

## **An Exploratory Research on eWOM Information Seeking Behavior and Attitudes in Service Consumption**

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— *Review of* —  
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### **ABSTRACT**

This research aims to explore consumers' electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) information seeking behavior and their attitudes in relations to service consumption. Specifically, this study explores the types of service consumption that consumers would seek eWOM and the relevant information seeking behavior, the eWOM evaluation dimensions and the factors moderating the influential effect of eWOM in service consumption. Six focus group interviews were conducted. The transcriptions were categorized into themes through hierarchical coding.

Seeking eWOM is deemed necessary when the participants have no experience with a service. Extent and depth of search increase with the price and importance of the service. eWOM is normally differentiated and extracted from discussion forums which are considered as having higher utility; corroborating sources in alternative websites are also identified. Posts with detailed descriptions, photos or videos are considered as more authentic, while posts related to independent third party investigations generate greater authority. Neither negativity bias nor positivity bias on eWOM exists. Before consumption, advices are sought from homophilous sources which seem more trustworthy than eWOM. Though eWOM is regarded as reference, it notably affects real consumption decision. Brand moderates the impact of eWOM in service consumption.

Keywords: word-of-mouth, information, service, consumer attitudes

### **1. Introduction**

In the context of Hong Kong (HK), online activities seem to be greatly associated with information seeking and comments about products or services. Research has revealed that conducting a search is the most common online activity in HK; further, some of the most popular social media activities are reading other people's comments about brands, products or services, clicking the 'Like' button for a brand or organization, and reading online forums/ discussion boards (Nielson, 2011). As Internet-capable mobile devices, such as smartphones, are getting more popular, there is little debate that online activities will have greater impact on the daily lives of HK consumers.

Godes and Mayzlin (2004) argue that word-of-mouth (WOM) is more potentially influential than other communication channel and is an important driver of consumer behavior. Research has also confirmed that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)

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contributes to the purchasing decision of consumers (e.g. Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). Given consumers' increasing dependence on online information for decision making, understanding eWOM communications remains an important area for study (O'Reilly & Marx, 2011). Furthermore, study on the influential effect of eWOM on consumer behavior should be extended to service given the intangible characteristic of service (Mazzarol, Sweeney & Soutar, 2007). In HK, service is the dominant economic sector (Information Services Department, 2013), knowing how HK consumers seek eWOM and its impact on service consumption has practical implication to the local economy.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Information seeking behavior**

Many models have been developed to portray information behavior since the 1980s', predominately by library and information science academics. In recent years, information behavior studies have started to cover the Internet area, investigating web browsing and searching behavior. According to Wilson, information behavior is,

those activities a person may engage in when identifying his or her own needs for information, searching for such information in any way, and using or transferring that information

Wilson (1999, p.249)

Information behavior models developed by library and information science scholars generally focus on information seeking, describing the information seeker's needs, personal characteristics, the information seeking activities and the process of information search (Robson & Robinson, 2013). Ellis (1989) suggested one of the widely tested models in information seeking behavior, depicting information seeking consists of various non-sequential components: starting, chaining, browsing, differentiating, monitoring and extracting. His model was further improved by adding verifying and ending phases (Ellis, Cox & Hall, 1993). Likewise, Kuhlthau (1991) developed an information search process model involving six sequential order of information search: initiation, selection, exploration, formulation, collection and presentation.

Unlike prior models that focus on the information seeker only, Wilson (1997) developed a comprehensive information seeking model integrating the needs of the seeker and factors that affect information seeking. He suggested activating mechanism and intervening variables that activates and hinder information search respectively. He also established four types of information seeking behavior: passive attention, passive search, active search and on-going search. In a similar vein, Johnson (1997) proposed a comprehensive information seeking model incorporating the information carrier and the seeking actions. He posited information seeking comprises of three groups of factors: antecedents which deal with the information seeker's characteristics, information carrier factors that concern a particular source's

characteristics and utility, and information seeking actions that involve choosing the source to use and the extent and depth of search.

Regarding information seeking in the electronic environment, Marchionini (1995) suggested eight processes: (1) recognize and accept an information problem, (2) define and understand the problem, (3) choose a search system, (4) formulate a query, (5) execute search, (6) examine results, (7) extract information and (8) reflect/iterate/stop. Incorporating Aguilar's (1967, cited in Choo, Detlor & Turnbull, 2000) four modes of scanning and Ellis' information seeking framework (1989), Choo *et al.* (2000) explained that in web browsing, (1) undirected viewing is characterized by the starting and chaining phases, (2) conditioned viewing is typified in the differentiating, browsing and monitoring phases, (3) informal search presents in the differentiating and localized extracting phases, and (4) formal search is symbolized in systematic and detailed extracting.

Although there are different information seeking models, many of them are context specific that focus on specific problems (Case, 2007). There appears scarce research particularly focuses on eWOM searching behavior. As eWOM influences the purchasing decision of consumers, there is a theoretical need to understand the eWOM information seeking behavior.

## 2.2 eWOM and relevant evaluation dimensions

WOM is defined as the informal communication between people about the evaluation of products and services (Anderson 1998 cited in Mazzarol *et al.*, 2007). As more customers seek products or services information on the Internet, eWOM emerged (Jalivand & Samiei, 2012). eWOM is any statement made by actual or potential customers about a product or company on the Internet and can be made available to multitude of people (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004). eWOM can exist in consumer reviews, blogs or discussion forums where consumers interact with each other (O'Reilly & Marx, 2011), and is now also common in social media. Unlike offline WOM which is normally with direct interaction between the sender and the receiver, eWOM can have either direct (e.g. one to one through e-mail) or indirect/virtual interaction (e.g. group e-mail and discussion forum) (Hoffman & Novak, 1996).

Many studies identified characteristics of WOM or eWOM information that impact consumers' brand, product or service perception or consumption decision. Huang, Cai, Tsang and Zhou (2011) identified that quality, authenticity, authority and interestingness of eWOM information influence receivers' acceptance of the messages. According to their findings, quality in the form of accurate and useful information is the most important eWOM acceptance dimension. Authority in terms of official, scholarly or amateurish messages is another important dimension. Authenticity concerns credible, trustworthy or reliable messages; whereas, interestingness deals with the topic interest. Alternatively, O'Reilly and Marx (2011) suggested three eWOM acceptance factors: enhancing viewers' self-worth, avoiding risk, and negativity bias which is giving more weight and importance to negative posts. In terms of message appeal, positive eWOM on high involvement product with

rational message appeal can produce better brand attitude, trust, affection and purchase intention than emotional message appeal (Wu & Wang, 2011).

Specifically in the service context, cognitive content, richness of content and strength of delivery of the eWOM information significantly associate with change of perceptions of service quality and perceived value (Sweeney, Soutar & Mazzarol, 2012). Cognitive content is characterized by reliable and clear information, richness of content signifies depth, interesting and vividness of information, and strength of delivery suggests the power of advocacy.

Extensive research has been done on the persuasive effect of WOM on product attitudes and purchase intention (Wu & Wang, 2011). Given service's unique characteristics as compared to product, such as intangibility, heterogeneity, simultaneous production and consumption (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2004), the influential effect of eWOM on service consumption behavior may vary from that on product, yet corresponding research and literatures are limited. There also seems lack of study in the eastern cultural context. Given HK consumers' high Internet usage and brand and consumption associated online activities, there is a practical need to understand the information seeking behavior and attitudes of eWOM on service consumption with the possibility of providing insights to marketers.

To fill the above theoretical and practical research gaps, the purpose of this research is to explore consumers' eWOM information seeking behavior and their attitudes in relation to service consumption in HK. Specifically, this research aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What types of service consumption would consumers seek eWOM and the relevant information seeking behavior?
2. What are the eWOM evaluation dimensions in service consumption?
3. How does eWOM affect service consumption decision?
4. What are the moderating factors that affect the influential effect of eWOM in service consumption decision?

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Data collection method**

In response to the aforementioned theoretical and practical research gaps, an exploratory qualitative research (Creswell, 2008) in the form of focus group interviews was adopted. Qualitative research enables identification and clarification of the problems and greater understanding of the issues (McGivern, 2009). Focus group interviews were employed as they are appropriate for gaining insight into a less explored subject matter, and to decide the themes and concerns of a group of audience (Lawrence & Berger, 1999). In this study, participants were recruited through convenience sampling from the students and staff of a college in HK. Snowballing was applied to extend the sampling frame to their friends and relatives. Adopting the concept of smaller focus group sizes (Greenbaum, 2000; Fern, 2001) to enable participants to have sufficient opportunity to share their experiences (Krueger, 2009),

six focus groups of size ranged from three to eight, involving a total of thirty-eight participants were conducted. The focus group discussions were semi-structured with the moderator asked a set of predetermined open-ended questions of all participants (O'Reilly & Marx, 2011). Measures contributing to the reliability and validity of the research were followed, for instance, the same moderator was appointed and asked the same set of questions across all groups (Fern, 2001). The interviews were audio taped and field notes were also taken to capture observational data.

The sample of the study were predominately female (71 percent) and at the 18 to 25 age group (71 percent). 60 percent of the participants were student and 65 percent have university education level.

### 3.2 Data analysis method

The field notes and audio recordings were transcribed subsequently (Hennink, 2007). The data analysis process followed that of Wolcott (1994) in three phases. In the description phase, an analysis was made to the transcriptions and verbatim quotes were noted; in the subsequent analysis phase, themes, factors and relationships in the transcriptions were identified and categorized into themes through hierarchical coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Thematic analysis was adopted as it allows patterns within the data to be identified so as to describe and interpret the phenomena (Boyatzis, 1998). Finally, the interpretation phase was to make sense of meanings in context. In such phase, references were made to relevant literature and literature definitions were applied to the themes. To improve rigor of the qualitative research (Armour, Rivaux & Bell, 2009), the data collected was triangulated through checking by a research assistance and cross referencing to relevant literature (Cavana, Delahaye & Sekaran, 2001). For reporting purpose, the important verbatim quotes originally in Chinese were translated to English, and then back translated to Chinese by separate experienced translators in order to verify the meaning and to make sense in both languages (Chen & Boore, 2009). Those quotes are stated in the following section.

## 4. Findings and discussion

The transcriptions were categorized into two main thematic blocks: information seeking behavior and evaluation of eWOM. The information seeking behavior theme was further grouped into five categories, whereas the evaluation of eWOM was classified into two categories. Each category consists of different sub-categories. Possible literature definitions were applied to the categories. The categories identified are stated in Table 1.

Table 1 Categories on the information seeking behavior and attitudes of eWOM in service consumption

Information seeking behavior categories	Sub-categories
information needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ problem solving approach</li> <li>◆ fill knowledge gap</li> </ul>
activating mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ risk reduction</li> </ul>

	◆ social learning
information seeking action and phases	◆ active search ◆ semi-directed browsing ◆ conditioned viewing ◆ starting : search engine ◆ chaining: set of relevant web pages, especially discussion forums, to retrieve the information ◆ differentiating and extracting ◆ verifying
information carrier factors	◆ characteristics: authority, accuracy, comprehensibility
	◆ utility: relevance, interest of information
	◆ ease of access
motivations to post eWOM	◆ lurkers ◆ sharing information
<b>Evaluations of eWOM categories</b>	<b>Sub-categories</b>
eWOM dimensions	◆ quality
	◆ authority
	◆ authenticity
	◆ interestingness
	◆ message appeal
influential effect on service consumption decision	◆ quantity and polarity of comments ◆ negativity bias and positivity bias ◆ consumption cycle ◆ moderating factor

## 4.1 Information seeking behavior

### 4.1.1 Information needs

Participants regarded seeking eWOM as necessary when they have no experience with a service. This implies that they perceive knowledge gaps and expect information exists to fill their gaps (Robson & Robinson, 2013). Their information seeking approach aligns with Spink and Cole (2006)'s argument in that information seeking is actually a problem solving aspect of human behavior. As most services possess experience and credence qualities (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2004), participants intend to learn from others through eWOM. Participants continued to highlight that they took eWOM of medical practitioners, elderly care service, dentists, beauticians and travel agencies, which they were unfamiliar with:

Recently, I needed to extract my wisdom tooth, as it is something that I haven't done before, so I search for comments of dental service in the Internet.

### 4.1.2 Activating mechanism

Need of information may not necessarily result in information seeking behavior, various personal, role-related or environmental factors may activate or intervene

information seeking (Wilson, 1981). Groups generally agreed that they would seek eWOM if the risk of not having the service information was high, coherent with the risk and reward theory of information seeking activating mechanism (Wilson, 1997). Evidence of risk reduction through information seeking was also observed in participants who increased the extent and depth of search as the price and importance of the service increased.

Many participants also engaged in seeking eWOM on restaurant choices which do not seem a risky type of consumption. Their information seeking activating mechanism can be explained by social learning theory (Wilson, 1997), which states that information seekers try to demonstrate their capability to perform a task, such as searching a database. In the participants' case, the task is searching a popular local dining website so as to identify a good restaurant.

In contrast, when trustworthy information source was limited, participants tended to stop seeking eWOM even though they were short of specific service information and their information needs were not fulfilled:

I would not check out comments on home decorator on the Internet as the comments are unreliable. I asked for referral from my friends and relatives instead.

When I looked for private tutor for my children, I did not check on the Internet as the comments are untrustworthy. I asked for referral from other parents that I know.

#### 4.1.3 Information seeking action and phases

It was noted among the groups that eWOM seekers actively searched for particular information, demonstrating active search information seeking action (Wilson, 1997). In terms of information seeking process, in the starting phase of information seeking (Ellis, 1989), participants normally entered a general term into a database, preferably discussion forums or search engines, such as Yahoo and Google. In this phase, browsing is semi-directed which is typified by purposeful, but less definite and systematic browsing (Marchionini, 1995). Participants then scanned through the initial source to identify relevant information and followed up the appropriate leads, signifying the chaining and differentiating phases of Ellis' (1989) information seeking model. Participants performed conditioned viewing where browsing and differentiating are common activities (Choo *et al.*, 2000). Finally, participants took out useful information from the web, agreeing with the extracting phase depicted by Ellis (1989).

Participants continued to point out that once appropriate eWOM sites were identified, they would check with the same sites whenever relevant information was needed. These sites include several popular general discussion forums and specialized discussion forums in dining, travel and family care service, suggesting that these forums have high utility among the eWOM seekers:

I used to search many websites to look for comments on travel services, such as hotels and budget airlines. But then I found out ..... got all the information, I refer to these sites whenever I travel. The information is given by consumers all over the world and is constantly updated. I think the information is trustworthy.

Though participants considered discussion forums as good sources for eWOM, they also emphasized that they reviewed alternative websites with the purpose of identifying corroborating sources (O'Reilly & Marx, 2011), agreeing with the verifying phase suggested by Ellis (1989) or the formulation and collection processes of information seeking depicted by Kuhlthau (2005).

In contrast to Ellis's model (1989), participants did not exhibit the monitoring phase of information seeking whereby information seeker maintains awareness of development in an interested field. This can be explained by the fact that eWOM information seeking is need driven, the seeking will stop once the problem of the eWOM taker is solved.

#### 4.1.4 Information carrier factors

Users choose a source of information based on its characteristics and utility (Johnson, 1997). Regarding eWOM information source characteristics, participants particularly relied on information source that exhibited comprehensibility, accuracy and authority. According to the participants, comprehensibility is characterized by many consumer comments, preferably from various countries, and polarized comments including both positive and negative reviews; accuracy refers to whether the information is up to date, while authority indicates whether independent third party testing or investigation from experts is provided.

Many participants preferred information source with qualities of relevance and usefulness. Sources in audio-visual format were particularly attractive to them, such as with photos and videos. Multimedia may be a concrete way to assess a service, as service is intangible and cannot be communicated easily (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2004). Johnson (1997) refers those qualities as the utility of the information source and affects users to decide on a source for information. Many participants commented that discussion forums, particularly specialized forums, were able to provide the required utility. Those forums also offer an ease of access (Johnson, 1997) whereby participants could bookmark them and refer to the same forums whenever particular information is needed:

Previously, I needed to search many websites for beauty service. The searching was just like growing tree branches, I was directed from one site to another then to another. It took quite a lot of effort. My effort was reduced until I found a specialized forum. The forum provides comprehensive information from many users and is up to date. I refer to it all the times now whenever I need to search for beauty service.

#### 4.1.5 Motivations to post eWOM



Despite participants actively seek eWOM, many of them stated that they rarely posted eWOM. They are mainly ‘lurkers’ (Schlosser, 2005), reading others’ eWOM without the tendency to give. Participants further explained that only when they came across extremely bad service, would they post negative eWOM in open forum with the purpose to help others to avoid the same bad experience. Such findings were reflected by previous research (e.g. O’Reilly & Marx, 2011). Further, participants described that when they posted eWOM, they normally restricted to posting in facebook, for sharing information and happiness to their friends and relatives only. Posting in open forum was not common.

It is weird to let unknown people to know your good experience; it looks like you are showing off.

## 4.2 Evaluation of eWOM

### 4.2.1 Dimensions of eWOM

With reference to prior literature (e.g. Huang *et al.*, 2011; Wu & Wang, 2011; Sweeney *et al.*, 2012), five sub-categories on eWOM information evaluation were extracted from the transcriptions and are listed below.

*Quality.* Participants preferred eWOM message that offered accurate and useful information. The result matches the findings of eWOM information source by Huang *et al.* (2011), in which consumers showed the highest acceptance on accurate and useful eWOM information as compared to other eWOM dimensions.

*Authority.* Many participants agreed that there were paid bloggers giving out unrealistic comments, hence they generally considered posts related to independent third party investigations or from experts conveyed authority and generated greater trustworthiness. This coherent with the findings by Huang *et al.* (2011) positing that official, scholarly and amateurish eWOM delivered authority.

Though participants generally considered posts from experts have greater authority, one participant pointed out an exception:

Some beauty experts may deliver unbiased comments initially, but when they get more popular, their comments become incentive driven and not trustworthy anymore.

*Authenticity.* Authentic eWOM is characterized by credible, trustworthy and reliable message (Huang *et al.*, 2011). Participants considered posts with detailed descriptions, photos or videos as having higher authenticity. This is particularly true in travel and dining experiences where photos are usually attached. Richness of content in terms of depth, interestingness and vividness helps to change perception of service quality (Sweeney *et al.*, 2012). Yet, participants resisted messages with over-detailed descriptions as the messages might come from paid bloggers, not real consumers:

In case of dining experience, if the eWOM giver describes how the food is cooked and served in details, probably the information is from paid blogger.

*Interestingness.* Participants preferred information presented in interesting way, such as with rating and emoticons, confirming that acceptance of eWOM information is positively related to interestingness (Huang *et al.*, 2011).

*Message appeal.* Regarding rational and irrational message appeal (Wu & Wang, 2011), there were mixed comments. Some participants were more interested in emotional messages as compared to rational messages, supporting the argument that a certain level of emotion enhance viewer's acceptance of the eWOM message, as the message seems more realistic and come from actual consumers (Wu & Wang, 2011).

Some participants however preferred rational messages irrespective of positive or negative eWOM, with a view that rational messages provided more useful information. Some participants even disliked too emotional messages as they seemed untrue:

In dining eWOM, if too much emotion is embedded in the message, such as giving a lot of emoticons, I would wonder whether that was just an exceptional experience.

#### 4.2.2 Influential effect of eWOM in service consumption decision

*Quantity and polarity of comments.* Participants pointed out that service providers with many reviews, including polarized comments were generally more trustworthy than those with few comments, supporting the findings by Sher and Lee (2009). Further, participants generally trusted service providers with more positive comments than negative one. They even highlighted that they were willing to pay 20 to 30 percent higher price for services with positive eWOM. They would be hesitant to consume a service if there were more negative comments than positive one.

*Negativity bias and positivity bias.* Though participants displayed greater trust on service providers with more positive comment, they emphasized that they would not exert negativity bias or positivity bias and were skeptical on both positive and negative eWOM. This can be illustrated by the below comment:

Positive eWOM may come from paid bloggers, especially when the service is newly launched. Negative eWOM can also come from competitors. Also, service is personal and subjective, so eWOM is for reference only. I'll do my own analysis.

The findings is contradict to prior research stating that users give more weight and importance to negative than positive eWOM, hence negative eWOM has greater impact on purchase decision (e.g. Park & Lee, 2009; O'Reilly & Marx, 2011).

Service is produced and consumed simultaneously, the various outcome of service highly depends on the interaction between employee and customer; service is also heterogeneous, employee's action on the spot affects the consumption experience to a

certain extent (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2004). Probably participants recognize that message of any eWOM is subjectively sent out by other person, a service recommended through eWOM may not be fully replicated to another customer next time due to the aforementioned characteristics of service.

Other contrary comments were received in the discussions. Though participants regarded eWOM as references only, majority of them reflected that eWOM largely influenced real consumption decision. In fact, most of the participants described that eWOM, among other factors, contributed up to 50 percent of the consumption decision.

*Consumption cycle.* Irrespective of the eWOM polarity, participants consistently agreed that they took a 'clicks-to-bricks' consumption approach (Schlosser, 2005). They visited the service providers to verify the eWOM, checking out the tangibles of a store, e.g. decoration, attitude of staff, before they paid for the intangible services (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2004). Participants would also eventually seek advices from people of close social ties, such as friends, before consumption, indicating that they have higher trust on homophilous sources (Rogers, 2003) rather than unknown sources from the web. High accessibility of information source, e.g. service providers, friends and relatives, in a small and compact city like HK could be an explanation. As Johnson (1997) notes, ease-of-access plays a significant part in the choice of information source.

*Moderating factor.* Brand was identified as a moderator affecting the influential effect of eWOM in consumption decision. In fact, brand power outweighs the impact of eWOM:

For brand that I experienced and like, I still prefer the same brand even when there are negative eWOM.

This echoes with the findings that participants did not exhibit positively or negatively bias on eWOM.

## **5. Implications**

Theoretically, despite that eWOM exists in various sources, such as blogs, company websites and discussion forums, the eWOM seeking behavior in the service context reviewed in this study generally adhered to the information seeking behavior models proposed by previous research (e.g. Ellis, 1989; Johnson, 1997; Wilson, 1997). Further, participants consistently sought eWOM from the same discussion forums implies that the eWOM information sources is quite limited in the case of HK; it also suggests that discussion forums own the preferred characteristics of information sources, such as accurate, comprehensive, exhibit authority and high utility.

Regarding eWOM information evaluation in the service context, participants exhibited the same evaluation dimensions identified by previous research in the product context (e.g. Huang *et al.*, 2011; Wu & Wang, 2011). The evaluation dimensions in terms of quality, authority, authenticity, interestingness and message

appeal impact eWOM takers' acceptance of the eWOM messages. In terms of consumption decision, similar to product consumption, eWOM displays notable influences even though service is heterogeneous, simultaneously produced and consumed in such a way that the service experience can fluctuate.

Practically, as eWOM takers rely on both general and specialized discussion forums for eWOM, marketers could create more influence in those forums by actively addressing the negative eWOM. For instance, some travel websites allow hotel representatives to address to the negative posts in the websites. Further, as there are more eWOM takers than givers in HK, marketers should encourage more eWOM giving behavior.

## **6. Originality and value**

This study was the first to explore insights on the information seeking behavior of eWOM in service consumption, and it also filled the eWOM research gap in the eastern context. Moreover, this study explored more on the dimensions and the moderator of eWOM's influential effect on service consumption.

## **7. Limitations and further research**

The possible limitations in this research are: first, as the participants mainly came from one educational institution, the characteristics of the participants were not diversified enough for possibly broadening the insights generated from the discussions. Second, no sophisticated qualitative analysis method was applied in this study, which may impede the interpretation of the data and weaken the exploratory nature of the study (Bazeley, 2007). In terms of future research, a quantitative analysis can be done to identify the relationship between eWOM and service consumption in the HK context.

## **8. Conclusion**

In response to the research objective and questions, the findings in this study generated several important insights in the research of eWOM and information seeking behaviors. eWOM will be sought on particular services that the information seekers have no experience on. The eWOM seeking behaviors are generally similar to the depictions in well-established information seeking models. However as mentioned in earlier sections, some characteristics in particular exist in eWOM seeking context.

Information seekers search information from an array of sources solving non-routine problems in daily life, they especially favored discussion forums and specialized websites as those sites possess the preferred characteristics and utility. Interestingly, participants hardly contribute to these types of online media. The eWOM evaluation dimensions in the service context are similar to previous research in that quality, authority, authenticity, interestingness and message appeal are assessed by eWOM seekers. Participants tend to be attracted by interesting audio visual contents, but they do not have negativity or positivity bias on eWOM messages. They regard eWOM as

a reference only as the service experience is subjective and personal, but they admit the fact that eWOM affect their consumption decision notably, and brand power may be a moderator on the decision too.

Limitations mentioned earlier would undoubtedly affect the generalization of the findings. The insights generated in this research may be a good foundation for further research in eWOM in other contexts.

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