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MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

**I TRUST YOU BECAUSE I KNOW YOU: THE ROLE OF
SOCIAL TIE STRENGTH AND INFORMATION IN EWOM
FOR DIFFERENT CHANNELS**

The Graduate School
Of the University of Ulsan

Department of Business Administration
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**I TRUST YOU BECAUSE I KNOW YOU: THE ROLE OF
SOCIAL TIE STRENGTH AND INFORMATION IN EWOM
FOR DIFFERENT CHANNELS**

Advisor: Professor Doyle Kim

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The Graduate School of the University of Ulsan

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By

María Elizabeth Herrera García

Department of Business Administration

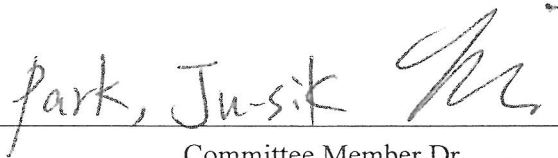
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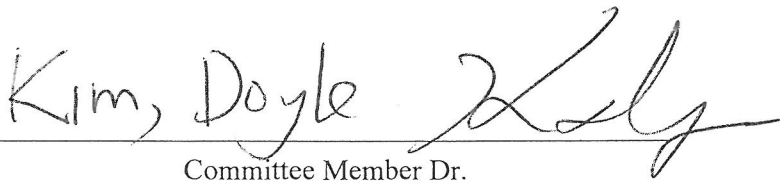
August, 2021

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate whether the channel used to transmit the EWOM will have different effects on how the information (quality and quantity), and the social tie between the sender and receiver of the message impact on the consumers' trust, and their response to the message, leading to either reinforcing the purchase intention or increasing the discomfort on the decision.

A total of 263 users of video sharing sites, blogs, social networking sites, and community forums who use those sites as a source of information for making purchase decisions completed an online survey. The sample was recruited through international online groups and snowball sampling.

The research revealed that there is a significant difference between video sharing sites and blogs, social networking sites, and community forums in the way that social tie and information influence consumers' trust and purchase intention; and that there is an inverse relationship between the groups and the independent variables "social tie" and "information" having SNS the closest connection with social tie and the weakest link to information.

The study could be replicated by taking participants from a single country to check whether the results change given just one cultural background; also, taking a more specific target objective could also give a clearer perspective to enhance consumer's purchase intention depending on the channels used by the consumers of specific products or services.

There are three main practical implications that can be taken from this study: first, EWOM should be used differently depending on the channel chosen. Second, for the case of SNS and CF, as the social tie is more relevant, paid reviews may have a negative impact, therefore the way of increasing positive EWOM is through promoting brand equity and loyalty. And third, increasing consumers' trust does not necessarily improve purchase intention.

The study extended prior EWOM research by addressing its impact in different channels, and how the divergence in the social tie strength among channels affects the outcomes of the information analysis¹.

¹ The author of this thesis is a Global Korea Scholarship scholar sponsored by the Korean Government.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

How do people decide which information is useful for them while making a purchase decision? One of the most used sources of information when it comes to the process of decision making is the “Electronic Word of Mouth” (EWOM), its importance has promoted a significant increase on the interest of academics and business industry in this topic.

Responses to traditional marketing and advertising are becoming adverse due to the increasing of clutter (Dellarocas, 2003), and consumers require more information to lessen uncertainty and perceived risks, and in order to gather information they normally rely on EWOM (Hernandez-Ortega, 2017). Then, many customers base their purchase decisions on reviews or judgement from others who have previously used the product, therefore they take decisions based on other people’s experiences (Albarq & Al-Doghan, 2020).

It is necessary to notice the relevance of new media channels during the last years which has promoted the increase of EWOM communication. Every year more consumers use Web 2.0 tools such as online discussion forums, consumer review sites, weblogs, or social network sites in order to communicate their opinions and exchange product information (Cheung & Thadani, 2015).

This digital communication technology and the internet had facilitated the spread of information and improve marketing communication by enabling marketers to provide consumers with specific information, adapted to their interests, and in the proper time (Tucker, 2012). Then, as Web 3.0 develops, information and most of the behaviors of users will be captured and stored in a huge database which will lead to a greater visibility, accessibility, and legibility of EWOM data; researchers speculate that the migration of Web 2.0 to Web 3.0 will facilitate EWOM communication which then will have a greater influence in consumer purchase decision (Cheung & Thadani, 2015).

Prior studies found that consumers perceive WOM as more trustworthy and persuasive than traditional media, such as print ads, personal selling, radio and TV advertising (Cheung & Thadani, 2015); in the case of EWOM, previous research has focused on how it influences choice, diffusion, and sales (Van den Bulte & Wuyts 2009), as well as the behavioral drivers of WOM (Berger 2011; Berger & Milkman 2012; Dubois, Rucker, & Tormala 2011; Packard & Wooten 2012) and the role of emotions in consumers' consumption perception and behavior, analyzing EWOM mainly from the traditional commercial market context and analyzed it from a static perspective (Xu, 2020).

Many scholars have analyzed EWOM focusing in its volume, used in 88% of the studies, and valence, used in 81% of the studies (Babic, Sotgiu, de Valk, & Bijmolt, 2016); also purchase intentions are highlighted as one of the most important consequences of online critics and reviews, because information obtained in review platforms influences various steps of the consumer purchasing process (Hernandez-Ortega, 2017). In addition, researches had focused on either positive or negative EWOM with inconclusive findings, showing both a positive or a detrimental connection between EWOM and purchase intention and sales (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Sun, 2012; Hiura et al. 2010; Kikumori & Ono 2013).

As we had described, many analyses had been done regarding EWOM from diverse perspectives, even so, two key debates remain wandering. The first one refers to the moderating role of platform and product characteristics for the effect of EWOM on sales; and the second one focuses on EWOM metrics (Babic, Sotgiu, de Valk, & Bijmolt, 2016). The present research will focus on the first one of these aspects; and the reason is that attitudes toward EWOM communication have been neglected or just analyzed by the advertising literature (Gvili & Levy 2016) and there is barely any research that has examined the relationship established between the participants of the EWOM process and how the receiver evaluates the information received or how they can be connected with the source of the information (Hernandez-Ortega, 2017).

Evaluating the impact of different channels in one research work is necessary because current studies have focused on using just one EWOM channel: Online discussion forums (Huang, & Chen, 2006; Zhang, & Watts, 2008) consumer review sites (Awad, & Ragowsky, 2008; Cheung, Luo, Sia, & Chen, 2009), Blogs (Chu, & Kamal, 2008; Lee, & Youn, 2009) social networking sites (Riegner, 2007), online brand/shopping sites (Lee, Park, & 2008, Lee, & Youn, 2009). Because studies had focused mostly on individual channels little is known about how different costumers are in the way they talk about brands across Social Network Services (SNSs) (Vargo, Gangadharbatla & Hopp, 2019).

The technological revolution and the increasing role of the internet allowed new ways of interactive communication by using channels such as e-mail, online forums, blogs, wikis, recommendation sites, online comment boards, social networking sites, digital-virtual worlds, among others (Gvili & Levy 2016). Nevertheless, despite the extensive variety of media alternatives, little is known about the differences across these channels as EWOM facilitators (Berger and Iyengar, 2013).

Different channels of online reviews or comments have different characteristics, and research has demonstrated that the characteristics of an information source have important effects on the way people respond to messages (Kang & Herr, 2006); related to this, relationship that the consumer have with the transmitter is very relevant, because it is not the same to talk to close friends or family that getting advices from unknown people on a website. In this context, the closer one feels to the publisher,

the more likely is to rely on WOM to make purchase decisions, and the social psychological distance (tie) will mediate the relationship between information quality and trust (Zhao, Wang, Tang, & Zhang, 2020).

In the EWOM context, the few studies that consider psychological distance are usually focused on temporal and spatial dimensions, not considering the effect of social distance (Hernandez-Ortega, 2017; Huang et al., 2016; Tangari, Burton, and Smith 2015). Previous literature remarks in EWOM the anonymity between the communicator and the receiver of the information has a negative effect on the credibility (Albarq & Al-Doghan, 2020); nevertheless, more recently we can note that strong ties can also share information through electronic channels and therefore the consumer will have a high trust in these sources of information (Hernandez-Ortega, 2017).

Some researchers have analyze the relevance EWOM including whether consumers provide product-related information to a particular audience or just spread their EWOM recommendations at random (Berguer, 2014); this preceding literature has examined consequences of EWOM, or how it is shaped by social network structure or opinion leaders; nevertheless, there has been less attention to the difference between online channels and the relevance of the social tie strength in EWOM acceptance (Berger & Schwartz, 2011).

This study extended prior EWOM research by addressing its impact in different channels, and how the divergence in the social tie strength among channels affects the outcomes of the information analysis.

1.2 The purpose of the study

For all the above mentioned, the purpose of this study is to investigate whether the channel used to transmit the EWOM will have different effects on the level of trust of the consumers (or receptor of the message), and in their response to the message, leading to either reinforce the purchase intention or to increase the discomfort on the decision; nevertheless, this will be moderated by the information (quality and quantity), and the social tie between the sender and receiver of the message; also, the relationship and therefore the social tie involved in the communication process will be different for every type of channel. We will consider Video Streaming (VS) and Community Forums (CF) as channels of weak social ties and Social Media (SM) as a channel of strong social ties.

This study is relevant because companies need to understand how customers influence each other and how to manage these customer interactions (Blazevic, et al. 2013) and the findings could allow retailers, social media marketers and designers of SNS platforms to understand how an EWOM

influences the consumer's purchase decisions and how they should manage marketing initiatives by designing effective virtual strategies (Hernandez-Ortega, 2017).

1.3 Organization of the thesis

The structure of this thesis is organized in five sections: introduction of research, literature review, research model and hypothesis, data analysis and hypotheses testing; and conclusion. I start the research by explaining the purpose of the study, as well as the structure of the paper.

Second, the literature review is presented, this compiles the explanation of EWOM and how it works as a source of information, then I will describe the importance of the social tie strength and the information quality and quantity in EWOM which will lead to the definition and description of EWOM channels briefly noting how they are influenced by the social tie strength. It is worth to note that I will focus on three channels: first, video sharing and blogs; second, Social Networking Services; and last, community forums. To conclude this second chapter, I will present a general appraisal of the implications of EWOM in customer's trust and response.

In the third chapter, based on the literature review, the research model and several hypotheses will be presented; and following this, in the fourth chapter, the examination tasks designed to test the proposed hypotheses will be described in addition to the data collection, the methodology used to analyze the propositions, the items of the questionnaires based in previous research, and the interpretation of the results. Finally, in the last chapter the conclusion of the results will be delineated as well as the study's limitations and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Electronic Worth of Mouth (EWOM) as a source of information

Word of mouth has an important impact on consumer behavior (Berger, 2014), and the way and channel in which people get information have important effects on how individuals respond to that information during the purchase decision (Kang & Herr, 2006). Individuals share their emotional experiences and satisfaction with others through WOM (Septianto & Chiew, 2018) and many customers check reviews from previous users, and make their purchase decisions based on other consumer's experiences (Albarq & Al-Doghan, 2020).

WOM are the communications directed from consumer to consumer about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of goods and services and/or their sellers (Westbrook 1987); it comprises the exchange of experiences, conversation about the product or brand and sharing product related content, direct recommendations and mere mentions (Berger, 2014).

When WOM is transmitted through online communication it is known as Electronic WOM (EWOM) and uses channels like twitter, Facebook or Instagram; inside these channels there are groups created to talk about products, give personal reviews, and taste products (Jeon, Lim, Kim, & Seok, 2019). EWOM is also used to share opinions and information with social ties, generating social support, venting, facilitating sense making, reducing dissonance, taking vengeance, and encouraging rehearsal (Albarq & Al-Doghan, 2020; Berger, 2014).

Online WOM can be done by communication from the sender to only one person (narrowcasting); or by talking to two or more people (broadcasting) (Barash & Berguer, 2014; Reckmann & Teichert, 2016), although online communication is typically written and in an one-to-many context, involving large audiences and weak social ties (Berguer & Iyengar, 2013; Lovett, et al., 2013); it also allows a later reply, because the receptor has more time to think about the answer (Berger, 2014 Clark & Brennan 1991; Morris & Ogan 1996).

EWOM provides businesses with means to identify and meet customer's needs cost-effectively through proactive communication and also can affect consumer attitudes towards purchase decisions (Albarq & Al-Doghan, 2020; Chong, Ch'ng, Liu, & Li, 2017). In most online interactions the format is one of broadcasting to many and interactions are more likely to take place with unfamiliar people;

therefore, the tendency to express personal aspects in general, and uniqueness in particular, should be greater (Lovett, et al. 2013).

Another relevant aspect of WOM is that it is goal driven and has five key functions. First, impression management refers to the impression that other people have of the consumer; second, emotion regulation, which refers to the ways people manage their emotions; third, information acquisition, referring to the process of information search; forth, social bonding, this is the desire of belonging to a social group and is related to social tie strength; and last, persuasion, this involves the motives that lead people to talk about things that are either more emotionally polarized or more arousing in nature (Berger, 2014).

When EWOM is used for broadcasting, people avoid sharing content that makes them look bad, which is one of the previously mentioned key functions of WOM “Impression management”, and means that costumers share WOM to shape other people’s impressions of them (Berger, 2014), for this reason, in a broadcasting process people tends to be self-centered and don’t consider the other side on the message (Berguer & Iyengar, 2013).

Impression management can work in different ways: first, self enhancement, meaning that people share things that make them look good and therefore they post more positive reviews (Berger, 2014), although consumers may get more open with their strong social ties and also talk about negative experiences (Park, Yi, & Kang, 2019). The second characteristic is identity-signaling, this implies that the person will share expertise about specific products/topics; and third, filling conversational space or small talk (Berger, 2014).

The Impression management function is linked to the transmitter of the WOM; from the perspective of the receptor, the trustworthiness in the information quality and attitude toward review is more favorable when the number of opinions is greater, especially if there are both positive and negative reviews (Eguchi & Yamashita, 2016a, Yi, & Kang, 2019).

EWOM also involves exchanging information (Albarq & Al-Doghan, 2020; Lovett, et al. 2013); and in this exchange process the communication channel play an important role as it moderates the functions of WOM and what consumes talk about; besides, people also infer things about others based on conversational style (Berger, 2014).

From the perspective of the firms, it is important to understand the characteristics of EWOM in order to direct the message to the appropriate receivers (Reckmann & Teichert, 2016) as different type of conversations will be more relevant for the marketing objectives (Baker, Donthu, & Kumar, 2016). For the particular purpose of this research is relevant to consider how these distinctions can affect the consumers’ behavior.

Furthermore, as EWOM tends to be asynchronous, (which means that people tend to respond minutes, hours, or even days later) EWOM users have time to construct and refine communication, so they can bring up more interesting products because selecting the right thing to say requires time (Berguer & Iyengar, 2013, Berger, 2014), asynchrony also allows people to make sure they are on the same page before changing topics (Berger, 2014).

2.2 EWOM channels

EWOM includes consumer opinions, comments and reviews that can be transmitted through different channels (social media, blogs, discussion or review forums, newsgroups, etc.), each one with distinct features that alter the way people use them and the types of messages sent (Cheung, & Lee, 2012, Eguchi, 2017, Gvili & Levy, 2016, Jeon, Lim, Kim, & Seok, 2019).

Some digital channels can get more immediate and intimate by using private chat or text messaging, while others are used to share and spread information among groups of users, there are also channels that allow users to recognize the source of the message and facilitate the judgement of its credibility (Steffes and Burgee, 2009); while for other channels, message senders remain anonymous (Gvili & Levy 2016).

Electronic consumer comments can be classified in two; first, attribute-based reviews, which are rational, objective and concrete; and experience-based reviews which are emotional, subjective, abstract, and tend to reflect consumer feelings (Gopinath, Thomas, & Krishnamurthi, 2014; Hernandez-Ortega, 2017).

Online channels can be differentiated by their participants, the content transmitted, its orientation, the strength of the participant's relations and ties, their composition, derived from the social attributes of the participants, and their complexity (Petróczi, Nepusz, & Bazsó, 2007). Due to the diversity that characterizes online WOM channels, past researches have expressed that consumer reviews are biased because they are based on personal experience and can be subjective because personal attributes and prior experiences vary from person to person. Also, experience-based consumer reviews normally don't have supportive arguments and will be different between individuals (Hernandez-Ortega, 2017; Park and Lee 2008).

The increase of the use of the internet also propitiated the growth of information exchange through networking sites, customer communities, and video sharing; changing the interaction between customers and with the firms (Libai, et al., 2010) because consumers tend to check online posts about products or customer reviews when they need or want product information (Doh & Hwang, 2009).

Communication can be judged differently by recipients depending if the message is perceived to be deliberate or unintentional. When a consumer likes the recommended product, his reflective system is activated and the behavioral decision is based on reasoned action; in contrast, when a consumer wants the recommended product, the impulsive system draws on associative links and reacts out of a pure motivational force (Blazevic, et al. 2013).

Social networks can also create a sense of community and belonging, where individuals can be differentiated by their cultural aspects. EWOM users not necessarily experience loss of intimacy, and using online channels not always make the disclosure less personal; although communication can change depending on the perception of the duration of the relationship, time spent on each interaction, the possibility of future communication, the help provided and received (Petróczi, Nepusz, & Bazsó, 2007).

EWOM users can exchange knowledge with people in or outside their personal network (Cheung and Ho 2015); if an individual feels socially similar to a reviewer, he/she may pay more attention to the comments and give greater credibility; alternatively, if the tie strength is weak, the consumer may not consider the information useful or doubt of its veracity (Hernandez-Ortega, 2017). Usually, people prefer interacting with those who are similar to themselves as they share characteristics and preferences, which makes them feel a closer connection and gives them greater credibility; this is known as the “like-me principle” (Cheung & Thadani, 2015).

Furthermore, both social tie strength and Information source are important for the message acceptance on social media. For social media users, the most noticeable source of brand-related content is their friends (Kim & Lee 2017) because friends represent the major portion of one’s social circles on social media due to the existing offline relationships, and communicating with one’s close ties is one of the primary reasons why people use social network sites (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007); and consumers had indicated that what their friends say in social media affect their purchase decisions (Klena & Puleri, 2014).

From the firm’s perspective, EWOM should be adapted to their media strategy and objectives; depending on the company’s objectives they should decide which channel is more appropriated; for example, using blogs and social networks is effective for brand attitude formation, while web forums enhance message credibility (Gvili & Levy, 2016), there are cases when the channel has sponsorship presence and this may affect the attitude toward the online review (Park et. al. 2019).

Online channels provide many opportunities and challenges for firms (Blazevic, et al. 2013); for example, some marketing agencies contact and pay Twitter users with many followers in order to post sponsored brand-related tweets in this user’s accounts (Wood and Burkhalter, 2014); celebrities are also commonly used as a source of sponsored EWOM (Kim & Lee, 2017). Nevertheless, when

customers perceive that communication is fake, forced, or unnatural the trustworthiness of the message may decrease and consumers resist to accept the information (Blazevic, et al. 2013; Tuk, Verlegh, Smidts, & Wigboldus, 2009).

In sum, recommendations from close friends can lead to a greater information sharing and approval of the EWOM received than the recommendation for acquaintances, unknown people or even celebrities, depending on how information is presented and the channel chosen to transmit the EWOM (Kim & Lee, 2017).

For this study the channels were divided in three groups, considering the characteristics of the majority of the websites representing each channel category. The reason for choosing this specific groups was their predominance of use by the internet users, as most of the websites visited for EWOM fall into one of these three group categories, in the next section of the thesis I will generally describe each group to give a more comprehensive perspective of each group selected.

So, the first group comprehends video sharing and blog websites, as they share characteristics such as transmit the information in a broad casting way and having low possibilities of feedback between the source of information and the receivers. The second group includes social networking services, this includes all the websites used for people to have a narrowcasting communication with friends, family and co-workers, among other people that the users may mostly know personally and having the possibility of getting feedback from other users every time something is posted. Finally, the last group includes the websites called community forums, in these sites people use narrowcasting to communicate with other users that share the same interest or experiences.

2.2.1 Video Sharing and blogs

A video sharing (VS) website is an online portal that allows its users to upload and share video clips, this can be done privately, by sharing with specific people such as friends, family or for business purposes; or publicly, where they can share it with a large number of persons; an example of this kind of channel is YouTube, known to be the most popular video sharing site on the Web (PC Mag encyclopedia, 1981-2021).

On a typical day people watch videos as one of their main activities, for the case of this channel, their relative popularity can be measured by views, this considers the perceived interest shown by the online community, then the estimation of success can be seen in the number of times the video has been viewed. Additionally, when users upload videos, their viewers can comment at the site but the

interaction won't be synchronic; and the transmitter can respond or not to these comments after posting/uploading the video (Sharma, Morales, & Pandey, 2011).

On the other hand, blogs, also known as weblogs, are informal websites where individuals or groups can post articles or timestamp, they have a journal style of publishing and usually a reverse chronological order (the most recent publication is presented first), some blogs contain video clips and are called "video blogs" (Internet technology, May, 2015). Blogs' contents include comments, opinions, images, audio, links to other sites, as well as a search facility for finding past entries; blog comments can become viral and spread very quickly. By 2020 there were more than 400 million blogs in existence that used platforms such as WordPress, Tumblr and Blogger (PC Mag encyclopedia, 1981-2021)

There is another blog format where just short message with 100 to 200 characters are published, it is called microblog (Internet technology, May, 2015), the most known is Twitter which is largely an open platform with less than 2% private profiles (Vargo, et al., 2019).

Some companies get involved into blogs by encouraging employees to write internal blogs to share knowledge, firms also use public blogs to check on customer satisfaction and other issues. Customers tend to trust in employee bloggers as long as the product or brand is not using hard sales (PC Mag encyclopedia, 1981-2021).

Finally, posts in video or blog websites can may be measured by volume, frequency, or popularity, these channels represent interactive media which allow users to leave comments on the posts, but not directly interact with the publishers at the moment that the post is been created (Sharma, Morales, & Pandey, 2011).

2.2.2 Social Networking Services (SNS)

Online social networking sites (SNSs), are web-based services that allow individuals to construct public or semi-public profiles, connect with other users, view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Baker & White, 2010).

These platforms encourage their members to create communities and share with them interests, ideas, stories, photos, music, videos etc. After knowing about other people's experiences users may feel motivated to try the same experience. The members can also re-publish information posted by others. SNS normally include chat rooms and/or newsgroups (Internet technology, May, 2015; Lerrthaitraul & Panjakajornsak; 2014).

People in the communities are normally family, friends, co-workers or people that shares hobbies; at first this groups had 150 to 200 people, but nowadays some sites have expanded this size.

SNS allow families, friends, colleagues, celebrities and politicians to stay connected with each other and the world (PC Mag encyclopedia, 1981-2021).

As for the case of the firms, SNSs facilitates the creation of digital strategies that foster positive conversations online, this can be relevant for marketing researchers because by studying the EWOM that occurs in different SNSs may lead to a better understanding of the drivers of desires and behaviors as well as sales persuasion. EWOM in SNS includes personal, subjective experiences and opinions about products, that normally generates favorable consumer response because people trust their close ties (Vargo, et al., 2019).

Currently the major social media platform is Facebook, but Instagram and snapchat are also relevant whit people actively following others who post content and being able to respond to it; lately there has also being an interconnection of platform which allows users to re-post content from Instagram on Facebook (PC Mag encyclopedia, 1981-2021).

2.2.3 Community forums (CF)

Community forums are websites or section of a website where users can communicate with each other by posting messages. Most forums allow anonymous visitors to view forum postings but if the individuals want to make a comment or post messages in the forum, they need to create an account on the site. The activities that can be done in forums include creating new topics (“threads”), or reply to someone else's threads (Christensson, 2011).

The topics of community forums are very diverse, they can be related to health, fitness, cars, houses, teaching, parenting, and many other topics of interest; some forums are general in content while others are more specific (Christensson, 2011).

As it was already noted there are different types of community groups and I can highlight three of the most common classifications of it which are informational groups, entertainment or ex-Miniclip groups; and finally, personal groups. Informational websites are normally created by firms to provide a customized and branded resource for potential and active customers, members, investors and so forth. These websites are usually content and design driven. An entertainment or ex-miniclip site offers an interactive and engaging environment. Popular entertainment sites offer music, video, sports, games, web episodes, sweepstakes, chat room and more (Internet technology, May, 2015).

Last, a personal community site is a more family or business oriented, often not associated with any organization or private. Here individuals can maintain a personal site or a single Web page in order

to publish personal content for a variety of reasons that could be related to job applications or just to share life experiences with the world (Internet technology, May, 2015).

2.3 The importance of Social Tie Strength in EWOM

In the analysis of EWOM, the audience to whom people are communicating with, and the channel used for communicating are two key variables. The audience plays an important role, because they will make a purchase decision; and to study the responses of the audience, the social tie (or psychological distance) must be considered (Berger, 2014).

Social distance can be described as the distinction between the self and others, basically discriminating between similar and different others (Trope, Liberman, & Wakslak, 2007). People have a strong desire for social relationships, and interpersonal communication (sharing EWOM) serves as “social glue” bringing people together and strengthening social ties, this social bounding is facilitated through the reinforcement of common opinions which makes the costumers reduce the feelings of loneliness and social exclusion (Berger, 2014).

Past research had distinguished between strong and weak ties; the first ones are people we know well, trust, and/or speak to often, it includes friends and family members (Baker, Donthu, & Kumar, 2016; Bansal & Voyer, 2000); people usually form more intimate interactions with others when they are socially close because they can observe their behavior and get to know their thoughts, feelings and personality (Hernandez-Ortega, 2017).

In the case of the weak ties, this are acquaintances or strangers with whom we do not have as strong a connection nor frequent interaction (Baker, Donthu, & Kumar, 2016; Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Berger, 2014) Communication will differ depending on the tie strength. About this Baker et. al. (2016) proposed one strength for each of this sides.

“Strength of weak ties” is the concept used to describe that weak ties interact infrequently and people tend to have low trust in them, but these ties are important to spread new information across a social network. In the other hand, the “strength of strong ties”: means that when the social tie strength increases, trust will also increase and become more relevant, persuasive, and the information of WOM will be more personalized.

With weak ties consumers are more likely to talk about things that make them look good because this interaction will have an impact on how weaker ties see them; people will also share relevant information with their strong ties but will hesitate to transmit valuable information to weak ties; therefore, the information will be discriminated before sharing (Berger, 2014; Frenzen & Nakamoto, 1993); although there may be some exceptions, previous research suggests that females are more open

than males to disclose information to both strong and weak ties, depending on circumstances (Zhang, Feick, & Mittal, 2014).

Individuals judge opinions, people or products differently depending on the social tie strength between them and the transmitter of the information (Trope & Liberman, 2010); when there is a strong social tie, the consumer will consider superordinate features (general aspects of the discussed object); but, when there is a weak social distance the receiver of the information will focus on the subordinate aspects, this means that there will be a closer or more detailed inspection of the discussed object's features (Hernandez-Ortega, 2017).

People have more in common with strong ties and trust them more, so they are more likely to reach out to them for advice and rely more on them to make purchase decisions because the experiences of close people tend to be more persuasive (Berger, 2014, Zhao, et al., 2020, Zhang, Feick, & Mittal, 2014), on the other side, the transmitter will be more likely to share information of bad or emotional experiences or unwise purchases because they are concerned about the other person's welfare (Berger, 2014, Zhang, Feick, & Mittal, 2014).

When the social tie is felt to be strong individuals establish closer interactions and share more personal or important information with them (Zhao, et al., 2020), here social proximity also enables individuals to perceive that others belong to the same group as themselves (Charness, & Gneezy, 2008); this is called "interpersonal similarity", and refers to the degree of interaction between individuals that are similar in attitudes and preferences; and is related to the concept of homophily, which is the tendency to gather with people that is analogous to us (Herrero-Crespo, San Martin-Gutierrez, & Hernández-Mogollón, 2015).

The aforementioned closeness of the relationship will increase the persuasive capability of the message, regardless if it is positive or negative, because strong social ties are perceived as more relevant, reliable, trustworthy, and credible, giving the impression of less risk for retransmitting the informational content received from a well-known source (Baker, et. al. 2016). As support for this, researchers found that when individuals feel close to a group of people and identify with them, they may engage in the same activities or consumption habits, therefore their opinion tends to have a great relevance (Baker, & White, 2010).

To sum up, according to the "network analysis theory" there is a process to spread the information considering the strength of the social tie; weak social ties accelerate product information spread to other interpersonal networks, while strong social ties have influence in decision making (Eguchi, 2017). And social tie strength has indicators, which are actual components of it such as closeness, duration and frequency, breadth of topics and mutual confiding; but it also has predictors

which are related to it, some of these are neighborhood, affiliation, socio-economic status, and workplace (Petróczi, Nepusz, & Bazsó, 2007).

2.4 The role of information

In the EWOM context the main components of information are quantity and quality. Information quality can be understood as the personal perception of the individual who is receiving the message, considering this as persuasive information; in other words, information quality is the scope to which the receptor considers the information useful, accurate, and actual (Huang, Cai, Tsang, & Zhou, 2011; Wu, Li, & Sun, 2016).

Information quality is a central element of the persuasion process (Wu, et. al., 2016) because it affects consumer perceptions of EWOM trustworthiness (Cheung, Luo, Sia & Chen 2009). People use WOM to acquire information when they don't have previous knowledge or when they trust on the experience of the advisor (Berger, 2014).

When the information is perceived as high-quality it tends to be more persuasive and increases trust in consumers while increasing the user's interest in the reviewed products and purchase satisfaction (McCroskey, McCroskey & Richmond, 2006; Zhao, et al., 2020). Nevertheless, when we make decisions our perception of information quality can be biased (Eguchi & Yamashita, 2016a) because information is judged differently depending on the source; therefore, if we trust in the provider of the information the perception of the information quality will be more positive (Le, Dobeles, & Robinson, 2018).

Moreover, if the consumer does not trust in the source of information, he/she may be doubt on the validity of the WOM; when this happens, the quantity of EWOM (number of comments or reviews) will influence the purchase intention, opposite to the scenario when the skepticism is low, as is the case of the information coming from a known source with a strong social tie (Eguchi & Yamashita, 2016a).

Deepening into the EWOM volume concept, it refers to the total amount of EWOM interaction; that is, the total number of comments about a particular object (Babic, et al., 2016), it is linked to the number of people that have experienced or used the product and how popular the product is in the market. The quantity of online WOM can increase consumers' awareness and reduce uncertainty, causing a sales increase (Park, Gu, & Lee, 2012). In fact, the volume of WOM may be the most influential cue for consumers when judging the reliability of the WOM (Kim, Yoon, & Choi, 2018).

When a consumer does not trust in the information quality or if there are not enough valuations (EWOM) then the purchase intention will decrease (Lee, et al., 2018), although the perception of this

variables is subjective as it can be biased by the social tie and the popularity of the information, which can either improve or worsen costumer's perception (Kim, Yoon, & Choi, 2018).

The mere availability of other people's opinions has an influence on other consumers (Babic, et al., 2016) and the messages with higher consensus tend to be more persuasive and powerful than messages with lower consensus (Doh, & Hwang 2009), particularly when there is skepticism about the information, even if the information supports existing beliefs and attitudes, costumers may search for complementary information in multiple websites, reviews and messages (Pyle, Smith, & Chevtchouk, 2021).

Finally, rational decisions should be taken based on absolute information such as price, technical specifications or usefulness of the product, this way the decision would be based in hard data and consumers wouldn't be affected by skepticism or social tie; even so because people are emotional these factors must be considered while analyzing the impact of EWOM (Eguchi & Yamashita, 2016a) as the quantity and quality of the EWOM are related to the product attitude (Park & Kim, 2009).

2.5 Implications of EWOM in customer's trust and purchase intention

People are more likely to trust and accept information that comes from close friends than information from casual friends (Kim & Lee 2017), this is because people with strong ties usually interact more often in daily bases, they exchange more information, and trust each other's advices more compared to people with weak ties. In consequence, both the frequency as well as the impact of EWOM is greater for strong ties than for weak ties (Blazevic, et al. 2013).

In this context, credibility will be the extent to which one perceives sources of information provided as believable and unbiased, assuming the facts as true. If receivers have a low credibility on the source of information, they will resist the message, so it won't be persuasive enough; then, the receiver's judgement on message credibility is important to determine if the consumer will accept the information (Hernandez-Ortega, 2017).

Past research has demonstrated that expectations of product quality will be different depending on the source and information that the consumer gets during the evaluation of the EWOM (Hernandez-Ortega, 2017); in a strong social tie, the receiver will be more open and empathic towards the information and the communication will be more persuasive, therefore he/she will trust more easily on the message compared to the interaction where the EWOM comes from a stranger (Liviatan, Trope, & Liberman 2008, Zhao, et al., 2020).

Moreover, although the trust on the information will be different depending on how strong the tie with the messenger is, consumers usually consider both the credibility of the information source, and the quality of information itself, especially in the case of high uncertainty or important purchase decisions; then, when EWOM communication occurs between weak ties, and consumers need to make complex decisions, they will try to use as much information as they can, because if the tie is weak trust on the information will decrease and this will lead to a search for complementary information (Zhao, et al., 2020).

Equally important, high-quality information also has persuasive power and plays a key role in generating trust in consumers; it can also generate consumer interest in the reviewed products, and belief that a satisfactory purchase decision can be made on the basis of the information, in this case social tie strength can just give more certainty to the trust already generated (Zhao, et al., 2020).

In addition, attitude toward EWOM communication significantly differs across media channels, it can be inclined to be negative or positive. Attitude toward EWOM is an important antecedent for the consumer's response towards the message; and has been found to influence purchase intentions (Gvili & Levy, 2016). When WOM is shared the messages can be positive, negative or neutral, and in the specific case of online channels the credibility of the message can be damaged if all the comments are positive because may create the effect of forcing the message (Doh & Hwang, 2009).

Purchase decisions are not always based on a rational process where the consumer takes time to analyze the best options; sometimes decisions are made fast, intuitively or automatically (Arens, & Rust, 2012), and when consumers take a fast decision EWOM can be decisive for the resolution; for this reason, relevance, timeliness, and comprehensiveness are essential features of EWOM (Tien, Amaya, & Liao, 2018).

Also, consumer's responses towards EWOM and purchase intention tend to be more favorable when the transmitter uses persuasive arguments (Tien, Amaya, & Liao, 2018), and when the person feels close to the publisher. Previous studies have confirmed that consumers' emotional and cognitive reactions produced by EWOM have significant positive effects on their perceptions of product quality, and satisfaction after purchase decision (Zhao, Wang, Tang, & Zhang, 2020).

Furthermore, it has been said that when the costumers know and are interested in a product or service and as they keep getting information then they will be more likely to have a satisfying experience that will be embodied in an online recommendation or review, also known as EWOM (Blazevic, et al. 2013). Linked to the afore mentioned, for online consumers strong emotional and cognitive reactions can increase consumers' purchase intention, being this a positive response to the online message received (Zhao, Wang, Tang, & Zhang, 2020).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

3.1 Research model

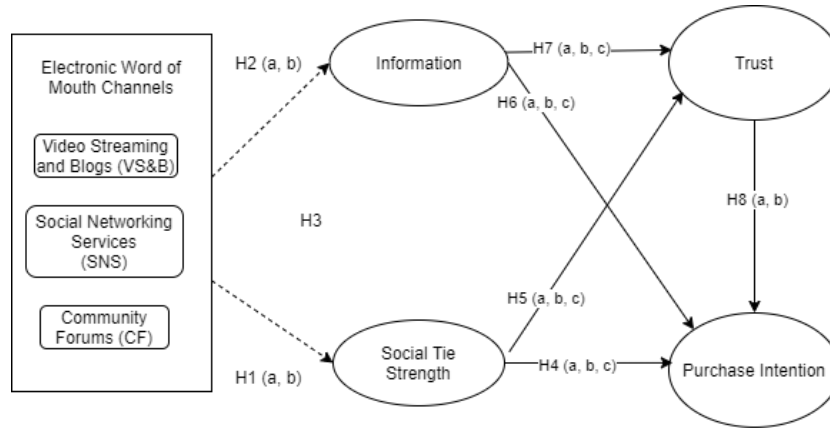
This research model aims to investigate whether the channel used to transmit the EWOM will have different effects on how the information, and the social tie between the sender and receiver of the message impact on the consumers' trust, and their response to the message, leading to either reinforcing the purchase intention or increasing the discomfort on the decision.

The present research considers three channels: Video Streaming and blogs (VS&B), Community Forums (CF), and Social Networking Services (SNS), the premise is that there are three levels of social tie strength depending on the characteristics of each channel; and therefore, the effect of transmitting the EWOM will be different depending on the chosen source of EWOM, being VS&B the channel with the weakest social tie strength, and SNS the one with the strongest social tie.

Alternatively, when there is not close connection to the source of information, the information will take a more relevant role to mediate the trust and purchase intention. This difference emerges because this research is considering the biases that can be caused by the social tie when the consumer considers the person as reliable and takes for granted the veracity of the information; nevertheless, when this variable is not considered then the consumer will seek for more trustworthy information that will encompass the quality of data and the amount of information received, in this case how many reviews or comments are evaluating the wanted product or service.

For the above said, I consider two mediators of the WOM: Information and Social tie strength, depending on the channel choose the relevance of each mediator variable will be different, being social tie more important for SNS as the communication occurs with known people, while information quality and quantity will be more important when there is a lack of familiarity/friendship with the transmitter of the message.

Figure 1
Research model



3.2 Strength tie differences between EWOM channels

EWOM will have a different impact on customer's purchase intention depending on the channel used (Cheung, & Lee, 2012, Eguchi, 2017, Gvili & Levy, 2016, Jeon, Lim, Kim, & Seok, 2019). Each EWOM site has different audiences (Gvili & Levy, 2016, Vargo, et al., 2019), and the type of platform used is positively associated with the way people perceive and evaluate EWOM (Cheung & Thadani, 2015).

In this context, video sharing sites and blogs are sites where the users can post online WOM and their followers can comment or give feedback, then the publisher of the content can reply or not; this type of websites also often have RSS syndication, this is a system that notifies users when there is a new publication in the site. The posts of this type of channels tend to be personal and project the individual thoughts and expressions of the publisher, for this reason they are considered truthful (PC Mag encyclopedia, 1981-2021).

Nevertheless, normally there is not close relationship between the publishers and their followers and a lot of times the publishers won't reply directly to the comments of their followers, and the users of this channel tend to make public content that can be accessible to anyone (Vargo, et al., 2019). Considering this information, I propose the first hypotheses:

- *H1a: The relevance of social tie will be different for each EWOM channel*
- *H2a: The relevance of information will be different for each EWOM channel*

On the other hand, people using SNS communities are normally family, friends, co-workers or people that shares hobbies, this kind of channel allow families, friends, colleagues, celebrities and politicians to stay connected with each other and the world (PC Mag encyclopedia, 1981-2021).

Opposite to video sharing and blog sites, SNS users generally prefer their content to be private so they keep their content just for their closest nets; and people tend to publish information related to their everyday consumption and activities so that their friends can see it; then EWOM in SNS includes personal, subjective experiences and opinions about products, that normally generates favorable consumer response because people trust their close ties (Vargo, et al., 2019), which leads to the next hypothesis:

- *H1b: The relationship between the SNS and social tie will be greater than for the other two groups*
- *H2b: The relationship between the SNS and information will be weaker than for the other two groups*

For the case of community forums, the activities that can be done include creating new topics (“threads”), or reply to someone else's threads (Christensson, 2011); as in the case of the video sharing sites and blogs, community forums also host discussions mostly between unknown people, but differently the user actively joins the debates or discussion (Vargo, et al., 2019), this may give to the online relationship a sense of closeness due to the constant exchange of information between the forum participants; considering this feeling of closeness, when the costumer receives EWOM the evaluation of the information will be different if he/she does not trust in the source of information. (Eguchi & Yamashita, 2016a),

Then, if there is a close tie, the evaluation will be more trusted and the social tie will have a greater relevance, on the other hand, if the tie is weak the information quantity and quality will have a greater relevance guiding to the next proposal:

- *H3: The relationship between the three channels and the variables “information” and “social tie strength” is opposite*

3.3 The influence of social tie strength on trust and purchase intention

As social psychological distance increases, consumers need to make complex decisions, because trust on the information will decrease and this will lead the audience to search for complementary or confirming information (Zhao, et al., 2020). In order to effectively communicate a message, the receiver

of the information must believe and trust in the transmitter of the content; but for the case of EWOM, it has some peculiarities that inhibit the judgement, trustworthiness and credibility of the source (Hernandez-Ortega, 2017); it must be noted that the particularities will be different depending on the channel and the psychological distance will appear differently in each EWOM media. Then, if the consumer doesn't trust in the information the purchase intention will also decrease.

When the consumers feel closer to the sender and perceive it as useful, they will rely more on their EWOM to make purchase decisions (Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn 2008, Zhao, Wang, Tang, & Zhang, 2020), it is necessary to consider the mediator effect of social tie strength between the chosen channels and the costumer's purchase intention; then hypothesis 4a to 4c should also be tested.

- *H4a: The influence of social tie in purchase intention will be weak or null for VS & blogs.*
- *H4b: The influence of social tie in purchase intention will be greater for SNS than for the other channels.*
- *H4c: The influence of social tie in purchase intention in the case of community forums will be greater than for VS & blogs but weaker than for SNS*

Trustworthiness is an emotional factor, that influences the consumer's purchase decisions (Anderson, 1998, Eguchi & Yamashita, 2016b), and it is differently perceived depending on the communication channel, for EWOM the anonymity between the communicator and the receiver of the information may have a negative effect on the trust (Albarq & Al-Doghan, 2020); then, as it was pointed before, each channel had different peculiarities and when the connection with other users is more personal than the social tie in that channel will be stronger, opposite to channels where users exchange EWOM but there is not relationship with the people joining the channel. Taking this into account, hypotheses to prove the mediator relationship between social tie strength and trust are proposed.

- *H5a: The influence of social tie in trust will be weaker for VS & blogs than for the other channels*
- *H5b: The influence of social tie in trust will be stronger for SNS than for the other channels*
- *H5c: The influence of social tie in trust for community forums will be stronger than for VS & blogs but weaker than for SNS*

3.4 The influence of information for trust and purchase intention

When the costumer receives EWOM there will be a process of evaluation and if he/she does not trust in the source of information the trustworthiness of the information will be weak and the consumer may

not consider it to make purchase decisions (Eguchi & Yamashita, 2016a), in the past hypotheses the trust was based on the consumer's relationship with the transmitter of the EWOM; nevertheless, as hypotheses 3 states, there is an opposite relationship between social tie strength and information, where the information will have more strict requirements when the social tie is weaker and the analysis of information will be less strict when there is a stronger tie. Considering that this encompasses the consumer's perception of information quality and quantity; then this perception of the information will increase the trust.

In this case, when there is a high skepticism and uncertainty, the quantity of EWOM (number of comments or reviews), added to the perceived quality of the revived information will increase trust and influence the purchase intention (Eguchi & Yamashita, 2016a); consumers have a more favorable attitude towards a product when the product information has a high-quality argument compared to low-quality ones (Huang et. all., 2011). So, hypotheses H6 and H7 are suggested as follows:

- *H6a: The influence of information in purchase intention in the case of VS & blogs will be greater than for the other 2 channels*
- *H6b: The influence of information in purchase intention will be weaker or null for SNS compared the other channels*
- *H6c: The influence of information in purchase intention will be greater for community forums compared the other channels*
- *H7a: The influence of information in trust will be stronger for VS & blogs than for the other channels*
- *H7b: The influence of information in trust will be weaker for SNS than for the other channels*
- *H7c: The influence of information in trust for community forums will be stronger than for VS & blogs but weaker than for SNS*

3.5 Trust and Purchase intention

Trust is an important part of the model because perceived credibility will precede the acceptance of EWOM and purchase intention (Tien, Amaya, & Liao, 2018) and in the specific case of EWOM credibility is an issue since many times the users don't know each other and therefore they will doubt of the veracity of the information (Fang, 2014; Luo, C., Luo, X., Schatzberg, & Sia, 2013). The affinity (tie strength) to the person that shares the EWOM can influence decision making as an emotional factor, this means that the stronger the affinity the greater the influence will be, because affinity influences

trustworthiness which at the same time influences decision making (Eguchi & Yamashita, 2016b; Hernandez-Ortega, 2017).

Social tie is also related to information quality and trust, because consumers usually consider both the credibility of the information source, and the quality of information itself, in the process of judging recommendations (Zhao, et. al. 2020). Considering this, I propose that as the social tie gets stronger the consumer will increase his/her trust in the receives EWOM and this affinity with the transmitter will also have a positive effect in the purchase intention because of the trust but also because the relationship between the parts decreases uncertainty and risk feelings, limiting the analysis of alternative options. Then, the proposition is that a greater trust in the information will have a stronger impact on the purchase intentions, which leads to the last proposed hypothesis:

- *H8a: In the case of SNS, trust will lead to purchase intention.*
- *H8b: In the cases of VS & blogs and community forums the lack of trust will prevent purchase intention.*

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESES TESTING

4.1 Sample and data collection

As this research aimed to search the difference between different communication channels of EWOM, a survey based on previous literature was developed, and the adapted for each channel. The survey was filled online, the first part of the formulary contained demographic questions and by the end of this section there was a filter question “among this group of websites which ones are the ones that you use the most for searching information when you are interested in purchase a new product?”, depending on the answer of the respondent the electronic survey would redirect each participant to the survey of the channel that better matched their information searching preferences.

The three survey options can be seen in in appendix 2, excluding the part related to the demographic questions, in which case just the results are listed.

The survey was distributed to a total of 360 people, 120 for each group, with a return of 263 responses, after eliminating the outliers and invalid responses the valid answers were: 77 from VS users, 84 from SNS users and 84 from community forums users.

The surveys were applied to foreigners living in Korea, active users of at least one of the 3 chosen EWOM channels. The overall demographic characteristics of the final respondents are: 44.8% women and 55.2% men, the majority between 20 and 39 years old. The proposition is that in daily bases these participants receive various kinds of EWOM through multiples channels of communication.

Based on previous studies of source of information and message this research examines the conceptual model using cross-sectional data obtained via a quantitative survey. The final survey was administrated via online to graduate students and workers living in Korea; the participants were contacted through foreign community groups in EWOM channels, as well as snowball sampling.

4.2 Construct definitions and measuring items

The variables considered in the model include: information, social tie strength, trust and purchase intention. Is worth to note that although the EWOM groups are considered in the model, they are used as a control groups to analyze the differences of the relations between the constructs of the

independent and dependent variables of the model, also, the definition for each one of these channels was provided in chapter 2.2 (refer to the mentioned chapter for channels' definitions).

However, previous studies had given diverse descriptions for these variables, the specific definition for each of these constructs in the context of this research were considered as follows:

Information

Information is data/knowledge transmitted in a message from sender to receiver. The receiver interprets the message as intended by the sender. There may be added value as the information is disseminated or exchanged (Madden, 2000). For the specific case of this research, information is the data obtained through an electronic channel through EWOM communication. In this specific case, this data should be related to a purchase intention or customer experience to be considered information.

Social tie strength

Early approaches defined the strength of social ties as a combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy and sometimes as a measure of trust which characterizes the tie (Basta, N. et al., 2019). For this research I also consider the filial proximity to the sender of the message, in this case associated to the type of relationship between the users of each channel, then social tie will tend to be strong in networks where the users share information with family, friends and in a lower level to acquaintances.

Trust

Trust means that a person voluntarily depends on another person with a feeling of relative security, even though negative consequences are possible. 'Depends' is specified as a behavioral term, distinguishing trust-related behavior from trusting Intentions, which inhere a willingness to depend (Harrison & Chernavy, 2001). In this case trust will be understood as the extent to which a person relies to the EWOM received from another user of a determinate channel in order to make purchase decisions or evaluate product options.

Purchase intention

Purchase intention can be defined as a situation where a consumer is willing and intends to make transactions (Meskaran, et al., 2013). For this research the action of buying a product can be done online or offline as long as the source of information had been EWOM.

Measuring items

The model was divided on two parts for the analysis, the first one would be focused on the different channels chosen and this distinction was made through the division of the respondents in three groups and adapting the questions for each channel.

In the second part of the model the relation between the dependent and independent variables was studied, here the social tie strength was measured using the scales of Petróczi, Nepusz, & Bazsó (2007), and Hernández-Ortega (2017). The information scale was adopted from Kim, Yoon, & Choi, (2018), López, & Sicilia, (2014), Park & Kim (2009), Park, Lee, & Han, (2007); McAllister (1995), Zhao, et al. (2020). Purchase intention was measured with the scales of Hernandez-Ortega, (2017), and Yüksel, (2016). And trust was measured using the for items taken from the scales of Lee, Dobeles & Robinson (2018), Morgan-Thomas, & Veloutsou, (2013), and Zhao, et al. (2020).

As it was already mentioned the survey was adapted for each channel, therefore three different types of questionnaires were applied, refer to appendix 2 to see the three different surveys used for the collection of the information.

The scales established in the literature previously mentioned were all seven-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), with the exception of the EWOM channels items which were measured using nominal values. The initial list of items chosen for this survey can be seen in the table below, and considered 5 items for social tie, 4 for purchase intention, 4 for trust; and, 6 for information, the model validity using these items was tested and the explanation and results appear in the next section of the research and the number of scales was reduced as we will explain later.

According to Conroy (2018), the sample size for Comparisons between groups is made considering that the groups are part of the same population, in which case the sample size should be increased. For this study a sample for a prevalence of 10% with a power of 90% and significant difference of at least 25% was chosen, therefore a sample per group of at least 65 people was needed.

Consistent with the process used by Zhang, Feick, & Mittal, (2014), the channel condition was manipulated by presenting 3 different scenarios, one per each channel, these hypothetical cases will be related to the items related to the tie strength mediator variable, and the dependent variables of trust and

purchase intention, which are hypothesized to be related to the channels in Hypotheses: H1, H2, and H3. The participants were divided in three groups; each group will answer the survey from one of the three channel perspectives.

Then, the approaches will be as follows: “Imagine that you want to purchase a new telephone, and you decide to search for information in *(name of the channel)*” the rest of the questions will be the same for all the groups.

4.2.1 Model validity

Validity tests (convergent and discriminant validity) were performed to validate the measurement scale before the main stage of analysis. The measurement model was tested by two techniques: Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using SPSS and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using AMOS for SPSS.

Exploratory factor analysis

The model was run twice. In the first trial the factor loadings showed high values that were similar for several items, showing a high correlation between these items and more than one variable, therefore they had to be discarded, from the final survey.

In the second EFA analysis, as expected, the results showed four groups of items, to cover the proposed variables. Considering this, the first variable “social tie strength”, was measured with 4 items, the variable “information” was measured with 3 items, and the dependent variables “trust” and “purchase” intention were measured with 4 and 3 items respectively.

The EFA showed a fit of 0.791 (KMO and Bartlett’s test) with a significant *p value* 0.000 confirming the validity of the four variables used for the model, as well as the fit of the items proposed for the survey.

Table 1
Factor loadings of the EFA

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
social tie 1	0.852	0.085	0.163	-0.010
social tie 2	0.854	0.039	0.122	0.110
social tie 3	0.784	-0.091	0.191	0.033
social tie 4	0.652	-0.215	-0.056	0.415
information 4	-0.151	0.763	0.317	-0.060
information 5	-0.124	0.888	-0.002	0.115
information 6	0.104	0.811	0.005	0.194
purchase intention 1	0.251	0.046	0.849	-0.009
purchase intention 2	0.004	0.133	0.847	0.109
purchase intention A3	0.159	0.315	0.564	0.226
purchase intention 4	0.117	-0.061	0.822	0.077
trust 1	0.193	0.397	0.198	0.636
trust 2	0.077	0.364	0.002	0.579
trust A4	0.046	-0.089	0.148	0.786

Note: Extraction Method => Principal component analysis
Rotation Method => Varimax with Kaiser Normalization
Rotation converged in 5 iterations,

In order to confirm the reliability of each factor Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) were used. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is commonly used to exclude non-conforming variables, with criteria rated as items with an item correlation of less than 0.3 being eliminated and the criteria for selecting the scale is when the Cronbach's Alpha value is ≥ 0.6 (Hair, et al. 2006, Nunnally & Burnstein, 1994).

On the other hand, some authors have affirmed that CR is a less biased estimate compared to Cronbach Alpha, the scale considered reliable when the CR coefficient and the extraction deviation are greater than 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In this case the results show that two of the items of the variables of the scale corresponding to "information" had a correlation in two factors and therefore were deleted from the analysis and the model was run again in SPSS, in the second results all items had a correlation greater than 0.3 and both Cronbach Alpha and CR were above the minimum required levels which are 0.6 and 0.5 respectively, as we can see in table 4.

Furthermore, the communality values in the EFA should be higher than 0.4 to be significant, which was fulfilled as the values of the results go from 0.564 as the lowest value to 0.888 as the highest communality value; therefore, all the items are confirmed again to be accepted. Therefore, the values

of the results show that there is a high level of internal consistency for the scale used to collect the data in this research.

Table 2
EFA reliability values

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha	CR
Social tie strenght	4	0.824	0.868
Information	3	0.807	0.862
Purchase intention	4	0.819	0.858
Trust	3	0.597	0.858

Note: Minimum acceptable value for Cronbach Alpha is 0.6 and for CR 0.5, all values are greater than the minimum established.

Confirmatory factor analysis

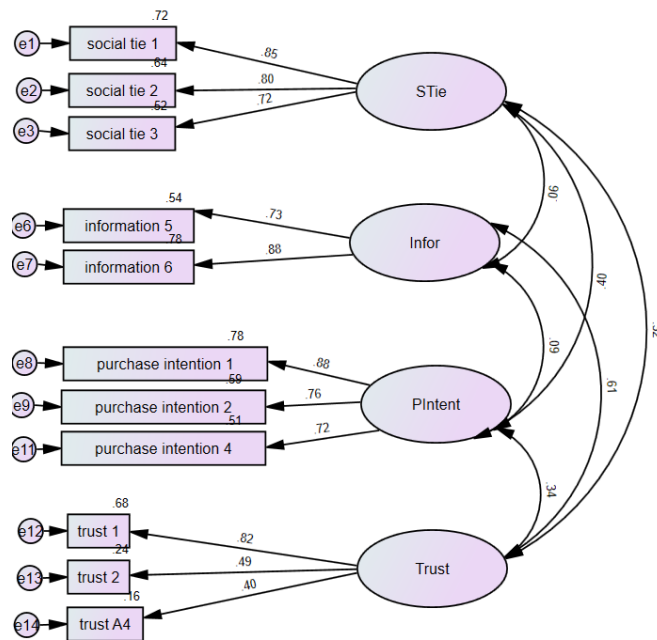
Finally, the validity of social tie strength, information, purchase intention and trust as variables was assessed by performing a CFA using AMOS26. This analysis was also performed twice. In the first CFA the results showed low values in the correlations of 3 of the items, therefore although they seemed to be significant in the EFA were not for CFA, as low values suggest that there is a low correlation between the item and the variable that they are supposed to measure for the specific case of the data tested.

To avoid biases in the final results, the items with low loadings in the first CFA were deleted. The values that appeared to be lower than .4 were “social tie 4”, “information 4”, and “purchase intention 3”.

The model had overall good fit indices of X^2/DF of $2.162 < 5.0$ or less, RMSEA of $0.069 < 0.08$, IFI of 0.958, NFI of 0.925, CFI of 0.957, GFI of 0.949, and AGFI of 0.903, all greater than 0.80.

Figure 2

CFA Standardized regression estimates



Note: Social tie and Information are expected to not be correlated as the proposition is that consumers will prefer one or the other one, or use one of them more than the other, depending on the source of EWOM and the channel,

Thus, the final measure tool includes 11 measuring items, 3 items to measure social tie between the transmitter and receptor of the EWOM, 2 items to measure the information, 3 items to measure trust, and 3 items to measure purchase intention. The reliability of each of the four variables as also tested by computing the means in excel to obtain the value of composite reliability and Cronbach Alpha, both significant with values higher or equal than 0.6 and 0.5 respectively.

Table 3

Results of CFA

Path (Item-variable)		Estimate	P	Composite Reliability	Cronbach Alpha
SocialTie1	--> SocialTie	0.859	***	0.83	0.82
SocialTie2	--> SocialTie	0.792	***		
SocialTie3	--> SocialTie	0.705	***		
Information5	--> Information	0.715	***	0.79	0.81
Information6	--> Information	0.897	***		
PurchaseIntention1	--> PurchaseIntention	0.879	***	0.83	0.82
PurchaseIntention2	--> PurchaseIntention	0.771	***		
PurchaseIntention4	--> PurchaseIntention	0.714	***		
Trust1	--> Trust	0.837	***	0.61	0.60
Trust2	--> Trust	0.476	***		
TrustA3	--> Trust	0.402	***		

Note: Minimum acceptable value for Cronbach Alpha is 0.6 and for CR 0.5, all values are greater than the minimum established.

Also, as expected, the covariance between the final four variables shows positive values of less than 1 with a significant P value = 0.000, with two exceptions: first, the covariance between information and purchase intention that has a significant P value of 0.003; and second, the connection between social tie and information that have an estimate of .998, non-significant because it has a P value = 0.319. This is consistent with the proposal of the research that depending on the type of EWOM chosen the importance of social tie and information will be different, given preference to one or another.

4.3 Data analysis: hypotheses testing and results

The data analysis was divided in two phases. First ANOVA was run in order to prove the mean differences for the three studied groups; and second, a multigroup analysis was run in AMOS in order to obtain the estimates for the relation of the model variables.

4.3.1 ANOVA: group mean differences

The results of the ANOVA outputs are validated by the F and P values. For this analysis the F critical value (2,243) = 4.61 p value = 0.01, in the case of social tie results show an F value of 117.136 significant with a p value of 0.000, and information shows an F value of 32.756, significant at a p value of 0.000.

The test of homogeneity in ANOVA for the social tie and information variables showed a P value of 0.007, and 0.004 respectively, rejecting in both cases the null hypothesis that the values are equal, and therefore each channel group shows be differently affected by the social tie and information, as we can see in table 5.

Table 4
ANOVA: means and hypotheses testing

	N	Mean for Social Tie Strength	Standard deviation for Social Tie Strength	Mean for Information	Standard deviation for Information	Hypotheses
Video Sharing & blogs	77	2.680	0.998	5.221	1.140	H1a & H2a => Supported
SNS	84	5.444	1.053	4.714	1.071	
Community Forums	84	3.956	1.349	6.006	0.910	
Total	245	4.065	1.604	5.316	1.170	

Note: the mean results were taken from 2 different ANOVA analysis, one applied for the social tie and one for the information.

In the case of social tie strength, the mean values for the three channels are different for about one unit each (VB&S 2.680, SNS 5.444, CF 3.956), showing that the model is indeed different for the three groups; and therefore, supporting H1a. Similar to this, the analysis of information also showed a significant difference in the means between groups (VS&B 5.221, SNS 4.714 and CF 6.006) supporting H2a.

In addition, a Tukey HSD post-Hoc analysis was made to compare the means between SNS and the other two groups in order to test H1b, H2b and H3. The results showed that, compared to VS&B and CF, SNS is more closely related to social tie with significant values of 2.7565 and 1,488 respectively, supporting H1b. Opposite to this, for the case of information SNS shows negative meanings with respect to VS&B (-0.5065) and CF (-1.2917), supporting H2b.

Table 5
ANOVA: Tukey HSD post Hoc means

Dependent Variable	Multiple comparisons	Mean difference	Sig.	
Social tie	VS&B	SNS	-2.765	0.000
		CF	-1.277	0.000
	SNS	VS&B	2.765	0.000
		CF	1.488	0.000
	CF	VS&B	1.277	0.000
		SNS	-1.488	0.000
Information	VS&B	SNS	0.5065	0.006
		CF	-0.7852	0.000
	SNS	VS&B	-0.5065	0.006
		CF	-1.2917	0.000
	CF	VS&B	0.7852	0.000
		SNS	1.2917	0.000

**H1b
Supported**

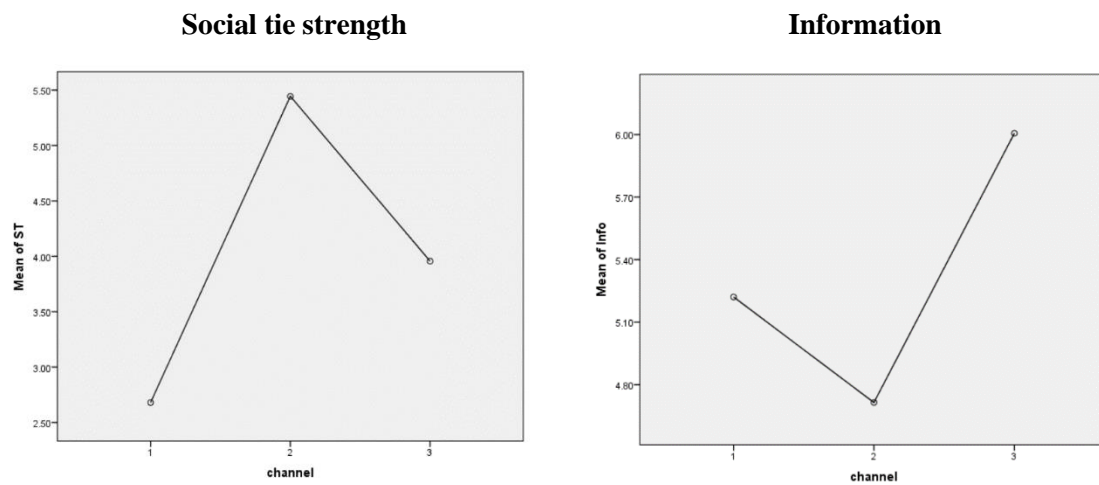
**H2b
Supported**

Note: the mean results were taken from 2 different ANOVA analysis, one applied for the social tie and one for the information.

From comparing these results, we can also see that when the values are positive for social tie with one of the groups, they are negative for information. In other words, the values of each group with respect to social tie are opposite to the ones that they have for information, supporting H3, as we can see in figure 4.

Figure 3

Group differences for social tie strength and information



Note: 1= VS& blogs, 2= SNS, 3= community forums. Source: Source: data analysis results of the research.

4.3.2 Multi group analysis

In order to taste the validity of the analysis researchers use numerous goodness-of-fit indicators to assess a model. Significance of different indices with different samples sizes, types of data, and ranges of acceptable scores are the major factors to decide whether a good fit exists (Hu & Bentler, 1999). In general, Chi- squares, GFI, IFI, CFI, and RMSEA for one-time analyses are preferred (Schreiber et al, 2006). The results of the test showed an overall good model fit with X^2/DF of $1.830 < 5.0$, RMSEA of $0.059 < 0.08$, IFI of 0.936, NFI of 0.869, CFI of 0.930, GFI of 0.922, and AGFI of 0.806, all greater than 0.80.

From the significance in the results of the SEM multi group analysis we can support and reject some of the proposed hypotheses. First, as for VS&B p value > 0.05 , H4a is supported, as it stated that the influence of social tie over purchase intention would be low or non-significant; then, as for SNS p value = 0.421 we also reject H4b, as it stated that for the case of this channel social tie would be relevant but turned up not being significant. Also, as CF showed the only significant mean, H4c is partially supported, as the influence of social tie on purchase intention is clearly more significant that the one for the case of VB&S but SNS is not more significant as it was expected.

Second, the meanings for the influence of information on purchase intention showed that for SNS p value = 0.537, as it is non-significant, we support H6b, which propose that for SNS user's information won't affect purchase intention, and for the case of CF as the p value was also non-significant H6c is rejected as the mean can't be compared to SNS or VS&B; and last, H6a is supported

as it stated that VB&S will have the strongest influence and the meanings for the other two channels were non-significant.

Moreover, in the relation between trust and purchase intention, none of the values is significant with all *P values* above 0.05, rejecting H8a and H8b, as trust don't seem to have a direct effect in purchase intention for this research.

Finally, all the values measuring the influence of social tie in trust were significant; therefore, H5a, H5b and H5c were tested with a path analysis. The values for measuring the influence of information on trust were also significant so H7a, H7b, and H7c also were tested with path analysis to compare the significance of each group.

Table 6
SEM Multi-group analysis means

		GROUPS' MEANINGS						HYPOTHESES		
		VS & blogs	P value	SNS	P value	CF	P value	Supported	Rejected	Partially supported
Social Tie	--> Purchase Int.	-0.361	0.257	-0.115	0.421	0.603	0.020	H4a	H4b	H4c
Social Tie	--> Trust	0.322	0.048	0.513	0.044	0.229	0.013			
Information	--> Purchase Int.	0.748	0.007	-0.042	0.537	0.368	0.373	H6a, H6b	H6c	
Information	--> Trust	0.258	0.030	0.331	0.021	0.652	***			
Trust	--> Purchase Int.	0.779	0.128	0.308	0.224	-0.193	0.718		H8a, H8b	

Note: *** < 0.0001, Bold values are non-significant at a $p < 0.05$

Nested model comparison and path analysis

As a last confirmation, a nested model comparison in AMOS was performed. The constrained and unconstrained model were compared as well as each path to check the differences between groups. The results confirm that the model is different for each channel, as we can see in table 8.

Table 7
Chi-square comparisons between models

	Chi-square	df	p-val
Overall Model			
Unconstrained	98.831	54	
Fully constrained	219.289	86	
Number of groups		3	
Difference	120.458	32	0.000

Equally important, two path analyses were performed in both AMOS and SPSS in order to test the influence of social tie towards trust for the three channels (H5a/b/c), and the influence of information

on trust for the three channels (H7a/b/c). The comparison of the values of the paths for each channel was made considering the chi square and degrees of freedom, as well as the p value, as we can see in table 9.

From the results of the path analysis, we can note that the influence of information on trust is high for CF, moderate for SNS and low for VS&B, which differs from the hypothesized results (SNS>CF>VS&B); therefore, H5a is supported because, as expected, VS&B was the lowest value, and H5b and c are partially supported as both are more significant than VS&B but their significance has a different order than the anticipated in the research.

However, the result from the path analysis between information and trust showed that, as expected, the values for SNS were the lowest ones, supporting H7b. Nevertheless, as the value of VS&B (2.129) is lower than the mean of CF (2.615), H7a and H7c are partially supported, being both more significant than SNS but not in the hypothesized order.

Table 8
Chi-square comparisons between paths

Parameter/Path	Constrained values			Unconstrained values				Hypotheses testing
	χ^2	DF	P	Channel	χ^2	DF	χ^2/DF	
Social tie->Trust	102.832	56	0.000	VS&B	125.435	110	1.140	H5a supported
				SNS	180.233	80	2.253	H5b partially supported
				CF	351.425	140	2.510	H5c partially supported
Information->Trust	102.525	56	0.000	VS&B	234.194	110	2.129	H7a partially supported
				SNS	144.231	72	2.003	H7b supported
				CF	209.239	80	2.615	H7c partially supported

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

EWOM is nowadays one of the most used sources of information when consumers need to make a purchase decision (Dellarocas, 2003, Hernandez-Ortega, 2017) mainly because consumers can get the information, they want in the moment they need it (Tucker, 2012).

Considering the importance of EWOM for the firms, this research analyzed cross-sectional data obtained via a quantitative survey applied to users of different EWOM channels to study the different effects of social tie strength and information over consumer trust and purchase intention among the three chosen channels: VS&B, SNS and CF.

The analysis revealed that there is a significant difference between the three EWOM channels studied (VS&B, SNS and CF), in the way that social tie and information influence consumers' trust and purchase intention; and that there is an inverse relationship between the groups and the independent variables "social tie" and "information" having SNS the closest connection with social tie and the weakest link to information.

The results of the study can be explained by channel. First, for social networking sites, both, social tie and information have a great influence on trust but not on purchase intention but none of these variables affect purchase intention. Trust does not affect purchase intention.

Second, for video sharing and blogs, information has a great influence in both, trust and purchase intention, while social tie strength does not impact purchase intention, but it has influence in trust, and trust does not increase purchase intention.

Third, in the case of community forums, both, information and social tie strength are important to increase trust, but just social tie influences purchase intention; nevertheless, trust does not increase purchase intention.

5.2 Managerial implications

Many studies have been made about WOM and EWOM; nevertheless, the academic debate regarding the moderating role of the different communication channels and their individual characteristics remain wandering (Babic, Sotgiu, de Valk, & Bijmolt, 2016).

This research aimed to contribute to the analysis of this literature gap by studying some of the most used channels of EWOM: Video Sharing and blogs (VS&B), Social Networking Services (SNS), and Community Forums (CF). The results of the study may support some practical implications for the use of EWOM in different channels.

First, EWOM should be used differently depending on the channel chosen. Firms can increase purchase intention through VS&B by spreading constant and reliable information, in other words they should increase the quality and quantity of the information provided, this can be done through paid product/brand reviews, leveraging influencers and Public Relations (Yüksel, 2016).

Second, for the case of SNS and CF the as the social tie is more relevant, reviews may not be contingent to pay, therefore the way of increasing positive EWOM is through promoting brand equity and loyalty (Sweeney, Soutar, & Mazzarol, 2014). For the specific case of CF could be made by creating specific groups for their target market to with attractive and continuously updated information to gather; while for SNS users may be done through interpersonal consumer service and leveraging customer satisfaction surveys (perceptive, 2017, Sweeney, Soutar, & Mazzarol, 2014).

Then, as SNS seems to just increase consumers trust, it should be used mainly to increase brand awareness and equity, which could indirectly affect purchase intention, but this should be tested in a different study. Is also important to remember that according to this study's analysis results, increasing consumers' trust does not necessarily improve purchase intention.

This research is relevant because companies need to understand how customers influence each other and how to manage these customer interactions (Blazevic, et al. 2013) and the findings could allow retailers, social media marketers and designers of online platforms to understand how EWOM influences the consumer's purchase decisions and how they should manage marketing initiatives by designing effective virtual strategies. (Hernandez-Ortega, 2017)

5.3 Limitations and future research

Future research should address the limitations apparent in the current study. The database collected for the study was made from foreign participants residing in Korea, which gives an intercultural perspective of the way different EWOM channels are used, nevertheless the study could be replicated taking participants from a single country to check whether the results change considering just one cultural background.

Besides, this research does not focus in any specific product line or brand and the search of information may differ among products; therefore, taking a more specific target objective could also give a clearer perspective to enhance consumer's purchase intention depending on the channels used by the consumers of specific products or services.

Also, it would be interesting to analyze the perspective of different channels considering the involvement and risk of the purchase, this research was made without considering a specific product, but just the consumers' opinions and uses of EWOM as well as how they influence in their purchase intention when they need to acquire a product, testing how the result change giving specific examples that alter the involvement and risk of the users could bring significant contributions.

Future research should also consider that, as the results of the study showed, a strong social tie can come from the family and friends, but also a close connection between users of community forums can be developed by the consumers' similarities even though they do not know each other personally, this differences on strong social ties should be studied in depth.

And last, in this study video sharing and blogs were considered under the same category of sites, separating them could also bring different results to the analysis.

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APENDIX 1

PARTICIPANTS DEMOGRAPHICS

	DEMOGRAPHICS	VS & BLOGS	SNS	COMMUNITY FORUMS
GENDER	Female	38	50	30
	Male	47	42	56
AGE	Under 20 years	5	4	0
	20-29 years	46	59	49
	30-39 years	29	27	26
	40-50 years	3	0	0
	51 years or older	2	2	11
STUDIES (completed)	High school	10	15	16
	Bachelor degree	58	53	49
	Master's degree	12	15	17
	PhD or higher	3	5	0
	Other	2	4	4
EMPLOYMENT STATUS	Employed full time	34	41	40
	Unemployed	4	4	3
	Retired	5	1	3
	Student	39	45	38
	Other	3	1	2
INCOME	Equal or under 1,000,000 won	49	34	34
	1,000,100 to 2,000,000 won	9	30	20
	2,000,100 to 3,000,000 won	21	25	20
	More than 3,000,001 won	6	3	12
CITY IN KOREA	Busan	1	12	10
	Changwon	0	2	0
	Daegu	6	3	6
	Gimhae	0	6	0
	Gunsan	3	0	0
	Gwangju	2	3	3
	Gyeongju	7	9	10
	Incheon	0	2	4
	Jeongeup	3	1	0
	Jinju	0	2	0
	Osan	3	0	0

NATIONALITY	Pohang	12	12	4
	Sangju	0	2	0
	Seongnam	3	0	0
	Seoul	23	17	32
	Suwon	0	2	2
	Ulsan	19	19	13
	Yongsan	0	0	2
	Yongin	3	0	0
	Canada	14	12	24
	Mexico	9	3	15
	South Africa	8	11	0
	USA	18	15	17
	Asia	16	22	15
	Europe	0	8	4
	Others in Africa	7	18	4
	Others in America	13	3	7

Note: as the respondents were for many countries, for the table they were grouped by continents, except for those countries with a great number of participants.

APENDIX 2

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRES

TYPE 1: Video sharing and blogs

Online searching and information trust

Rate in a scale from 1 to 7 how much you agree or disagree with the next statements

FOR THE FIRST 5 STATEMENTS, suppose that you want to buy a new mobile phone, and you decide to watch YouTube videos and read twitter post from influencers or experts that know about or have experience with the specific phone you want to purchase.

I think that I have a close relationship with the person sharing the information in the video

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly agree

If I want to contact a youtuber or any other influencer, I can write to them and they will respond to the messages or comments

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly agree

When I'm watching videos I trust the person that is sharing the information in the video

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly agree

If the person sharing the information in the video needs it, I would give him/her advice

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly agree

I have common interests and likes with the youtubers in the videos that I watch when I search for recommendations *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

If I need it, I can find useful information online *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I talk about online content with my friends and family *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

...

When I find a website, video or online group that I like, I share it with my friends and family *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I use online websites to find information when I want to buy a product *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

When I'm considering to buy a product, I like to watch YouTube reviews/experiences, or read what has been tweeted about that product before making the decision *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

If I don't find enough information online I would rather not to buy the product *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

When I search for information, I want to know both the positive and negative reviews/opinions of the product *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I can get the information I need, when I need it by searching for it in YouTube or Twitter *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

...

Usually, I can find in YouTube or Twitter all the information I want to know (to clarify my doubts about products or services) *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I can find in YouTube and Twitter detailed information that is easy to understand *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I would consider buying a product if a YouTuber or influencer that I like/follow gives a positive review about it or uses it *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I would consider buying a product if a lot of people give positive reviews/comments about it in social media *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

If I'm interested on purchasing a product, I would search and read reviews in YouTube or Twitter *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Sometimes I want to buy products after I see them in videos or in my social media *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I can find reliable and trustworthy information when I search for it in YouTube or twitter *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

When I search for information in YouTube or Twitter I can find credible sources *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

When I watch/read YouTube or Twitter reviews I trust in the information they give me *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I feel more confident with my purchase decision If I buy a product after I have read comments and reviews online about it *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

TYPE 2: Social Networking Services

Online searching and information trust

Rate in a scale from 1 to 7 how much you agree or disagree with the next statements

FOR THE FIRST 5 STATEMENTS, suppose that you want to buy a new mobile phone, and you ask for recommendations in your social media, then some of your friends and relatives comment on your post with their experiences and opinions about that specific product.

I have a close relationship with the people that gave me the information (in this case friends and family) *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly agree

I often spend time (on or offline) with the people that gave me the information (in this case friends and family) *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly agree

I trust my friends and family when they give advices or recommendations *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly agree

I would give advice to my friends and family if they need it *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly agree

I have common interests and likes with my friends and family *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly agree

When I need it, I can find useful information if I ask on my social media for recommendations and opinions *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I talk about online content with my friends and family *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

When I find a website, video, or online group that I like, I share it with my friends and family *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

If I want to buy a product, I ask my friends and family for information and opinions *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

When I'm considering to buy a product, I need to read many online reviews before making the decision *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

If I don't find enough information online I would rather not to buy the product *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

When I search for information I want to know both the positive and negative opinions of the product, especially from my friends and family *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

If I ask for information to my family or friends, I get it in the moment I need it *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

If I ask to my friends or family I can get all the information I want to know (to clarify my doubts about products or services) *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

My friends and family can give me detailed information that is easy to understand *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I would consider to buy a product if a friend or family member recommends it *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I would consider to buy a product if a lot of people give positive reviews/comments about it in social media *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

If I'm interested in purchasing a product I would ask for opinions in social media *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Sometimes when my friends or family talk or use certain products I want to buy them too *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I can get reliable and trustworthy information if I ask to my family and friends *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

When I search information online I find credible sources *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

When I ask to my family and friends in my social media about a product I trust in the information they give me *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I feel more confident with my purchase decision If I buy a product after I have read comments and reviews online about it, especially if the reviews come from my family or friends *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

TYPE 3: Community Forums

Online searching and information trust

Rate in a scale from 1 to 7 how much you agree or disagree with the next statements

FOR THE FIRST 5 STATEMENTS, suppose that you want to buy a new mobile phone, and you ask for recommendations on Facebook groups and community forums (like reddit), then some random people comment on your post about their experiences and opinions with that specific product.

I think I have a close relationship with the people in my Facebook groups or community forums *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly agree

I often spend time (on or offline) with people in my Facebook groups or community forums *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly agree

I trust the people in my Facebook groups or community forums *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly agree

I would give advice to people in my Facebook groups or community forums in case they need it *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly agree

I have common interests and likes with the people in my Facebook groups or community forums *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly agree

If I need it, I can find useful information online *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I talk about online content with my friends and family *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

When I find a website, video or online group that I like, I share it with my friends and family *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I use online websites to find information when I want to buy a product *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

When I'm considering to buy a product, I need to read many online reviews before making the decision *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

If I don't find enough information online I would rather not to buy the product *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

When I search for information, I want to know both the positive and negative opinions of the product *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

If I search for information online, I get it in the moment I need it *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Usually, I can find on the internet all the information I want to know (to clarify my doubts about products or services) *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

On the internet I can find detailed information that is easy to understand *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

If different people in my Facebook groups (or any other community forums) recommend a product I would consider to buy it *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I would consider to buy a product if a lot of people give positive reviews/comments about it on social media *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

If I'm interested on purchasing a product, I would search and read reviews on social media, watch YouTube videos or visit community forums *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

If a lot of people are talking about the same product I want to buy it too *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I can find reliable and trustworthy information on internet *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

When I search information online I find credible sources *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

When I ask in online groups or forums about a product I trust in the information they give me *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

If I buy a product after reading comments and reviews online about that product I feel more confident with my purchase decision *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

초록.

본 연구는 EWOM 전송에 사용된 채널이 소비자의 신뢰에 다른 영향을 미치는지 여부를 조사하고 메시지에 대한 응답으로 구매 의도를 강화하거나 결정에 대한 불편함을 증가시킨다. 그럼에도 불구하고, 이는 정보 (질과양) 와 메시지 발신자와 수신자 사이의 우대에 의해 중재될 것이다.

구매 결정 정보 출처로 해당 사이트를 이용하는 동영상 공유 사이트, 블로그, SNS, 커뮤니티 포럼 이용자 총 263 명이 온라인 설문조사를 마쳤다. 이 표본은 국제적인 하위 온라인 그룹과 눈덩이표본추출법을 통해 모집되었다.

조사 결과는 소셜네트워크서비스(SNS)와 소비자의 신뢰와 구매 의도에 영향을 미치는 것을 보여준다, 방식으로 동영상 공유 사이트와 블로그, 커뮤니티 포럼 사이에 상당한 차이가 있다. 집단과 독립 변수 "사용자 우대" 와 "정보" 사이에 역관계가 존재하며 SNS 는 사회적 유대감과 가장 밀접한 관련이 있고 정보에 대한 가장 약한 연결고리를 가지고 있다.

이 연구는 단일 국가의 참가자들을 대상으로 하나의 문화적 배경만을 고려하여 결과가 변화하는지 여부를 확인할 필요가 있다. 또한 보다 구체적인 표정 시장을 고르는 것은 특정 제품 또는 이 제품의 소비자가 사용하는 채널에 따라 소비자의 구매의도를 제고하는 더 명확한 관점을 제공할 수 있다.

본 연구에서 도출할 수 있는 실질적인 의미는 크게 세 가지이다. 첫째, EWOM 은 선택한 채널에 따라 다르게 사용해야 한다. 둘째, 소셜 네트워킹 사이트 및 커뮤니티 포럼의 경우, 사회적 유대관계가 보다 관련성이 높기 때문에 긍정적인 EWOM 을 늘리는 방법은 브랜드 형평성과 충성도를 높이는 것이다. 그리고 셋째, 소비자의 신뢰를 증가한다고 해서 구매의사가 반드시 높아지는 것은 아니다.

본 연구는 다른 채널에서의 영향과 채널 간 사회적 유대 강도의 차이가 정보 분석의 결과에 어떤 영향을 미치는지 설명함으로써 이전의 EWOM 연구를 확장했다¹.

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