unique characteristics of the online setting of SNSs results in other motives for engagement in eWOM communication, compared to traditional WOM. Out of the motives that have been confirmed in a traditional setting in previous research, i.e. expressing positive emotions, self-enhancement, concern for others and message intrigue, only expressing positive emotions was found to have a significant impact on eWOM communication in general and eWOM activities in particular, in an SNS setting. Facebook provides many facilitating tools for sharing content and expressing emotions. Through Facebook the consumer is enabled to share their positive emotions instantly with a multitude of people simultaneously through various kinds of activities. Facebook is thus a setting that is especially suited for eWOM communication for consumers driven by this motive.

The setting of the SNS also differs significantly from opinion platforms, which results in other motives for engagement in eWOM communication on SNSs, compared to opinion platforms. Of the motives that have been confirmed for engagement in positive eWOM communication on opinion platforms, i.e. social benefits, concern for others, self-enhancement and economic incentives, only social benefits is found to have a significant impact on eWOM communication on SNSs, both in terms of frequency and kinds of activities. The main difference of the SNS setting compared to opinion platforms is the focal point of the platform. On opinion platforms the focus of the discussion is purely commercial, as users visit opinion platforms with the objective of giving and receiving advice on products. SNSs, on the other hand, focus on sociability and interaction between users. In addition, users are allowed to stay relatively anonymous on opinion platforms, in contrast to SNSs where the user can be identified through their user-profile. People driven by the motive social benefits thus engage in positive eWOM on SNSs in order to strengthen and maintain relationships within their social network.

The motives concern for others, self-enhancement, economic incentives and message intrigue have not been found to have a significant impact on engagement in positive eWOM communication on Facebook, in contrast to findings that have been made in previous research, both for engagement in positive WOM and positive eWOM on opinion platforms. Each motive and the potential explanations for the results will be further discussed in detail in the following sections.
5.2 Social benefits and expressing positive emotions – significant motives

The findings of this study have confirmed that the motives social benefits and expressing positive emotions have a significant impact on engagement in positive eWOM communication on SNSs. Hence, companies should focus on encouraging sociability and facilitate for consumers to share their positive experiences.

In line with the findings made by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) this study confirms that social benefits have the strongest impact on eWOM communication. This motive is found to have an impact on primarily eWOM frequency and to a lesser extent on eWOM activities in an SNS setting. Consumers that are driven by this motive are thus engaging in eWOM communication on SNSs more frequently and through more activities, compared to consumers driven by other motives. This finding suggests that consumers share their brand preferences with other users on Facebook because they want to gain benefits from socializing with others (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). As activities that stimulate sociability are found to have the strongest impact on consumers’ engagement in eWOM behavior, a successful strategy for companies in an SNS setting should include a social dimension and promote communication between friends. Furthermore, the results of this study together with the results from Hennig-Thurau et al.’s (2004) research, which also confirm social benefits as a motive, strengthen the argument that SNSs is a favorable setting for eWOM to occur. Facebook is primarily used for communication and interaction between friends and acquaintances and the results show that consumers are primarily motivated to spread brand-related content in their networks in order to strengthen social ties.

The motive expressing positive emotions is found to have a significant impact on engagement in eWOM activities. The consumers that are driven by this motive are thus found to use the most kinds of ways to communicate their joy over a good purchasing experience, i.e. posting, sharing, liking and checking-in. The consumers driven by this motive solely want to communicate their joy and thus engage in eWOM through the most appropriate activity for that specific situation, consequently leading to eWOM communication through a broader variety of activities. This finding suggests that companies should facilitate for consumers to express their positive emotions post-purchase by creating various opportunities to share their experience with other users on the SNS. Expressing positive emotions is however not found to have a significant
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impact on eWOM frequency. In contrast to social benefits, which is a motive that can take place at any time when friends are interacting, expressing positive emotions is to a larger extent restricted to situations directly following a positive purchasing experience, as the consumer feels a need to dispose the satisfaction that is obtained. The motive expressing positive emotions thus has a more limited impact on eWOM frequency as it assumes a preceding positive purchasing experience directly in conjunction with the eWOM communication.

5.3 Self-enhancement and concern for others – non-significant motives
In contrast to previous research findings, the motives self-enhancement and concern for others were not found to have a significant impact on positive eWOM behavior in an SNS context. Theoretically, the motive self-enhancement should have an impact on eWOM behavior, as Facebook allows its users to create their profile-page and show their identity to other users through for instance liking certain company pages or sharing content about a particular brand. Through this behavior the user is enabled to create their image and communicate their status to other users. The results of the study however do not confirm self-enhancement as a motive for eWOM communication. One possible explanation for this could be that eWOM on SNSs is automatically forwarded to all contacts within the user’s network, meaning that it is difficult to fabricate an inconsistent image among different individuals as it is visible for all contacts. This is in contrast to traditional WOM, where what you say to one individual can differ from what you say to another individual. Hence, it is less credible for individuals to enhance themselves on an SNS, which consequently means that the motive has no significant impact on eWOM. Another possible explanation could be that the study was conducted with Swedish respondents. Self-enhancement is considered to be an unattractive quality in the Swedish cultural context (sw. “Jante-lagen”), which could be the reason as to why self-enhancement is not found to have a significant impact on engagement in eWOM communication in this study. Important to note is that self-enhancement is only measured by one item in this study, which can potentially underestimate the impact of this motive on engagement in eWOM communication on SNSs.

The motive concern for others was not found to have significant impact on engagement in positive eWOM communication, in contrast to previous research findings. Theoretically, the motive concern for others is described as a desire to help others by
sharing experienced benefits with them. The results of this study however suggest that when consumers share brand-related content with their friends on an SNS, the users’ motive is to gain social benefits and strengthen social ties within the network, rather than altruism. The specific nature of the SNS, where the core idea is sociability between the users could therefore explain this finding. When giving advice and helping friends on SNSs the consumers are driven by social benefits, rather than pure concern for their friends according to the results of this study.

5.4 Message intrigue and economic incentives – non-significant negative motives

While the motives message intrigue and economic incentives were not found to have a significant impact on eWOM behavior, hence one should be careful drawing strong conclusions, the motives showed a negative impact on both eWOM frequency and eWOM activities. This suggests that consumers driven by these two motives engage less frequently in eWOM communication and in fewer eWOM activities. Interestingly enough, these motives are the ones that are the easiest to control by companies and are therefore commonly used in marketing strategies. Companies have always tried to create interesting persuasive messages and ads, as well as give consumers economic incentives to join competitions. The results of this study, however, indicate that such traditional marketing strategies do not translate well into an SNS context. On the contrary, the results suggest that these motives have a negative impact on eWOM behavior. One possible explanation behind this finding is that there is a clear commercial interest behind both message intrigue and economic incentives. The reason behind eWOM being credible is that an independent third party communicates it. However, in the case of these two motives it is apparent for the consumers that a company is the initial source of the eWOM. Hence, the eWOM message loses its trustworthiness, consequently creating an adverse effect. The findings therefore indicate that companies should be cautious when applying traditional strategies, such as attempting to create message intrigue and give economic incentives, in an SNS context. Rather, it is more advantageous for companies to develop new strategies when entering into an SNS environment, which are better suited for encouraging positive eWOM communication in this particular platform. Companies cannot assume that their regular strategies that are effective in real-life will be equally effective in an SNS setting. Rather companies must adapt their strategies for the specific platform in order to succeed with their marketing efforts.
6. Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion
This study has aimed to add value to existing literature on motives for positive eWOM communication by testing previously identified motives in an SNS context. In previous research the motives concern for others, self-enhancement, expressing positive emotions and message intrigue have been found to lead to positive WOM communication in a traditional setting. When researched in an online context, the motives concern for others, self-enhancement, economic incentives and social benefits have been found to lead to positive eWOM on opinion platforms. The main argument of this study is that eWOM on SNSs is a unique phenomenon which contains elements of both traditional WOM and eWOM on opinion platforms. A framework originally developed by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) to test motives for eWOM communication on opinion platforms served as a basis for this study. However, as the purpose was to explore the motives in a new setting, additional motives from research on traditional WOM were included. The conceptual model that was tested in this study thus incorporated the following motives; expressing positive emotions, concern for others, self-enhancement, economic incentives, social benefits and message intrigue. Positive eWOM communication was represented by the two parameters eWOM frequency and eWOM activities. By using a quantitative method all factors were subjected to a regression analysis. The results show that social benefits and expressing positive emotions have a significant impact on positive eWOM communication on SNSs, while no significant relationship was found between the motives concern for others, self-enhancement, economic incentives and message intrigue and engagement in eWOM communication on SNSs. The findings show that social benefits drive both eWOM frequency and the amount of eWOM activities consumers engage in. eWOM communication is thus primarily driven by the consumer's need to share their positive experiences in order to gain social benefits, such as strengthening social ties and maintaining relationships. People driven by this motive both engage in eWOM communication most frequently and in a number of different types of ways. Practitioners should therefore encourage conversation between consumers and facilitate sharing their experiences in an easy and fun way with their social networks. An additional finding from our study shows that consumers driven by the motive expressing positive emotions are most likely to use different types of activities to express their joy. This suggests that practitioners should
encourage and create possibilities for consumers to engage in positive eWOM communication everywhere both in an online and offline setting.

From a theoretical perspective this study has also contributed with the development of the construct measurements by testing previously used scales and developing own measurements for variables that have not up until now been tested statistically, i.e. expressing positive emotions and message intrigue. All constructs were tested by conducting a factor analysis and confirmed by performing a confirmatory factor analysis. The results suggest that the items for the motive self-enhancement needs to be further developed as the factor analysis eliminates one of the items (“I share because I can tell others about a great experience”), groups one of the items to the motive expressing positive emotions (“I share because I feel good when I can tell others about my buying success”) and consequently only leaves one item to measure what it set out to measure (“I share because my contributions show others that I'm a clever customer”). Furthermore, the factor analysis confirmed that the self-developed items for the constructs expressing positive emotions and message intrigue show a good fit with the theoretically derived model and measure what they intend to measure.

In summary, this study contributes to theory by demonstrating that the motives for engagement in positive eWOM on SNSs is neither the same as the motives to traditional WOM nor eWOM on opinion platforms, rather it should be considered as a unique context. From a practitioner’s perspective the results of this study suggest that when entering SNSs new marketing strategies need to be developed in order to encourage eWOM communication. As the motives social benefits and expressing positive emotions are found to be the main drivers of positive eWOM communication on SNSs, companies need to focus their marketing efforts on activities that strengthen social ties within the network and encourage brand-related conversation between friends by offering more types of ways to easily express positive emotions.
7. Managerial Implications, limitations and future research

7.1 Managerial Implications

The purpose of this study has been to explore the motives consumers have for engaging in positive eWOM communication on SNSs. By using a sample of 154 Swedish Facebook users who are actively engaging in eWOM on Facebook, this study tests previously identified motives for positive WOM as well as eWOM communication and provides insight into which of the motives drive eWOM communication on SNSs specifically. For practitioners, the findings from this study provide a timely account of motives for positive eWOM communication in a setting that has up until now been rather neglected in research. By identifying such motives, marketers are better equipped to design their marketing strategies in a way that encourages eWOM communication to a larger extent by focusing on specific reasons as to why consumers engage in this type of conversations on SNSs. The results of this study show that social benefits and expressing positive emotions are the primary reasons consumers engage in eWOM on Facebook. Based on these results, marketers can develop strategies, which appeal to the motives that drive eWOM communication and thereby increase the positive eWOM about their products and brands.

For instance, as social benefits is found to have the largest impact on engagement in positive eWOM communication on SNSs, companies should focus their marketing efforts on activities that strengthen social ties within the network. More specifically, as brand-related conversations on SNSs are driven by the consumers desire for social integration and strengthening of relationships, companies should integrate activities that stimulate conversation between friends into their marketing efforts. A successful strategy should encourage and facilitate conversations between consumers by offering a fun and social way to discuss brand-related content. Companies should build a sense of community around the brand by extending the conversation to include areas of interest in connection to the product. For example, a company selling sportswear could encourage their consumers to share advice on exercises and healthy eating among each other. The central thing to consider is what the consumers want to tell their friends about. Practitioners should put the product into perspective and consider how the consumers use the product, in what context and with whom and encourage conversation around it.

Another finding from this study is that brand-related conversations on SNSs are also
driven by the consumers’ need to share excitement and positive emotions post-purchase with their social connections. Companies should therefore encourage brand-related conversation between friends by offering more types of ways to easily express positive emotions. **Sharing content should be easy and fun for the consumer.**

**Opportunities for consumers to engage in eWOM communication** should be offered everywhere. The consumer should not only be encouraged to share content on Facebook, rather eWOM should be encouraged in all spaces connected to the product, namely in stores, the context in which the product is used and in conjunction with the purchasing experience. **Many consumers today have smartphones and can easily engage in eWOM communication and share content anywhere at any time.** Companies should make it easier for consumers to share their positive brand experiences by for instance incorporating QR-codes with direct links to the brand’s Facebook page or provide opportunities in-store to share content directly to the consumer’s Facebook page. The key takeaway is that marketers should encourage and create opportunities for consumers to engage in positive eWOM everywhere, not only online.

These are only a few examples of how the identified motives in this study could be used in order to develop strategies to encourage positive eWOM communication on SNSs.

### 7.2 Limitations and future research

The study is associated with a few limitations, which can provide guidelines for future research. First, the results of this study show that a refinement of the scales for measuring motives for positive eWOM communication is needed, mainly regarding the items for the motive self-enhancement for which this study could only confirm one item. In addition, as the items for two of the motives, i.e. expressing positive emotions and message intrigue, are self-developed further validation could be necessary in order to confirm the reliability of these measures. Consequently, future research should further improve the constructs and validate the items that have been tested for the first time in this study. Second, a Swedish sample was used in this study, which might affect the impact the motives have on eWOM communication due to cultural values. As previously noted, the impact of self-enhancement on eWOM communication on SNSs might be under-estimated due to the motive being an undesirable quality in the Swedish society. This suggests that future research should replicate the study in different cultural contexts. Third, this study was conducted on a general level, which makes it difficult to
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detect potential differences in the motives for eWOM communication depending on the activity of brand preference display, i.e. post, share, like, check-in. It might be of value in future research to make distinctions between the different eWOM activities in order to establish whether different motives drive different activities. Finally, the theoretically derived model was able to explain 19% of engagement in eWOM activities and 10% of eWOM frequency. This suggests that eWOM communication on SNSs is a complex phenomenon and that there might be additional motives, which explain eWOM communication, that could be added and tested in the model in future research.
8. References


Motives behind positive electronic Word-of-Mouth on SNSs


Internet publications:


Appendix I – Examples of Facebook activities

When you respond to the following statements please consider a situation that involves a post/share/like/check-in where a company, brand or product is mentioned or seen in a positive context. Examples of such Facebook activities are presented below. Please keep in mind that these examples only illustrate a few cases and may therefore differ from the ones that you may have done on Facebook.

Check-in:

Like:

Status update:

Share:

Photo:
Appendix II – Questionnaire design

Screening questions
1. Gender
2. Age [If not 18-34 = disqualified]
3. Do you use Facebook? [If no = disqualified]
4. How often do you use Facebook? [If less frequently than once a month = disqualified]
5. Which of the following activities do you regularly engage in on Facebook? (post content/share/like/check-in) [If none of the above = disqualified]
6. How often do you engage in the activities described in the previous question? (i.e. post content/share/like/check-in) [If not applicable = disqualified]

Instructions
When you respond to the following statements please consider a situation that involves a post/share/like/check-in where a company, brand or product is mentioned or seen in a positive context.

Please respond based on how you usually reason when you engage in the Facebook activities that you selected in the previous question.

Concern for others
1. I share because I want to help others with my own positive experiences
2. I share because I want to give others the opportunity to buy the right product

Self-enhancement
1. I share because I feel good when I can tell others about my buying success
2. I share because I can tell others about a great experience
3. I share because my contributions show others that I’m a clever customer

Economic incentives
1. I share because of the incentives I receive (possibility to win a competition)
2. I share because I get a reward for writing (money off-coupon)

Expressing positive emotions
1. I share because I want to express my joy about a good purchasing experience
2. I share because I’m so satisfied with the product/service I purchased that I want to share my enthusiasm
3. I share because the product/service give me so much positive feelings that I can’t wait to tell others about it

Social benefits
1. I share because I believe a chat with friends in my social network is a nice thing
2. I share because it is fun to communicate this way with friends in my social network
3. I share because it is a good way to maintain my relationships with friends and acquaintances

Message intrigue
1. I share because I think an ad is funny
2. I share because I am intrigued by an ad (it is so different/original)
3. I share because an ad is clever
### Appendix III – Item overview

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>No. of items</th>
<th>Theoretical origin of items</th>
</tr>
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