Antecedents of Online Word-of-Mouth and Memorable Experience Concept

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the antecedents of brand-related online word-of-mouth (WOM) communication from the memorable experience concept perspective. This paper considers the factors that are behind the willingness to participate in brand-consumer interaction when passing on messages, generating content, and sharing online communication. The study is built on complementary sources of information, employing a mixed methods approach. The results show that sharing and generating positive online communication involves reciprocal patterns, while a memorable experience, good brand experience, and interaction in value co-creation drive willingness to help the brand. The gratitude-related reciprocal online behaviour is a "virtual praise". The findings provide insight into how meaningful experience, interaction in value co-creation, and reciprocity, which are the key concepts of experience marketing, cause and have an impact on sharing online communication. From a theoretical viewpoint, this study offers insights into the links between constructs of meaningful experience concepts and brand-related online communication. Understanding the experiential aspects of consumers' online behaviour, such as willingness to co-create value together with brands, offers an implication for marketing management.

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Social networking sites, blogs, recommendation sites, and online communities are tempting channels for marketers to interact with and engage the consumers. On the other side, social media channels give their users a possibility to advocate, ignore or sabotage brands and, for this reason, marketers need to understand how to manage a consumer's online interactions. In the context of social media, interactions among consumers can, for example, be a viral video shared via YouTube, a liked campaign in Facebook or the retweeting of new product information in Twitter. Online WOM is the central element in

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consumers' engagement with marketing offerings (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Lang & Hyde, 2013). The presupposition of successful marketing management is to generate meaningful and memorable experiences through innovative delivery channels. Personally relevant and meaningful experiences can generate a positive offline and online response. Meaningful experience (a.k.a. an experience different from those undergone before, standing out from the rest of experiences) is one of the keywords, which is a relatively new experience in marketing. Experience marketing, based on the experience economy theory, is usually broadly defined as any form of consumer-focused marketing activity that creates a connection to consumers (Schmitt, 2010). Consumers look for brands that provide them with unique and memorable experiences, and for this reason, the concept of brand experience is of substantial interest to marketers (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009; Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010).

Online communication has received significant academic and managerial attention. Likewise, the experience concept has received attention in academic research, and it is utilized in business practices. In the academic literature, issues of experience production, creation, and design are highlighted and discussed, mainly on the marketing management-oriented side. On consumer insight, including the experiential aspects driving for engagement in online WOM there has been more theoretical but less empirical research so far. This study strives to address that gap in the existing literature by examining the antecedents of brand-related online WOM communication from the memorable experience concept perspective. In this paper, we discuss experience concepts, such as meaningful experiences, interactions, value co-creations, and reciprocity. We suppose the answer to this issue is needed to provide insight into the consumers' motives for engaging in brand-related, online WOM. We begin by highlighting research for the purposes of online WOM to understand why online communication takes place and why it is generated and shared. We discuss key concepts and develop an argument why memorable brand messages, interactions, value co-creations, and reciprocity may interact in the prediction of online WOM. In addition, we postulate research hypotheses. In the subsequent sections, we interpret the findings of the exploratory qualitative research. In particular, we test the model of factors influencing positive online WOM. Then, we show and discuss preliminary empirical evidence supporting the conceptual framework and encouraging further research. Finally, we discuss implications for marketing theory and management. The focus of this study is on antecedents of positive online WOM.

This paper contributes to the literature of experience marketing concepts, such as meaningful experiences, interactions, value co-creations, and reciprocity. Moreover, we suppose to provide insight into the consumers' willingness for engagement in online WOM exploring them as the co-creators the brand value and meaning.

2.0   RELATED LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.01   ONLINE WOM COMMUNICATION

The online communication research timeline is relatively short, since the academic research into online WOM first appeared in scientific journals about fifteen years ago. Online WOM communication refers "to any positive or negative statement made by any potential, actual, and former consumer about a product or a company" (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004, p.39). Due to the conceptual closeness of online WOM and traditional offline WOM communication, research on traditional WOM can inform online WOM remaining largely relevant in social media context (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Lang & Hyde, 2013; Toder-Alon, Brunel & Fournier, 2014). Satisfaction, loyalty, quality, commitment, trust, and perceived value are the most investigated antecedents of WOM (Lang & Hyde, 2013; Matos & Rossi, 2008). According to some authors the roles of the drivers and characteristics differ between online and offline WOM. Lovett, Peres and Shachar (2013) argue that consumers spread brand word for three fundamental purposes: social, emotional, and functional. The main social driver is the desire to send signals to others about one's expertise, uniqueness, or social status. The functional driver motivates people to provide and supply information. Whereas the social and functional drivers are the most

important for online WOM, the emotional drivers (such as excitement and satisfaction) are the most important for offline (*ibid.)* However, taking the example of the travel industry consumer satisfaction with travel consumption experience is suggested one of the key factors affecting the travellers' online communication (Liang, Ekinci, Occhiocupo, & Whyatt, 2013).

One of the earliest researches on the factors leading to online WOM communication is published by Hennig-Thurau et al., (2004). They identified four motivational categories, such as consumers' desire for social interaction, desire for economic incentives, their concern for other consumers, and the potential to enhance their own self-worth. The related studies published beginning the second decade of Millennium belong already to the emerging venue of online information-sharing formats such as Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. Facebook groups constitute a new form of virtual communities. Facebook users interact with other group members and share information with ease and speed; therefore it is platform for marketers to build viral-driven and multidirectional communication with consumers (Chu, 2011). Thus, at the present the changes in communication environment may have been influenced by slightly different drivers leading to online WOM communication.

The sharing and creating online content has been explained by intrinsic and extrinsic consumer motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, and extrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation is driven by an intense interest and involvement in the activity itself, curiosity, enjoyment, peer recognition, a personal sense of challenge, accomplishment or belonging, whereas extrinsic motivation is driven by the desire to achieve some external reward (Kietzmann, Silvestre, McCarthy, & Pitt, 2012). Holbrook (2006) discussing the types of consumer value, distinguishes extrinsic value including economic and social values and intrinsic value that includes hedonic and altruistic values. These values, in turn, can be divided into self-oriented and other-oriented. Hence, motivational categories, which drive consumer online interactions, are conceptually close to the types of consumer value suggested by Holbrook. Kozinets, Valck, Wojnicki, and Wilner (2010) argue that WOM communications are co-produced in consumer networks where consumers are active co-producers of value and meaning. We propose that brand value is co-created in consumer networks where consumers are active co-creators of value and meaning.

2.02   MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE

In the marketing literature the idea that consumers are looking for memorable experiences is well established. Experiences are memorable events (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) and in order to leave a memory trace, they must take place outside the daily routine (Sundbo & Sørensen, 2013). Thus, memorable experience is something unusual standing out from the rest. Experiences are provoked by stimuli; they may occur as a result of offline and online activities; they may be evoked by products, packaging, communication, in-store actions, engineer work, salespeople, after-sale service, events (Schmitt, 2010; Jensen, 2013), and by special messages in the social media. A strong experience triggers a desire to share it; people discuss experience with their friends. An important part of a brand-related experience is being able to communicate it by telling one's own story, recording the event in memorable pictures or videos, and sharing these experiences on social media platforms (Gelter, 2007).

Experience has been considered part of the marketing activities which focuses on the character of product or service (Sundbo & Sørensen, 2013) and which may have experiential value for the consumer. Consumers are more likely to engage in WOM when they experience significant emotional experience (Matos & Rossi, 2008; Söderlund & Rosengren, 2007). Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) suggest that only messages that are both memorable and sufficiently interesting to be passed on to others have the potential to spur a WOM marketing phenomenon. Memorable message should be contrasting - different with respect to the consumer's earlier experiences (Riivits-Arkonsuo, Kaljund, & Leppiman, 2014).

The authors of the current study assume that the memorable brand online message (e.g. campaign, consumer game) is an antecedent of online WOM. Brands, whose messages on social media are

memorable and different from others may stimulate the consumers to click the like button, become a fan, share them in order that the friends see them as well, write a comment or even recommend the brand.

Hence we propose:
H1: Memorable online campaign affects WOM positively.

2.03   INTERACTIONS IN VALUE CO-CREATION

With the rise of social media, consumers are becoming co-producers of products and services. Moreover, they are also becoming producers of experiences both for each other and for companies (Chakrabarti & Berthon, 2012). The literature regarding value co-creation suggests that consumers are always active participants in the creation of value (Akaka, Vargo, & Lusch, 2012; Grönroos, 2008; Leppiman, 2010; Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). Value co-creation is a function of interaction. McColl-Kennedy, Vargo, Dagger, Sweeney, and van Kasteren (2012) determine interactions as the ways individuals engage with others actively searching for information and providing feedback. Interactions are the source of experiences and the value is derived from consumption experience (Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Minkiewicz, Evans, & Bridson, 2014). Brand value co-creation process involves the interaction among brands and consumers during which consumers take an active role and co-create value together with brand (Merz, He, & Vargo, 2009; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Consumers can associate themselves with brands by becoming in social media platforms a friend or a fan. That is, consumers are seeking ways to interact with brands and other consumers. The creation of content and willingness to share online word with others is notably useful in increasing brand engagement. From integrated marketing communication perspective, the closer the consumer and brand, the more willing the consumer is to interact, share information, and introduce friends to the brand (Duncan & Moriarty, 2006).

Consumer participation in value co-creation depends on consumers' ability and willingness to attend in value formation process. Accordingly value creation and destruction can occur during the same interactive process. Interactive value formation is not only linked to positive outcomes (Echeverri & Skalen, 2011), but also associated with value co-destruction. The focus of this study is on antecedents of positive online WOM and therefore we hypothesize that good consumption experience creates the need for engaging in brand value co-creation.

H2: A good brand experience and thus, willingness to engage in brand value co-creation affects online WOM positively.

2.04   RECIPROCITY AND GRATITUDE

A theory of reciprocity explains the behavioral response to perceived kindness or unkindness (Falk & Fishbacher, 2006). Both traditional and online brand-related WOM involves the reciprocal patterns. The consumer is motivated in online communication to give the company something in return for a good experience (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Blazevic et al., 2013). The emotional core of reciprocity is gratitude towards the giver (Becker, 1986). Skakeby (2010) suggests that compared to the classic economic exchange paradigm the gratitude paradigm may provide a better way of understanding social media communication.

This leads to expectation that:
H3: Willingness to help brand (reciprocity, gratitude) affects online WOM positively.
The concept of reciprocity (including gratitude) is applied in relationship marketing (Palmatier, Jarvis, Bechkoff, & Kardes; 2009; Raggio, Walz, Godbole, & Folse, 2014) and in experience marketing (Leppiman 2010). Reciprocity and gratitude are important components in the co-creation of value (Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder 2011; Skakeby 2010). Therefore, in line with three main hypotheses we propose:

H4: A memorable online campaign affects willingness to help brand positively.
H5: Willingness to engage in brand value co-creation affects willingness to help brand positively.

3.0   RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to develop a stronger understanding of drivers the brand-related online WOM we use an exploratory sequential mixed method approach for our research design. A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, the rationale for use the methodological triangulation is to observe the phenomenon from several angles rather than one angle (Neuman, 2003). We begin with a qualitative method (study 1) to enhance in-depth information and then use the findings in a second quantitative phase (study 2). In our research, the second database builds on the results of the initial database. The intent of such strategy is to see if data from a few individuals can be generalized to a broad sample of a population.

3.01   STUDY 1 QUALITATIVE PHASE

An exploratory qualitative study (n=16) was designed to understand why consumers forward and generate the brand-related online WOM. Face-to-face in-depth interviews were carried out in a semi-structured manner. The sample was selected with an attempt to concentrate on heavy or at least medium users of various social media channels (such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube). The interviewee group was composed of students, IT-specialists, health professionals and bank employees as well as high-level managers. 8 females and 8 males were involved, the age of the informants ranged from 21 to 35, and their education varying from high school up to postgraduate degrees. The interviewees were asked to describe their social media usage and habits, to explain their motives to pass on brand messages, and to share positive and negative opinions. An interview lasted in average about 50 minutes. The transcribed interviews were read by two researchers in parallel (Mayring, 1999), either researcher familiar knowledge with the topic. The categories that emerged in the systematic reading process were discussed and carefully compared.

The qualitative content analysis provided the following categories (1) memorable brand experience, (2) interaction in value co-creation, and (3) reciprocity and gratitude. We assume that categories derived from our qualitative data may have the impact on consumer online interaction and can be antecedents of positive online WOM.

The study data demonstrate that the interviewees are not generous when it comes to liking and sharing brands in Facebook. Thus, the sharing threshold is high. They see clicking the like button as equal to giving an opinion, thus they will not do that without considering it first, in order not to devaluate the like button. The interviewees emphasized that they like and share only the brands they appeal truly. The interviewees understand that if they like and share, they promote WOM marketing. They do it if a brand has used something in its communication that the receiver perceives as interesting, memorable and extraordinary. The brands whose online and offline messages are entirely different from others brings along sharing. Female, 29 years old, describes an advertising campaign of a bike store:

> A bike in an ice cube was put up in front of the store towards the end of winter. Then they let the people estimate when the bike would melt out of the ice. The one whose estimate was the closest, became a prize. It was a very popular campaign and the consumers constantly demanded new information [new pictures on Facebook] in order to see how much ice was left.

Male, 28 years old, describes an online campaign:

> That was years ago, but one of the most genius things I have seen in my life was the way an advertising was built up [an alcohol brand, Pisang] ... Multidimensional, I shared that with all my friend since it was really – wow!

A good experience creates wish to help. The interviewees hope to promote the welfare of the company as well that of the people working there by sharing brands and posting on the wall of the latter:

> Good service in real life has earned a virtual praise. (Female 25)
> I thought I'll help them and write a positive comment, maybe it promotes their sales. (Female 31)
> I gave feedback about the service person, hoping to influence the salary in a positive way. (Male, 23)

Thus, a positive consumption experience creates a true wish to help and promote the company. In marketing literature this phenomenon is known "feeling gratitude".

3.02   STUDY 2 - QUANTITATIVE PHASE

In order to generate instrument we began with scales in the Marketing Scales Handbook (Bruner, James, & Hensel, 2001) and refined them. We used the results of the qualitative study (study 1) to construct the items of the scale as well as took over items that have been identified in previous related research (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007; Chu & Kim, 2011; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004) , modifying the latter to suite the context of present study. The 7-point measurement scales included both behavioral and attitudinal indicators using the Likert scale from 1 (disagree strongly) to 7 (agree strongly). The survey was fielded to a nationally representative sample of Estonian Internet users. The online panel of a professional research agency was used. Estonia ranks as one of the countries with the highest Internet penetration rate in Eastern Europe (78%, during the survey was fielded), making it a suitable market to study online issues.

An e-mail was sent to 1,350 panelists inviting them to fill out a web questionnaire. In four days, responses of 542 panelists were returned. This data was weighed in order to correct the results of the sample so that they would match the model of the whole Estonian Internet users as close as possible. After answering "no" to the question "How often do you use social media network sites (such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube)", the questionnaire was closed for 56 (10.3%) panelists. The question about Facebook account usage screened out another 68 panelists (13.9%) who responded that they do not use Facebook. Information about the demographic profile of the sample is presented in Table 1. The table shows those Facebook user profiles who completed the questionnaire.

Table 1: The demographic profile of the sample, n=418

The variable	Categories	Percentage of the sample
Age (M=35.55; SD 12.68)	15-19	4.5
	20-29	37.9
	30-39	25.4
	40-49	16.1
	50-59	10.7
	60+	5.5
Gender	Female	54.8
	Male	45.2
Education	Primary or basic	6.6
	Secondary (high school)	44.0
	College or University	44.3
	Other	5.1
Place of residence	Capital	31.7
	City > 50,000 inhabitants	18.4
	Town, 5,000-50,000 inhabitants	23.8
	Smaller town < 5,000 inhabitants	11.6
	Village, rural area	14.5

Since Facebook is the most popular social network site in Estonia our focus was on Facebook users and their willingness to share and generate online WOM.

4.0   HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Based on the theoretical framework discussed above and on findings the qualitative interviews, we choose for the conceptual model (Figure 1) three distinctive constructs to analyze what impact they have on online interaction. Three constructs are addressed as antecedents of online WOM while online WOM is considered as a central construct.

Figure 01: Conceptual model of sharing online word
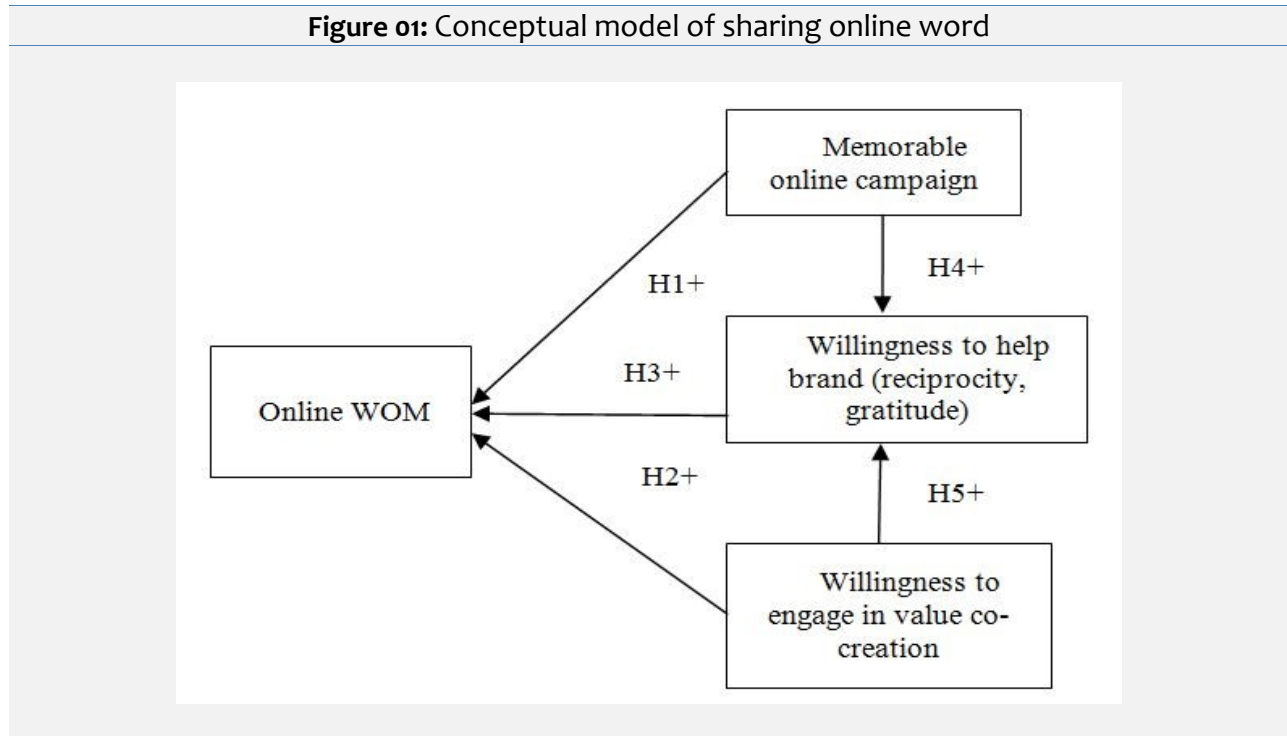
We are interested what impacts have distinctive constructs 1) memorable online campaign, 2) value co-creation, and 3) willingness to help brand to consumer online interaction?

The collected quantitative data (n=418) were analyzed using and exploratory factor analysis. Using IBM SPSS Statistics 22.0 software, first, 21 items characterizing behavior and attitudes were entered into an analysis of principal components to examine the dimensionality of the entire set of items. Since the correlations of some items were too low, we abandoned the initial matrix containing 6 components. A principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted on 16 items with orthogonal rotation (varimax). The Kayser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy of the analysis, KMO=0,844 ("great" according to Field, 2009), and all KMO values for individual items were > 0.7, which is well above the acceptable limit of 0.5 (Field, 2009). Barlett's test of sphericity $\chi^2(136) = 3416.26$ $p < 0.001$ indicated that correlations between the items were sufficient for the PCA. An initial analysis was made to obtain eigenvalues for each component in the data. Four components had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of 1 and in combination explained 63.86 % of the variance. All factor loadings greater than 0.4 were considered for further analysis. Given the large sample size and the convergence of the scree plot and Kaiser's criterion on four components, a number of components were retained in the final analysis. The psychometrics properties of the latent constructs and the wording of the items are displayed in Table 2 below. All composite reliability (CR) values are at or above the recommended 0.80.

Table 2: Psychometric properties of the applied scale

Construct	Item	Loading	Mean	SD	CR
Sharing online word					0.82
	I am very picky about the brands I like and share	0.80	5.89	1.75	
	If I like and share, then only because I really like something	0.80	6.24	1.39	
	Many companies offer good service/good products but in order to share and like them, it must be at least outstanding	0.70	5.33	1.79	
Memorable online campaigns					0.93
	There are brands whose message in the social media is so different from others that				
	… I have clicked the like button and become a fan	0.90	3.49	1.98	
	… it has led me to write a comment or send posts	0.88	3.59	2.06	
	… it has led me to share them since I want my friends to see the message as well	0.87	3.10	1.94	
	… it has led me to recommend the services or the products of that company	0.83	3.10	1.89	
Reciprocity					0.85
	A sales/service person who served me well can be helped by writing positive comments or sending posts	0.87	5.1	1.7	
	A company can be helped by writing positive comments or sending posts	0.77	5.1	1.8	
	Companies who really care for their clients positive comments should be sent written/posts	0.67	4.7	1.8	
Interaction in value co-creation					0.8
	I readily read the posts and comments of those who have tried the product/services before me and recommend them	0.70	4.93	1.83	
	If a service/a product is especially good, one just has to click the like button and share it	0.67	4.22	2.21	
	There are brands that I like so that I think I should share them	0.66	4.50	2.14	
	If brands ask for my opinion about how to improve their services/products for the consumers, I readily share that	0.63	4.46	1.89	
	One should write comments/send posts about really good brands	0.60	4.47	1.86	
	It is important that brands ask for the consumer's opinion about how to improve their services/products	0.54	5.42	1.62	

A linear regression analysis was employed using IBM SPSS Statistics 22.0 to investigate significant relationship between predictors and dependent variables. As depicted in Table 3, four hypotheses out of five are confirmed. No support to direct and positive relationship between willingness to share online word and memorable online campaigns was found (H1), thus the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 3: Research hypothesis

	β	t-value	Result
H1: Memorable online campaign affects WOM positively	0.033	0.678	Not supported
H2: Willingness to engage in brand value co-creation affects online WOM positively	0.154	3.177	Supported
H3: Willingness to help brand (reciprocity, gratitude) affects online WOM positively	0.232	4.855	Supported
H4: A memorable online campaign affects willingness to help brand positively	0.217	4.530	Supported
H5: A memorable experience affects willingness to help brand (reciprocity) positively	0.561	13.923	Supported

H2: Willingness to engage in brand value co-creation affects online WOM positively The relationship between willingness to share online WOM and interaction is significant at the 95 per cent confidence level (P < 0.05). In this relationship, the multiple correlation coefficient (R) is 0.232, and the R-square is 0,054. Thus, the predictor variable of interaction has illustrated 5 per cent of the variance in the dependent variable WOM. The beta coefficient (β) is shown to be positive and statistically significant at the 0,001 level. Therefore, the higher the interaction scores, the higher their WOM scores (β = 0.232, t = 4.855, P < 0.001) In addition to this, the hypothesis (H2) is supported at t-value > ±1.96.

H3: Willingness to help brand (reciprocity, gratitude) affects online WOM positively.
The results show that the relationship between willingness to share online WOM and willingness to help brand is significant at the 95 per cent confidence level (P < 0.05). In this relationship, the multiple correlation coefficient (R) is 0.154, and the R-square is 0.024. Thus, the predictor variable of reciprocity has illustrated 2 per cent of the variance in the dependent variable WOM. Table 3 displays the standardized beta coefficient (β) between the predictor variable reciprocity and the dependent variable WOM. The beta coefficient (β) is shown to be positive and statistically significant at the 0,001 level. Therefore, the higher the reciprocity scores, the higher their online WOM scores (β = 0.154, t = 3.177, P < 0.001) In addition to this, the hypothesis (H3) is supported at t-value > ±1.96.

H4: A memorable online campaign affects willingness to help brand (reciprocity) positively.
The relationship between willingness to help brand (reciprocity) and memorable online campaign is significant at the 95 per cent confidence level (P < 0.05). The multiple correlation coefficient (R) is 0.217, and the R-square is 0.047. Thus, the predictor variable of memorable online campaign has illustrated 4 per cent of the variance in the dependent variable reciprocity. The beta coefficient (β) is shown to be positive and statistically significant at the 0.001 level. Therefore, the higher memorable online campaign scores, the higher their reciprocity scores (β = 0.217, t = 4.530, P < 0.001) In addition to this, the hypothesis (H5) is supported at t-value > ±1.96.

H5: Willingness to engage in brand value co-creation (interaction) affects willingness to help brand (reciprocity) positively.
The relationship between willingness to help brand (reciprocity) and willingness to engage in brand value co-creation is significant at the 95 per cent confidence level (P < 0.05). The multiple correlation coefficient (R) is 0.561, and the R-square is 0.315. Thus, the predictor variable of interaction has illustrated 35 per cent of the variance in the dependent variable reciprocity. The beta coefficient (β) is shown to be positive and statistically significant at the 0.001 level. Therefore, the higher the interaction scores, the higher their reciprocity scores (β = 0.561, t = 13.923, P < 0.001) In addition to this, the hypothesis (H4) is supported at t-value > ±1.96.

5.0   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research design involved a two-phase project in which we collected qualitative data and then we built on this database with a second quantitative data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2014). Figure 2 depicts the research design and results. The qualitative study delivered us the themes related to the high sharing threshold and expectations that brand communications would be memorable and different from others.

Figure 2: Research process and results, exploratory sequential mixed method.
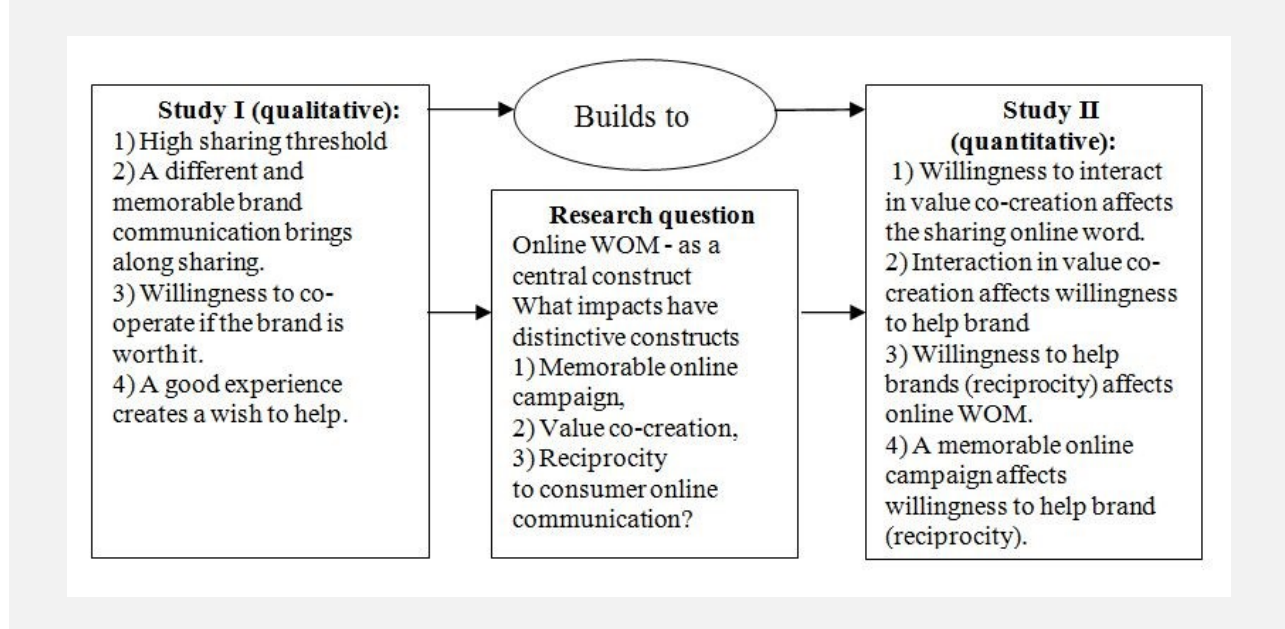
The content of interviews revealed that informants are willing to cooperate when they appreciate the brand to be worth it. In addition, the informants emphasized that a good brand experience creates a true wish to help. We interpret this result as reciprocal behavior, more precisely as manifestation of gratitude. On the themes mentioned above we built the research question for the next phase of our study. According to our conceptual model, we are interested in what impacts have the distinctive constructs on online WOM. These constructs are memorable online campaigns, willingness to engage in brand value co-creation, and enthusiasm to help the brand.

We argue that online WOM has a certain meaning for the consumer that presupposes special positive and memorable experience. The findings support the expectation that the consumers are not generous when it comes to liking and sharing brands online. Our questionnaire contained the statement: "There are (1=very few if any, 7= very many) brands which I have liked and shared because of very good experiences". The result (M=2.43, SD=1.22) shows how picky the consumers about sharing are. On the other side might ask how the consumers determine a "very good experience" to be worth online sharing. Is every memorable brand experience worthy online communication or do the consumers have only limited number of excellent experiences? It may depend on the individual propensity to like and share overall and is it related to the local culture context.

The current study compares what impact a memorable and/or a distinguishable brand online campaign to an online WOM that was tested under H1: Memorable online campaign affects WOM positively. The findings show that the memorable brand online campaigns by themselves do not predict positive online WOM. Though, we found that consumers' willingness to help a brand (reciprocity and gratitude) and their willingness to interact in value in co-creation have a positive impact to sharing online word. The findings support relationships between willingness to interact in value co-creation and willingness to help a brand. In addition, willingness to help a brand and memorable online campaign have a positive

relationship. However, the latter is not antecedent of positive WOM. Our study results reveal that the aspects of brand value are co-creation and reciprocity. We discuss both the findings more detailed below.

5.01   BRAND VALUE CO-CREATION

Value is co-created during the interaction between the provider, that is, a brand and a consumer (Leppiman, 2010; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Successful communications between the brands and the consumers mean a mutually beneficial cooperation. The participants of online WOM communications perceive that the brand invests in the consumers, and, thus, they are willing to invest in the brand. The consumers are enthusiastic to co-operate, to create content and to forward messages. If brands ask for their opinion about how to improve the services/products for the consumers, they readily share that. Thus, the consumers engage with others who are actively searching for information and providing feedback (McColl-Kennedy, et al., 2012). Moreover, brands are expected to give information about new products or services, and the consumers are willing to co-operate with them by expressing their opinions. Consumers appreciate reading the posts and comments of those who have tried the product/service before. Communication on social media platforms involves a trust-based dialog between a consumer and a company (Diffley, Kearns, Bennett, & Kawalek, 2011; Keller 2007). If no trust exists between the brand and consumer, there is no willingness to co-operate. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) highlight the meaning of interaction between a brand and consumer in value creation and value extraction. We argue that the more positive online WOM is, the higher the brand value extraction is.

5.02   RECIPROCITY AND GRATITUDE

The brand's value is derived from consumption experience; hence, such experiences are positive. The exchange that takes place is perceived as fair: the brand offers a good experience and, in return, the consumer engages in value co-creation. Our findings show that a good brand experience creates a true wish to help a brand. By giving positive online WOM, the consumers help and promote the brand. The findings of our two studies (qualitative and quantitative) are consistent with studies from Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) and Blazevic et al. (2013) in that they support consumers' motivation to give the company something in return for a good experience. Sense of gratitude elicits a positive word of mouth (Soscia, 2007). Such positive reciprocity is a reward for kind treatment. A good brand experience in real live has earned virtual praise. In marketing literature, gratitude-related reciprocal behavior is referred to as "thankfulness," "gratefulness," or "appreciation" (Palmatier et al., 2009). We suggest defining the gratitude-related reciprocal online behavior as "virtual praise".

6.0   CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Although there have been a number of studies investigating brand-related online interactions and motives why consumers engage in online WOM there is still little known about relationships between online WOM and key concepts of experience marketing. This study offers insights into the links between constructs of meaningful experience concepts and brand-related online communication. We contribute to the marketing literature by conceptualizing online WOM communications from a consumer's perspective, suggesting three dimensions. This research established that consumers use social media channels to producing brand value co-creations and to provide gratitude. We have proposed a framework of reciprocity as an earned virtual price and consumer willingness to be consumer-to-consumer and brand-consumer interactions impact on online communication and through its brand value co-creation. The central concept of experience marketing is that it be a memorable, meaningful experience. Such experience is different from those undergone before, standing out from the other experiences. If a brand offers a memorable experience then it may lead consumers to click the like button and become a fan, to write a comment or send a post, to share these messages since the friends would see it as well, or even to recommend the services or products of that company. In this study, the antecedents of positive online communications are viewed as consequences of memorable brand experiences whether it be an especially good service, product, or kind treatment. A good brand

experience creates a true wish to help. We interpret this result as reciprocal behavior, as manifestation of gratitude. Our study reveals that consumers' willingness to help a brand (reciprocity and gratitude) and their willingness to interact in value in co-creation have a positive impact to sharing online word. A good brand experience in real live earns virtual praise. The more positive online WOM, the higher is the brand value extraction.

From a practical perspective, the current study results demonstrate that the online campaign, although distinctive and memorable, would not ensure successful buzz. The brand that has not earned consumers' trust cannot be helped with the extraordinary online campaigns. This finding may indicate that consumers are selective, ignoring information that they perceive as unnecessary. Instead, they may appreciate a more long-term emotional bond with a brand. The participants of online WOM communications perceive that the brand invests in the consumers, and, thus, they are willing to invest in the brand. The present study shows that prior good brand experience is a factor that determines whether the consumer is willing to help a brand. Grateful consumers are motivated to give the company positive online WOM in return for a good experience. When gratitude is expressed, a non-financial exchange takes place, which can increase the likelihood of future market-based (a.k.a. financial) exchanges; thus; gratitude is a fundamental component (Raggio et al., 2014) of brand-consumer relationships.

The competition for consumer attention is becoming increasingly difficult for the managers and they can't continuously come up with new memorable experiences. The success of brands relies besides on creating memorable and meaningful experiences also on building long-lasting, trust-based relationships with consumers. A long-term and based on trust consumption experience motivates the consumer to promote a brand with positive WOM. That is, the consumer becomes a message conveyor for the brand and a brand value co-creator through the online and offline communications.

7.0   LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This paper suffers from several limitations that need to be addressed in future research. First, the current empirical study shows the results at an aggregate level, without detecting differences between various kinds of services, products, or brands. We propose future research that investigates positive online consumer WOM for different brands or product categories. Second, future researchers must consider developing a new research instrument for measuring the experiential aspects of brand performance in online WOM context. For instance, what kind of brand communication the consumer perceives as exciting, memorable, different from those encountered before, attractive, and impressive to such an extent to be worthy of the online WOM.

Third, an Estonian sample was used for the study, so it is not possible to generalize the results to other countries and cultures. We propose future research that compares the consumers' propensity to engage online WOM in the different nationalities and cultures context.

Fourth, consumers who participate in online communications are not a homogeneous group. Brand value is subjectively experienced; the meaning given is individual. In social media, brand value is collectively co-created but subjectively experienced. Additional research might help establish the consumer segments participating in online communication.

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