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## E-WOM Intentions towards Social Media Messages

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# eWOM Intentions toward Social Media Messages

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**Abstract** - This study investigated the influence of a consumer's online shopping motivation, attitude, and eWOM intention towards two social media messages while accounting for social media involvement. Using a fictitious brand and social media messages, data were collected through a snowballing technique by distributing a structured questionnaire on social media sites. It was found that a positive attitude toward task messages was influenced by both utilitarian and hedonic shopping motivations while attitude toward socioemotional messages were influenced solely by hedonic. Also, eWOM intention for both messages was influenced by attitude. Social media involvement had no moderating effect on the relationship between attitude and eWOM intention or a direct impact on eWOM intention.

**Keywords** – Social media, Electronic word of mouth (eWOM), Social media content

**Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and/or Practitioners** - These findings indicate the importance of identifying key shopping motivations of customers who frequent a brand's social media pages. In this way brands may fashion appropriate social media messages that may result in higher eWOM. Brands should also focus social media messages towards all social media followers not just those customers active on the social media pages, as a higher social media involvement does not necessarily indicate a greater likelihood of eWOM.

## Introduction

Companies seeking to build long-term customer relationships need to develop digital relations using promotional strategies that place importance on the co-creation of content and meaning. One way companies are seeking to achieve this is to adopt marketing campaigns aimed to produce word of mouth mainly

through social network. Social networks are an online communication tool that allows customers to engage in a conversation with other consumers and the company (Barreto 2014; Tiago and Verissimo 2014; Vernuccio 2014). As social media has become a popular channel for exchanging information among consumers it is important for businesses to consider the best way to leverage the power of social media as well as how to properly invest resources to gain a valuable return (Divol et al. 2012). To fully harness and use social media, companies need to understand consumer perceptions of the content presented by a brand in its social media pages. As consumer choices and consumption decisions are influenced by both hedonic and utilitarian motivations, understanding these motivations may allow companies to more effectively manage their social media messages to influence customers. Hedonic motivation refers to an intrinsic behaviour characterized by emotions such as fun and enjoyment during the shopping process, while utilitarian is an extrinsic behaviour driven more by the desire to achieve a particular task or goal (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Kwon and Jain 2009). While these motivations have been extensively studied in the literature, one area that lacks empirical research is how these motivations influence consumer perceptions of different types of content presented in a brand's social media pages. Therefore this study was designed to examine the relationships among online shopping motivations (hedonic and utilitarian), attitude toward social media message, and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) intention for two social media messages. Additionally, the study examined social media involvement as a moderator of the relationship between attitude and eWOM intention. Several previous studies, through qualitative content analysis, synthesized the main themes that arise on a brand's social media pages (Lin and Peña 2011; Parsons 2011; Saundage and Lee 2011). These studies found that companies use social media to engage with customers through either relational or transactional messages and that relational messages consist of two distinct types of message: task and socioemotional. The current study focused on the relational aspect of social media communication by using stimuli that represented task and socioemotional messages. This study also adds to the existing literature by expanding the knowledge of how consumers behave and respond to social media messages. The results may help companies engaging in social media activities to better target their customers by the application of more effective social media messages.

## **Literature Review**

### **Social Media Messages**

Messages and their accompanying content have been examined in relation to consumer perceptions on various levels. Inherently, advertising takes into account the importance of fashioning appropriate content to reach the right audience. In a study investigating the effectiveness of message content versus advertising expenses, it was found that the strategy surrounding message content is a very important decision for advertisers and outweighed the amount of money spent for the advertising budget (Van de Putte 2009). Fortunato (2008) introduces the importance of message content as it facilitates brand association. It is noted that message content can lead to a consumer's formation of a positive

opinion about a brand. With the move towards message content on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, there is an opportunity to better understand how brands should fashion content through this medium to target their customers.

Utilization of branded content is an appropriate way to examine social media messages. According to eMarketer, a market research firm, branded content refers to “anything created on behalf of a brand – be it an ad, YouTube video, online game, Facebook page, Twitter promo, or mobile app – that consumers genuinely want to engage with and pass along to others” (Miller and Washington 2012, p 210). Nearly 73% of the messages used for social media campaigns are in fact branded content created by the company (Miller and Washington 2012). The medium of social media has been called the Wild West and there is a great need, in particular, to “unravel the myths” about how brands can use the messages they create to reach consumers and produce a valid return on investment (Hosea 2011, p 28).

Several studies conducted content analyses of various brands’ social media pages (Lin and Peña 2011; Parsons 2011; Saundage and Lee 2011). Saundage and Lee (2011) found the majority of messages on social media pages were relational in nature, facilitating pre – and post – transactional themes along with support services, and only a limited number of messages were transactional, featuring direct sales. Parsons (2011) argued that companies use social media pages primarily to build relationships with customers. Accordingly, the current research focused on relational messages. Previous studies have found that relational messages can be categorized into two types of message: task and socioemotional (Bales 1950; Lin and Peña 2011). Task message content includes items relating to evaluation, information, suggestions, and opinions (Bales 1950; Lin and Peña 2011). In a previous study, task messages were identified to be the most prevalent type of message in social media pages (Lin and Peña 2011). In particular, the majority of task messages either gave suggestions or gave information. Socioemotional messages, on the other hand, include content themes such as rewards, jokes, salutations, agreement, and acceptance. In a content analysis investigating the Twitter behaviour of television networks, Lin and Peña (2011) found no presence of negative socioemotional message on the social media pages investigated. Therefore the current study focused only on task messages and positive socioemotional messages.

### **Shopping Motivations**

The driving motivator for shopping varies from the need to find a specific product/ service, time consumption, social outing with family and friends, emotion, pure enjoyment, or method of attraction. Often, these factors are classified as either utilitarian or hedonic shopping motivations (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). Utilitarian motivation is task oriented, and the benefits derived from this shopping experience are accomplished with the completion of the task and the efficiency in which the task is completed (Babin et al. 1994; Batra and Ahtola 1991). Utilitarian motivation has also been described as a critical, rational, and goal oriented process (Batra and Ahtola 1991; Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). This motivation is highly relevant for task specific use of

shopping, such as comparing prices and other features of a specific product or service (Hoffman and Novak 1996). Therefore, utilitarian value is more instilled in cognitive aspects of attitude in comparison to hedonic motivation, which is embedded in affective aspects of attitude (Jarvenpaa and Todd 1997; Zeithaml 1988). Hedonic motivation, on the other hand, is defined as consumption behaviours in pursuit of happiness, fantasy, awakening, sensuality, and enjoyment. The benefits of hedonic motivation are rooted in emotion and experience (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). Some consumers shop for an appreciation of the experience instead of focusing on task completion and the experience has been recognized as a vital element of shopping (Babin et al. 1994; Hoffman and Novak 1996).

Several studies have examined utilitarian and hedonic motivations in an online shopping environment as well as in a traditional format. Consumers engage in shopping for both utilitarian and hedonic reasons, but the two types of shopping motivation affect the consumer's shopping experience differently. For example, O'Brien (2010) found that both utilitarian and hedonic motivations influence user engagement with online shopping yet they influence different elements of user engagement. Kwon and Jain (2009) found both hedonic and utilitarian factors to be significant predictors of multichannel shopping but hedonic motivations was able to better explain high level multichannel shopping than moderate or non-multi-level shopping. To, Liao, and Lin (2007) noted that both utilitarian and hedonic shopping motivations significantly influence online shoppers' intentions to search and purchase but that the utilitarian was a stronger determinant of both intentions to search and purchase. Past studies also indicate that consumers with a stronger hedonic motivation find more enjoyment in interactive environments and consumers with a stronger utilitarian motivation are more likely to shop online when a pure text environment is provided (Childers et al. 2002; Zhou et al. 2007). Kim and Eastin (2011) observed that hedonic shopping motivation is a significant predictor of exploratory information seeking and impulse buying. Both utilitarian and hedonic attitudes played a vital role in effective online communication in Lopez and Ruiz' (2011) study; however, utilitarian attitude demonstrated a stronger relationship with cognitive communication, and hedonic attitude displayed a stronger connection with emotional communication. To date, shopping motivations have not been studied in relation to consumer responses to social media messages. Given the differences in the relative roles of utilitarian and hedonic motivations in consumer behaviors and communication, these two concepts may be useful in explaining how consumers react to two different social media messages. As task messages are more functional in nature and socioemotional messages are more affective with a stronger hedonic appeal, it is expected that utilitarian and hedonic shopping motivations will significantly influence attitude toward task and socioemotional messages, respectively.

Accordingly the following hypotheses were proposed:

**H1.** Consumers' utilitarian shopping motivation will have a positive significant influence on their attitude toward task social media messages.

**H2.** Consumers' hedonic shopping motivation will have a positive significant influence on their attitude toward socioemotional social media messages.

### **eWOM Intention**

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) refers to an online communication forum where one person shares information which is then passed from person to person via specific online contexts, in essence "going viral" (Yeh and Choi 2011). It has been widely utilized as a powerful marketing communication tool within companies because consumers' purchase-decision making processes tend to be closely influenced by opinion of others. Previous research has found that a consumer's intention to pass along information in an online setting is significantly predicted by the consumers' motivations such as altruism (Cheung and Lee 2012; Lee et al. 2011) and egoistic and collective motivation (Cheung and Lee 2012). Brand- and community-related variables such as brand identification (Yeh and Choi 2011), social trust (Chu and Kim 2011; Hau and Kim 2011; Yeh and Choi 2011), and online social ties (Chu and Kim 2011; Sohn 2009; Sun et al. 2006) have also been noted to influence a consumer's intention to pass information. However, little research has examined how consumers' attitudes towards social media messages influence their intention to participate in eWOM communication. Numerous studies have examined why consumers engage in eWOM behaviour. In a study by Henning-Thurau et al. (2004) five main motivations were identified to explain consumer engagement. Some of the motivations identified included the need to express positive emotions and to vent negative emotions. Sun et al. found innovativeness, internet usage, and internet social connection be significant predictors of consumer engagement in eWOM behaviour. When social networking sites were examined, Chu and Kim (2011) found tie strength, trust, normative, and informational interpersonal influence to be vital antecedents to eWOM behaviour when focusing of product focused messages. Lin and Peña (2011) observed that types of Twitter messages affected consumers' eWOM behaviours. When consumers considered socioemotional messages more important and influential than task messages, they passed these messages onto others more often. The current study attempted to extend the existing literature on eWOM by examining how attitudes towards socioemotional and task messages influence eWOM intention. Therefore, the following hypotheses were developed:

**H3a.** Attitude toward task social media messages will significantly influence eWOM intention.

**H3b.** Attitude toward socioemotional social media messages will significantly influence eWOM intention.

## Social Media Involvement

Social media is the consumption of digital media or Internet that has detoured from the traditional informational media use. Users of social media sites are regular patrons with more than one-third checking profiles and pages daily (Correa et al. 2010). Consumers rely on social media for product and brand information allowing companies to directly interact with these consumers at social media sites (Naveed 2012). Involvement has been defined as the degree to which consumers are engaged in the consumption process as it relates to products, advertisements, and purchasing (Broderick and Mueller 1999). Measurement of object involvement, which includes the message behind products, task of purchasing, and promotions, has been the focus of numerous studies leading to the agreement that the consumer's level of involvement is determined by how relevant the object is to the consumer as well as the relationship between the object and the consumer (Michaelidou and Dibb 2006; O'Cass 2000). Involvement has also been noted to play a role in attitude formation (Foxall et al. 1998), reaction to promotional media, and purchase decisions (Josiam et al. 2005). According to Laurent and Kapferer (1985), involvement is directly linked to the way consumers perceive advertising, as how they receive and process advertising messages vary with level of involvement. Involvement research is often linked to behavioural intentions such as purchase intention (Kinley et al. 2010), information search behaviour (Naveed 2012), and opinion seeking behaviour (Kinley et al. 2010).

Individuals with varying levels of involvement at social media sites tend to develop emotional and lasting associations with the community and users within the community due to shared interest and information exchange (Balasubramanian and Mahjan 2001; Lim et al. 2013). An individual's experience with other users in the social media community is associated with social compliance, identification, and internalization of virtual communities and is believed to lead to individuals' involvement with social media sites (Venkatesh and Bala 2008). According to a study by Nardi, Schiano, and Gumbrecht (2004), social media presence generated by brands and companies is more influential on consumer behaviour than traditional advertisement or other promotional media. Nardi, Schiano, and Gumbrecht (2004) found that two-thirds of consumers are more likely to pass brand-related information onto others than to act on the information for themselves. Social media has allowed consumers to become more involved with the brand and also to increase their base knowledge of a product before making any purchasing decision. Putrevu and Lord's (2003) study highlights the interaction between attitude toward a website and processing motivators (product involvement and attention getting devices) in affecting brand attitude and the influence of attention getting devices on banner ads under various involvement conditions. In their study involvement was proposed as a moderator and it was implied that more research would be needed into this moderator, as well as others on the impact of how consumers interact with online marketing in media. Because the more involved a consumer is, the greater number of cognitive responses is expected (Putrevu and Lord 2003), a higher level of social media involvement may strengthen the relationship between

attitude toward the message and behavioural intentions, specifically eWOM intention. Thus the following hypotheses were proposed:

**H4a.** Social media involvement will significantly moderate the relationship between attitude toward task social media message and eWOM intention.

**H4b.** Social media involvement will significantly moderate the relationship between attitude toward socioemotional social media message and eWOM intention.

## Method

### Stimuli Development

The stimuli used to represent task and socioemotional messages were developed based on findings from a study by Lin and Peña's (2011). Their study used Bales (1950)'s Interaction Process Analysis (IPA) categories for task and socioemotional messages to examine relational content on social media pages. Considering Lin and Peña's (2011) study along with an examination of current content on popular social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, five task messages and five socioemotional messages were created. These stimuli were pre-tested with 34 undergraduate students at a south-eastern U.S. university. Students were given a brief definition of both types of messages and asked to pick which message choice best represented a task message and a socioemotional message. A majority chose the following messages as the representative content for each stimulus:

Task message [chosen by 44%]:

“Everything you wanted to know about the #SBCblack but were afraid to Google: <http://tinyurl.com/yeg7yz>”

Socioemotional message [chosen by 53%]:

“Happy first day of summer! Tell us where you and your #SBCblack are going for vacay #summertime. <http://tinyurl.com/yeg7yz>”

The main survey was conducted online and administered to a convenience sample of 409 online users. A total of 194 respondents were asked to view the socioemotional message and 215, the task message. The participants were recruited using the snowball sampling technique through Facebook. Individuals were recruited to participate in the survey and asked to pass on the survey link to their friends and associates who would also be interested in participating in the study. Each respondent was presented with a fictional scenario introducing the launch of a new smartphone the ‘SBC Black’. This product was indicated to be comparable to the iPhone and HTC. The product category was appropriate as smartphone usage surpassed 1.5 billion in 2014 (eMarketer, 2014). Also, according to Smith (2013), this product category has widespread recognition across different demographic segments. For instance, smartphone adoption levels are as high as 60% in several cohorts, regardless of age or gender (Smith 2013). The stimuli represented messages that were comparable to a Facebook status update or Twitter message (i.e. Tweet). It has been noted that 73% of all

Internet users are active on social media sites (Duggan and Smith 2013). Thus it is surmised that survey respondents were familiar with the format of these stimuli presented in the form of social media messages. To prevent bias or unfair familiarity the company name and any specific identifiers were made fictitious.

### **Instrument Development**

In addition to the stimuli presented, five variables and demographic characteristics were investigated. Items for each of the five constructs were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree) and were adapted from previous research to fit the study. Hedonic motivation was measured with four items from Cotte, et al. (2006) and had a reliability coefficient of .87. An example of the scale included: "Online shopping is truly a joy." Utilitarian motivation was measured with two items adapted from Cotte et al. (2006) and two items from Overby and Lee (2006) (e.g., "When I shop online I know exactly what I am looking for" and "When I make a purchase online, save time"). The four items yielded a reliability coefficient of .68. Although scales with a reliability of less than .70 are generally considered unacceptable, the scale for utilitarian motivation was retained as it was close to the cut-off, and also because an examination of both hedonic and utilitarian motivations constitutes an important part of this study. Each of the two dimensions of attitude toward social media message (i.e., affective and cognitive) was measured with four items adapted from Huang, Chou, and Lin (2010) and Mehrabian and Russell (1974). Examples of the scales included: "I think this message is interesting" (affective) and "I think this message is specific and persuasive" (cognitive). The reliability coefficients were .88 for affective attitude and .77 for cognitive attitude. The final response of eWOM intention was measured with four items adapted from Yeh and Choi (2011) and had a reliability coefficient of .94. An example of the scale included "I would pass on this information to other people." Social media involvement was measured using three items adapted from Tsai (2009)'s study (e.g., "I spend a lot of time engaging in social media site activities" and "I actively participate in social media sites"). This scale yielded a reliability coefficient of .77.

## **Results**

### **Sample Characteristics**

The demographic information collected included gender, ethnicity, age, education level, and frequency of Internet access. Overall, males and females were almost equally represented in the sample (47.4% and 52.6%, respectively). The two-thirds of respondents were Caucasian and 14.9% were Asian/Pacific Islander. The largest age group was that of 25-34 years (40.6%), followed by groups of ages 18-24 (30.6%) and 35-44 (13.7%). A total of 167 respondents (40.8%) had a 4-year college degree and 28.1% indicated that high school was their highest level of education. The majority of the respondents accessed the Internet on a daily basis

(86.3%), 24.9% of whom accessed the Internet hourly. Only 22 respondents (5.4%) reported that they accessed the Internet weekly or less frequently.

### Correlation Analyses

The relationship amongst the variables was investigated using Pearson's correlation. A significant correlation was found for each possible pair of variables with the two strongest correlations being between eWOM intention and two dimensions of attitude toward social media message ( $r = .77, p < .001$ ) for affective attitude and ( $r = .76, p < .001$ ) for cognitive attitude. Utilitarian motivation was positively related to hedonic motivation ( $r = .42, p < .001$ ), cognitive attitude ( $r = .25, p < .001$ ), affective attitude ( $r = .20, p < .001$ ), and eWOM intention ( $r = .19, p < .001$ ). Hedonic motivation was also positively correlated with cognitive attitude ( $r = .25, p < .001$ ), affective attitude ( $r = .29, p < .001$ ), and eWOM intention ( $r = .31, p < .001$ ). Social media involvement was positively related to utilitarian motivation ( $r = .18, p < .001$ ), hedonic motivation ( $r = .27, p < .001$ ), cognitive attitude ( $r = .27, p < .001$ ), affective attitude ( $r = .29, p < .001$ ), and eWOM intention ( $r = .27, p < .001$ ).

### Regression Analyses

Multiple regression analyses were conducted separately for task and socioemotional messages in order to test the effects of online shopping motivations on each of the affective and cognitive attitudes towards each social media message (see Table 1). For those who viewed the task message, utilitarian and hedonic motivations together explained 15% of the total variance in cognitive attitude ( $F(2, 212) = 18.61, p < .001$ ) and 11% of the total variance in affective attitude ( $F(2, 212) = 13.24, p < .001$ ). Cognitive attitude was significantly predicted by both utilitarian motivation ( $\beta = .29, p < .001$ ) and hedonic motivation ( $\beta = .17, p < .05$ ). Affective attitude was also significantly predicted by utilitarian motivation ( $\beta = .29, p < .001$ ) and hedonic motivation ( $\beta = .23, p < .01$ ).

**Table 1: Regression Analysis Results for Attitude toward Task Message**

	Cognitive		Affective	
	B	$\beta$	B	$\beta$
Utilitarian motivation	.44	.29***	.29	.17*
Hedonic motivation	.18	.17*	.25	.23**
$R^2$	.15		.11	

$p < .05^*$ ;  $p < .01^{**}$ ;  $p < .001^{***}$

For those who viewed the socioemotional message, utilitarian and hedonic motivations together explained 4% of the total variance in cognitive attitude ( $F(2, 191) = 4.92, p < .01$ ) (see Table 2). Hedonic motivation was a significant predictor of cognitive attitude ( $\beta = .17, p < .05$ ) but utilitarian motivation was not ( $\beta = .08, p = .30$ ). When regressed on affective attitude, both motivations together explained 8% of the variance ( $F(2, 191) = 4.92, p < .01$ ) with hedonic motivation showing a significant effect on affective attitude ( $\beta = .28, p < .001$ ).

Utilitarian motivation did not significantly predict affective attitude ( $\beta = .01, \Delta = .87$ ).

**Table 2: Regression Analysis Results for Attitude toward Socioemotional Message**

	Cognitive		Affective	
	B	$\beta$	B	$\beta$
Utilitarian motivation	.10	.08	.02	.01
Hedonic motivation	.15	.17*	.28	.28***
$R^2$	.05		.08	

$p < .05^*$ ;  $p < .001^{***}$

In order to estimate the effects of the two dimensions of attitude, as well as a moderating effect of social media involvement, on eWOM intention, a series of multiple regression analyses with the enter method were carried out. Again, the model was tested separately for task and socioemotional messages. For those who viewed the task message the model with all predictors, excluding the moderator, explained 74% of the variance in eWOM intention ( $F(3,211) = 202.54, \Delta < .001$ ) (see Table 3). Intention to engage in eWOM for the task message was not significantly predicted by social media involvement ( $\beta = .04, \Delta = .25$ ) but strongly predicted by both cognitive attitude ( $\beta = .33, \Delta < .001$ ) and affective attitude ( $\beta = .50, \Delta < .001$ ). When the interaction effects for social media involvement (social media involvement x cognitive attitude, social media involvement x affective attitude) were added, the total variance explained by the model did not significantly increase ( $F(5,209) = 121.65, \Delta < .001$ ) and the interaction effects were not significant.

**Table 3: Regression Analysis Results for eWOM Intention for Task Message**

	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	$\beta$	B	B
Cognitive attitude	.46	.40***	.46	.39** *
Affective attitude	.54	.50***	.54	.49** *
Involvement	.05	.04	.05	.04
Interaction x Cognitive			.04	.04
Interaction x Affective			.01	.01
$R^2$	.74		.84	

$p < .001^{***}$

**Table 4: Regression Analysis Results for eWOM Intention for Socioemotional Message**

	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	$\beta$	B	$\beta$
Cognitive attitude	.55	.42***	.55	.42***
Affective attitude	.44	.38***	.44	.38***
Involvement	.04	.03	.04	.07
Interaction Cognitive	x		-.01	-.01
Interaction Affective	x		.01	.01
R <sup>2</sup>	.58		.58	

$p < .001$ \*\*\*

For those who viewed the socioemotional message, the model with all predictors, excluding the moderator, explained 58% of the variance in eWOM intention ( $F(3, 190) = 88.08, p < .001$ ) (see Table 4). Intention to engage in eWOM for the socioemotional message was not significantly predicted by social media involvement ( $\beta = .03, p = .56$ ) but significantly predicted by both cognitive attitude ( $\beta = .42, p < .001$ ) and affective attitude ( $\beta = .38, p < .001$ ). When the interaction effects for social media involvement (social media involvement x cognitive attitude, social media involvement x affective attitude) were added, the total variance explained by the model did not significantly increase ( $F(5, 188) = 52.32, p < .001$ ) and the interaction effects were not significant.

## Discussion

Hypothesis 1 and 2 proposed a significant relationship between online shopping motivations (utilitarian and hedonic) and consumer attitudes towards task and socioemotional messages. We proposed the significant relationship between utilitarian motivation and attitude toward task messages but the results of the study indicated that for the task message, both utilitarian and hedonic shopping motivations significantly influenced both cognitive and affective attitudes toward the message. That is, when viewing a task message, those who were more strongly driven to shop online for either utilitarian or hedonic reasons were more likely to develop a positive attitude toward the message. Because consumers with higher utilitarian motivations are more task oriented it is not surprising to see a strong relationship between utilitarian shopping motivation and attitude toward task message. However, it should be noted that utilitarian motivation positively influenced not only cognitive attitude but also affective attitude toward task message. This finding somewhat contradicts Jarvenpaa and Todd's (1997) argument that utilitarian value incorporates more cognitive aspects of attitude. The finding of our study suggests that utilitarian shopping motivation is significantly related to positive attitudes toward task message regardless of the domain of attitude. It was interesting to see that attitude toward task

message was predicted not only by utilitarian shopping motivation but also by hedonic motivation. In this study hedonic shopping motivation was a significant predictor of attitude toward both task and socioemotional messages, suggesting that consumers with strong hedonic motivation will have positive attitudes toward social media messages regardless of the type of the message. Previous studies suggest that consumers with stronger hedonic motivation find more enjoyment in interactive environments (Childers et al. 2002; Zhou et al. 2007) and they may therefore generally have a positive response to the interactive nature of social media messages.

On the other hand, for the socioemotional message, both cognitive and affective attitudes toward the message were predicted significantly by hedonic online shopping motivation only, in support of H2. Those who were more strongly driven by hedonic aspects of online shopping were more likely to hold favourable attitudes toward socioemotional messages. This finding suggests that social media messages focusing on interpersonal relationships or personal feelings would be more effective for hedonically motivated online shoppers rather than those who are motivated by utilitarian reasons. Accordingly, managers of a brand's social media pages should note that when creating a task message both utilitarian and hedonic consumers will form a positive attitude toward the message; however, marketers should take great care when creating a socioemotional message, as utilitarian consumers may not be responsive to this type of message. These findings also suggest that companies should identify the key motivations of customers visiting their various social media pages so they can fashion the most effective social media messages. If a company's social media pages attract mostly hedonically motivated customers they will then benefit from including both task and socioemotional messages, while companies catering to customers with strongly utilitarian motives should primarily focus on task messages to generate a positive attitude towards the content on their social media pages.

Hypothesis 3 proposed a significant relationship between attitude toward message and eWOM intention. For both task and socioemotional messages, eWOM intention was significantly influenced by attitudes towards the messages, which supported both H3a and H3b. The results indicated that the well-established link between attitude and behavioural intention was supported in the context of social media communication and that the relationship did not vary significantly by the type of social media message. Unlike other studies, which observed a significant difference in the effects of cognitive and affective attitudes on intention (Shih et al. 2013; Yang and Yoo 2004), this study finds that attitude as a single construct significantly influences eWOM intention for task and socioemotional messages. This result emphasizes the importance of choosing effective social media messages that influence a customer's attitude and subsequently lead to higher eWOM intention. In accordance with the implication of the findings for H1 and H2, managers of a brand's social media pages should target their customers based on their known shopping motivations. Hedonic shoppers will have a positive attitude towards both task and socioemotional messages, thus prompting the shoppers to pass along the messages to others. Alternatively utilitarian shoppers will only respond positively towards task

messages, resulting in higher eWOM intention only for task messages. Managers and marketers should therefore pay close attention to the shopping motivations of their customer base, fashion appropriate social media messages, and monitor the eWOM for those social media messages.

Hypothesis 4 proposed a moderating role for social media involvement in the relationship between attitude and eWOM intention. The results of multiple regression analyses revealed that social media involvement did not have a significant moderating effect on the relationship between attitude and eWOM intention for either of the social media messages. In other words, the relationship between attitude toward social media message and eWOM intention was not significantly influenced by the level of the consumer's involvement in social media. The concept of social media involvement is new and has not been widely studied in the literature up to this point; thus future research should investigate the construct as it relates to different social media activities, product categories, and behavioural intentions. Future studies should also explore other variables, such as product involvement, for possible associations with attitude and eWOM intention.

Interestingly, social media involvement had no direct impact on eWOM intention either, indicating that those who are more actively involved with social media are not significantly more likely to pass along social media messages to others. This finding is in contrast to prior studies that found involvement to be a significant factor affecting attitude and behavioral intentions (Kinley et al. 2010; Laurent and Kapferer 1985; Naveed 2012). Although it is reasonable to expect that consumers with a stronger involvement in social media would be more likely to participate in consumer activities in social media such as eWOM, the results of this study suggested that high involvement with social media is not necessarily translated into active participation in social media. This may be due to the fact that a majority of social media users are consumers of social media information rather than active participants or contributors (Heinonen 2011). Social media managers should note that brand pages can reach anyone, not just those individuals who are actively participating on the brand's social media pages. Because of this, brands should be reaching out to their current customers and social media followers, but also to potential customers and a general audience as eWOM in the form of a "re-tweet", "share", "like", or "re-post" can come from any social media user regardless of their social media involvement.

## **Limitations**

The major limitation of this research was the data collection method. The participants for the study were gathered via social media platforms by posting the survey link on their personal Facebook pages and asking friends and followers to participate in the survey and to pass the survey on to other associates. This method may have limited the participant pool, affecting how representative the sample is. The study was also limited by its utilization of one message for each message type, task and socioemotional. Another limitation could be the use of a fictitious brand. Using a fictitious brand gives no past experiences, emotions or ties that consumers could process, thereby potentially

lessening their affective reactions; however, as consumers do not have a sophisticated schema in memory about fictitious brands compared to familiar brands (Navarro et al. 2009), the use of a fictitious brand may have resulted in an unrealistically simplified information process. Another limitation is the low reliability of the scale items used to measure utilitarian shopping motivation. Our research model, therefore, should be subjected to further testing and validation with a more reliable measure. Another limitation of the study is the participant's level of involvement with smartphones was not examined. Future studies should examine product involvement in addition to social media involvement for their possible effects on consumer attitude toward social media messages. A final limitation to the study is the use of one product type, smartphones, thus limiting the generalizability across different product categories.

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