An Insight into Firm Perspective on the Use of Electronic Word-of-Mouth

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Abstract

The Internet has dramatically changed the business landscape and the way word-of-mouth spreads. The possibilities for small, Internet-depending firms to compete have improved. This study addresses the question how such firms in the Netherlands, Sweden, and Finland deal with word-of-mouth through the Internet. Findings from this study were that these firms’ business models are based on a reciprocal relationship between them and consumers. The market information received, called “community knowledge,” produces a feedback mechanism that they can use to their advantage and implement in their businesses. Surprisingly, firms across countries use the same management approach to implement eWOM (electronic word-of-mouth) and have a tendency to neglect the customer’s perspective. Consequently, they underestimate the results that can be accomplished with eWOM. We identify the major elements at work and provide a conceptual framework that will contribute to further eWOM research work.

Introduction

Consumers these days spend more and more time online, as Internet access continues to increase. In 2012, BIA/Kelsey released a report showing that advertising on U.S. social media had grown from $4.6 billion in 2012 to $9.2 billion in 2016. This means that firms had doubled their advertising budget for social networking sites in four years’ time. So, what exactly are Social Networking Sites (SNS)? We have adopted the following definition: “Web-based services that allow users 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 other users within the system” (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 211). As Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calver (2009) point out, consumers are present on these platforms on a daily basis to discuss and post everything that is going on in their life. This includes discussions about goods and services and posting reviews.

Electronic word-of-mouth content is therefore increasingly available on SNS, and this channel is gaining in importance for businesses seeking ways to advertise their products. Some firms have already had successful experiences with the use of SNS. There are documented examples of products “going viral,” whereby the product information spread very quickly. The very popular video game Angry Birds, produced by the Finnish-based Rovio Entertainment, is one such example. CEO Peter Vesterbacka was quoted in 2011 as saying about its success, “The game got a viral push when a popular skier told Swedish TV viewers that she played the game. It then caught on through other European countries, caught the eye of American gamers, and eventually gained recognition from Apple, which featured it on the App Store” (Cohen, 2011). This shows that the game got a push and was able to spread much faster through the influence of a famous person. Situations like this do not necessarily occur on a regular basis, however. This free word-of-mouth from the skier was pure luck, and without it, Angry Birds might not have reached the same degree of success.

Most firms are not so lucky as to belong to these happy few, and it is interesting to see how they manage to survive in a highly competitive global environment. These firms operate at the lower tiers, where they compete for the market share left behind by the extremely successful firms. What these firms have in common is that they are small, and relatively new and have limited resources thus completely depending on the Internet. Therefore this is an interesting group to examine in the context of eWOM. The main question is: how do those in the lower tiers manage their business model in order to achieve success? As we all know, this is a much bigger group than the “happy few”
who manage to earn millions of dollars. These so-called plodders need marketing more than the latter group, who benefit from high brand awareness. It is therefore interesting to zoom in on this specific type of resource-scarce firms.

Before we do that, however, we must first understand the concept of electronic word-of-mouth. Consumers talking to other consumers about their purchase experience is hardly a new phenomenon. Such purchases can vary from cars to sofas to their latest vacation, with consumers evaluating and validating their choices and also seeking advice. That is the definition of “word-of-mouth communication” (Wetzer, Zeelenberg, & Pieters, 2007). Despite how old the process is, though, the world around us has changed. We communicate differently than we did 20 years ago. Back then, we talked more with people in close physical proximity, but nowadays, the Internet has made it possible to talk to people at remote distances. This has replaced, to some extent, the intensity of connections with people close by. It makes sense that as the amount of time we communicate online grows, it also causes a shift in terms of where the word-of-mouth (WOM) communication takes place, from offline to online electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Allsop, Bassett, & Hoskins, 2007; Hennig-Thurau & Walsh, 2003). There are some important differences between the two. Whereas WOM is limited in reach, eWOM offers the unprecedented scale of the Internet, enabling communication with consumers around the globe at a low cost. Furthermore, in the latter case, powerful feedback mechanisms are emerging, whereby consumers simultaneously rate products and services and provide feedback on a large scale. The written word is what matters, since body language is absent in eWOM. Last but not least, eWOM allows for actual measurement (Dellarocas, 2003, 2006).

It is remarkable that, despite the developments of an increase in online advertising expenditure and a rise in Internet use (Rieger, 2007), the effect of eWOM on social networking platforms has drawn relatively little academic attention. The majority of research has focused more on consumer review sites, with very few studies dedicated to SNS itself (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). The purpose of this paper is to provide insight into how eWOM is used by small, resource-scarce firms and what the added value is. These firms are likely to underscore the importance of eWOM in their drive for commercial success. They lack both industry experience and a budget for marketing expenditures, and the Internet enables them to overcome these gaps (Arenius, Sashi, & Gabrielsson, 2006; Gabrielsson & Gabrielsson, 2011). These are also Internet-based firms and the Internet is their main sales and communication channel. At this stage in the research, the eWOM strategy of firms on SNS has not received enough attention. It is unclear what the firms’ role is in the eWOM process, since most studies focus on the consumers’ perspective. Moreover, there is a lack of understanding in terms of what community knowledge is exactly and how it is used within firms. Two further variables under consideration here are the effect of awareness on that community knowledge and the role of the social media platform. This paper will address these gaps.

Theoretical Framework

The rise of the Internet caused word-of-mouth among consumers to shift to electronic formats, which are different concepts with different characteristics. Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, and Gremler (2004, p. 39) have defined eWOM as:

*Any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet.*

The differences with conventional word-of-mouth are significant: consumers’ opinions travel farther and faster, potentially reaching an unlimited number of recipients worldwide. The opinions also enjoy indefinite visibility, in that the statements can be read for years after they are published.
(Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). On top of that, the effect of eWOM is easier to measure (Dellarocas, 2006). These differences have introduced a whole new set of challenges for firms to meet in order to survive in today’s business landscape. This discussion is not all that recent: as early as 1997, Stauss revealed what could happen if firms did not actively become involved in the online discussions among consumers. Complaints can escalate if a firm does not respond and the complaining consumer receives more public support. He emphasized that negative eWOM is more powerful than positive eWOM. Since our study seeks to identify the added value of eWOM management, it will require further insight into consumers’ motives for participating in these formats. Balasubramanian and Mahajan (2001) and Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) have proposed a useful “utility” framework for how virtual communities can enhance economic leverage. The crucial role the firm and consumers fulfill in this framework is evident, so we have adapted both variables for our conceptual model. We provide an overview below of the points of view of several scholars regarding this matter. First, we will look into the consumer side of eWOM.

Consumers are looking for unbiased information so they can avoid a bad buy (Granitz & Ward, 1996). They perceive information from other consumers to be more trustworthy than when the source is the firm itself (Pan & Chiou, 2011). Thus, consumers like to read about other consumers’ experiences. This could be one reason for posting your own experiences, because others will benefit. In the same way, you hope to benefit from their experiences in terms of preventing you from a bad buy. This “willingness” varies, depending on the product and the type of experience a consumer has had. If it is a more expensive product or if a consumer is satisfied or dissatisfied to a high degree, sharing is more likely, as confirmed by Sundaram, Mitra, and Webster (1998), Dellarocas (2006), and Choi and Scott (2013). If a consumer has had a horrible experience with a product, it makes sense that they would not want this to happen to others (Verhagen, Nauta, & Feldberg, 2013).

The effects of these motivations can be tremendous. First of all, dissatisfaction is the biggest threat for a firm, because consumer complaints can spread very quickly and be exposed to thousands of people. Bad reviews can prevent consumers from buying a firm’s products or services (Fagerstrøm & Ghinea, 2011) and cause them to look elsewhere, in the worst-case scenario causing a firm’s bankruptcy. Negative eWOM has a larger impact on consumers than positive eWOM (van Noort & Willemsen, 2011). That does not mean, however, that positive eWOM is useless. Sometimes consumers are very satisfied with their experience, and they want to help the firm in return. In some cases, it even goes beyond that, and people can become fans of a product, brand, or firm and voluntarily invest their free time in promoting it. These “fans” will talk about the firm and its products a lot in online communities. Indeed, social interaction with other “fans” can be a trigger for them to act upon (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Now, we will take a look at things from the firms’ perspective. Not surprisingly, firms assign great value to these consumer reviews, which provide them with consumer knowledge they can use to their advantage. Dellarocas (2006, p. 284) points out these unique opportunities: “These insights, together with the new ability to measure aspects of WOM in real time by mining publicly available data from Internet communities, can lead to substantial advances in the ability of the organization to manage WOM.” However, firms must take into account that while they can manage eWOM, they do not have full control over it (Welker, 2002).

Firms, thus, do make efforts to manage eWOM, and it is interesting to know which variables play a role in their approach. When we take a look at successful viral campaigns, which reach a high number of recipients within a short timeframe, they share the common characteristic that a critical mass of consumers made the effort to share the content. Although these success stories are rare, every firm has possibilities for promoting consumer sharing. To start with, the message to be shared needs to be appealing. A message that is fun, visible, and entertaining will be forwarded more easily. Other aspects that increase the likelihood of forwarding are when the initial recipients belong to the target group (Kalyanam, McIntyre, & Masonis, 2007) or when the source is perceived to be trustworthy.
(Choi & Scott, 2013; Lin, Lu, & Wu, 2012; Dobele, Toleman, & Beverland, 2005). Managing eWOM, however, involves more than just sending the right message to the right people. There is the issue of negative word-of-mouth arising in a community and what actions should be undertaken to prevent further damage to the product. After all, the relationship between firm and consumer is reciprocal and continuously changing.

It is evident that firms must monitor everything that is happening online. Consumers are more likely to talk amongst themselves than to the firm, which means that the information is out there, but firms need to find it. The only solution is to monitor all the possible places on the web where consumers talk about their products. Such monitoring is time-consuming, especially since the content can be modified at any time. Moreover, monitoring is just one part of the process: reacting to either positive or negative content is even more important. How can a firm change the ambience in a community in the event of negative word-of-mouth? And how do consumers, for their part, respond to the firm’s contribution in the discussion? In the literature, this has been labeled the feedback loop. Anything consumers say can be valuable to a firm. This varies from questions about product use and complaints about technical failures to online ratings regarding perceived quality. Firms can respond to these online remarks and sometimes improve their value chain. Van Noort and Willemsen (2011), Dellarocas (2003), and Kalyanam et al. (2007) have all underscored the usefulness of the feedback loop. We have therefore incorporated it, along with continuous monitoring/interaction and type of message, in our conceptual model.

Scholars have also examined the effectiveness of eWOM as a marketing instrument. After all, firms have one commercial goal and that is to sell as many of their products as possible. It has already been proven in the literature that eWOM positively influences sales (Senecal & Nantel, 2004; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Forman, Ghose, & Wiesenfeld, 2008; Duan et al., 2008). Duan found that the impact on sales from the number of reviews was stronger than that of the ratings given. These reviews can appear on SNS, but also in online feedback mechanisms. We emphasize the importance of online feedback mechanisms, which enable firms to adjust their value chain based on consumer feedback. This feedback affects a wide range of activities, such as brand building, creating awareness, customer satisfaction, customer relationship-building, and product development. It is an effective form of online market research, since it provides insights into consumer wants and needs.

There are many feedback mechanisms out there, such as the Apple app store where consumers can rate the apps purchased, allowing others to base their purchase decision on that. Another example is eBay, where not only firms, but also consumers sell products and services. Sellers are trusted based on the ratings they receive from previous customers. People are more inclined to want to conduct business with those who have received good ratings. Consumers perceive transaction risk according to a party’s track record of good reviews. If there are negative reviews, the likelihood that buyers will trust a seller decreases. This study emphasizes the fact that online feedback mechanisms enable firms to collect data from large communities at a low cost and at the same time build trust in large-scale word-of-mouth networks.

Firms use all the information they receive from consumers in their ongoing eWOM communication to their advantage and implement that in the value chain (Dellarocas, 2003). Facilitation on websites enables consumers to provide feedback much more easily, but these are usually controlled by platform holders and not the seller. Another constructive way of managing eWOM communication is to identify recipients whose reviews are highly rated and therefore influential (Yung-Ming, Chia-Hao, & Cheng-Yang, 2010). Influential recipients are capable of reaching a high number of consumers because of their network. This is an indicator of awareness: the more people being reached, the higher the total consumer awareness. We consider eWOM to be more effective when consumer awareness increases. This underlines the greater importance of consumer awareness of a specific brand/product versus persuasiveness. Thus, the number of reviews matters, and when firms

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stimulate content-sharing (dispersion), awareness will increase. We therefore adopted this construct, as well, in the conceptual model.

Now, we will propose the chosen constructs on which we have built the conceptual framework. From the utility model and the additional literature, we concluded that the main parties involved in eWOM communication are the consumers and the firms. We are primarily interested in the question of how these two parties interact and what results from that. This interaction produces certain information, called community knowledge, and we are further interested in the firms’ behavior regarding that knowledge. Consumer awareness of the product or firm is included as a construct because consumers need to be aware of a product’s or firm’s existence in order to participate. Thus, awareness plays a role in the extent to which consumers participate. This construct is expected to moderate the relationship between the two parties, on one side, and the community knowledge, on the other. For each of these constructs, we will examine if and how they interrelate. In addition, we will examine how the firms deal with the outcome. Finally, we will test a set of propositions about these interrelationships. These propositions will be developed in the next section.

**Proposition Development**

It is possible to argue that there is a positive contribution to a firm’s market knowledge from having consumers talk online about brand, products, and companies. However, it can also be argued that the contribution from such talk is negative or nonexistent, depending on the quality of the information being discussed. Firms would like to use this market knowledge to make better commercial decisions and improve business performance, though the counterargument can be made that they should not rely on online sources, whose quality varies. There is always a risk when focusing on unreliable information that could blur the pointers provided by high-quality sources. Nijssen, Douglas, and Calis (1999) emphasize the importance of using formal procedures when searching for high-quality information. From a consumer perspective, the credibility of sources is based on expertise, trustworthiness, and reputation (Chu & Kamal, 2008; Gunter, Campbell, Walsh, & Gremler, 2009). The question is how firms should judge the quality of online sources. These are the same criteria that consumers use, because as established in Lankes (2008), firms are authorities within their industry, which is also true of consumers. One indicator of authority is the track record of how a source used his experience over time. Thus, a firm is able to judge a consumer’s contributions by simply identifying this track record, and if it does not exist, firms can judge the source’s reliability by interacting with it and asking questions. Because of these possibilities alone, we believe that the arguments in favor of the added value of eWOM are strong.

Firms have different goals in terms of their use of eWOM, such as searching for information, sales activities, relationship development (Moen, Madsen, & Aspeland, 2008), providing webcare (van Noort & Willemsen, 2008), viral marketing, campaigning (De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008), and influencing purchasing behavior (Li & Hitt, 2008). These goals require active participation on the part of both firms and consumers, whether it is posting, monitoring, discussions, giving feedback, reading posts, or sharing posts. Continuous interaction is necessary, and this means the relationship between firm and consumer is reciprocal. This reciprocity is reflected in consumers’ responses to firms’ efforts and vice versa. One illustration of this is a firm that posts something about a new game, introducing three characters and asking consumers to discuss which character is the best fit for the game. This allows the firm to collect consumer arguments concerning the fit of one character versus another. Without consumers’ willingness to participate, the firm would be unable to find out which character was the preferred one. The one that receives the most votes will be used for the product, which amounts to product development participation. Earlier, we discussed reasons why consumers were willing to invest their precious time in posting purchase experiences. If firms detect these consumer motives,
they can adapt their eWOM communication and enhance the customer relationship. Based on this point, we propose the following:

**P1: The higher the degree of a firm’s proactiveness in eWOM, the more consumer participation can be expected. This results in a reciprocal relationship and a higher number of postings.**

This ongoing online conversation, both among consumers and directly with firms, is a rich source of information (Dellarocas, 2003). Bidirectionality is a key characteristic of this. Firms can receive feedback from consumers on an unprecedented scale, depending on their own efforts to encourage it. According to Lesser, Fontaine, & Slusher (2000), this valuable information is exchanged across the whole value chain. In this study, we refer to this type of information as community knowledge. Consumers can share content on other platforms or forward it directly to other consumers. Both cases are a matter of dispersion, and more dispersion leads to a higher volume of postings (Cui, Lui, & Guo, 2012). On a few rare instances, the products launched went viral. This happened as a result of high awareness among consumers resulting from rapid content-sharing and a large reach in terms of numbers of people. Content does not need to go viral to be valuable. If a few consumers talk about your business, it can contribute to better performance. However, the more people that contribute to an online discussion, the higher the number of suggestions the firm will receive. Such discussions function as an online brainstorming session, in which interaction leads to ideas. The more participants there are, the more interaction there will be, and the more ideas that will arise. We therefore expect to see a positive relationship between the number of postings and the amount of valuable information reflected in community knowledge. The number of postings matter to a firm. The more people are aware of a product, the more they will talk about it and the more people will want to buy it. Conversely, with lower awareness, there are fewer reviews and fewer buyers. Awareness moderates the relationship, the outcome of the reciprocal relationship, and the number of postings. Thus, we propose:

**P2: Consumer awareness is expected to have a possible moderating influence on the relationship between the reciprocal relationship and number of postings constructs.**

And

**P3: The number of postings positively influences the amount of community knowledge.**

To draw upon the example of consumers participating in product development, we cite the case where a game developer posted three different game characters and asked which was the most appealing for consumers for the video game. In these kinds of situations, consumers give their opinion as to the one they perceive as being most suitable. Such online brainstorming sessions attract either a low or high number of participants. The latter yields more information, leading to a better product fit for the public (product modification). If only a few participants participate, the quality of information is inferior. Statistically, the number of sources correlates positively to the number of credible sources. Other possible scenarios are that consumers complain about misunderstanding how a product should be used, leading to changes in after-sales service, or questions might arise about product use. All this is vital information for getting to know the customer better and helps build customer relationships. To achieve this, firms must embed such information in their value chain to serve the customer more efficiently. We therefore expect that the amount of community knowledge has a positive effect on the number of modifications in a firm’s business model. Thus, we propose:
**P4:** The amount of community knowledge is positively correlated to the amount of modification in a firm’s business model.

Figure 1 shows these propositions in a conceptual model. The five constructs are expected to interrelate positively to one another, so that a high score on one construct implies a higher score on another construct.

Five variables are outlined in the conceptual model. The first variable is the eWOM strategy executed by the firms. This strategy is made up of three components. The first is message content. Consumers are not indifferent to the visual aspects of a posted message. Does it entice them to comment on it and/or share it? The literature is very clear on how to present messages in an appealing way. The second component is proactive monitoring of postings and interacting with the people who post. This is an important aspect, because it is not sufficient to simply post something about a new video game character; the firm needs to follow the subsequent online discussion to be able to intervene if the tone becomes negative or to answer any questions raised. This is a way for firms to ask questions to obtain more detailed information or stimulate the discussion by posting a theory. They can even encourage content sharing. The more discussions there are, the more feedback a firm will receive. The third component concerns the firm’s process for handling feedback and suggestions from the
public, such as using them for product development, after sales, eWOM communication, and so forth.

This first variable is thus related to the second variable, which is the use of eWOM by consumers. The construct outlined here explores why consumers participate in conversations with the firm and other consumers and what their main motives are. One great advantage of eWOM is that it allows for quantifiable measurement. Businesses that spend money on marketing are keen to know what their return on investment is. To this end, it is essential that they be able to measure output, so as to discover whether the expenditure was a correct decision. There are several metrics for demonstrating the results of eWOM management, such as number of reviews on a product that has been launched, number of visitors to the website, number of Likes on Facebook, number of tweets on Twitter, number of shared messages, number of views on YouTube, etcetera. Two of these metrics are particularly important and directly impact sales: volume (total number of reviews) and dispersion (spread of the reviews) (Liu, 2006; Dellarocas & Narayan, 2006; Duan et al., 2008; Rui, Liu, & Whinston, 2013). Volume and dispersion are indicators of awareness (our third variable), and that supports our statement that the number of reviews positively influences the available community knowledge. Therefore, content sharing by consumers enhances awareness. Specific to this industry is also the ability to get a product featured by an app store, a scenario that also enhances consumer awareness. Thus, consumer awareness is a moderating variable, reflecting the awareness about a certain brand, product, or firm. The more consumers there are who know about a product, the more people will talk about it, and the more people talk about it, the higher the likelihood they will buy it.

Greater awareness results in more postings, which is our fourth construct. And a higher number of postings has a positive influence on the fifth construct, community knowledge. Community knowledge is the useful information retrieved from the discussions within the community. A higher number of postings implies a greater amount of useful information. It is in the firms’ interest to stimulate these conversations, because they produce more community knowledge. This construct influences the first construct, because the greater the amount of community knowledge received, the more valuable the feedback, which can in turn be imbedded in the organization’s value chain. Thus, the model as a whole and the interconnected influences of the variables provide us with insights into firms’ perspectives on the use of eWOM.

**Methodology**

**Procedure**

For our research, we conducted a qualitative study. This decision was based on our desire for a richness of data. Since this is the first study of its kind, depth and detail are what count. As stated in Patton (2001, p. 14), “approaching fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth, openness, and detail of the inquiry.”

We chose to perform an explanatory, multiple case study, because we wanted to explain the presumed relationships depicted in the conceptual model. Case studies enable us to describe an intervention and the real-life context in which it occurred. This technique was the most appropriate, since a clear set of outcomes is uncertain. Our motivation is to cover multiple cases and draw a single set of cross-case conclusions (Yin, 2009). Each firm is an individual case, but the study as a whole covers several firms, based on an inductive, multiple-case study design (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). This is a holistic design, with inquiries made at the firm level (with the person in charge of marketing) and no other individuals at the firm are interviewed. Moreover, the firms were not chosen at random, since according to Eisenhardt (1989, p. 537), “Random selection is neither necessary, nor
even preferable.” We opted for a method based on semi-structured interviews to make sure that a certain set of topics would definitely be covered, but also allow for some freedom during the interview. This technique opens up the possibility of gathering more information from respondents compared to a structured interview. It allows respondents to contribute topics that were not anticipated in preparing the interview guidelines. The interview guide was prepared based on the four propositions and contained only knowledge questions (Patton, 2001).

Operationalization of Research Constructs

As outlined in this study’s conceptual model (Figure 1), there are five constructs: firms’ eWOM strategy, eWOM use by consumers, consumer awareness, number of postings, and community knowledge. All of these constructs were discussed during the interviews.

- Firms’ eWOM strategy refers to the type of messages firms post and their degree of involvement in continuously monitoring and interacting in the eWOM. A third component of the strategy is the extent to which they utilize feedback in their business model. This is in line with van Noort and Willemsen (2011), Dellarocas (2003), and Kalyanam et al. (2007).

- eWOM use by consumers refers to the motivation of consumers in participating in eWOM in response to the firms’ proactiveness, which is the point of view being examined in this study.

- Awareness is the moderating variable, and it consists of three components. The first is volume, which refers to the amount of postings and is interrelated with dispersion, the second component. It is treated as a separate variable below. The second component is dispersion, which means that when consumers share content, it spreads around the web and increases awareness. The third component is featuring, which is specific to the industry that was studied. Featuring is when a game is promoted in the app store. This enhances visibility and increases awareness, because it is the first thing consumers see when clicking on the game category to see what games are interesting. This is in line with Yung-Ming et al. (2010) and Duan et al. (2008).

- Number of postings simply refers to the total amount (volume) of postings about a product, brand, or company. This is both an indicator of consumer awareness and a result of that awareness at the same time. This is due not only to the interrelationship between total dispersion and volume, but also the influence of the reciprocal relationship between the firm and consumers.

- Community knowledge reflects the outcome of the number of posts that prove interesting as a feedback tool for the firm. Community knowledge is therefore derived from the total number of posts that appear online as eWOM. We designate useful information as community knowledge in this perspective.
The firms in the sample are independent videogame developers (indies). We chose to focus on this industry for several reasons. Not only is there a high level of accessibility, but these firms are emotionally involved in eWOM, and the industry is now bigger than the movie industry (Chatfield, 2009). Furthermore, this industry has a predominance of young new firms suffering from resource scarcity that depend solely on the Internet to overcome the liability of newness and foreignness. Firms that rely on the Internet and do not use other marketing tools provide us with better insight into the phenomenon we are studying, making comparisons between cases easier. We also drafted six other requirements for our sample subjects to ensure the reliability of the results. The requirements for participation were:

- Specific industry affiliation, to avoid the influence of inter-industry differences (Turnbull, 1987)
- Age of the firm
- Size of the firm: small < 50 employees; medium-sized < 250 employees (European Commission, 2003)
- Independent (no subsidiaries of other firms, to avoid resource access)
- Size of domestic market
- Indigenous, to avoid cultural influences (Bell, 1995)
- Business-to-consumer market

Tables 1 and 2 summarize the basic information about the firms in the sample.

**SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS**

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Sample of firms</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>Five</td>
<td>D1, D2, D3, D4, D5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>S1, S2, S3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>F1, F2</td>
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</table>

**Table 2**

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year Established</th>
<th>Number of Staff</th>
<th>Platforms</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Google Play and Apple Store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Apple Store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Apple Store, Google Play, Amazon Store, Samsung Store</td>
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<tr>
<td>D4</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>D5</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Steam, Could</td>
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Data Collection

The respondents were identified and selected from the website [http://www.gamedevmap.com](http://www.gamedevmap.com). We chose this website because it displayed the most comprehensive list of indies. Suitable candidates were contacted through e-mail, Twitter, or Facebook. After each interview, respondents were asked if they knew other firms that would be willing to cooperate. This snowball sampling during the data collection resulted in more firms being induced to participate. In all, 16 firms from the Netherlands, Sweden, and Finland agreed to participate in our study (See Tables 1 and 2).

Part of the research included a pretest among six Dutch independent game developers. The pretest was carried out for several reasons. First of all, it was used to check whether the sample requirements were accurate and appropriate for this study. Second, it provided a way of testing the assumptions made in the conceptual model. The third reason was to check that the interview guide was complete and that all questions were clear for the respondents. The sample requirements and conceptual model remained unchanged as a result of the pretest, although some modifications were made to the interview guide in terms of the order of the questions and the addition of a few questions based on the responses.

The interviews were conducted from May through July, 2013, with each lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. All of the interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The interviewees were the people at the firms who were in charge of marketing, since they would be able to provide the most in-depth information. In two cases, this was the marketing coordinator and in the remaining cases, it was the CEO of the firm.

After the data were collected we decided to send a follow-up email with three additional questions to all of the sample respondents. These included one open question and two half-open questions with a seven-point Likert scale. Eight out of the 10 participants returned that questionnaire. The original interviews and follow-up questions were used for the data analysis. We used simple pattern matching as the analysis technique (Yin, 2009). The objective was to explain the phenomenon by comparing the predicted patterns to the actual ones. The findings are discussed in the next section.
Findings and Discussion

We discuss the findings below according to the four propositions we used to conduct the interviews. Each proposition starts with a recap of the theory, followed by the analysis and conclusion.

5.1 eWOM and reciprocal relationship

According to the theory, we expected that the degree of firms’ involvement in eWOM would have a positive effect on consumer participation. This is reflected in Proposition 1.

P1: The higher the degree of a firms’ proactiveness in eWOM, the more consumer participation can be expected. This results in a reciprocal relationship and a higher number of postings.

Proposition 1 is supported since a proactive stance in terms of eWOM is recognized as being helpful in terms of enhancing consumer participation, however there is some dispute as to how this should be accomplished. Thus, there is agreement about the effect but disagreement about the instruments that should be used. The analyses revealed which instruments reflected a firm’s proactiveness: posting content and stimulating eWOM within a video game. We address both instruments in this section.

All of the respondents were asked which social media tools they used in their marketing policy. In general, the tools selected were the same across the firms in the sample. Twitter and Facebook were the most popular, since these provide the greatest consumer access. To our surprise, most of the firms admitted that they do not have a detailed marketing plan with specific targets and goals. They do have some set goals, though these vary among firms even in terms of using the same tools, and some had no goals at all. One firm, for example, said that they had three main goals for all tools: increase sales, boost the company’s positive image, and spread the word about the games and the company. They felt strongly about the synergy of the different tools. Other firms had different goals for each tool. Notably, the case firm that rarely used any tools at all was also the least successful.

• Posting Content

Our next step was to zoom in on the kind of postings that were used to engage consumers and generate eWOM. This message content is part of the eWOM strategy and will be illustrated with a few examples of how firms deal with it. In one case, a firm posted a teaser message on their website. It was a screenshot of a new game meant to stimulate consumer response. Another award-winning firm posted their recent win on their website, which generated some congratulations. Firms can also react online to situations in which consumers start discussions. In one case, a consumer posted a question about why he had not gotten a gold medal for a certain achievement. The developer then explained that there had to be at least a thousand participants. This was a good opening for discussing the reasoning behind that choice with the gamers.

This anecdotal evidence seems to support the assumption that firms use different types of postings to enhance discussions but are unaware about what type of posting has the highest success rate. The firms resort to a trial-and-error system to discover what works best for them. Some firms post questions for the public, such as which icons should be used for the app store, with the goal being to get suggestions for appropriate icons. In another case, a firm asked their gamers how they would feel about using a laser gun in the game to easily kill all opponents. Upon receiving a positive response, the developer reasoned with the gamers, explaining why this choice had not been made, and more gamers participated in the conversation. In this specific example, the discussion about game details
was a motivator for participating in the eWOM. Gamers seemed to enjoy having the developer talk about his game. This is similar to the case where a screenshot was posted with certain levels and gamers could choose their favorites, a post that received a lot of response.

Other respondents noted that merely asking questions of the public did not work for them. “We usually ask open questions, but the conversation rarely continues for more than 10 messages,” one said. Or, to quote another, “We tried to motivate them by asking for suggestions and asking questions, but the response was very low.” In one case, the firm did not believe in proactive posting and mentioned that they hardly ever started conversations themselves, because they felt it was wrong to dump your marketing message in such forums. Traffic was low, and they did not feel it was effective, and might even be a risk, to start a conversation that did not take off. It would be considered an embarrassment. A few other case firms agreed and admitted that they had hesitations about posting for fear of an adverse effect.

It seems that there is no known strategy for easily initiating eWOM. Moreover, firms reported having hardly any influence over consumer behavior in any way. As one case firm explained, if they want to share something, they will and asking them to do it is not going to help. Another respondent used incentives by sending gift packs to fans to thank them for their support, hoping in so doing that they would continue to enjoy that support. That was an attempt at relationship-building with the customers, and all firms emphasized that improving customer relations meant a great deal to them. To achieve this, indies present themselves as very sympathetic to consumers as a way of enhancing their likeability. One particular group of customers is called fans, and they are more likely to participate in eWOM. Fans are defined as customers who eagerly await the release of a new game of a specific firm or people who have had several contacts with the developer. When asked to describe their relationship with customers, most firms used the term “informal.”

- **Stimulating eWOM within the game**

Another possibility, instead of posting, is to encourage consumers to share eWOM within the game. One indie said that they were extremely cautious about advertising in a game that had been purchased, because players can become angry if they have paid for a game and are then confronted with advertisement when they play it. So, what they did instead was allow players to download another game for free when a new game was about to come out and then push the news item about their new game in that free downloaded game. There was no general agreement among respondents about whether this was a good instrument or not. One reason for opposing it was that it is best to avoid irritating consumers. There were two examples of firms that did use this kind of marketing. One offered a feature enabling users to share a game screenshot on Facebook. This firm knew that only 1% of the gamers used that. The second firm asked players if they wanted to rate the game while playing it.

To conclude, it is obvious that all of the activities undertaken by the case firms were intuitive and based on a trial-and-error system. There is a tendency for them to avoid taking risks, which results from a lack of ambition. Another serious issue is the lack of marketing knowledge, manifesting itself in the absence of marketing strategies, so that social media tools are not used to their full potential. The possibilities afforded by online tools are unclear, since their use varies among the respondents or is entirely absent. Relationship-building is something all firms strive for, since they all believe it is a good instrument for boosting eWOM. There was no consensus, however, about the idea of stimulating eWOM within a game, with disagreement among the firm cases about its appropriateness.
5.2 Awareness

The second proposition explains the moderating effect of consumer awareness on the reciprocal relationship between firms and consumers and the number of postings. In the first proposition, we established that as firms’ efforts increase, so do the number of postings. In this proposition, we shed light on the fact that awareness also positively influences the number of postings. This means that the higher the level of awareness, the higher the number of postings generated. The proposition was stated as:

*P2: Consumer awareness is expected to have a possible moderating influence on the relationship between the reciprocal relationship and number of postings constructs.*

Overwhelming evidence has been found to support this proposition: the moderating influence is undisputed but out of the sample’s control, though agreement exists about the possibilities for influencing awareness, which leads to more postings. In the analyses, three variables were found to be important in this regard: first, how firms foster dispersion; second, the key influencers for stimulating awareness; and third, the role of being featured in the app store in influencing the awareness level.

**Fostering Dispersion**

Firms were asked if and how they foster the speed and reach of their postings. As one of the firms said, “We are still living off the sales from a particular game, which isn’t smart, but we can still pay our noodles and rent.” This underlines the fact that they do not undertake any content sharing whatsoever. While all of the firms emphasized the importance of stimulating dispersion, they found it hard to influence that process. One opinion was that commercial content tended not to go viral, and most thought it was impossible to influence virality. And if it did go viral, then it was impossible to measure the impact. Another interviewee had gotten results: they chose to launch a humorous video in response to a video by a well-known video game developer and managed to get 700,000 views. Indies realize the importance of going viral but think it is hard to achieve.

**Key Influencers**

There are also existing online networks that can have a big impact on sales. Let’s Play, for instance, is a YouTube channel where people videotape themselves playing video games for the channel’s subscribers. These kinds of channels have millions of followers and can thus directly affect sales. Let’s Play was top-of-mind as a key influencer. All of the case firms try to get in touch with channel owners with large followings. They send them their products and ask for an online review to boost awareness among consumers.
Being Featured in an App Store

The respondents agreed about the importance of getting featured on a platform. This means being listed in a platform holder’s top ranking of games in their store, which enhances an indie’s visibility. Consumers visiting the game page on an app store will see their game in the hit list, including consumer reviews. Overall, the respondents agreed that it was not clear how one got featured. One respondent said that Apple just likes them and another firm described it as the “golden question.” The latter firm suggested that the things that were helpful in terms of increasing one’s chances of getting featured were game quality, luck, timing, and being mentioned on review sites. Featuring is something all Indies strive for, since they experience sales peaks when they are featured.

To conclude, it is difficult, in the experience of our sample firms, to control whether or not content goes viral. Products that go viral (high speed and high reach) are the most extreme success stories, but achieving this can be challenging. There are, however, possibilities for influencing content dispersion. The two main instruments for doing so are: praise from key influencers, which has been proven to guarantee greater dispersion, since some of them are very influential, and featuring in app stores, which is very important for gaining exposure, resulting in more visibility, reviews, and sales.

5.3 Number of Postings and Community Knowledge

The third proposition deals with the question of what the result of the ongoing interaction between firms and consumers is. We expect that as the number of postings increases, it positively influences the amount of community knowledge.

P3: The number of postings positively influences the amount of community knowledge.

No evidence was found to support Proposition 3. Not a single case firm provided information indicating that more postings led to more community knowledge. Overall, most firms acknowledged the importance of eWOM but, at the same time, underlined how complicated it was to measure its effectiveness. We discuss in more depth below the results of eWOM interaction and its perceived benefits.

Result of Interaction

There was overwhelming agreement about the value of monitoring postings, although some admitted to not doing it as much as they should. All of the respondents indicated that it was very difficult to get a grip on the results from the tools used. One respondent mentioned a few tools they used for monitoring, such as Google Alerts, Google Analytics, Flurry, and TweetDeck. However, he continued by saying that “monitoring is really complicated. Whether or not someone pays is actually the only thing we can really see.” Another comment was that the effectiveness of monitoring is only apparent in the forum, because that interaction enhances the relationship between the gamers and the Indies. Websites where numbers of visitors can be tracked, including whether they went through to the store, were also useful. Nevertheless, on most platforms it is impossible to see whether the people who proceed through to the website actually buy the game.

One firm described it very well by saying that the U.S. used to be their biggest market, but at some point sales from China increased dramatically and continue to do so. China is by far their main market now, but the firm has no clue what caused that. It only assumes it was due to word-of-mouth. Chinese forums are impossible to monitor without speaking the language. However, since the
primary interest of indies is to increase sales as much as they can, we focused on the comments saying that it was only in the forums that is was possible to get a grip on the results of interaction, even though this does not necessarily translate into sales. We address the other presumed benefits of this interaction in the next section.

Perceived Benefits of eWOM

The answers from firms varied as to the question of what the perceived benefits of eWOM were. “I really don’t have a clue. It is purely a gut feeling way of working,” was one response. Others mentioned benefits such as sales, product familiarity, networking, and making it easier to reach the target group. As to how they judged the effectiveness of eWOM, firms responded that it was limited, depending on which type of eWOM. “Our word-of-mouth advertisements don’t go very far, so the effectiveness is limited,” said one interviewee. Other firms said, however, that eWOM was very effective because it generated all their sales or that it made it easier for key influencers to measure impact because of the amount of followers they had. In general, the perceived effectiveness scored around three on a seven-point Likert scale. There was disagreement about the level of performance without any online word-of-mouth activities. Three firms expected that they would have reasonable success without eWOM, and the other five found it hard to answer that question or perceived that they would perform worse without eWOM activities.

In conclusion, the uncertain effectiveness of eWOM causes these firms to be indifferent to implementing eWOM strategies. They focus to a large extent on sales and are less interested in the effectiveness of other parameters, such as awareness. Although a few more benefits of eWOM were mentioned, the focus is almost exclusively on sales effectiveness, which they consider to be absent. Therefore, they do not see the need for such a strategy. This lack of ambition in terms of harnessing the possibilities of social media, which we touched on in the conclusion about Proposition 1 above, further manifests itself in not measuring the effectiveness of eWOM and not being in control. While most firms acknowledge the importance of eWOM, they do not use its full potential. There was therefore no evidence found to support Proposition 3, which suggested that the number of postings could influence community knowledge. There is no information that more postings lead to more community knowledge.

5.4 Community Knowledge and the Business Model

In this last proposition, the focus is on how the market information is used to the firms’ advantage. This community knowledge is retrieved from the total number of postings. Meaningful postings are those that the firm considers to be useful as feedback, which can be embedded within the business model. This could be in a variety of areas, such as marketing, product development, or communications. The proposition is as follows:

P4: The amount of community knowledge is positively correlated to the amount of modification in a firm’s business model.

No evidence was found to support Proposition 4. All of the case firms mentioned that useful community knowledge is implemented in the value chain, but there are no indications that an increase in community knowledge leads to an increase in business model modifications. Thus, while there is evidence of the existence of a feedback loop, there is no evidence of causality between these constructs.
In the analyses, the firms were asked to classify the postings according to different types of information. They were also asked to prioritize the information (community knowledge) according to what was important and less important. The firms were further asked to discuss what the role of the feedback loop was and if and how it had been implemented in their business model.

Table 3 shows that there is some consensus on the relevance of the different types of information, but there are differences, as well. Feedback is considered an important type of information, but bug reports receive the most frequent mention as being most important. Note that there is a very thin line between feedback and bug reports. Another conclusion that can be drawn from the table is that firms are not able to rank the importance of the information.

Classification of Types of Community Knowledge

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Community Knowledge</th>
<th>1 (most important)</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6 (least important)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D1 Feedback, game experiences, questions</td>
<td>Equal importance</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2 Feedback, game information, complaints</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3 Feedback, suggestions, game experiences, questions</td>
<td>Number of reactions</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D4 Feedback, suggestions, criticism</td>
<td>Criticism</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Suggestions</td>
<td>Suggestions</td>
<td>Suggestions</td>
<td>Suggestions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D5 Feedback, suggestions, fan work, technical complaints, questions, community talk</td>
<td>Technical complaints</td>
<td>Suggestions</td>
<td>Suggestions</td>
<td>Suggestions</td>
<td>Suggestions</td>
<td>Suggestions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1 Feedback, questions, bug reports, fan mail</td>
<td>Bug reports (negative input)</td>
<td>Positive input</td>
<td>Positive input</td>
<td>Positive input</td>
<td>Positive input</td>
<td>Positive input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2 General perception, questions, remarks, bug</td>
<td>General perception</td>
<td>General perception</td>
<td>General perception</td>
<td>General perception</td>
<td>General perception</td>
<td>General perception</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Role of the Feedback Loop and Its Implementation in the Business Model

Firms know how to deal with feedback, and all feedback was taken seriously without exception. Whether they could do something about it or not, they always communicated the outcome to the consumers. This provides overwhelming evidence for the existence of a feedback loop. In one case, a firm received complaints from consumers who bought their game but could not play it. The cause of the error was an unclear system requirement. So, some consumers thought it would work on their device but discovered after purchase that their device was not compatible with the software. Although the mistake had not been made by the developers, and the effect was limited, complaints nevertheless started to appear online, and it created negative feedback in the forums. It would take the developers a lot of time to respond to every individual comment, so they came up with a solution. They created a centralized post for that specific forum in the form of an essay about what exactly went wrong. The developers expressed their own frustration, as well, and promised that they were trying to solve the problem, despite the fact that it affected only a small number of people. The consumers’ responses were positive, and they were delighted the issue was being tackled. They felt understood and did not mind waiting a few months. It was a financial burden for the developers, but the positive spirit created in the community enhanced their reputation.

In conclusion, community knowledge is largely classified along the same lines by all firms but prioritized differently, and sometimes firms are clueless about what information is the most important. The feedback loop is taken very seriously, however, and often implemented in firms’ business models. Moreover, consumers are kept informed about the progress of the firms’ response to their feedback, even when implementation is undesirable for some reason. As a whole, all of the case firms agreed on the usefulness of the feedback loop and that the information was used to improve business models. Not a single respondent confirmed, however, that an increase in community knowledge automatically equaled more modifications to the business model.

Findings, Discussion, and Avenues for Further Research

In today’s online environment, firms face new challenges, since developments occur with tremendous speed, and responding to that requires a certain level of knowledge. SNS have allowed consumers to participate in eWOM on a massive scale, but that is only half the story. Firms play a
role in this, as well, and our study has shown that not being proactive in this field can negatively affect firms’ profit. This underscores the essential role that SNS plays in the survival of these indies. That does not mean, however, that it is taken seriously by the industry. Although participation among these firms is high, their amateurish methods are astonishing. Consumers must be taken seriously and are not passive recipients of product-related information. Nowadays, they can look up this information themselves from sources they consider to be reliable. At the same time, they extend their social networks over time and take up multiple roles in the eWOM process. They might be an expert or content sharer or actively seek information. The purpose of the present study was to discover how young, resource-scarce firms are dealing with these developments in the eWOM process.

To our surprise, the businesses never made any effort to examine in depth what type of posting might increase consumer use of eWOM. However, from the literature, we have seen impact indicators from Dellarocas (2006) and Dobele et al. (2005) on how to increase the likelihood of consumer participation. None of these pointers were used by the indies in the study. From the study, it is evident that proactiveness influences the number of postings, and consumer awareness has a multiplier effect on the total number of postings. Awareness is an important force, since consumers need to be aware of a product to join the conversation. The usefulness of this indicator is unambiguous in the eWOM process. Great additional value was assigned to the key influencers, online feedback mechanisms, and getting featured in an app store. These instruments have a great impact on general awareness, which is in line with Duan et al. (2008). The case firms in our study focused on featuring and reaching out to key influencers. Online feedback mechanisms are something that do not get the attention they deserve. Even though the platform holders control these feedback mechanisms and firms are not able to respond to the reviews directly, they still represent a valuable source of community knowledge.

Relationship-building is another useful tool that firms can utilize. Bonding with clients enhances their willingness to participate in eWOM, in general, support the firm, and pass along the message. Since one of the objectives of the case firms is to try and create and extend their fan base, this could be seen as the ultimate form of bonding. However, the efficacy of this relationship-building in terms of influencing sales figures was unexplored.

The research showed that firms adopt the same consumer approach across countries. Although previous research has shown that cultural differences play a role in consumers’ engagement in eWOM (Chu & Choi, 2011), firms do not take this into account in their attempts to seduce consumers to participate. There appears to be a gap between the firms’ perspective and the consumers’ perspective. Moreover, personal outcomes and relationship-building amongst consumers can also be reasons for sharing, but these, too, are underestimated by the case firms. Companies prefer to focus on the reciprocal relationship between themselves and the consumers, overlooking that which exists among consumers. This is a serious oversight in the firms’ eWOM strategy. A reward system could be helpful for enhancing this reciprocity among consumers, as suggested in Hsu and Lin (2008).

Another interesting result of our study is that collecting community knowledge could be considered online market research, since this knowledge provides better insight into the consumers’ wants and needs. While this study has stressed the importance of community knowledge, not much attention has been paid to it, in general, in earlier research. Most studies have focused on specific attributes,
such as brand attitude (Chu & Kamal, 2008), argument quality (Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn, 2008), purchase decision (Riegel, 2007), and sense of belonging (Zhao, Lu, Wang, Chau, & Zhang, 2012).

This paper has addressed some important issues regarding eWOM. It has shed light on the way firms shape their eWOM strategies for social media platforms and the extent to which they take consumers’ perspectives into account. We zoomed in specifically on the social media platform and outlined the role of awareness. We further discussed how firms perceive and value the outcomes of eWOM on the social media platform and how it is implemented in the value chain. In addition to having theoretical implications, this research also has important implications for CEOs of Internet-based firms. It has described the various instruments available for promoting eWOM, which should be considered as alternatives to the trial-and-error system. These instruments are: posting content, continuous monitoring of eWOM in different channels, online feedback mechanisms, and involving key influencers to stimulate dispersion. Moreover, measuring the effectiveness of these instruments is something that should be imbedded in the value chain, since it enables firms to regain control and increases the chances of survival. Instead of passively waiting on the Internet, we argue that proactively using eWOM and avoiding standardization in terms of approaching consumers will result in greater consumer participation, awareness, and community knowledge.

The results of this study should be interpreted with caution. The qualitative perspective of this research limits the generalizability of the conclusions beyond the video game industry. However, since this is a three-country comparison, it has shown that conditions among countries do not vary. The conclusions are therefore valuable for other Internet-based industries and countries. We suggest verifying these preliminary propositions in a quantitative context to overcome the limitation of the small sample size. We strongly believe that our study provides a basis for further research. Firstly, we recommend examining the possibilities for measuring the effectiveness of firms’ eWOM strategies on SNS. This is a particular field of interest, since so much has been unknown until now about this field, its characteristics, and suitable measurement tools. Secondly, we suggest integrating the firms’ and the consumers’ perspectives regarding willingness to share. While firms do not distinguish among consumers according to their cultural background, as previous research suggests, it does influence content sharing. This shows that firms’ knowledge about consumers’ motivations is underdeveloped and in need of further research attention. Thirdly, the role of awareness has received little attention in the eWOM context and deserves further exploration. Fourthly, the valence of community knowledge is another valuable field that should be explored in depth.
References


