

Online Word-of-Mouth Communication in a Collectivist Society

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ABSTRACT

Word-of-mouth (WOM) is perceived by consumers as a highly credible source of information, and online channels for WOM have become increasingly popular among consumers.

Although the impact of online word-of-mouth (OWOM) on consumers' purchase decisions has been researched, it remains unclear why information about products, brands or organisations is generated online and what influences its initiation from the sender's perspective. This research explores the antecedents of customer OWOM and examines the relationships between key antecedent variables and customer OWOM engagement in a Chinese context.

A conceptual model was developed based on the literature and information obtained through one-to-one in-depth interviews. Customer perceived value, satisfaction, loyalty and affective commitment were incorporated as key antecedent constructs of customer OWOM.

The research used a two-phase research design. The first phase was a qualitative exploration of the customer's OWOM experience. These findings were used to gain an understanding of customers' OWOM initiation, provide confirmation of the model, and refine the measurement thereof. The second phase used a quantitative online survey to validate the measurement instruments and test the model. The data for the study were collected from OWOM initiators in China over a period of one and a half months. A sample of 574 respondents was obtained. Hypotheses were tested using structural equation modelling and multiple regression analysis.

Findings from the research suggest that an emphasis on creating an affective bond with the brand and organisation is the key to customers' engagement of WOM on the Internet. The study also indicates that customer perceived QEP (quality, emotional and price) value is a less immediate but critical antecedent. In addition, the customer perceived social value of a

product or service is found to significantly impact OWOM. In China, where the collectivist view predominates, customers conform to social standards and withhold negative comments in their OWOM activities in order to maintain social acceptance and inclusion, and to make favourable impressions. They also engage in OWOM to gain and enhance *face*, which is a social need in China's status driven society.

This research contributes to a growing body of research on customers' OWOM behaviour by developing and empirically testing the customer OWOM model. It provides a more holistic view of post-purchase OWOM by simultaneously investigating a set of key antecedents for OWOM in a single framework. The research also widens the geographic and culture scope of OWOM research by undertaking the study in China. By using a mixed method, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the research offers a balance among objectivity, detailed description and the predictability of the study. Furthermore, the research provides marketing practitioners with a better understanding of the behaviour of Chinese OWOM initiators, and offers directions to improve their marketing communication strategies.

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CHAPTER 1. Introduction

This Chapter provides the background and introduction to the topic of this study. The research problems and questions are presented and the contribution of this study is outlined. The chapter concludes with an overview of the organisation of the thesis.

1.1 Background of Study

Communications in marketing are the means by which companies inform, persuade, and remind consumers about their products and services (Keller, 2001). Marketing communication is a billion-dollar industry. Driven by advances in technology and shifts in business and consumer spending, total communications industry spending is on pace to increase 3.5% in 2010 and is expected to reach US\$1.4 trillion by 2014 (VSS, 2012). Marketing communication expenditures can be enormous for many products and services. Marketing communication has seen dramatic changes over the years in terms of the number and diversity of communication options available to marketers in reaching consumers. Above-the-line advertising expenditures peaked in the mid-1980s, and have been trending down ever since. The trend in the early 1990s was towards greater expenditures on below-the-line communication activities and fewer on above-the-line advertising (Rust & Oliver, 1994). The last two decades have seen the Internet revolutionise communication and Internet-based media present vast networks to marketers and consumers.

In the Web 1.0 era when Internet technology was relatively rudimentary, communication was more a top-down approach. Information was published by a relative few, and accessed by anyone, anywhere, at any time. This allowed companies to improve their communication with consumers in terms of “reach (determined by the number of people who share the same information at the same time) and richness (the amount of information that can be communicated at one time, plus the extent of tailoring of the information and the likelihood of two-way interaction)” (Day & Montgomery, 1999, p. 7). This Internet-based media also supported numerous marketing communications functions, such as advertising, public

relations, and sales promotions. Sending customised messages to consumers through Internet-based media (e.g., solicited email) was widely adopted, and thus even the relatively limited one-to-one communication of the Web 1.0 era allowed for customer data collection, distribution, analysis, and retention (O'Leary, Rao, & Perry, 2004). Companies' understanding of their customers was increased through the collection of consumer data through the Internet. Behavioural data could only be collected passively through tracing customers' online navigation sequences and site-visit frequencies. The collection of the data of customers' input was limited because there was little possibility to respond or actively get involved in the data collection. Cognitive data regarding the demographic and psychographic characteristics of consumers could be collected actively through permission-based communications. These data were then analysed to help companies create profiles for different customers (Wang, Head, & Archer, 2000) and to produce personalised marketing communication based on consumers' individual characteristics and behaviour. In non-Internet based communication and the Web 1.0 era a passive one-to-many communication model was typically adopted by companies to reach many current and potential customers, segmented or not, through marketing efforts that allowed for limited forms of feedback (Hoffman & Novak, 1996).

The Internet has moved on to the Web 2.0 era in the last decade, and is now entering its third generation - Web 3.0. Internet media now allow consumers to generate content themselves and there has been a mushrooming of user-created communication content online. Searches for such content are having greater meaning, relevancy and value for consumers in Web 2.0 and the relatively new and intelligent Web 3.0, compared with the dictated and passive communication of Web 1.0. Marketing communications has inevitably changed with the advent of social media, crowdsourcing, changing media consumption and hyper-competition (Smith & Zook, 2011). From a consumer point of view, consumers can engage in communication concerning a product, a brand or company whenever they desire. These new media facilitate participation and interactive communication, and they allow consumers to

engage in two-way communication easily, cost effectively, and in real time. The interactive and social nature of these media means that messages can be communicated through dialogue or conversation whereby the communicating parties can be both message originators and recipients. Some of these conversations are within the brand's official online space, and some occur way beyond the brand's space and are just amongst customers without any corporate influence (Smith & Zook, 2011).

In the pre-Internet era communications among consumers about products and services, known as word-of-mouth (WOM), took place in a personalised or face-to-face, one-to-one manner. The conversations were largely among people who knew each other. WOM is powerful in shaping consumers' attitudes and influencing their decision making. With either positive recommendations or a landslide of negative comments, WOM influences the consumer's purchase decision more than any other source, and it is one of the most trusted sources of product or service information for consumers around the world (Nielsen, 2012).

The Internet provides consumers with various venues not only in searching for information, entertainment and networking, but also for sharing experiences and views about products and services they have experienced. Because of the speed of technological innovation and global acceptance of various Internet-based media consumers now communicate with more people, faster, and in more ways than ever before. Channels such as chat rooms, message boards, weblogs, and social networking sites (SNSs) have enabled today's consumers to 'talk' to individuals outside their personal communication network of family, friends and colleagues. One person's opinion no longer impacts just his or her family and friends: it is shared with the world. This ability to exchange opinions on the Internet is known as online word of mouth (OWOM). The Internet has become a powerful and unintrusive medium to transmit WOM (Helm, 2000). OWOM has been acknowledged as a critical tool for facilitating information diffusion throughout online communication networks. According to a study of social media site users conducted in America (AmericanExpress, 2012) 47% of such

individuals share information about their shopping experience with a broader audience. Communication through online media allows people to establish friendships and acquaintances based on mutual interests (Walther, 1994) and therefore OWOM has the potential to be a powerful shaper of consumer values and attitudes (Lee & Conroy, 2005).

Compared with face-to-face communication, the Internet, with its limited cues and inherent asynchronicity, has led to a high level of consumer acceptance and reliance on OWOM (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). Consumers trust OWOM and access websites with WOM content on-the-go while shopping. Companies have realised the unique nature of the Internet as a communications medium, and have made use of WOM marketing online. Marketers use this online environment to tell their stories in their own words. However, the way communication occurs through OWOM amongst individuals afterwards cannot be exactly controlled by marketers. Marketers are particularly interested in better understanding OWOM because traditional forms of communication appear to be losing their effectiveness (Nail, 2005). The power and process of personal influence has been reinforced by various phenomena including buzz (contagious WOM commentary about products, services, brands, and ideas (Carl, 2006; Walker, 2004) and tipping points (the point at which an idea, behaviour, or product ‘tips’, crossing a threshold from being a minor phenomenon to a wild epidemic (Carl, 2006; Gladwell, 2000). More and more companies are paying attention to how their brands are discussed online (Bailey, 2004).

OWOM has become increasingly important and prevalent in today’s interpersonal communication; it attracts considerable attention across disciplines including sociology, communication and information management. The extant research in marketing has investigated how WOM influences individuals’ learning, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours in online media to promote socially desirable interests and ideas (Henderson & Gilding, 2004). Researchers studied aggregated outcomes of OWOM, such as product success (e.g., Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991) and financial returns (e.g., Trusov, Bucklin, &

Pauwels, 2009), which highlight the value of OWOM in business practices. Despite the considerable number of studies devoted to OWOM communication, little is known about why information gets generated among consumers in the first place in the online context, and what influences consumers' initiation of OWOM in different online channels.

1.2 China as Research Context

Seeing rapid growth and development over the years, China recently became the second largest economy in the world behind the United States. The country has experienced one of the most sustained and rapid economic transformations in the world, and has also now become a major market for the world's leading international consumer goods companies. China has been slowly integrating itself into the fabric of the global trading system, particularly since it joined the World Trade Organisation in 2001. China is changing the economic environment for many companies around the world, whether it is moving manufacturing to China, exporting to the growing Chinese market or dealing with Chinese consumers. Although it was reported that China's economy was slowing down in early 2012, the domestic demand held up well thanks to increasing household incomes and slower inflation (OECD, 2012). The disposable income of urban Chinese households rose to around US\$4000 per capita in 2011 (StatisticsChina, 2011) which is a boon for Chinese residents who have seen their yearly earnings multiply tenfold since 1980. The country has seen the rise of a middle class. By 2010, there were approximately 200 million middle-income individuals with enough disposable income to purchase nonessential goods, and this population segment is still fast-growing. It is expected that the Chinese middle class will reach over 500 million by 2025, which will constitute about 40 percent of China's population at that time (Farrel, Gersch, & Stephenson, 2006). An explosion of lifestyle and economic opportunities makes China one of the most attractive markets. Because of the great impact the country's rise is having on markets in Asia and the rest of the world, practitioners and academics alike are paying increasing attention toward understanding this market so as to enable companies to better tailor their China strategies.

The Internet became more accessible in China in the late 1990s, and has since been integrated into much of Chinese society. Thanks to government efforts in building telecommunications infrastructure the Internet is affordable and widely available. Broadband Internet costs just US\$10 per month against an average urban household income of US\$670 (StatisticsChina, 2011). The years 2007 through to 2012 saw rapid growth in the number of consumers going online. In each of those years, China gained between 56 and 88 million new Internet users (CNNIC, 2012). China has the world's biggest online population with 513 million Internet users and 356 million mobile Internet users by the end of 2011 (CNNIC, 2012).

Similar to other countries, the Internet is embedded more than ever into consumers' lives in China, and the OWOM phenomenon is becoming more pervasive. Engagement with online channels has deepened, as evidenced by the widespread adoption of such activities as social networking, blogging and messaging (CNNIC, 2012). In 2008 alone, there were approximately 180 million Chinese Internet users frequently involved in OWOM communication programmes (CNNIC, 2009). Business research on Bulletin Boards (BBS) and weblog users shows that more than 80% of BBS/weblog users search OWOM before making a purchase, nearly 60% of them make their purchase decisions based on OWOM, and most importantly, about 50% of users engage in OWOM to share their user experiences and express their opinions after the purchase (CIC Ltd., 2009). A survey conducted on Internet users in Asia including China showed that many consumers found consumer-generated OWOM content to be trustworthy (TNS, 2011). The content included consumer reviews on websites (89% considered it trustworthy), consumer opinions on blogs (87%), consumer opinions on message boards (81%), consumer opinions in chat rooms (77%), and e-mail newsletters (79%).

It is widely acknowledged that personal interaction in communication and purchasing behaviour is prevalent in high-context and collectivist cultures such as China, in which

people prefer fact-to-face interactions so that they can better decipher the speaker's meaning with the nonverbal elements of facial expression, gestures and eye movements (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1980). However, a growing number of Chinese consumers have become increasingly reliant on OWOM communication, even though it is impersonal with few or no face-to-face interaction clues. A few researchers pointed out that culture may exert a strong influence on consumers' online behaviour (Buttle, 1998; Chau et al., 2002). Despite the numerous studies devoted to online communication, empirical research on consumers' collectivist culture and OWOM activity has been scant. This under-representation may be due, in part, to the fact that much of the aforementioned academic research was conducted in Western societies where collectivist-minded individuals are minorities. This research is conducted in a collectivist context in an attempt to understand the role of the collectivist culture in consumers' OWOM behaviour.

Another interesting aspect to the study's geographical focus is China's unique social environment, and the involvement of the government in people's day-to-day communication on the Internet. China is witnessing an unprecedented number of Internet users, a vast volume of online information, as well as a massive impact from online opinions on every aspect of society (GlobalTimes, 2012). The government believes that the social structure is not stable enough for free expression on the Internet, and therefore imposes regulations on managing online media (GlobalTimes, 2012). Tsui (2003, p. 67) reported that the government is highly involved in the media and stated that "control of the information flow is crucial" to the government. Although there is some degree of Internet censorship and control in all 47 nations investigated by (Kelly, Cook, & Truong, 2012), there is widespread agreement that China maintains one of the most sophisticated and comprehensive censorship systems (Dutton, Dopatka, Law, & Nash, 2011), known as "Great Firewall" (Zhang, 2006). According to UNESCO's report, China engages in pervasive filtering of communication on political, social, and security grounds (Dutton et al., 2011).

Since 1995 when the government began permitting commercial Internet accounts, various sets of regulations have been issued to control the publishing of, or access to, information on the Internet. These include centralised control over international gateways and blocks on international applications such as the social-networking site Facebook, blogging services Blogger and Twitter, photo-sharing site Flickr, and video-sharing site YouTube. The void this has created has been filled by equivalent Chinese sites. Some e-retailers, such as the Yahoo Hong Kong auction website and Taiwan Eslite bookseller are also inaccessible to mainland Chinese consumers. A change in regulations has shifted some responsibility for content control to the Internet companies themselves. For example, Internet content providers such as Sohu.com have developed their own sets of guidelines for users who want to enter chat rooms or post on bulletin boards (i.e., there are 11 terms regarding message content) (Sohu, 2003). The companies regularly moderate the information being exchanged on their websites. The most popular micro-blog Weibo (a Twitter equivalent) is an example of this conduct of content-filtering. A few celebrity Weibo accounts were shut down in May 2012, because their messages on Weibo were considered to have crossed certain “boundaries” (GlobalTimes, 2012). Some journalists believe that China’s online freedom of speech is shrinking as the government continues to tighten its control over online expression as Internet usage grows (GlobalTimes, 2012). Despite the status of China’s Internet content restrictions, the Chinese still have more space to express their views and share their experiences online than any other medium, especially in areas concerning products, services, brands and businesses.

In recent years, OWOM content has become the focus among marketing practitioners. Companies track what is said in conversations, who is conversing, and who is watching. Such traces of online conversations have enabled analysis through various applications, such as Nielsen Buzz MetricsTM, Social Graphing applications (Owyang, 2007), and Facebook’s Page Insights API (Boyd, 2011). Similar practises are also adopted in China. Marketers create an online presence or product/service related content, and use these applications to understand their audiences, to understand if and how people engage with the content and, thus to assess

their performance as an online presence. However, the initiation of WOM by customers has not been given much attention. Given the increasing and persuasive power attributed to WOM communication, an understanding of what affects customers' initiation of OWOM activity from the customer's perspective is important for marketers in order to incorporate relevant elements into their marketing strategy. Furthermore, marketing theory cannot be applied universally without considering context (Wells, 2002). Researchers should not over-generalise by drawing global conclusions from the studies that are conducted solely in Western contexts.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

The main research objectives of the thesis are to: 1) better understand reasons customers engage in post-purchase OWOM, 2) develop an integrative model of customer OWOM, and 3) investigate if collectivist cultural context affects customers' OWOM engagement. The research is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What antecedents influence Chinese customers' WOM activity online?
- 2) What role, if any, does Chinese collectivist culture play in customers' OWOM initiation?

1.4 Research Contribution

This study contributes to the knowledge base of both academics and practitioners. The study provides additional theoretical insights into the antecedents of customer OWOM and offers an improved explanation as to what drives customers to initiate WOM via different online channels. The research applies general WOM theory to overcome the lack of research on WOM initiators' behaviours in the online context.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to existing knowledge in WOM in five primary ways. First, this study develops an integrative model for customer OWOM from the WOM sender's perspective, incorporating OWOM and its key antecedents. The study empirically

tests the customer OWOM model with the data collected from Chinese consumers. Second, the current study includes multiple product categories and OWOM channels to provide heterogeneity and improve the generalisability of the findings, and to obtain a more complete picture of customer OWOM and its antecedents. Third, the study adopts a mixed method with qualitative interviews followed by a quantitative survey. This provides a balance among objectivity, detailed description, and the predictability of the study, which leads to a richer examination of the antecedents and customer OWOM. Fourth, by examining OWOM in China, this study enhances our understanding of collectivist and *face* culture with respect to WOM research. Fifth, this study offers value for practitioners to examine OWOM to improve the performance of their strategies targeting Chinese consumers. The conceptual framework underpinning this study offers businesses useful guidelines for improving their marketing strategies. Each aspect is discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

1.5 Research Methodology

To address the research question, a conceptual model was developed and tested. The study used a two-phase sequential research design (Creswell, 2003). The first phase used a qualitative approach to: 1) gain a better understanding of customers' OWOM initiation, 2) seek initial confirmation of the conceptual model, 3) help inform the survey instruments, and 4) offer breadth and depth of survey results and interpretation. The researcher undertook qualitative interviews with a limited number of informants, followed in the second phase by a quantitative survey of a sample from China's population. An online survey was administered to Chinese consumers in order to empirically test the conceptual model. The rationale behind the choice of methods, and details regarding their procedure are provided in Chapter 4.

1.6 Chapter Summary

Understanding OWOM behaviour in greater detail at the individual level is worthwhile given the ongoing growth in new technologies that facilitates consumers' efforts to share product/service and brand or organisation-related information with each other (e.g., user-

generated content, social media, and social commerce). This study 1) examines customers' underlying reasons for engaging in post-purchase WOM online, 2) develops an integrative model of customer OWOM, and 3) investigates if collectivist cultural context affects customers' OWOM engagement. The study makes both a theoretical and practical contribution by developing and empirically testing an integrated customer OWOM model for OWOM research. A two-phase mixed method is used in the study.

The organisation of this thesis is as follows. Chapter Two discusses the main issues highlighted in the literature regarding traditional and OWOM communication, and the research gaps are identified. Based on the literature review, a conceptual framework guiding the research is developed and presented in Chapter Three. In Chapter Four, the research methodology is discussed. Data analysis and the results are reported in Chapter Five, followed by the discussion, limitations of the study, and the directions for further research in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER 2. Literature Review

The following section comprises a review of current literature regarding the key concepts addressed by the research. While this is a thorough examination of the literature, its scope is limited to work relevant to the research objectives and questions. Consequently, the literature review focuses on, and consists of, three key domains: 1) diffusion theory and information diffusion research, 2) traditional WOM communication, and 3) OWOM communication. Based on the literature review, the research gaps are identified at the end of the chapter.

2.1 Diffusion Theory and Information Diffusion

Among the efforts to encourage the spread of information about a product, mass media has a powerful effect on diffusion because it spreads knowledge of innovations to a large audience rapidly. But interpersonal communication (i.e., WOM), is usually more effective in the formation and change of strongly held attitudes. The idea of WOM used by marketers for product adoption finds its origins in diffusion theory, which is a set of generalisations regarding the typical spread of innovations within a social system.

The root of diffusion theory can be seen to extend back to French sociologist Gabriel Tarde's thinking (1903, cited in Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971) who introduced opinion leadership and the S-shaped curve while attempting to explain why some innovations are adopted and spread throughout a society, while others are ignored. His insights have affected the development of many social science disciplines, such as economics and anthropology, but diffusion research only emerged as a single and integrated body of concepts in the 1970s (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971). Diffusion theory has since been investigated by researchers in a range of fields, such as sociology, education, communication, political science, and marketing (Rogers, 2003). Diffusion research in marketing has advanced since the '60s and '70s, and many studies examined the spread of newly acquired items and ideas over a single geographic region or in a single cultural context (Rogers, 1995).

Broadly defined, diffusion is understood as the spread of an item, idea or practice across social institutions and through social networks (Strang & Soule, 1998). According to Rogers (1983), diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels, over time among the members of a social system. Essentially, the diffusion of information is a social process in which subjectively perceived information about an idea is communicated from one person to another (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971). It is a special type of communication, in that the messages are concerned with new information. Diffusion literature developed across disciplines to explain the flow of new ideas and practices and the adoption of new products and services through social systems. People get information on an innovation by sharing communication channels such as interpersonal communication or mass communication (Rogers, 2003). The classic model for the flow of communication linking mass media and interpersonal communication is commonly known as the ‘two-step model’. The essential feature of the two-step model is that ideas “flow *from* the mass media *to* opinion leaders and *from* them [opinion leader] to the less active sections of the population” (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948, p. 151). The two-step flow suggests that less active people are influenced by interpersonal sources instead of, or in addition to, mass media sources.

Personal influences evident in the diffusion process, as in using interpersonal communication channels, have been a particular concern of research (Gatignon & Robertson, 1985). Interpersonal networks influence people’s decisions to adopt an idea or innovation. WOM is one type of interpersonal communication that facilitates the flow of information in social networks (Frenzen & Nakamoto, 1993). The essence of the WOM diffusion process is an information exchange through which one individual sends information to one or several others. Its effects on innovation adoption behaviour over time are well documented and explained by theories, such as social contagion models (Coleman, Katz, & Menzel, 1966) and social network theory (Burt, 1982). Social contagion has been conceptualised as containing several causal mechanisms, one of which is information transfer (i.e., WOM) (Van den Bulte

& Lilien, 2001). Individuals may become aware of the existence of the innovation through WOM from previous adopters, and they may also update their beliefs about the costs and benefits of adoption after discussing it with previous adopters (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). Social network theory is concerned with the structural pattern of the connections between individuals in the network and the impact this has on social contagion. Research has shown that consumers are influenced by those with whom they interact, and that personal sources of information have a strong impact on consumer preferences and choices (e.g., Arndt, 1967a; Herr et al., 1991). However, historically, the *initiator* of the transmission of information was assumed to lie with the communicator and not with the audience (Cox, 1967). Information is first generated by a sender then gets passed along. There has been an increasing interest in applying these theories to understand WOM initiators' behaviour in marketing, which is also the focus of the current study.

2.2 WOM Communication as a Social Process

Communication is a social process, and is the principal means by which people are able to interact in meaningful ways. WOM is inherently a social phenomenon (Ryu & Han, 2009). WOM is informal communication, and a form of daily social interaction. This interaction occurs in the context of social networks that together aggregate to a social system. It involves dyadic exchanges; in the WOM encounter there is a sender as well as a receiver. People play both roles, apply social sanctions, and appraise each other's actions within a system of shared values through the exchange of ideas and information (De Fleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1982). They socially interact for various reasons.

Laczniak, DeCarlo & Ramaswami (2001a) argue that WOM communication is a popular marketplace phenomenon. Consumers frequently share their purchase experiences with people after the consumption of a particular product and/or service. The communication process is fundamental to consumers' social interaction as they repetitively engage with others (De Fleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1982).

For more than a decade, communication scholars have recognised the importance of the everyday and routine aspects of communication, and these scholars contend that dyadic and network relationships provide a framework in which to understand the process of interpersonal influence (Dindia, 2000; Leatham & Duck, 1990; Ozcan, 2004). Due to the social nature of WOM, scholars have underscored the importance of the relationships between the sender and the receiver (Frenzen & Nakamoto, 1993). These social relationships are often operationalised as ‘tie strength’, which describes the closeness of the relationship (Granovetter, 1973). Granovetter (2005) explains that social networks affect the flow and the quality of information. Information diffuses across a network subject to the parameters of a certain threshold which was termed the “tipping point” and popularised by Malcom Gladwell (2000). If the threshold is low, information will overflow across the nodes and exhibit a high spreading rate across a network. Conversely, if the threshold is high and the recipients of the information are resistant, the information flow will be restricted.

This information exchange about an idea occurs through a convergence process involving interpersonal networks. The dyadic and network relationships serve as a basis for the interpersonal influences that WOM generates (Carl & Duck, 2004). Much of the information spread is subtle and difficult to verify, so people do not necessarily believe impersonal sources and instead tend to rely on people they know. Subjective evaluations of the product/service are often sought from and shared with peers. In social networks, ties amongst family and groups of friends are strong ties which tend to have a stronger influence on one’s behaviour. However, the continued spread of information across a network is reliant on weak ties, according to Granovetter (1973), which means through casual acquaintance or even strangers who connect nodes across a distributed network. Therefore, he concludes that effective online marketing communications are dependent on strong ties to affect consumer behaviours and on leveraging weak ties to maintain exponential distribution (Granovetter, 2005). The network relations of people affect the dynamics of social interactions. Libai et al.

(2010), in their extensive review of customer-to-customer interactions, point out that much of what we know on how consumer interactions are driven by specific products is based on evidence and examples from the press, and little examinations of how consumers interact over various other channels.

2.3. Traditional Word-of-Mouth Communication

The emergence of Internet-based media has facilitated the development of WOM online. To study OWOM, it is important to understand basic and traditional WOM. This section examines the many definitions of WOM, and its characteristics portrayed in the traditional WOM literature. Consequently, a review of literature on traditional WOM is presented.

2.3.1 Definition of Traditional Word-of-Mouth

There are many definitions of WOM, but all seem to agree that traditional WOM is an informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, product, organisation, or service (see Table 2.1). Most earlier studies adopted Arndt's (1967a) definition of WOM, and emphasised the aspects of being spoken, face-to-face and spontaneous.

Buttle (1998) argues that WOM can be organisation-focussed in addition to product, brand or service-focussed. He concluded that one distinguishing feature of WOM may be that "WOM is uttered by sources who are assumed by receivers to be independent of corporate influence" (p. 243). This brings us to the need to distinguish two types of traditional WOM. Definitions by Silverman (2001) and Buttle (1998) imply the possibility that the source of WOM may be commercial but not disclosed. For example, companies may offer incentives or rewards to consumers in order to spread WOM or make referrals, unknown to receivers. This type of WOM is termed as "institutional WOM" (Carl, 2006), 'stealth marketing' (Balter & Butman, 2005) or 'buzz' (Dye, 2000). In other words the object being discussed (i.e., an organisation, brand, product, or service) may be part of an organised WOM campaign. Institutional WOM

has attracted great attention in both the business and academic arenas recently (cf. Rosen, 2000; Walker, 2004). Another type of traditional WOM is termed by Carl (2006) as “everyday WOM,” which is without institutional identity or corporate affiliation. Such WOM is initiated or spread by people who do not represent a commercial identity, and are perceived to have little interest in promoting the company and have no gain from altering the truth in favour of the product or service (Jin, Bloch, & Cameron, 2002).

Table 2.1 A Sample of Word-of-Mouth Definitions

Source	Definition of WOM
Arndt (1967a)	“Oral, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver concerning a brand, a product, or a service offered for sale” (p. 190).
Richins (1983)	“An act of telling at least one friend or acquaintance about the dissatisfaction” (p. 17)
Westbrook (1987)	“Informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services and/or their sellers” (p. 261)
Brown & Reingen (1987)	“The WOM exists at the macro level of inquiry (e.g., flows of communication across groups), as well as the micro level (e.g., flows within dyads or small groups)” (p. 350)
Swan and Oliver (1989)	“Postpurchase communications included positive versus negative word-of-mouth and complaints and praising directed at the three entities in the exchange (i.e., the salesperson, dealer, and manufacturer)” (p. 523)
Bone (1992)	Bone’s definition was similar to Arndt’s, but noted that WOM could be a group phenomenon – “an exchange of comments, thoughts, and ideas among two or more individuals in which none of the individuals represent a marketing source” (p. 579)
Stern (1994)	Stern distinguishes WOM from advertising as being face-to-face, interactive, ephemeral, and spontaneous.
Anderson (1998)	“Information communications between private parties concerning evaluations of goods and services.” (p. 6)
Buttle (1998)	“WOM is uttered by sources who are assumed by receivers to be independent of corporate influence” (p. 243)
Silverman (2001)	“Communication about products and services between people who are perceived to be independent of the company providing the product or service, in a medium perceived to be independent of the company.” (p. 4)
Harrison-Walker (2001)	“informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization, or a service (p. 63)

Source	Definition of WOM
Brown, Barry, Dacin, and Gunst (2005)	Adopted Harrison-Walker's definition (2001)
Carl (2006)	Cal's definition distinguishes between "institutional" and "everyday" WOM (focus of this thesis). Every WOM is defined as "informal, evaluative communication (positive or negative) between at least two conversational participants about characteristics of an organization and/or a brand, product or service that could take place online or offline" (p. 605)
Sweeney, Soutar, and Mazzarol (2012)	Adopted Anderson's definition (1998).

2.3.2 Characteristics of Word-of-Mouth

WOM has been characterised from different perspectives. In Buttle's (1998) article, traditional WOM is characterised by valence, focus, timing, solicitation and intervention. He suggests that WOM can be either positive or negative from a marketing perspective (i.e., valence). The clear focus of most WOM research is that of a satisfied/dissatisfied customer communicating with potential customers, and in turn influencing them. Timing refers to the fact that WOM might occur either before or after a purchase, known as input or output WOM. WOM may be offered with or without being sought (i.e., solicitation), and it may be moderated and managed at an individual or organisational level (i.e., intervention) (Buttle, 1998).

2.3.3 Findings from Traditional Word-of-Mouth Studies

Considerable research has been conducted to understand WOM communication, and the existing literature can be classified into four streams (Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Bone, 1995; Liu, 2006; Mazzarol, Sweeney, & Soutar, 2007; Singh, 1990). The first stream focuses on WOM in information-seeking behaviour, the second stream examines the efficacy of WOM and

source credibility, the third stream studies the valence of WOM, and the fourth stream aims at understanding the reasons for WOM engagement (i.e., antecedents of WOM).

2.3.3.1 Word-of-Mouth in Information-Seeking Behaviour

The first stream of study focuses on understanding information-seeking behaviours from the WOM receivers' stance (Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Murray, 1991). WOM communication often occurs as part of external search activities undertaken by consumers in their decision-making process (Sénécal, Kalczynski, & Nantel, 2005), usually as pre-purchase search activity. The purpose of this stream of research is to better understand under what circumstances consumers rely on WOM communications more than other sources of information to make purchasing decisions, and why certain personal sources of information have more influence than others. Consumers look to their reference groups for standards of value, but they also use the judgement of the people around them as informal consumer reports (Bauer, 1967). Consumers with high uncertainty about a product or service, such as those who have little relevant knowledge (Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Gilly, Graham, Wolfinbarger, & Yale, 1998), or those who are deeply involved in the purchase decision (Beatty & Smith, 1987), are likely to seek the opinions of others. This is a general strategy adopted to reduce uncertainty or perceived risks (Cox, 1967). The sources of information exert different influence on information-seekers. Factors such as source expertise (Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Gilly et al., 1998), tie strength (Brown & Reingen, 1987; Frenzen & Nakamoto, 1993), and demographic similarity (Brown & Reingen, 1987) have been identified as important antecedents of WOM influence.

In addition to being a pre-purchase activity, WOM communication can occur as an ongoing activity without purchase intent. Such information-seeking is meant to gain knowledge of particular brands and/or products. In this case, WOM communication is one of many information sources available to customers, apart from media and retailer searches (Beatty & Smith, 1987). This source of information is independent of the seller or producer, and hence

represents a rather unbiased point of view (see Chung & Darke, 2006 however for discussion on potential bias in WOM). Herr et al. (1991) showed that WOM communications have a greater impact on product judgement than information presented in printed format. To information-seekers, WOM is more readily available through social networks (Liu, 2006), and the information is of greater relevance. As Chen and Xie (2008) showed in their study, the WOM source often describes product features in terms of usage situations and performance from the user's perspective, whereas information provided by the seller focuses more on technical specifications and technical standards for product performance.

2.3.3.2 Efficacy of Word-of-Mouth and Source Credibility

WOM is often studied in relation to its consequences, and a considerable number of studies have investigated the efficacy of WOM in terms of shaping consumers' attitudes and behaviours (Brown & Reingen, 1987; Day, 1971; Herr et al., 1991; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). The interest in this area among both academics and practitioners has increased due to its proven impact on the awareness, beliefs, attitudes, and actual decisions of those who receive it. Lang (2006, p. 2) termed this as 'pervasiveness,' and the effects are well accepted in both academic and practitioner realms (Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Bone, 1995; Venkatraman, 1990).

WOM has also been examined as a driver of new product or innovation diffusion (e.g., Arndt, 1967a; Czepiel, 1974; Goldenberg, Libai, & Muller, 2001). The studies investigated the influence of referrals and recommendations on consumption (e.g., Brown & Reingen, 1987), including source effect (Bauer, 1967) and effectiveness of persuasion, such as consumers' short- and long-term product judgement (Bone, 1995). Burzynski and Bayer's study of conformist behaviour (1977) found that communications prior to the purchase of a product or service influence not only choice behaviour but also evaluations of the experience itself.

As a source of information, WOM has been found to be more important in influencing consumers compared to printed ads and independent third-party reviews, such as 'consumer

reports' (Herr et al., 1991; Price & Feick, 1984). Evidence for the link between WOM and firm performance shows that customers acquired through marketing induced channels such as promotions contribute more to a firm's performance in the short run than customers acquired through WOM. However, the latter tend to remain as active customers for longer, and thus generate more value over time, as found in Villanueva *et al's* study – customers acquired through WOM have double the impact than customers acquired by marketing-induced channels (Villanueva, Yoo, & Hanssens, 2008). A study conducted in the UK by Marsden, Samson, and Upton (2005) found WOM to be a significant predictor of sales growth in retail banks, car manufacturers, mobile phone networks and supermarkets. WOM can also be more powerful than the consumer's own attitude toward a product, particularly in cases where the WOM recipient has a lack of product knowledge (Bansal & Voyer, 2000).

Some research concerning WOM focuses on personal sources of information, whereby the sources are classified according to the closeness of the relationship between the WOM sender and the receiver (Duhan, Johnson, Wilcox, & Harrel, 1997). As mentioned above, strong tie sources are friends and family, while weak tie sources include acquaintances and strangers. Some studies found that strong tie sources tend to have a stronger influence on one's product purchases (Price & Feick, 1984). Other studies found perceived tie strength influences individuals' selection of WOM sources, and that consumers have different motivations for the use of weak versus strong tie sources (Duhan et al., 1997).

2.3.3.3 Valence of Word-of-Mouth

Valence describes whether the information is positive or negative. The existing literature on WOM has studied the effects of WOM valence on consumers' attitudes towards products and purchase intentions (Chung, Liang, Teo, & Yao, 2007). Positive WOM helps create a favourable image for the brand or the organisation, leading to positive product attitudes and encouraging purchases (Herr et al., 1991; Holmes & Lett, 1977; Wangenheim & Bayón, 2007). Yet negative WOM is more potent in influencing attitudes and intentions in the

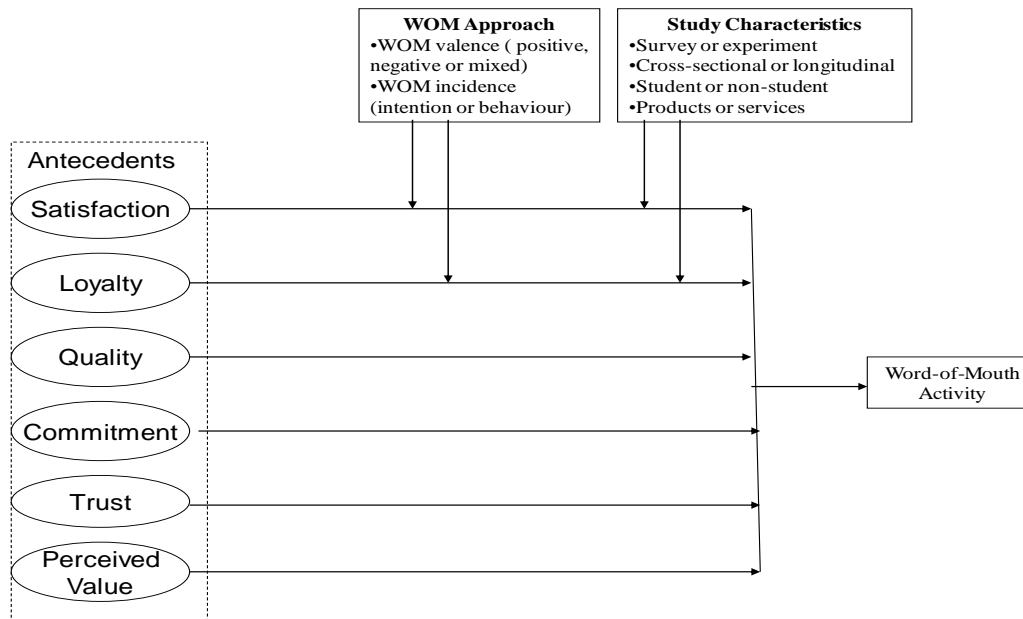
opposite direction, such as deterring consumers from buying certain products or brands, and hence damaging the reputation and performance of a business (Mizerski, 1982; Richins, 1983; Sundaram, Mitra, & Webster, 1998). Some researchers found in service context the dissatisfaction responses - negative WOM and complaining behaviour - depended on a number of situations such as problem severity and retailer responsiveness (Richins, 1983), and in product/consumption context the satisfied response - positive WOM depended on affective responses to consumption outcomes (Westbrook, 1987).

2.3.4 Antecedents of Word-of-Mouth Communication

There have been a number of studies directed at better understanding the antecedents of WOM. The extant literature has focussed on the reasons why customers proactively spread the word about their product and service experiences.

With regard to antecedents to WOM communication, a number of criteria have been investigated, including satisfaction (Ranaweera & Prabhu, 2003; Westbrook, 1987), perceived service quality (Danaher & Rust, 1996; Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1991); Fullerton & Taylor, 2002), and perceived value (Hartline & Jones, 1996; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). WOM has been used to evaluate the post-purchase behaviour that is based on affective responses, satisfaction and equity perceptions (Swan & Oliver, 1989; Westbrook, 1987; Westbrook & Oliver, 1991). De Matos and Rossi (2008) developed a conceptual framework to deal with the antecedents of WOM, shown in Figure 2.1, based on their meta-analytical review of 127 WOM literature sources that were mainly in the service context.

This framework summarises, quantitatively, the six most investigated antecedents in traditional WOM literature: satisfaction, loyalty, quality, commitment, trust, and perceived value. The following sections will further examine each key antecedent in the WOM literature.



Source: de Matos and Rossi (2008)

Figure 2.1 Framework of the Antecedents and Moderators of WOM Activity

2.3.4.1 Satisfaction as an Antecedent of Word-of-Mouth

Satisfaction is described by Hunt (1977a) as “the evaluation rendered that the experience was at least as good as it was supposed to be” (p. 459). Satisfaction is defined as an evaluation of the surprise inherent in a product acquisition and/or consumption experience (Oliver, 1981). Some researchers further point out that the evaluation can be for a specific purchase selection or evaluation of multiple experiences with the same product over time (Bolton & Drew, 1991).

Szymanski and Henard (2001) found that customers assimilate satisfaction levels to expectation levels in order to avoid dissonance. Some studies have shown that satisfaction also contains emotional components (Liljander & Strandvik, 1997; Oliver & Westbrook, 1993; Pecotich, Yang, & Liu, 2000). Oliver (1980) notes that, in the services literature, customer satisfaction is a summary cognitive and affective reaction to a service incident (or sometimes to a long-term service relationship). His model of customer satisfaction demonstrates that satisfaction judgement are influenced by: (1) both positive and negative

affective (i.e., emotional) responses; and (2) cognitive disconfirmation (Oliver & Westbrook, 1993). The affective view has gained the attention of a number of researchers (e.g., Westbrook, 1987; Westbrook & Oliver, 1991). That is, emotions “elicited during product usage or consumption experiences” are proposed to leave affective traces in customers’ memories, which are available for customers to translate into their satisfaction assessments (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991, p. 85). Engel, Kegerreis and Blackwell (1969) contend that customers’ emotional responses to the performance of products/services evoke WOM directly. These researchers argue that satisfaction assessment logically should be determined at least in part by the occurrence of product/service consumption-related affective responses. Emotional-based satisfaction has been found to strongly predict future behavioural intentions in a few studies, for example in the context of US political candidate preferences (Abelson, Kinder, Peters, & Fiske, 1982), and Norwegian employee service performance (Slatten, 2008). Some studies suggest that emotionally based satisfaction is a stronger predictor of future behavioural intentions than cognitive measures (Martin, O'Neill, Hubbard, & Palmer, 2008). For example, Dube-Rioux’s (1990) research on customer satisfaction with restaurant service in the US shows that affective reports differ qualitatively from cognitive evaluations, and may be more directly related to behavioural predictions.

A number of studies support the significant effect of satisfaction on WOM (refer to Table 2.2), and have found that customers translate their high or low levels of satisfaction into WOM. Positive post-purchase communications to the company have been associated with satisfaction in several consumer markets: automotive (Swan & Oliver, 1989), lodging (Cadotte & Turgeon, 1988) and non-profits (Cermak, File, & Prince, 1991).

Customers may voice their dissatisfaction to obtain sympathy and make excuses for behaviour that falls short of expectations (Weiner, 1992). Research has shown that customers engage in negative WOM because they are motivated by a desire to seek redress or inform

other potential customers (Day, 1980), or to release their frustrations and regain some semblance of control over a distressing situation (Alicke et al., 1992).

Table 2.2 Antecedents in Previous Word-of-Mouth Studies

Antecedents of WOM	Supporting Studies
Satisfaction	Anderson, 1998; Brown, Barry, Dacin & Gunst, 2005; Heckman & Guskey, 1998; Heitmann, Lehmann & Heitmann, 2007; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Lang, 2011; Mittal, Kumar & Tsiros, 1999; Price & Arnould, 1999; Ranaweera & Prabhu, 2003; Söderlund, 2006; Swan & Oliver, 1989; Walsh & Gremler, 2004; Wangenheim & Bayón, 2007; Westbrook, 1987;
Loyalty	Dick & Basu, 1994; Gounaris & Stathakopoulos, 2004; Reynolds & Arnold, 2000
Quality (mainly investigated in service)	Bloemer, Ruyter & Wetzels, 1999; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004; Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996; Danaher & Rust, 1996; Fullerton & Taylor, 2002
Commitment	Dwyer, Schurr & Oh, 1987; Fullerton, 2003; Harrison-Walker, 2001
Trust (mainly investigated in service)	Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Ranaweera & Prabhu, 2003; Sichtmann, 2007; Gremler, Gwinner & Brown 2001
Perceived Value	Hartline & Jones, 1996; Gruen, Osmonbekov & Czaplewski, 2006; Keiningham, Cooil, Aksoy, Andreassen & Weiner, 2007; McKee, Simmers & Licata, 2006; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001

However, the link between satisfaction and WOM may not be as clear as it once seemed. Subsequent studies have suggested that it is a U-shaped relationship (Anderson, 1998; Bowman & Narayandas, 2001). According to Anderson (1998, p. 8), “increasingly product-related experiences are expected to increase the utility of engaging in WOM activity (assuming the marginal cost of engaging in WOM remains constant)”. This occurs as either satisfaction or dissatisfaction with product experience increases. Consequently, the level of WOM activity should be higher for customers whose evaluations of product experience tend toward either extreme. Either way, the information conveyed should be of greater value.

2.3.4.2 Loyalty as an Antecedent of Word-of-Mouth

Loyalty is defined in many ways in the literature, but all definitions seem to be from either behavioural or attitudinal perspectives. The behavioural view of loyalty focuses on repeated purchase behaviour or the probability of product repurchase, according to Srinivasan, Anderson and Ponnnavolu (2002). Some researchers (e.g., Day, 1969) suggest that there is a need to distinguish between true loyalty and spurious loyalty that may result, for example, from a lack of available alternatives for the customer. They propose that the attitudinal aspect should be reflected in defining loyalty. Keller (1993) and Assael (1992) suggest that loyalty is present when favourable attitudes for a brand are manifested in repeat-buying behaviour. Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (1993) define brand loyalty as “the preferential, attitudinal and behavioural response toward one or more brands in a product category expressed over a period of time by a consumer” (p. 570).

WOM is often viewed as a part of loyalty (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996). However, loyalty depends on a favourable attitude that is based on cognitive, affective and conative antecedents, and on positive repurchase intentions (Dick & Basu, 1994; Gremler & Brown, 1999). Therefore, WOM is distinct from loyalty. A few studies (refer to Table 2.2) empirically tested the effect of loyalty on WOM. Dick and Basu (1994) examined the impact of customer loyalty on customer behaviour. One of the outcomes resulting from loyalty is positive WOM – the extent to which a customer says positive things about the company to others. This relationship is also supported by Hagel and Armstrong’s study (1997). Loyal customers perform a range of behaviours that signal a motivation to maintain a relationship with the company, including engaging in positive WOM (Sirdeshmukh, Singh, & Sabol, 2002).

2.3.4.3 Quality as an Antecedent of Word-of-Mouth

There are a number of studies (refer to Table 2.2) showing that quality (predominantly of services, ‘service quality’ hereafter) has an influence on WOM. (Harrison-Walker, 2001;

Zeithaml et al., 1996). Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) suggest that quality is evaluated from the eyes of the customers, and define it as the discrepancy between customers' expectations or desires and their perceptions. The authors propose a 'SERVQUAL' model in which quality is composed of five dimensions – tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Service quality has an important relationship with customers' behavioural responses, such as WOM. On the one hand, when evaluations of service quality or performance are high, a customer's intention in terms of recommendations are favourable (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zeithaml et al., 1996). On the other hand, when customers perceive service performance as being inferior, customers tend to engage in negative WOM or complaining behaviour (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Some empirical studies have demonstrated this positive relationship between service quality and WOM (Bloemer, Ruyter, & Wetzels, 1999; Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, & Zeithaml, 1993). However, Harrison-Walker (2001) examined this relationship across industries and found that the effect of service quality on WOM was inconsistent.

2.3.4.4 Commitment as an Antecedent of Word-of-Mouth

Commitment to the relationship between buyer and seller is another antecedent of WOM. Morgan and Hunt (1994) define commitment as "an exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it" (p. 23). Commitment can take three forms: 'affective' (positive emotional attachment), 'continuance' or 'high-sacrifice' (perceived costs associated with leaving the organisation), and 'normative' (perceived moral obligations toward the organisation). These three dimensions have been examined in the marketing literature, and the two dominant concepts are affective and continuance commitments (Fullerton, 2003; Harrison-Walker, 2001; Jones, Reynolds, Mothersbaugh, & Beatty, 2007).

It has been suggested that a potential consequence of commitment may include WOM communication (Dick & Basu, 1994). Mayer and Schoorman's (1992) longitudinal study of

the employee-organisation relationship supports this view. The study found that an individual who is high in affective commitment is motivated to actively engage in behaviours that would help the employing organisation achieve its goals. However, their study also found that an individual who is high in continuance commitment will remain passively with an organisation. Further supporting this view, Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993) demonstrate empirically that as continuance commitment increases, job performance decreases. Harrison-Walker (2001) argues that while job performance is a behaviour by an employee that affects the strategic health of the organisation, WOM communication is a behaviour by a customer that also affects an organisation's strategic health.

To date, there is only one study that has empirically investigated the consequences of the two forms of customer commitment (Harrison-Walker, 2001). Harrison-Walker's finding is consistent with the aforementioned studies, showing that only affective commitment is related to WOM communication, whereas high sacrifice commitment is not.

2.3.4.5 Trust as an Antecedent of Word-of-Mouth

Trust is defined as "a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence" (Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman, 1993, p. 82). Trust exists "when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity" (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 23). Trust has been found to have an important effect on the customer's propensity to leave or stay with the same service provider (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). A few studies found that higher levels of trust are associated with a greater tendency to offer positive WOM (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Ranaweera & Prabhu, 2003). Trust has been examined predominantly in a services context. This is based on the rationale that customers provide favourable WOM to their social groups, such as a friend or a colleague, and thus, they will be more likely to endorse a service provider that they have previous experience with and confidence in (Cermak, File, & Prince, 1994). Research shows that trust is only present

when the investigations are conducted with relationship-oriented consumption (Cermak et al., 1994; Gremler, Gwinner, & Brown, 2001; Ranaweera & Prabhu, 2003).

2.3.4.6 Perceived Value as an Antecedent of Word-of-Mouth

Perceived value has been defined as “the customer’s overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is perceived and what is given” (Zeithaml, 1988, p. 14). Alternatively, Woodruff (1997) defines customer value as “a customer’s perceived preference for an evaluation of those product attributes, attribute performances, and consequences arising from use that facilitate (or block) achieving the customer’s goals and purposes in use situation” (p. 142). Customers’ perceptions of value are influenced by differences in monetary costs, non-monetary costs, customers’ tastes, and customers’ characteristics (Bolton & Drew, 1991).

It has been found in a few studies that customers’ perceived value has an influence on their behavioural intentions, especially on WOM (e.g., Keiningham et al., 2007; McKee, Simmers, & Licata, 2006). For example, Hartline and Jones (1996) examined perceived value and WOM intention within a hotel service environment, and the results indicate that intention to engage in WOM is correlated with the customer’s perceptions of value – the higher the perception, the stronger the intention of engaging in WOM.

2.3.4.7 Other Antecedents and Selection of Final Antecedents

A few studies (e.g., Dichter, 1966; Engel et al., 1969; Lampert & Rosenberg, 1975) indicate that customers’ personal characteristics can influence WOM activity. For instance, customers who are self-confident, socially integrated, or concerned for others may offer more WOM. However, these relationships have rarely been supported. For example, Lampert and Rosenberg’s (1975) study showed no support for the effect of the self-confidence of the sender on WOM activity. Some early studies observe or support the association between involvement and WOM transmission (Arndt, 1967b; Dichter, 1966; Sundaram et al., 1998).

However, Sohn and Leckenby (2005) concludes that personal involvement has no significant influence on consumers' information transmission in their study. More recent WOM studies treat involvement as a contextual factor and use in their studies as a control variable (Laczniak, DeCarlo, & Ramaswami, 2001b; Xue & Zhou, 2010).

Quality and trust were more applicable in the service context. The effect of quality on WOM was shown to be inconsistent across service sectors (Harrison-Walker, 2001). There is a lack of supporting studies on the effect of trust on WOM in a product context, particularly in regards to transaction-oriented consumption. The exclusion of the other antecedents, including but not limited to personality and product involvement, were mainly due to: 1) the inconsistent results of their effect on WOM as antecedents, and 2) the lack of wide application, for example to other product categories and industries.

Among the antecedents reviewed, customer satisfaction is the most widely studied and confirmed antecedent of WOM in marketing literature (e.g., Anderson, 1998; File, Cermak, & Prince, 1994; Lang, 2011; Söderlund, 1998; Swan & Oliver, 1989; Westbrook, 1987). The review has also showed consistent findings of customer loyalty, customer perceived value and customer affective commitment as antecedents of WOM, as discussed earlier in this section. This study focuses on these main antecedents as they are the most sound and stable ones that have been examined in the previous studies.

2.4 Online Word-of-Mouth Communication

Differences exist between the virtual (online) and the material (offline) world. Witcomb (2007) pointed out that multimedia technology open a new affective space, which enables individuals and organisations to interact in new active and open ways. When we examine the flow of general influence in modern society, we should be aware that it stems not only from other people nearby and from the mass media, but also from people on the Internet. WOM communication can be transmitted in various ways including face-to-face, over the phone,

through the mail and via the Internet. The character and effects of diffusion are dependent upon the particular types of channel and social connection that facilitate the flow of information (Rogers, 1995), with OWOM having been acknowledged as a critical tool for facilitating information diffusion throughout online media. Over the years, the Internet has already become an important medium to transmit WOM, since it facilitates connections among customers and serves as a “forum” for exchange of information among them (Bailey, 2005). This section examines the definition of OWOM and its characteristics, followed by a review of literature on OWOM communication.

2.4.1 Key Definitions

While early definitions focussed on oral WOM (e.g., Arndt, 1967a), Buttle (1998) argues that WOM need not necessarily be “face-to-face, direct, oral or ephemeral” in this electronic age; it can be mediated by the Internet, computers, and mobile phones. More recent research includes non-personal communication via electronic channels, such as email, mobile phone text messages, bulletin boards and other means that would comprise what may be called ‘digital WOM’ (Bickart & Schindler, 2002; Newman, 1999). The Internet, with its interactive communication characteristics, has changed the product diffusion process in certain fundamental ways. The Internet has removed, or at least greatly diminished, the role of spatial distance in personal communications about ideas. Customers are capable of reaching an unlimited number of other customers in a manner that could be perceived as semi-personal. This can be observed in numerous online communication platforms, such as social networking sites and blogs (Stauss, 1997).

Rheingold (1993) uses “online communities” to describe these platforms and defines online communities as “social aggregations that emerge from the Internet when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationship in cyberspace” (p. 5). Bieber et al. (2002) broadly define an online community to include anyone actively interested in, or associated with, a group formed

around a particular domain of interest. There is no generally accepted definition of the term ‘online community,’ but the term is used in this study to describe the communication and social interactions occurring in online channels or media, such as web-based list servers, bulletin boards, e-net newsgroups and chat rooms. Based on this definition of online community and Carl’s (2006) definition of WOM, OWOM in the present study is defined as: “informal, evaluative communication (positive and/or negative) between at least two conversational participants about characteristics of an organisation and/or a brand, product, or service that take place” in online media.

2.4.2 Characteristics of Online Word-of-Mouth

Over the last several years, a great deal has been written about the effect of computers on human communication (e.g., Carr, Vitak, & McLaughlin, 2013; Henderson & Gilding, 2004; Jiang, Bazarova, & Hancock, 2011; Werry & Mowbray, 2001; Zhang, Tang, & Leung, 2011). It has been argued that the Internet has unique characteristics that differentiate it from face-to-face communication in important ways (Hoffman & Novak, 1996). Research has explored the distinctive characteristics of online communication, such as limited cues and the potential for asynchronicity, that set OWOM apart from its traditional counterpart (Henderson & Gilding, 2004).

2.4.2.1 Usage of Cybernetworks

OWOM is similar to traditional WOM in that its transmission uses social networks, but it differs in the fact that it uses cybernetworks. Cybernetworks are defined as “the social networks in cyberspace, and specifically on the Internet” (Lin, 2001, p. 212).

Social networks, enabled by information technology platforms and the scale-free network of the Internet, revolutionise not only the way businesses interact with their customers, but also the way customers communicate among themselves. Unlike traditional WOM communication, in which social connections between information senders and receivers are necessarily strong

(Brown & Reingen, 1987), the occurrence of OWOM communication is not restricted to the small circle of family and friends. The cybernetworks are constructed by individuals and groups of individuals – through various applications such as chat rooms, forums, e-mails, and messengers – as well as by informal and formal organisations (e.g., economic, political, media) for the purpose of exchanges, including resource transactions and relations reinforcement (Lin, 2001). These “virtual” connections allow customers to connect with others with few time or space constraints.

2.4.2.2 Identity

Participation in OWOM can be anonymous. In some instances the identities of people who posted a product review are not fully revealed, so that age, gender and other personal information are not known to the information recipient, and thus cannot be used as cues to judge the trustworthiness and/or relevance of the review. The source similarity, expertise and accessibility, used to determine information credibility in traditional WOM (e.g., Feick & Higie, 1992), are not very appropriate in this online context. Some online channels such as online retailers (e.g., Amazon) and forums have attempted to address this problem by giving customers the ability to make a profile in which he/she describes his/her background and interests. However, ‘third identities’ are common in the online context, and non-disclosure of the WOM sender’s identity remains the norm (Forgas, 2011). Although the identity issue reduces the customer’s ability to identify credible sources, some research suggests that many online customers accept customer reviews in order to reduce the amount of effort exerted during the online search process, irrespective of the reviewer’s personal characteristics (Smith, Menon, & Sivakumar, 2005).

2.4.2.3 Communication Channels

A communication channel is the means by which messages are transmitted from one individual to another. Customers engage in OWOM by using online community channels (e.g., posted reviews, chat rooms). Schindler and Bickart (2004) divide OWOM channels into

seven categories. However, as information technologies have advanced since their study was published, the weblog channel needs to be included. Table 2.3 shows the extended categories of online channels for the purpose of this study.

Table 2.3 Extended Online Channel Categories

	<i>Information Flow</i>	<i>Timing of Interactions</i>	<i>Interacting with</i>	<i>Referability (Accessibility)</i>
Posted reviews	One-way			Constant
Mailbags	Two-way	Delayed	Sellers	Constant
Discussion forums	Two-way	Delayed	Consumers	Constant
Weblogs	Two-way	Delayed	Consumers	Constant/Limited
Electronic Mailing Lists	Two-way	Delayed	Consumers	Limited
Personal e-mail	Two-way	Delayed	Consumers	Limited
Chat rooms	Two-way	Immediate	Consumers	Limited
Instant messaging	Two-way	Immediate	Consumers	Limited

Source: Adopted and modified from Schindler & Bickart (2004)

Schindler and Bickart's (2004) description of the *posted reviews* category covers customer opinions published on the Internet by online merchants, by commercial websites that specialise in posting customer opinions, and by customers who publish their product opinions on customer-created open-access websites, including "revenge" sites. *Mailbags* include customer and reader comments and feedback posted on organisation's websites regarding those organisations as consumer-products manufacturers, service providers, magazine publishers, and news organisations. *Discussion forums* include bulletin boards, Usenet groups, and published ongoing discussions on specific topics. Wijnia (2009) defines a *weblog* (or blog) as a webpage on which the customer publishes pieces with the intention to start conversation, and notes that the information pattern, such as consultation, registration and conversation, makes it a new medium. Weblogs (including micro-blogs, such as twitter) are

personal opinion, commentary or thoughts published on customer websites that can be accessed by customers' own selected groups of individuals and/or the public (Wijnia, 2009). *Electronic mailing lists* include customer opinions sent by email to the members of an email list. *Personal email* includes messages sent by one person directly to another (or a group of people). *Chat rooms* include real-time conversations over the Internet between groups of people, often based on a particular topic. *Instant messaging* includes one-on-one real-time conversations over the Internet (Schindler & Bickart, 2004).

2.4.3 Findings from Online Word-of-Mouth Studies

Information diffusion via online communication platforms accelerates business marketing communication; thus, many consumer researchers wish to extend current theories of consumer behaviour into this new consumption realm (Roger, 1995). Research into OWOM has focussed on how WOM influences individuals' learning, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours in online communities that promote socially desirable interests and ideas (Bendapudi, 1997; Henderson & Gilding, 2004)

The aspects of OWOM that have been investigated include the effects of the Internet on customers' pre-purchase activities, focussing on information-search activities and risk perception (cf. Martin & Lomax, 2001). Phelps, Lewis, Mobilio, Perry and Raman (2004) investigated customers' responses to receiving pass-along emails in the US. A few researchers were interested in the role of customer-generated comments in customers' assessment of information in the US (Schindler & Bickart, 2004; Xue & Phelps, 2004) and South Korea (Park & Kim, 2008). Researchers also investigated the effects of OWOM, such as product success in some US-based online firms and the relationship between product evaluations and product sales (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Godes & Mayzlin, 2004; Liu, 2006). The majority of studies tends to look at the marketer-led aspects of communication via the Internet, while few examine the two-way communication between marker and consumer, and the potential for consumer-to-consumer information flow.

Prior to the 1990s, many researchers emphasised the need for research that directly traces information flows along paths of interpersonal ties (e.g., Bolting, 1989; Sheth, 1971). However, there were few attempts to conduct such research across disciplines (Brown & Reingen, 1987). This was largely due to the difficulty of obtaining reliable data, and most researchers have relied on customers recall or have inferred the process of information exchange from aggregate data (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004). Sandage (1948), in his popular textbook, concluded pessimistically that “there was no way of measuring accurately the forcefulness of word of mouth” (p. 271). However, this has not been the case within the last decade, in which the Internet has become widely used as a WOM medium. The Internet addresses the limitation of non-observable WOM by offering an easy way to trace online interactions, such as conversations, reviews and social networks (e.g., Godes & Mayzlin, 2004; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels, 2009). Yet there existed for some time a methodological problem in studies of information diffusion: the reception of the information could not be so easily traced or observed, especially the information adoption using a variety of channels or less accessible channels, such as instant messenger, on which exchanged information is less easily observed. Only in recent years has there been an increase in applications designed to trace the information on social networking sites, such as Social Graphing (Owyang, 2007) and Facebook’s Insight API (Boyd, 2011).

The extent to which consumers rely on these websites for information has also been the subject of previous research (Chatterjee, 2001; Dholakia & Soltysinski, 2001; Ratchford, Lee, & Talukdar, 2003). However, many of these studies have been experimental in nature, where participants have been deliberately exposed to product review websites and then asked to provide their feedback. Prior research has shown the impact of the Internet as a medium for consumer feedback and information, and its influence on consumer behaviour. Bickart and Schindler (2002), for example, investigated how discussions within online communities impacted consumer behaviour, and their results pointed to the efficacy of online forums in

generating product interest. Chiou and Cheng (2003) also found that there is significant impact of messages from online discussion forums on consumers' brand evaluations and attitudes towards the Website owner. Chatterjee (2001) investigated whether negative word-of-mouth information or reviews of online retailers affected evaluations and patronage intentions. OWOM studies typically use product-review websites and forums as their contexts, since the information on these channels is usually openly accessible, and thus are assumed to represent OWOM communication.

In comparison to research on the antecedents of traditional WOM, investigations into the antecedents of OWOM are somewhat scarce. The extant literature identifies only a single study conducted in the US by Sun, Youn, Wu and Kuntaraporn (2006), which explored the antecedents and consequences of OWOM in the context of music-related communication. They considered OWOM as having two dimensions that are integral to the construct: opinion leadership and opinion-seeking. They examined music involvement, innovativeness, Internet usage and Internet social connection as significant predictors of OWOM, and online forwarding and online chatting as consequences of OWOM.

2.5 The Cultural Aspect in Word-of-Mouth Research

Many definitions of culture seem to focus on the way in which culture *influences* the behaviour of those who belong to a cultural group (McCort & Malhotra, 1993) and the impact that cultural values have on perception and choice within these groups (Pecotich et al., 2000; Runyon & Stewart, 1987). It is a collective idea that is associated with self-defined "imagined communities" (Benedict, 1983). Scholars in culture studies assert that every member of a community has both an individual identity and a collective identity as a member of the group (Brislin, 1993; Hofstede, 1991; Triandis, 1994). The variation of the balance between these two identities in socialising within the community is described in terms of the community's typical pattern of *individualism* versus *collectivism*. It is possible to describe a whole community as having individualist or collectivist values. This individualism-collectivism

dimension of culture has been identified as one of the major aspects of culture and is perhaps one of the most significant ways in which societies differ (Sun, Horn, & Merritt, 2004).

2.5.1 Collectivist Cultural Context

The individualism-collectivism dimension refers to how people define themselves and their relationships with others. Collectivism is defined as “people belonging in groups that look after them in exchange for loyalty” (de Mooij, 2010, p. 77). In individualistic culture, self is defined as the core authentic self; while in collectivist culture, self is a social self that is defined situationally and according to one’s relationships with others (Sueda & Wiseman, 1992; Ting-toomey, 1988). Individualist culture focuses on the internal self, emphasising one’s own freedom of expressing one’s inner values and tastes above the concern of group needs (O’Cass & Frost, 2002). Collectivist culture places more value in a highly developed social identity and expects its members to act in ways that benefit the whole group (Stewart, 1985). Elaborate protections of an individual’s autonomy in the realm of private thoughts, social respect, or personal “face” is not typically expected in collectivist cultures (Stewart, 1985).

Collectivism indicates a tight knit social framework which is built on trust and sharing between in-group members (Macquin, Rouziès, & Prime, 2001). Cultures characterised by collectivism emphasise relationships among people to a greater degree (Jandt, 2013). People are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups that continue throughout a lifetime to protect in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede, 2001). Strength comes from the belonging to the group and they tend to strive for ingroup recognition. In a collectivist culture, the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual. People tend to be concerned about the results of their actions on members of their ingroups (Triandis et al., 1988). Individual conforming to a group or society as a whole is typically prevalent in Asian cultures. Group and society exist to meet the needs of the individual (O’Cass & Frost, 2002).

Most Asian countries, such as Japan and China, are considered a collectivistic, group-oriented society. People in these countries tend to be inter-dependent, collaborative, indirect and consensual. In communication, people in collectivist culture tend to pay more attention to context, emotional or relationship cues, and the unspoken and implicit elements of a situation (Triandis, 1994). Collectivism is associated with a strong emphasis on interpersonal harmony and preventing conflicts (Kim, 1994), extensive use of high-context communication (Hall, 1976; Ting-toomey & Kurogi, 1998; Triandis et al., 1988), and concern for face-saving (Sueda & Wiseman, 1992).

2.5.2 Culture in WOM and OWOM Research

The review of WOM studies shows that most published research has been undertaken in Western and individualist societies where the person is viewed as a self-contained, autonomous individual (Buttle, 1998). There are very few studies addressing the cultural aspect in WOM research (Money, Gilly, & Graham, 1998). Buttle (1998) argues that not all cultures view the person as independent, and he contends that people in collectivist cultures who subordinate their individuality to the collective may well demonstrate different WOM activity, whether positive or negative. He gives two examples: 1) In a collectivist culture, negative WOM about a personally unsatisfactory experience may not be offered if the collective view is generally favourable; 2) People in collectivist cultures are more likely to develop strong emotional connections to products and services when there are signs of group membership, and therefore they engage in WOM in order to develop strong and trusting relationships with the supplier.

Some researchers have begun investigating cultural differences in attitudes towards negative WOM and complaining behaviour (Cheng, Lam, & Hsu, 2006; Richins & Verhage, 1985a; Richins & Verhage, 1985b). Watkins and Liu (1996) discuss the cultural limitations of WOM research and argue that customers' behavioural responses to post-purchase dissatisfaction is strongly influenced by the individualist/collectivist tendencies of their cultural identity.

However, Watkins and Liu (1996) acknowledge that much of their discussion that follows “may be equally salient for understanding within-culture differences among individuals based on the individualism/collectivism dimension” (p. 73).

Similarly, a lot of studies have examined culture at the national level by taking a country as the unit of analysis, indicating cultural homogeneity. However, this view has been criticised as problematic (e.g., Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990; Triandis et al., 1988) as it does not correctly reflect the reality of cultural diversity among the members of a nation. This is particularly important as the culture on the Internet can be even more heterogeneous with the existence of cultural hybrids, ‘third’ identities and online cultures (Buttle, 1998).

2.6 Research Gaps

The review of the literature relating to diffusion research, particularly regarding traditional and OWOM, shows that studies in these areas have a few limitations and the current research intends to fill in these gaps.

Research Gap 1: The lack of empirical research in a collectivist context.

WOM is undoubtedly a universal phenomenon. The review of WOM literature reveals that although the geographic scope of these studies has broadened considerably, there are still very important gaps due to the majority of research being predominantly conducted in Western societies with a largely individualist focus. Culture exerts a high level of overall influence on diffusion (Takada & Jain, 1991). Questions remain to be answered by researchers concerning the transferability of the findings to Eastern countries such as China, particularly where interpersonal communication is valued significantly differently. Watkins and Liu (1996) proposed a model describing the relationship between the degree of cultural collectivism and negative WOM, but it has not been empirically tested in a multicultural context. Cheng et al.’s (2006) research on negative WOM intentions in China simply applied Theory of Planned Behaviour and failed to explain the role of cultural factors in detail.

However, these studies do indicate that cultural psychology plays its part in WOM behaviours. One of the questions that emerged from Buttle's (1998) review of referral marketing is "how does WOM operate in cultures other than Western?" (p. 251). The concept of OWOM has attracted a great deal of attention in recent years due to the growth of the internet and the popularity of e-commerce. According to Chan and Ngai's review (2011), the topic of OWOM has only been addressed by top-level marketing journals in the last ten years or so, and their review also reveals that there is a lack of empirical studies of OWOM in collectivist societies.

Research Gap 2: The lack of empirical research into the antecedents of OWOM.

Although the Internet is ushering in an era where the role of individual influence will attain unprecedented prominence, the literature on OWOM does not adequately describe the situation when a single electronic message can reach hundreds of thousands of people in a matter of minutes (Kiecker & Cowles, 2002). Kiecker and Cowles' review of online activities suggests that interpersonal communication research needs to be expanded to include special cases of OWOM. The extant research on OWOM tends to focus on the aggregate outcomes (e.g., product adoptions or sales) in marketing contexts, and has failed to consider why WOM gets generated in different forms online (Gruen, Osmonbekov, & Czaplewski, 2006; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Stewart & Pavlou, 2002).

Given the critical role that OWOM plays in the lives of today's consumers, more attention needs to be devoted to understanding the antecedents of WOM in the online context. One of the questions to have emerged from Buttle's (1998) review of referral marketing is "which antecedents are most closely associated with WOM?" (p. 251). Although some researchers indicate that some factors predicting traditional WOM are similar and correlate to OWOM (de Matos & Rossi, 2008), few researchers have empirically investigated these relationships. Although Sun et al. (2006) explored the antecedents of OWOM, they conceptualised OWOM from the perspective of its task-oriented purpose (i.e., information-sharing and information-

seeking). The items used to measure OWOM appeared to be possibly redundant, as was acknowledged in the paper. In addition, their use of a student sample also constrained the variance in the results. Thus, there is lack of empirical research examining the antecedents of OWOM.

2.7 Chapter Summary

WOM facilitates the flow of information in social networks as a form of communication in the information diffusion process. It has informal and non-commercial characteristics. The WOM behaviour in this study is everyday WOM, independent of corporate influence. The study adopts Carl's (2006) definition to study customers' initiation of WOM after purchases or experiences. He defines WOM as "informal, evaluative communication (positive and/or negative) between at least two conversational participants about characteristics of an organisation and/or a brand, product, or service that could take place online or offline" (p. 605). This definition recognises the range of objects being communicated and the approaches of both face-to-face (e.g., in traditional WOM) and non face-to-face interactions.

WOM research to date has studied the role of WOM in information-seeking behaviour. The focus of these studies was on individuals' prior purchase activity from the perspective of WOM receivers. WOM serves as a source of information and is usually provided by consumer-reference groups. Being considered unbiased (i.e., non-association with commercial identities) and more relevant, WOM has great influence in information-seekers' decision making relative to other sources, such as the media (Beatty & Smith, 1987; Chen & Xie, 2008; Duhan et al., 1997; Liu, 2006). Customers also engage in WOM as an ongoing activity in order to enhance their knowledge of particular brands or products.

Many aspects of the efficacy of WOM have been widely researched, especially when the outcomes of the WOM can be measured in different contexts. Studies have examined the effectiveness of WOM in changing attitudes and generating interest (Bansal & Voyer, 2000),

and the impact of WOM on consumers' actual purchases, and performance (Marsden et al., 2005) in both product and service sectors. The previous WOM research also studied the effect of WOM valence on customer attitudes towards products or brands and purchase intentions (e.g., Holmes & Lett, 1977). The study of the effect of WOM valence on inferential processes further supports the notion that WOM facilitates information diffusion (Price, 1992).

The antecedents of WOM initiation are of interest to this research. A good starting point for identifying antecedents for engaging in OWOM is the literature concerning antecedents for traditional WOM, as the two concepts are similar. The extant studies looked into the reasons why customers initiate WOM regarding products and services they have experienced. Considering WOM content can be product or service, brand or organisation-focussed, quality and trust are excluded in this study as they were more applicable in the service context as examined in the literature reviewed. In addition, the effect of quality on WOM has shown inconsistent across service sectors (Harrison-Walker, 2001). Trust is also excluded due to the lack of supporting studies in a product context, and its questionable application to transaction-oriented consumption. The key antecedents that are applicable to OWOM and are considered relevant to this study include:

1. Customer satisfaction (emotionally based post-choice evaluative judgement) (e.g., Brown et al., 2005; Mittal, Kumar, & Tsiros, 1999; Oliver, 1980; Westbrook, 1987)
2. Loyalty (e.g., Dick & Basu, 1994; Gounaris & Stathakopoulos, 2004; Reynolds & Arnold, 2000)
3. Commitment (affective commitment in particular) (e.g., 1987; Fullerton, 2003; Harrison-Walker, 2001)
4. Perceived value (e.g., Gruen et al., 2006; McKee et al., 2006; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001)

Traditional WOM is highly interactive, in that it involves people communicating face-to-face with each other via the spoken word. OWOM, depending on the media that carry the words (usually characterised by written communication), is generally considered to have limited interactivity, especially when it is one-to-many communication. Most online channels, such as forums and weblogs, restrict online communication from being simultaneous. OWOM uses cybernetworks, and often allows users to avoid disclosing their identities. These characteristics of OWOM make it unique, and previous studies focussed on how WOM in certain online media affects consumers' product or service-related behaviour and business performance (e.g., Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; 2008; Trusov et al., 2009). However, few studies have examined the antecedents of WOM online (Sun et al., 2006), and none have looked into the antecedents of post-purchase WOM in particular.

Cultural aspects have been pointed out by a number of researchers (e.g., Buttle, 1998), and they contend that people in collectivist cultures can demonstrate different WOM activity. Studies focussing on negative offline WOM have been conducted in different cultural contexts (Cheng et al., 2006; Richins & Verhage, 1985a).

The gaps evident in the extant research include: 1) the lack of empirical research in a collectivist cultural context; and 2) the lack of empirical research on the antecedents of post-purchase WOM in the online context. This research investigates the antecedents of OWOM in a collectivist society from the WOM sender's perspective, and explores the sender's choice of online channels for WOM.

CHAPTER 3. Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

Chapter 2 provided the literature review and background to the current research and the research model. This chapter formally introduces the conceptual model, outlines the relationships between customer OWOM and its antecedents, and presents the research model and hypotheses to be tested.

3.1 Overview of the Conceptual Model

As noted earlier, the main research objective of this study is to examine the antecedents of customer OWOM. To this end, an integrated approach to OWOM behaviour is adopted and different literature strands, such as WOM and relationship marketing, and psychological studies are incorporated. The framework involves the following key antecedent constructs: customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, affective commitment, and customer perceived value, and the focal construct of this study – customer OWOM. The hypotheses developed from the framework in Figure 3.1 are delineated to explain the links between these research constructs.

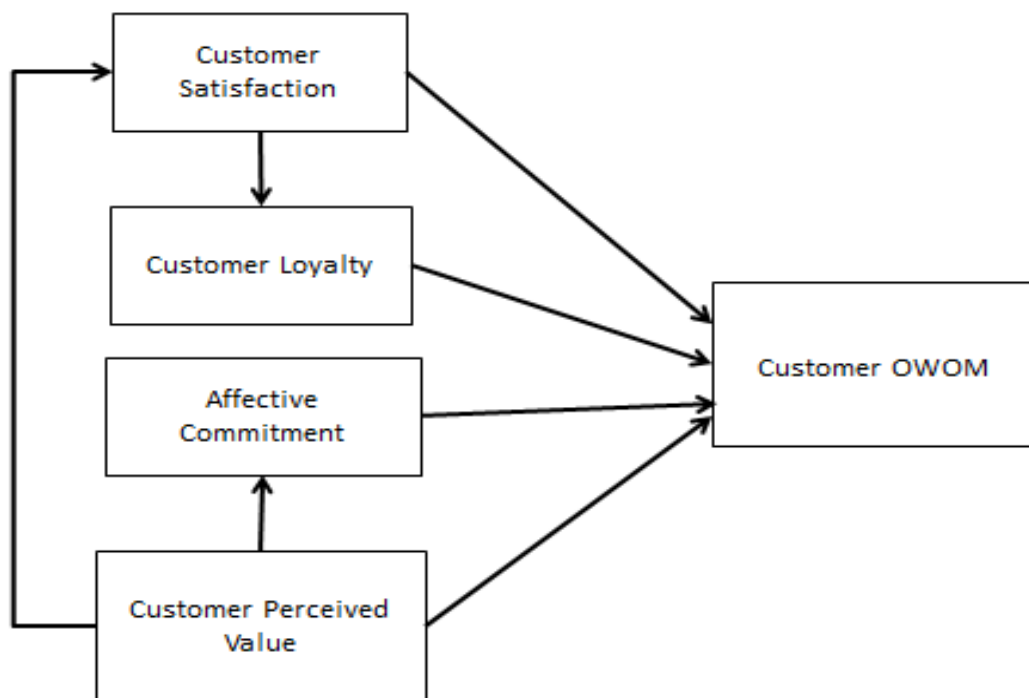


Figure 3.1: Overview of the Conceptual Model

3.2 Conceptual Model and Hypothesis Development

The individual constructs of the conceptual model and the rationale for incorporating them are explained in detail in this section, along with the development of the research hypotheses. It is important to note that besides the grounding in the literature, the rationale for incorporating the constructs in the model was further supported in the exploratory interviews that are outlined in Chapter 5.

3.2.1 Customer Online Word-of-Mouth (OWOM)

As presented in the previous chapter, there have been a number of studies on WOM since the 1960s. OWOM in this study is defined as “informal, evaluative communication (positive and/or negative) between at least two conversational participants about characteristics of an organization and/or a brand, product, or service that take place in the online community” (Carl, 2006, p. 605). As the definition indicates, WOM is informal, involves a flow of information, and is communication among individuals. Thus, the term “WOM” used in this study excludes customer-initiated WOM towards an organisation (e.g., complaints), organisation-created WOM (e.g., online advertising through interactive online channels), or rewarded WOM initiation (e.g., offering vouchers for customers to make product recommendations) (Ryu & Feick, 2007).

Table 3.1 shows a summary of the aspects conceived by researchers regarding WOM/OWOM. What can be drawn from this is that conceptualisations of WOM have tended to be simplistic from either the receiver’s or sender’s viewpoint. Some studies understand WOM to involve the influence of a received message from the WOM receiver’s viewpoint, such as the effect on product judgement (Bone, 1995) and adoption (Sheth, 1971). Sun et al. (2006) considered OWOM to consist of opinion-giving and seeking. Since the current study focuses on post-purchase WOM sender’s communication, these two perspectives were of little interest.

From the sender's perspective, the review of the literature reveals that very few studies have examined the composition of WOM. WOM has been conceptualised primarily as the favourable recommendation of a product or service to others (e.g., Anderson, 1998; Kim, Han, & Lee, 2001; Ranaweera & Prabhu, 2003), which is extended to OWOM. WOM is also viewed as product-related conversation (Bayus, 1985; Godes & Mayzlin, 2004; Still, Barnes, & Kooyman, 1984), which distinguishes product or brand recommendations from simple recounts of experiences. This view largely focuses on the details or the richness of the content in the discussion, particularly in the studies that used secondary data or qualitative methods. Similarly, another stream of WOM research considers the valence of the message in WOM communication, that is, whether the content is positive or negative, or both (e.g., Bone, 1995; Singh, 1990; Swan & Oliver, 1989). In some studies, researchers include both aspects of favourable recommendation and valence in their measures (e.g., Kim et al., 2001; Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002). Among the authors presented, Harrison-Walker (2001) was the only one who has investigated the composition of WOM. A recent piece of OWOM research has extended Harrison-Walker's approach to study the composition of OWOM (Goyette, Ricard, Bergeron, & Marticotte, 2010).

Godes and Mayzlin (2004) view OWOM as aggregated data (i.e., the messages of the conversation from which a manager attempts to learn). They consider OWOM in terms of its frequency in the conversation and the distribution of the message within and across groups. As the researchers studied messages from one type of platform in the form of newsgroups, the focus was on the number of message postings and the message details. Harrison-Walker (2001) conceptualises WOM as being composed of enthusiasm in the action of recommendation, message details, and the positive or negative valence of the message. Her conceptualisation has improved the understanding of how WOM operates and is seen as highly commendable among WOM researchers (Goyette et al., 2010; Sweeney, Soutar, & Mazzarol, 2008).

Table 3.1 Summary of WOM and OWOM Conceptualisation

Authors	Aspect of active recommendation	Aspect of content	Sender-receiver relationship	Dimension	Method	Viewpoint	Sector
Arndt (1967a)	N/A	Cross-checked conversation	N/A	N/A	Personal interview	Sender & receiver	Food products
Sheth (1971)	Not specified	Not specified	Source of information, WOM effect	N/A	Personal interview	Sender & receiver	Razor Blades
Burzynski & Bayer (1977)	N/A	Positive and negative	WOM effect	Unidimensional	Experiment and survey	Receiver	Cinema
Richins (1983)	Act of telling	Negative	N/A	Unidimensional	Survey	Sender & receiver	Clothing and apparel, electronics
Brown & Reingen (1987)	N/A	N/A	Sender and receiver	Unidimensional	Telephone interview	Sender & receiver	Music
Higie, Feick & Price (1987)	N/A	Attribute of retail outlets (volume)	N/A	N/A	Telephone survey	Sender	Retail sales
Westbrook (1987)	Number of individuals involved; frequency of discussions	Number of topics discussed	N/A	N/A	Personal interview and survey	Sender	Automotive, cable TV
Swan & Oliver (1989)	Act of telling	Positive and negative		Unidimensional	Survey	Sender	Automotive
Singh (1990)	Act of telling	Negative	N/A	Unidimensional	Survey	Sender	Grocery trade, vehicle repair, medical services
Herr, Kardes & Kim (1991)	N/A	Positive and negative	WOM effect	N/A	Experiment	Receiver	PC, automotive
Bone (1992)	N/A	Conversation about food during consumption		Multidimensional	Survey	Sender	Restaurant food

Authors	Aspect of active recommendation	Aspect of content	Sender-receiver relationship	Dimension	Method	Viewpoint	Sector
File, Cermak & Prince (1994)	Act of telling	N/A	WOM effect on endorsement	Unidimensional	Structured interview	Sender	Professional services
Bone (1995)	N/A	Positive and negative	WOM effect	N/A	Experiment	Receiver	Biscuits
Sundaram, Mitra & Webster (1998)	N/A	Positive and negative, specifics	Time period of conversation, motivations behind WOM	N/A	Personal interview and survey	Sender	Various businesses
Anderson (1998)	Number of individuals spoken to	N/A	N/A	Unidimensional	Telephone interview	Sender	Various products
Mangold, Miller & Brockway (1999)	N/A	Positive and negative	Trigger of WOM, form of WOM, sender-receiver relationship	Multidimensional	Survey	Receiver	Various services
Kim, Han & Lee (2001)	Act of recommending	Positive	N/A	Unidimensional	Survey	Sender	Hospitality
Harrison-Walker (2001)	Frequency, number of contacts	Positive, details of conversation	N/A	Multidimensional	Survey	Sender	Vet clinic, hair salon
Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner & Gremler (2002)	Act of recommending	N/A	N/A	Unidimensional	Survey	Sender	Service
Maxham & Netemeyer (2002)	Likelihood of spreading word	Positive	N/A	Unidimensional	Experiment	Sender	Banking service
Ranaweera & Prabhu (2003)	Act of recommending	Positive	N/A	Unidimensional	Interview	Sender & receiver	Phone service
Godes & Mayzlin, (2004)	Frequency in conversation, distribution of message	Volume	Dispersion of WOM	Multidimensional	Direct observation	Sender & receiver	New TV series
Brown, Barry, Dacin & Gunst (2005)	Act of recommending, Frequency	Positive	N/A	Unidimensional	Survey	Sender	Car dealership

Authors	Aspect of active recommendation	Aspect of content	Sender-receiver relationship	Dimension	Method	Viewpoint	Sector
Sun, Youn, Wu & Kuntaraporn (2006)	N/A	N/A	Leadership and opinion-seeking	Multidimensional	Survey	Sender & receiver	Music
Goyette, Ricard, Bergeron & Marticotte (2010)	Intensity (frequency of discussion and number of contacts)	Positive and negative, attributes of service	N/A	Multidimensional	Survey	Sender	e-Service companies
Lang (2011)	Amount	Positive and negative	WOM intention	Multidimensional	Experiment	Sender	Dry cleaning, tattooing

A small number of researchers have dedicated their studies to WOM measurement (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004; Harrison-Walker, 2001; Lang, 2011). Much of the WOM research devoted to understanding the sender's WOM behaviour uses an experimental method in order to test the impact of WOM on other variables rather than to measure WOM itself. As presented in Table 3.1, a single-item dichotomous scale (e.g., tell/recommend the experience or not; tell positive or negative things) is prevalent in measuring WOM in the studies that used survey methods. Some studies use a Likert response scale. They are unidimensional, and most authors do not specify which dimension they measure. In most cases, a single statement or question is used to measure WOM. Of the few studies that examine WOM using multi-item indicators, few appear to develop measurement adequately as this is not their primary focus (e.g., Brown et al., 2005). Universal agreement does not exist within the extant literature concerning the identification and conceptualisation of WOM.

Harrison-Walker (2001) argued that these simplistic approaches to conceptualising WOM and the use of ad hoc measures are insufficient to capture the richness of the WOM construct. However, these studies appear to agree in their perspectives on the action of recommending and positive/negative valence of WOM content. Harrison-Walker (2001) took a different approach in this regard, investigating the meaning of the WOM concept by focussing on four aspects: (a) frequency, (b) number of contacts, (c) detail, and (d) WOM praise. She developed and empirically validated the measures for her suggested constructs using a systematic process. After refinement, she identified two dimensions. One dimension is termed "WOM activity", which conceptualises WOM as being composed of the factors of frequency (how often the WOM communications occur), number of contacts (number of people told about a specific service), and the quantity of information (level of detail or volume). This dimension reflects the enthusiasm and detail of the sender's WOM communication. The other dimension is termed "WOM praise", reflecting the favourableness of WOM content. Later this factor is changed into "valence", being viewed by the WOM sender as whether a comment is positive or negative. In her study, valence is treated as a bipolar construct – with WOM praise taking on a value on a dimension with the endpoints "low" and "high". WOM can be extremely positive, relating to vivid, novel or memorable experiences, or extremely negative, including complaining, rumour and product denigration (Anderson, 1998; Herr et al., 1991). The current study follows Harrison-Walker's (2001) perspective to capture the richness of WOM, while taking into account the online context of WOM.

The distinction between OWOM and traditional WOM lies where the communication occurs: online or offline. WOM, particularly through online channels, can be given by a single consumer to one person once (via email or instant messenger), to several people once (via email, chat room) or to several people several times (via discussion forums, etc.). The basic unit of WOM is, therefore, an incident in which WOM is given (Mazzarol et al., 2007). This is similar to the ‘frequency’ factor suggested by Harrison-Walker (2001). Since the WOM occurred online, the contacts are invisible when the information is given via highly referable channels, such as weblogs and posted reviews. The number of contacts factor only applies to immediate and/or constant interactions. It does not capture the characteristics of both asynchronicity and synchronicity of OWOM communication. Hence, it is not fully applicable to OWOM. WOM in the online context is distinguished by two dimensions: 1) OWOM activity, reflecting the aspect of enthusiasm and detail of OWOM, including the frequency of WOM incidents and the volume of information, and 2) the OWOM praise, including the valence of WOM content.

The following sections discuss in detail each antecedent of OWOM, along with the hypotheses developed for testing.

3.2.2 Customer Satisfaction (SAT)

Satisfaction has been conceptualised predominantly from a cognitive viewpoint. In taking this view, consumers are assumed to evaluate a product or service and compare their evaluation with their pre-purchase expectations (Oliver, 1980), or to evaluate their several experiences with the same product (Bolton & Drew, 1991). In addition to the cognitive view, emotionally based satisfaction has been found to strongly predict future behavioural intentions. According to Hunt (1977b), customer satisfaction is a quasi-cognitive construct and it is the evaluation of an emotion. More recent theoretical treatments identify customer satisfaction as a feeling or emotional concept (Hausknecht, 1990). Oliver (1997) suggests that satisfaction is a customer’s response to the fulfilment of needs and wants. From an emotional viewpoint, satisfaction is conceptualised as an affective state resulting from an overall appraisal of a product/service or a brand. It is, therefore, a consumer’s personal evaluation concerning the extent to which he or she is satisfied with a given product or service. It reflects the degree to which one believes an experience will evoke positive feelings. Therefore, customer satisfaction is an affective response due to the use of a product or service.

Two different perspectives are seen in the conceptualisation of customer satisfaction: transaction-specific and cumulative satisfaction (Boulding et al., 1993; Iacobucci, 2010). Taking the transaction-specific perspective, customer satisfaction is the evaluation based on the recent specific purchase experiences (Boulding et al., 1993; Oliver & Westbrook, 1993). Cumulative satisfaction is the total experience with a product or service to date (Liu, Furrer, & Sudharshan, 2001). This perspective has been adopted to understand customer evaluations and relationships over time (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Mittal et al., 1999). Measures from the transaction-specific perspective capture the complex psychological reactions that customers have to a product's or service provider's performance on a given occasion or over a given time period (Oliver, 1997). Because the focus in this study is on the customer OWOM about a particular product or service, the theoretical framework treats customer satisfaction as transaction-specific.

In addition, the predominant conceptualisation of customer satisfaction in the literature assumes that customer satisfaction is a bipolar construct. It assumes that customer satisfaction takes on a value on a single dimension with the endpoints "low" and "high" satisfaction (Söderlund, 1998). According to Hausknecht's (1990) review of customer satisfaction scales, the majority of such scales are of a bipolar type. With this bipolar view, the relationship between satisfaction and an effect variable (e.g., OWOM engagement) can be explained as satisfaction on the x-axis and the effect variable on the y-axis. The current study applies this conceptualisation. Given this study's interest in the extent to which different levels of customer satisfaction affect customer OWOM behaviour, it is natural to consider such differences in terms of the relationship to customer OWOM when customer satisfaction is "low" or "high".

The customer satisfaction construct has been used to explain post-purchase behaviours such as word-of-mouth (Söderlund, 1998), and the satisfaction-WOM relationship has been investigated by a number of researchers. A variety of research contexts have been used, such as a study on automobile post-purchase communication (Swan & Oliver, 1989), and research on American and Swedish consumers' experiences of services (Anderson, 1998). A number of studies support the effect of satisfaction on WOM (e.g., Anderson, 1998; Brown et al., 2005; Swan & Oliver, 1989). Holmes and Hanzlick (1988) found a positive relationship between satisfaction and the intention to initiate WOM. It is clear that satisfaction with

products, services, brands or organisations is an important post-purchase response often associated with consumer WOM (e.g., Heckman & Guskey, 1998; Mittal et al., 1999; Reynolds & Beatty, 1999; Swan & Oliver, 1989).

Studies provide evidence of a significant positive influence of satisfaction on WOM (e.g., Heckman & Guskey, 1998; Mittal et al., 1999; Mooijart & Bentler, 2010; Swan & Oliver, 1989). Westbrook (1987) found consumption emotions, such as emotionally based customer satisfaction to be significant predictors of WOM transmission. Higher customer satisfaction reflects more positive experiences with the product, brand or service provider. It is a natural consequence that customers share these experiences with other customers to recommend the brand or organisation (Bettencourt, 1997). Holmes and Lett (1977) found a strong relationship between satisfaction and WOM about a sampled brand of instant coffee. They showed that subjects satisfied with the target brand of coffee were more likely to start conversations about the product than otherwise. It is clear in the literature that customer satisfaction has an important impact on WOM valence. Customers who are satisfied with products or services tend to talk positively about the products or the companies. Conversely, customers who have bad consumption experiences tend to spread negative WOM. For example, Richins (1983) reported that customers who were dissatisfied with clothing and appliances engaged in negative WOM.

Based on the above discussion, it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 1: The extent of customer satisfaction is positively related to customer WOM activity and praise.

Yet, a few researchers found that customers who are satisfied with a product or service may still fail to recommend it to friends or relatives (Reynolds & Beatty, 1999). Their study used a single item to measure WOM, which is problematic and might have contributed to such a finding. However, another stream of studies holds a different view regarding the relationship between satisfaction and WOM action. Söderlund (1998) and Anderson (1998) believe that the relationship is not linear, but is rather U-shaped curvilinear. They offered some of the first evidence that customer satisfaction is U-shaped over WOM. Lang (2011) examined satisfaction-WOM relationship in two different types of service encounters. In one encounter he found that high levels of satisfaction lead to greater WOM activity than low levels of satisfaction (positivity bias). In the other encounter this relationship is reversed (negativity

bias). Therefore his study generally supports the existence of a U-shaped relationship. On the one hand, the extent to which the product exceeds customers' expectations would motivate them to share their experience (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002). On the other hand, the extent to which customers' expectations are not fulfilled would lead to engagement in WOM because interactions with others may help the customer in the cognitive burden of dealing with the negative experience (Söderlund, 1998). Engaging in WOM is thus a form of 'venting' customer negative emotions, such as anger and frustration, reducing anxiety, warning others, and/or seeking retaliation (Anderson, 1998; Richins, 1983).

With this view, the association is likely to be negative in the lower part of the satisfaction continuum and positive in the high part. Thus, the direction of the relationship changes at a particular point. This particular point is conceived as being located within a zone of indifference (cf. Mooijaart & Bentler, 2010), i.e., an interval in which pre-purchase expectations and perceived performance post-purchase are matched. When this occurs, no particular reaction is to be expected from the customer; when things occur as expected, there is not much to talk about with others. However, when things do not occur as expected, resulting in high levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, the customer has more reason to turn to others. In other words, we are assuming that the form of the relationship between customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth is different at different levels of satisfaction. This stream of studies indicates that a U-shaped model exists where highly satisfied and dissatisfied customers engage in greater WOM activity.

Based on the above discussion, it is hypothesised that:

Alternative Hypothesis 1: The extent of customer satisfaction has a U-shaped relationship with customer OWOM activity.

3.2.3 Customer Loyalty (LOY)

Several studies in the marketing literature examined loyalty using definitions in line with that of Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002, p. 20): "an intention to perform a diverse set of behaviours that signal a motivation to maintain a relationship with the focal firm, including allocating a higher share of the category wallet to the specific service provider, engaging in positive word of mouth, and repeat purchasing" (e.g., Bloemer et al., 1999; Lam, Shankar, Erramilli, & Murthy, 2004; Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002). These studies conceptualise WOM as a component of loyalty and consider favourable WOM and recommendations as indicators of customer

attraction and loyalty to the organisation, and thus they could not present specific results for the WOM construct with their aggregated measurement approach. Söderlund (2006) criticises this approach of including repeat-purchase intentions and WOM intentions as items of a unidimensional loyalty construct. His empirical studies support his argument that repurchase intentions and WOM should be seen as two discrete constructs. Some researchers also conducted studies modelling repurchase intentions and WOM as independent constructs (Gruen et al., 2006; Jones, Reynolds, & Arnold, 2006; Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002). Following this rationale, in addition to the focus of the study being on WOM, the current study treats WOM as a separate construct, rather than a component of loyalty.

According to Söderlund (2006, p. 80), customer loyalty refers to “the customer’s relationship over time toward one specific object (a vendor, a brand, a service supplier, etc.)” and implies a certain level of continuity in how a customer relates to that object. Early views of loyalty focussed on the behaviour of repeat-purchases, and thus loyalty was understood based on prior purchasing patterns of customers and the possibility of product repurchase (e.g., Byrne, 1995; Hau & Marsh, 2004; MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996). Some researchers have criticised this behaviour-focussed view of customer loyalty because it does not distinguish between true loyalty and spurious loyalty that may result, for example, from a lack of available alternatives for the consumer (e.g., Day, 1969; Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978; Ullman, 2006a). For example, Dick and Basu (1994) argue that the behavioural definition is “insufficient to explain how and why brand loyalty is developed and/or modified” (p. 100). Behaviourally loyal customers can also be spuriously loyal as they may make repeat purchases because of situational constraints such as the availability of only a particular brand at retail outlets. Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) proposed an attitudinal approach in addition to a behavioural approach, and viewed loyalty as a biased behavioural purchase process that results from a psychological process. The attitudinal perspective implies that loyalty is a state of mind (i.e., having a positive, preferential attitude towards a brand or a company). The emphasis is on “willingness,” rather than on actual behaviour, per se. Along the same line, Assael (1992, p. 87) views loyalty as “a favourable attitude toward a brand resulting in consistent purchase of the brand over time.” Keller (1993) also supported this view by suggesting that loyalty is present when favourable attitudes for a brand are manifested in repeat-buying behaviour.

In addition to repeat-purchase intentions, the biased or preferential aspect of loyalty should also be emphasised. Howard and Sheth's (2006) brand choice behaviour model suggests that if a brand purchase proves extremely satisfactory, the buyer will keep *only* the purchased brand in his evoked set; other brands will have close to zero probability of consideration. In short, extreme outcomes are likely to affect the *number* of brands in the evoked set, and reasonable discrepancies between actual and expected outcomes will affect the *ranking* of the brands in the evoked set. This ranking corresponds with the first choice in the Loyalty concept. This study takes an attitudinal perspective and conceptualises customer loyalty as a strong internal disposition towards a brand or organisation leading to repeated purchases. This approach conceives of loyalty based on stated preferences and repurchase intentions.

According to Dick and Basu (1994), when customers are more loyal to a given company or service provider, they are more likely to: (1) give recommendations or positive reviews of the company to their social networks; (2) have greater motivation for processing new information about the company, and; (3) have stronger resistance to being persuaded by contrary information. They spread positive recommendations about the company either as a cognitive consistency mechanism (Wangenheim & Bayón, 2007) or as part of a self-enhancement motivation in which customers provide WOM to praise the object of their strong relationship (Brown et al., 2005; Sundaram et al., 1998). On the other hand in a disloyalty situation when customers switch to other companies' products, they try to convince themselves about their decision by reducing post-decision dissonance. In reducing their cognitive dissonance, they are likely to engage in negative WOM about the organisation to release negative emotions, to warn others, and/or to retaliate (Richins & Verhage, 1985a; Sweeney, Soutar, & Mazzarol, 2005; Wangenheim, 2005). Based on this rationale, it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 2: The extent of customer loyalty is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise.

3.2.4 Affective Commitment (COM)

Commitment refers to "an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship" (Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpande, 1992, p. 316). Affective commitment is the psychological attachment of an exchange partner to the other (Bentler, 2001b) and it is based on feelings of identification and affiliation (Curran, West, & Finch, 1996). Buchanan (1974) conceptualised affective commitment as an emotional attachment "to the goals and values of the company; to

one's role in relation to the goals and values; and to the organization for its own sake, apart from its purely instrumental worth" (p. 533). His conceptualisation clearly distinguishes affective commitment from other dimensions of commitment, such as high-sacrifice or continuance commitment (costs associated with leaving the organisation) (Fullerton, 2003; Jones et al., 2007) and normative commitment (moral obligation toward the organisation) (Kline, 2010). Affective commitment is a positive emotional attachment and it is related to the customer identification with, and involvement in, a particular company. It involves emotional reactions and the emphasis is on willingness and wanting. It reflects a psychological bond that motivates the customer to continue the relationship with the company from a genuine desire to do so.

Since affectively committed customers feel attached to the company because of positive feelings, these customers display and dedicate positive voluntary behaviour for the company, for example, promoting the product/service or organisation to their social group (Bettencourt, 1997). Dick and Basu (1994) suggest that WOM communication is one type of potential consequence of commitment. According to Harrison-Walker (2001), highly committed customers present high identification with the company and hold feelings of attachment to maintaining valued relationships, reflecting the affective nature of commitment. Customers who feel a psychological connection with the organisation will offer positive referrals of the organisation (Price, 1992).

The direct impact of affective commitment on referrals has been found in a number of studies with the focus on service industries, such as in automobile dealership (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002), insurance (Bentler, 2001b), and the hair salon and veterinarian industries (Harrison-Walker, 2001). Bettencourt (1997) found that in a grocery retailing service context, customer commitment leads to an increased likelihood of customers saying positive things and recommending the business. Fullerton (2003) identified a strong positive relationship between affective commitment and advocacy intentions in the settings of banking, retail grocery and telecommunications. The study by Fouladi (2000) shows support of this relationship in the hotel service context. Hirschman (1989) also notes that an individual with a strong attachment to a product or organisation often seeks ways to make himself or herself influential. WOM is a means whereby a customer can exert influence within a product's or service's potential community of customers.

Moreover, customers are more likely to increase their commitment with companies that recognise and reward their status of special customer (Lacey, Suh, & Morgan, 2007). De Matos and Rossi (2008) concluded that the highly committed customers are likely to engage positive WOM about the company in order to reinforce their decision to enter the relationship as a good one. In further supporting this view, Brown et al.'s (2005) study shows that even when experiencing lower levels of satisfaction, the high-commitment customers are likely to endorse the company as a need to justify their favourable attitude and strong identification with the company. Based on this rationale, it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 3: The extent of customer affective commitment is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise.

3.2.5 Customer Perceived Value (PVAL)

Zeithaml (1988) suggests that perceived value can be regarded as “consumer’s overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given” (p. 14). She refers to this assessment as a trade-off between benefits or *gets* and costs or *gives*. Reviewing the definitions of customer perceived value summarised by Kainth and Verma (2011), the concept of customer perceived value is generally understood as a construct configured of two parts: one of benefits received (economic, social and relationship) and another of sacrifices made (price, time, effort, risk and convenience) by the customers (Garson, 2012b; Mardia, 1970; Satorra & Bentler, 1988). Zeithaml’s definition describes the post-consumption value, and is concerned with the consumption experience resulting from the use or the appreciation of an object (Hu, Bentler, & Kano, 1992).

The conceptualisation of customer perceived value is quite fragmented, with different points of view being advocated (Woodruff, 1997). However, the most common conceptualisation takes a ‘value-for-money’ view; in other words, value is seen as a trade-off between only quality and price (e.g., McKee et al., 2006; Petroschius & Monroe, 1987). This view has been criticised by a number of scholars as being too simplistic and too narrow to capture the richness of value (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). They argue that dimensions other than price and quality would increase the construct’s usefulness. Sheth, Newman and Gross (1991) are among the first to propose a broader theoretical framework of perceived value. They view customer choice as a function of multiple ‘consumption value’ dimensions, suggesting five dimensions (social, emotional,

functional, epistemic and conditional value) that make varying contributions in different choice situations (e.g., social value in choices involving highly visible product and emotional value in choices involving product or services with aesthetic appeals) (Sheth et al., 1991). Perceived value is a more tangible signal since it includes the aforementioned dimensions in the ‘given’ product/service, and these dimensions represent both extrinsic and intrinsic attributes of product/service. Sheth et al’s (1991) broadened the conceptualisation of perceived value and their work has been seen as providing the best foundation for extending existing value constructs as it was validated through investigation of the variety of fields in which value has been discussed, including economics and social and clinical psychology (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). This multidimensional perspective has been taken by a number of researchers in marketing in the last two decades (cf. Kainth & Verma, 2011; McDonald & Ho, 2002).

Sweeney and Soutar (2001) take this perspective and argue that customers assess products not just in functional terms of expected performance and value for money, but also in enjoyment or pleasure derived from the product and the social consequences of what the product communicates to others. They specified the value dimensions and developed the “PERVAL” scale to measure the four dimensions of customer perceived value (i.e., quality/performance, price/value for money, emotional value and social value). This conceptualisation views customer perceived value as a multidimensional construct, and PERVAL has been found to be both reliable and valid in post-purchase situations. The authors suggest that PERVAL can be applied in a variety of purchase situations. The current study adopts this conceptualisation and measurement, and thus customer perceived value is considered to encompass the dimensions of quality/performance (“quality” hereafter), price/value for money (“price” hereafter), emotional value and social value.

Customers react differently depending on their perception of the product/service value. It is proposed, based on prior research, that customer perceived value is positively related to customer OWOM (Gruen et al., 2006; Litwin, 1995). That is, the more customers value a product or service they purchase or consume, the more likely they are to express their opinions and view through positive WOM activity, which is a tendency that is consistent across cultures (McKee et al., 2006).

Perceived value has been hypothesised as a predictor of WOM in a number of studies (e.g., Gruen et al., 2006; Hartline & Jones, 1996). It has been found that the customers who perceive that they receive relatively high value tend to become more committed to the company and seek to recommend others to become loyal to the same company (Litwin, 1995; McKee et al., 2006). Based on this rationale, it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 4: The extent of customer perceived value is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise.

Because of the multidimensional conceptualisation of the perceived value concept, the relationships between each dimension of customer perceived value and customer OWOM activity are discussed and sub-hypotheses are proposed in the following section.

3.2.5.1 Perceived Quality Value (PVAL_QUA)

Perceived quality value is one type of functional value, and has been referred to as functional quality value in some studies (Browne, 1984). According to Sheth et al. (1991), functional value is the perceived utility acquired from an alternative's capacity for functional, utilitarian or physical performance. Perceived quality and performance form part of the positive component of functional value (Sheth et al., 1991). Taghizadeh and Fesghandis (2011) see value as a real quality such as life, efficiency and reliability in their study of product value. Sweeney and Soutar (2001, p. 211) describe customer perceived quality value as "the utility derived from the perceived quality and expected performance of the product". It has been the crucial, most-studied construct in the area of perceived value research (Kainth & Verma, 2011). WOM is conceived as volitional post-purchase communication between customers. Engagement of WOM activity is believed to follow from an evaluation of how the acquired service or product performs. The quality and performance value that customers perceive focuses on the utilitarian aspect of the product or service. As a rational consequence of use and consumption, it is also easy to communicate to peers. Hartline and Jones (1996) used perceived value as the overall perceived quality value in a hotel service setting, and found that perceived quality value has a significant effect on customers' WOM intentions. Thus, customer perceived quality value is expected to have a significant influence on OWOM behaviour. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 4a: The extent of customer perceived quality value is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise.

3.2.5.2 Perceived Price Value (PVAL_PRI)

Customer perceived price value is described as “the utility derived from the product due to the reduction of its perceived short term and long term costs” (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001, p. 211). It denotes perceptions of good value for money or low price compared with alternatives. Similar to quality value, this dimension is also considered a functional component of overall perceived value. These two perceived values have been treated as functional sub-factors that contribute separately to customer perceived value and were measured separately (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Bentler and Weeks (1980) point out that some consumers may know the exact price of the product or service purchased, while others may only remember that their purchase was expensive, inexpensive, or good/bad value for money in relation to that purchase. It is logically assumed here that the higher the price value customers perceive, the more likely they would engage in OWOM communication (Bentler & Weeks, 1980). Perception of price value plays a fundamental role in the valuation of the overall perceived consumption experience (McDonald & Ho, 2002). It is expected that the higher monetary value customers perceive in a product or service, the more actively they will promote it to their peers. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 4b: The extent of customer perceived price value is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise.

3.2.5.3 Perceived Emotional Value (PVAL_EMO)

Customer perceived emotional value is described as “the utility derived from the feelings or affective states that a product generates” (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001, p. 211). In a sense, value has internal, intuitive and abstract meanings such as appearance, shape and style, which are perceived by individuals’ internal feelings (Homburg, Müller, & Klarmann, 2011). Emotional value arises through consumption experiences, whether it be feeling good, relaxed, or pleased. Havlena and Holbrook (1986, p. 394) suggest that “emotional benefits may also affect choices between instrumental alternatives that are functionally equivalent in other aspects.”

Perceived emotional value is an affective state a product or service generates (Browne, 1984). Because of its affective nature, emotional value has been mostly examined in experiential consumption, including leisure activities such as tourism product purchases (McDonald & Ho, 2002), aesthetic products such as music, creative activities such as drawing, and religious activities (Hardesty & Bearden, 2004). Emotional aspects of consumption experiences occur to a greater or lesser degree in almost all consuming situations (Plouffe, Hulland, & Vandenbosch, 2001). In their study of mobile services, Litwin (1995) found a positive relationship between emotional value and WOM communication, although it is significantly stronger for entertainment service users than information service users. It is expected that the higher the emotional value customers gain from their consumption of a product or service, the more likely they are to spread positive OWOM. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 4c: The extent of customer perceived emotional value is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise.

3.2.5.4 Perceived Social Value (PVAL_SOC)

Customer perceived social value is described as “the utility derived from the product’s ability to enhance social self-concept” (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001, p. 211). It relates to the social impact of the consumption of the product or service. Products and services possess symbolic or conspicuous consumption value in excess of their functional value (Sheth et al., 1991). This value reflects the extent to which a product or service delivers on significant aspects of a consumer’s social identity and helps express the consumer’s self. In a study of tourism products, McDonald and Ho (2002) found that social value, among other dimensions such as conditional and functional values, is the most important factor in customers’ overall value perception. Customers gain social approval from being associated or dissociated with certain social groups, or receive other social benefits such as displaying social status, through their consumption of a product or a service. There is a need for consumers to portray their social images, and consumption of a product or service is understood to make a personal statement about the customer. Consumers evaluate their purchase by looking at their social surroundings. It is expected that when they perceive higher social value, they are more likely to engage in WOM communication. By doing so, their attractiveness via their social identity can be preserved and even enhanced. Litwin (1995) found in their study of mobile service users that WOM was significantly influenced by social value.

Perceived social value is particularly important in a collectivist context, which is the context of this study. An individual is part of the collective. If one holds social status and prestige, the collective, as part of one's social self, will feel or share the same social status and prestige. Similarly, people in collectivist society see themselves as interdependent and group-related (Lehman, Chiu, & Schaller, 2004). They have an innate need for social acceptance. They spread the word about the product/service to the group to meet the standards of their interdependent self, such as gaining recognition of social status and seeking social identity. Customer perceived social value is expected to have a positive influence on their OWOM . Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 4d: The extent of customer perceived social value is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise.

3.2.6 Relationships between the Antecedents of OWOM

In reviewing the antecedents of OWOM, there are three relevant relationships discussed in the literature that are hypothesised and investigated in this study. Considering OWOM is likely the result of an interplay between a plurality of constructs (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002), including these relationships will provide a more holistic view of customers' engagement in OWOM.

Firstly, the relationship between customer perceived value and customer satisfaction is hypothesised. Customer satisfaction with the purchase or consumption is a post hoc or retrospective evaluation. Thus, it should be directly influenced by perceived value (Iacobucci, 2010). In an experiment conducted by Bentler and Stein (1992), a similar concept of perceived value, goal congruence (a cognitive appraisal indicating the extent to which consumption of a product or service is congruent or incongruent with an individual's expectations, wants or desires), was found to have significant and positive effect on emotionally based satisfaction. Nevo (1985) agreed with a number of scholars (e.g., Fan & Sivo, 2005; Sivo et al., 2006) that customer satisfaction depends on customer perceived value. Woodruff (1997) also contends that measures of received value are antecedents to overall customer satisfaction. A number of studies support this important link in various contexts in the research on behaviour intentions. For example, Gallarza and Gil Saura's (2006) study also clearly indicated that customer satisfaction is the consequence of overall perceived value. Perceived value, with the focus on quality and price dimensions, is found to be a determinant

of overall customer satisfaction in seven sectors such as retail, services, durables and nondurables (Chan, Yim, & Lam, 2010). Patterson and Spreng (1997) also supported the assertion that perceived value, with the focus on functional dimensions, precedes satisfaction. Christodoulides, Jevons, and Bonhomme (2012) used measures of customers' perceived emotional, functional and overall value to explain tourist satisfaction. However, in the review of the literature, perceived social value has not been extensively included in studies on the relationship between perceived value and satisfaction, particularly considering it was first proposed as a dimension of perceived value as early as 1991 by Sheth et al. (1991). Among the few studies that included social value in their research models, Gallarza and Gil Saura's (2006) study of travel situations found social value to be positively related to satisfaction.

In post-purchase situations, the perceived value is a comparison between what a purchase has allowed the consumer to "get" versus what its acquisition has required the consumer to "give," whereas customer satisfaction is a comparison between the pre-purchase expectation of value and the perceived post-purchase value (McDonald & Ho, 2002; Nevo, 1985; Parasuraman, 1997). Post-purchase evaluation reflects customer satisfaction, which is determined by a customer's assessment of the value that they receive from the product or service they purchased. The more value that the customer perceives they are receiving from that product or service, the more satisfied they will be. Customer satisfaction is determined by their perceived value of that product or service. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 5: The extent of customer perceived value is positively related to customer satisfaction.

Secondly, the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty is hypothesised. The satisfaction construct is an essential factor in most loyalty analyses. Customer satisfaction is an important post-purchase response often associated with customer loyalty (e.g., Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Bolton & Lemon, 1999; Rust & Zahorik, 1993). However, the majority of studies on the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty treat loyalty from a behavioural perspective, as discussed in the previous section. This study sees customer loyalty as a favourable attitudinal preference and repurchase intention. Chan et al. (2010) maintain that after a customer purchases a product or service, a level of satisfaction attitude will be formed. If satisfaction is high, this will create a greater attitudinal loyalty, meaning a likelihood of repeated patronage. Nevo (1985) argued that customer satisfaction is

a predictor of intention to repeat purchase. A satisfied customer is supposed to stay loyal to the company for a long period of time and to buy more, and more often, than less loyal customers do. Szymanski and Henard (2001) conducted a meta-analysis based on 50 studies on customer satisfaction and their results support a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and repeat-purchase intention. Loyalty attitude is the outcome of customer satisfaction (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). In other words, customer satisfaction has a positive impact on attitudinal loyalty. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 6: The extent of customer satisfaction is positively related to customer loyalty.

Thirdly, the relationship between customer perceived value and customer affective commitment is hypothesised. Affective commitment is described as a customer's long-term orientation towards a business relationship that is grounded in emotional bonds and based on liking and identification. Customer perceived value leads to a situation in which the customer acts as the company's voice in their social group, and also considers maintaining their interactions with the company. Consistent with the theory of reasoned action (Skogland & Siguaw, 2004), a customer's positive perceived value of a product or service can lead to intentions to commit to a long-term relationship with the company. When customers believe they received high value from the consumption of a product or service, it is likely to lead to bonds of an emotional kind that constitute commitment. Brunner, Stöcklin, and Opwis (2008) found the perceived value of an offering has a direct and positive effect on affective commitment in the cellular phones market, although the study conceptualised perceived value as a broad construct encompassing perception of quality versus price and inputs versus outputs relative to the competition. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 7: The extent of customer perceived value is positively related to customer affective commitment.

3.3 Research Model Summary

The conceptual framework shown in Figure 3.2 illustrates that a set of antecedents affects customer OWOM. It summarises the hypothesised linkages between the proposed constructs under investigation in this study. Central to acceptance of the model is the hypothesised positive effect of the four OWOM antecedents, (i.e., customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, affective commitment and customer perceived value), on customer OWOM (H1-H4). Also

shown are the hypothesised positive impact of customer perceived value on customer satisfaction (H5) and affective commitment (H7), and the effect of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty (H6).

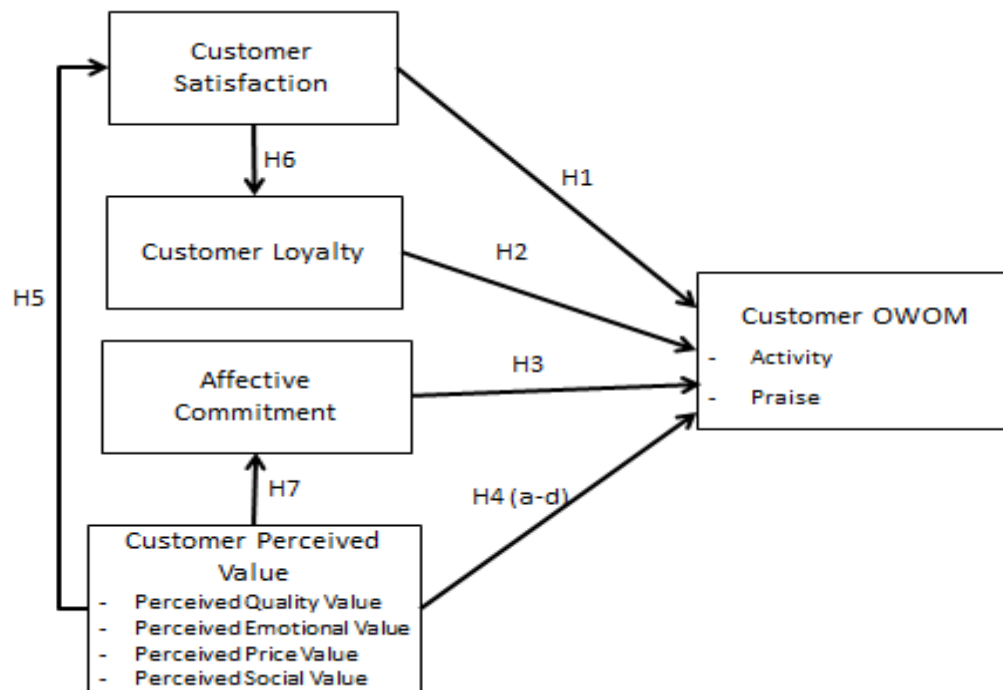


Figure 3.2 Research Model for Online Word-of-Mouth

3.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter described the proposed research model under investigation in this study. The conceptual model was outlined. Each of the five model components were discussed with respect to the linkages between each construct, and seven hypotheses were proposed for testing. The study investigated the relationship between OWOM and its key antecedents. Chapter 4 now discusses the methodology that will be used to answer the research question.

CHAPTER 4. Research Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodology employed in this research. The research paradigm is discussed and a two-phase design approach is outlined, followed by a description of the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study. Also discussed are the methods, including procedures and techniques for refining, validating and testing the measurement model.

4.1 Research Paradigm

A paradigm is “a basic belief system or a worldview that guides the researcher, not only in choices of method but in ontological and epistemologically fundamental ways” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 66). A paradigm defines for the researcher the nature of reality (ontology), the relationship between the researcher and that being researched (epistemology), and how the researcher can go about finding out what is being researched (methodology) (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). It provides guidelines and principles concerning the way research should be conducted and what the results of research should accomplish.

Two predominant paradigms in the social sciences are the positivist and interpretivist views (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). Positivist researchers view reality as objective and being independent of the researcher. The researcher remains distant and independent of that being researched, and is “objective” within the situation. The researcher’s values are kept out of the study (Creswell, 2003). Positivist researchers generally subscribe to the theory that there is a “single apprehensible reality composed of discrete elements whose nature can be known and categorised” (Perry, Riege, & Brown, 1999, p. 16), and measured objectively rather than subjectively (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, 1991). They see research as an “organised method for combining deductive logic with precise empirical observations of individual behaviour in order to discover and confirm a set of probabilistic causal laws” (Neuman, 2000, p. 66). Positivist studies therefore tend to test theory in order to increase the predictive understanding of certain phenomena for the purpose of generalisation, which underlies most experimental and survey studies (Creswell, 1994; Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). For the interpretivist researcher there is no single reality apart from our perceptions, and the only reality is that constructed by the individuals involved in the research situation (Schwandt, 2000). Interpretivist researchers interact with those they study and try to minimise the distance of perspective with them. An interpretivist researcher studies people in their context and according to their perspective, not from the perspective of the researcher (Hudson &

Ozanne, 1988). The researcher admits the value-laden nature of the study and actively reports their values and biases, as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the field (Creswell, 2003). The interpretative paradigm underlies certain approaches to grounded theory, ethnography, narrative and the use of case studies.

This study is grounded in the post-positivist paradigm. A post-positivist paradigm is related to the positivist perspective, which is based on the assumption of an objective reality. Post-positivists believe truth exists but can only be partially comprehended, as our understanding of reality is constructed and research is influenced by the values of the researchers (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Post-positivists believe that researchers should strive for increasingly better explanations of reality. The use of the scientific method helps to control subjectivity, and allows researchers to get closer to reality. Taking this position, the researcher attempts to find causes, effects, and explanations, and test theories and hypotheses (Hussy & Hussy, 1997). A post-positivist paradigm generally underlies a quantitative research methodology (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). However, Creswell (2003) points out that knowledge can be discovered through a less stringent scientific methodology that engages quantitative and some qualitative methods. Quantitative and qualitative methods may be used appropriately within any paradigm.

The post-positivist paradigm serves as the foundation and the dominant paradigm for this study. The intent of the study is to develop generalisations that contribute to theory and enable one to better predict, explain, and understand certain phenomena. Quantitative methods adopt a deductive logic, where the theory that is expressed in detailed hypotheses is developed before empirical observation. Creswell (1994) suggests that the quantitative method is appropriate when the proposed study intends to 1) test hypotheses, 2) synthesise a number of variables to determine relationships and the strength of those relationships, and 3) to allow for generalisation. Therefore, the purposes of applying a quantitative approach to the study are, 1) to verify theories supported by solid confirmatory evidence, and 2) to test hypotheses in order to verify existing theories in different contexts.

Under the post-positivist paradigm, the study adopts a quantitative methodology as the dominant approach, engaging both qualitative and quantitative methods (a mixed method). Surveys remain the most popular method to study off-line WOM (e.g., Bowman & Narayandas, 2001; Brown & Reingen, 1987; Richins, 1983), while experiments and

qualitative methods of using artefacts are often found in the studies of OWOM (e.g., Godes & Mayzlin, 2009; Trusov et al., 2009).

In light of the nature of the research question, a quantitative research design is complemented with a qualitative component in order to provide additional insights into the dynamics of customers' OWOM experience. A mixed methods design "combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration." (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007, p. 123). In addressing the research problem, this study adopts a sequential mixed method approach as proposed by Creswell (2003) and Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998). The purpose of a mixed method in this research is to 1) use the results from one method to help develop and inform the other method, and thereby increase the validity of the constructs and inquiry results, termed "development" (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989), and 2) discover new perspectives of frameworks by using results from one method with those of the other to increase the breadth and depth of inquiry results and interpretations, termed "initiation" (Greene et al., 1989). Therefore the study used a two-phase research design, with an exploratory qualitative method being used to help develop and inform the main survey instrument that is administered to a population sample. In line with the "initiation" purpose (Greene et al., 1989), the results from the qualitative interviews and quantitative survey are jointly used to offer a richer and more in-depth understanding of the OWOM phenomena under study.

4.2 Two-Phase Research Design

As depicted in Figure 4.1, the study proceeded in two phases. The study began with a qualitative (QUAL) exploration of customers' OWOM experience through interviews in Phase One. Then the study moved into Phase Two using quantitative (QUAN) methods to test the theory.

4.2.1 Phase One Objectives and Methods

The purpose of the qualitative phase is to, 1) gain a deep understanding of the customer's OWOM initiation, 2) help inform the survey instrument, and 3) seek initial confirmation of the conceptual model. Existing word-of-mouth survey instruments were originally conceptualised and developed for off-line activity in a Western and individualist setting. This

research extends the instrument to a new online and collectivist society context. Therefore, there is a need to confirm the existing constructs and their measures as appropriate for this research.

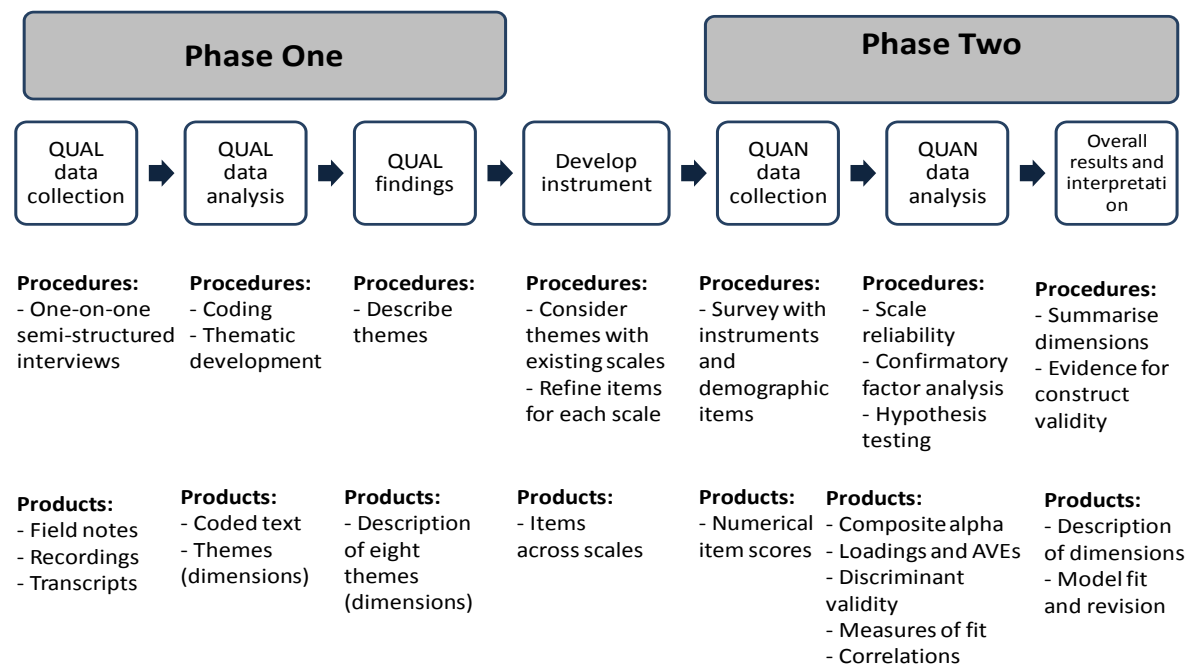


Figure 4.1 Visual Diagram of Two-Phase Research Design

Interviews are often used as a primary data source in qualitative research, as they can provide rich, empirical information (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). In addition, the choice of using interviews for qualitative data allows a small number of informants to provide in-depth information on their individual experience within a desired time frame. Construct validity is expected to be increased through the use of interviews and a subsequent survey instrument (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

In qualitative study, it is an advantage that the researcher has not only the status, background and experience to access the study area, but also an understanding of the language, people and culture that provide insight into the study. The current study benefits in this aspect as the researcher, also the interviewer, meets these criteria.

4.2.1.1 Sample Selection

The qualitative phase was not conducted to collect data that could be generalised to the wider population. Respondents in this sample were selected because they were identified as Chinese

and OWOM initiators. The researcher purposefully selected individuals who could enable exploration of a particular aspect of behaviour relevant to the research (i.e., initiating OWOM).

The main criteria for informant selection included being an Internet user living in mainland China, and having initiated WOM activity online about a recently purchased product in the past three weeks. A maximum variation sampling strategy was used, in which individuals are chosen who hold different perspectives on the OWOM experience (Creswell & Clark, 2007). To maximise differences, informants were selected depending on their age, location, level of education, Internet experience, and the period of time since their first OWOM activity. This diversity provides a broad range of perspectives. Because of the exploratory nature of the qualitative interview, and the aim of exploring data on what people remember doing, and their attitudes and feelings about their OWOM activities (Arksey & Knight, 1999), a diverse mix of informants ensures a variety of perspectives that is a key to a multi-sided and unbiased study.

Sample size

Sampling for interviews aims for “insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalisation from a sample to a population” (Patton, 2002, p. 40). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that interviews that are carefully selected will usually exhaust most available information after about a dozen instances, and thus to include as many as twenty would definitely “reach well beyond the point of redundancy” (p. 235). Bertaux (1981) suggest fifteen is an acceptable sample for all qualitative research. Green and Thorogood (2009, p. 120) stated that “the experience of most qualitative researchers is that in interview studies little that is ‘new’ comes out of transcripts after you have interviewed 20 or so people”. Following these guidelines, 20 interviews was considered appropriate in reliably establishing a comprehensive primary data source.

4.2.1.2 Data Collection – Phase One

Recruiting Informants

The researcher sent inquiries via email, instant messenger and telephone to a list of individuals in her social networks asking if they had been actively involved in OWOM activities in the past three weeks. Then a snowball sample from initial contacts was

developed by asking these individuals if they could refer other individuals they knew from their informal networks who had been active in OWOM activities.

The initial contacted individuals spread the information about the study through their networks via emails, group message on their messengers, and word of mouth. The people who were interested in participating in the study contacted the researcher. A purposive sample of 20 participants ranging in age from 21 to 55 years was recruited for the study.

Interview Protocol

A semi-structured interview protocol with open-ended questions was developed to guide each interview, which allowed the researcher to exercise a degree of control over the line of questioning to ensure that the data were consistent enough to categorise and analyse (Creswell, 2003; Morse, 2005). The protocol was developed to ensure the necessary information regarding the research questions was collected. Questions were developed to allow ample opportunities for informants to elaborate, with multiple probes into the descriptive questions posed. The protocol is provided in Appendix 1 in both English and Chinese. It should be noted that the protocol did not include any emerging questions that evolved during the course of the interviews, and that the interviewer only used these to probe when considered appropriate. This was done to ensure that previous interviews did not influence the answers of subsequent interviewees.

4.2.1.3 The Interviews

Before the interviews, the informants were informed that the questions were about the WOM they initiated online regarding a product/service they had experienced in the last three weeks. As a result of this pre-interview notification, the participants arrived for their interviews ready to discuss their thoughts on their particular WOM experience. In addition, the researcher tried to minimise the possibility of deficient participant recollection by focussing on their activity within the previous three weeks. The informants were asked questions relating to their experience with the product/service they nominated, and their WOM on the Internet relating to the product/service.

All the interviews were conducted in China either face-to-face (F2F) or online. Telephone interviews were suggested, but none of the informants preferred this form of interview due to the unavailability of home phones and the potential for compromised interview times. Twelve

interviews were conducted face-to-face, and, due to budget constraints, six were carried out online using an online audio or video application (QQ Audio/Video) (two informants pulled out from the study).

Interviews with informants ranged from 45 minutes to 1.5 hours in length, with most interviews lasting around an hour. F2F interviews were conducted by the researcher, and were held at places suggested by the informants. Interviews were conducted in informants' homes or offices, or at cafes. Prior to the interviews, the participants were given time to read the information sheet (Appendix 2) and they then completed a consent form (Appendix 3) indicating agreement to participate in the study in line with the standards of Victoria University of Wellington's Human Ethics Committee (HEC). The consent form emphasised the voluntary nature of participation and assured the confidentiality of all interview data. Both documents were translated into Chinese. A copy of the participant information sheet and consent form can be found in Appendix 2 and 3. All interviews were digitally recorded with consent from the informants. All information collected from the interviews was returned to the informants for their reviews and comments for accuracy (Decrop, 1999).

4.2.1.4 Data Analysis Procedure

Interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. During this process, all the interview guide questions and answers were transcribed. Other audible behaviours during the interviews (e.g., sounds and pauses) were not transcribed, as they do not add value (Schilling, 2006).

A deductive content analysis approach was used to analyse the interview data in order to validate and extend the conceptual framework or theory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Applying this approach, initial coding started with findings from the relevant literature, then the researcher immersed herself in the data and allowed themes to emerge (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). A list of coding categories from the relevant research findings was generated and a preliminary model was created. The model was considered for possible modification within the course of the analysis as new categories emerged inductively (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The consistency of the coding was reviewed after coding the entire data set by going through each interview transcript. In this process, mistakes caused by fatigue from long hours of coding were eliminated and changes were made. An independent coder was given the coding

summary and a sample text, and was asked to match the text to the categories. The differences were discussed with the researcher.

The data collected were coded and analysed as textual data, both manually and by using NVivo8 text analysis software. NVivo is an efficient tool for conducting advanced qualitative analysis and is widely used in qualitative research (Bazeley, 2007). The results were compared to the preliminary research model and the extant literature in order to refine the model and to confirm items for the survey questionnaire. Interview findings and major insights from this phase of the research are provided in Chapter Five.

4.2.2 Phase Two Objectives and Methods

The quantitative phase included a web-based survey. The purpose of the survey was to collect data in order to examine the relationship between the antecedents of customer OWOM, and the OWOM of customers who initiated WOM on the Internet about the product/service they purchased or experienced in China. The rationale for choosing a web-based survey, as well as the procedure for survey development and administration, is described in the following sections.

4.2.2.1 Choice of web-based survey

The data were collected via a web-based survey. Use of the Internet is supported by Sweet (2001), and Hughes and Lang (2004), who suggest that using the Internet can be beneficial for both theory building and supporting studies, particularly of online experiences.

One criticism of using an online survey relates to the degree of sample representativeness – online participants do not mirror the entire population (Evans & Mathur, 2005; Ilieva, Baron, & Healey, 2002). Online participants are demographically skewed relative to the general population (Evans & Mathur, 2005), and they are more technology-friendly (Kwak & Radler, 2002). However, the whole population of interest in this research is Internet users engaged in OWOM, who are assumed to possess these characteristics. The first and foremost consideration in the decision to use an online survey method is the population being studied. Internet users who engage in OWOM are the population of interest, and they can obviously be expected to be found online. It is expected that the intended population tends to prefer the convenience of taking surveys online.

Nevertheless, Internet connectivity is becoming more widespread and integrated into daily life in China, and is thus becoming more typical of behaviour. Therefore, online surveys are considered a more appropriate data-collection mode. Online surveys also result in the desired quality and quantity of information without exceeding time or budget constraints.

In a web-based survey, respondents are referred to a website where the survey is hosted. Respondent identities are not visible, thus guaranteeing anonymity (Birnbaum, 2004; Jansen, Corley, & Jansen, 2007). In addition, web-based survey methods have the potential for bringing efficiencies to the design and administration of self-administered questionnaires, such as low logistics costs (Dillman & Bowker, 2001; Medlin, Roy, & Chai, 1999), design and layout flexibility (Griffis, Goldsby, & Cooper, 2003), easy administration and high data quality, and shorter delivery and response times (Ilieva et al., 2002; Kwak & Radler, 2002). The survey used in this research was designed using Qualtrics survey software. The software supports the creation of multi-language surveys, including Chinese.

4.2.2.2 Survey Development Procedures

The development of the survey proceeded in a step-by-step fashion.

Step 1: The scales to measure research constructs were adapted from the existing WOM behaviour literature.

Step 2: These questions were rewritten for an online context, and were further developed and refined after the qualitative phase.

Step 3: The questions were submitted to two panel judges drawn from the marketing academic community. The judges were asked to 1) evaluate the items in terms of their appropriateness in an online context, and 2) suggest possible changes that would make the questions more appropriate in this context.

Step 4: The questionnaire was translated into Chinese using a back-translation method suggested by Brislin (1970) (refer to Section 4.4.2 for detailed procedure).

Step 5: These questions were submitted to a pre-test sample. Pre-testing serves the purposes of evaluating the questions contained in the scales and determining whether respondents

understand all the questions. The pre-test sample was drawn from the researcher's online social networks in China.

The web-based survey instrument is presented in Appendix 4 (English) and Appendix 5 (Chinese). The survey is organised into five main parts:

- Part 1: Screening for eligible respondents
- Part 2: Factors including respondents' OWOM initiation
- Part 3: Online channels for WOM
- Part 4: WOM measurement on online channels
- Part 5: General respondent information (e.g., demographic information; Internet usage characteristics)

The detailed measurement of the constructs is outlined in the following section.

4.3 Measurements of Constructs

This section outlines the measurement of the constructs employed in this research. The majority of the measurements are derived from the existing literature, except for the measurement of some respondent profile variables. Seven-point Likert type response scales ranging from 1 (extremely disagree) to 7 (extremely agree) were used for variance in responses, which were sensitive to slight gradations in respondent endorsement. Respondent profile variables were measured using a categorical format, except for the measure of the collectivism variable, which used a 7-point Likert type scale.

4.3.1 Online Word-of-Mouth (OWOM) Measurement

OWOM is the main dependent variable in the study. The OWOM scale was based on Harrison-Walker's (2001) study and was comprised of two dimensions. The questionnaire measured OWOM through measures of OWOM activity and OWOM praise. In Harrison-Walker's (2001) work that developed the WOM scale, both measures demonstrated good reliability, with a Cronbach's α of 0.804 for word-of-mouth activity and 0.78 for word-of-mouth praise.

Four items were used to measure the OWOM activity (OWOM_ACT), capturing the aspects of enthusiasm and detail, two items were used to measure OWOM praise (OWOM_PRA),

reflecting WOM valence. OWOM activity refers to the frequency with which people engage in WOM online and the number of people with whom they engage, while OWOM praise refers to the positive or negative nature of the WOM comments people make to others about their experiences. The wordings were modified for the online context. The OWOM scale (OWOM) consisted of the following:

- OWOM_A1: In this program, I mention this brand/organisation to others quite frequently.
- OWOM_A2: In this program, I've told more people about this brand/organisation than I've told about most other brands/organisations.
- OWOM_A3: In this program, I seldom miss an opportunity to tell others about this brand/organisation.
- OWOM_A4: In this program, when I tell others about this brand/organisation, I tend to talk about the brand/organisation in great detail.
- OWOM_P1: In this program, I have only good things to say about this brand/organisation.
- OWOM_P2: In this program, I am proud to tell others that I use this brand/organisation.

4.3.2 Customer Satisfaction (SAT) Measurement

The customer satisfaction (SAT) measure is a six-item scale adapted from Oliver (1980) ($\alpha=0.82$). All items were emotional-based in content and included references to the respondent's outright satisfaction, regret, happiness, and general feelings about their choice of product or service consumption (Hausknecht, 1990; Hunt, 1977b; Oliver, 1981). This Likert scale of measuring customer satisfaction is one of the best performing measures on convergence versus divergence criteria (Hausknecht, 1990; McGee & Ford, 1987). Furthermore, the emotional measures best reveal the degree of satisfaction, whereas evaluative measures are more useful for explaining which factors influence satisfaction in a specific situation, such as studying a specific product or industry (Hausknecht, 1990). The scale adapted is not product class dependent, which is appropriate for the study as product or service is nominated by the respondent at the beginning of the survey.

SAT_1: I am satisfied with my decision to purchase this product/service.

- SAT_2: If I had it to do all over again, I would feel differently about the purchase of this product/service.
- SAT_3: My choice to purchase this product/service was a wise one.
- SAT_4: I feel bad about my decision to purchase this product/service.
- SAT_5: I think that I did the right thing when I decided to purchase this product/service.
- SAT_6: I am not happy that I did what I did about the purchase of this product/service.

4.3.3 Customer Loyalty (LOY) Measurement

The customer loyalty (SAT) measure is adapted from Srinivasan et al. (2002) ($\alpha=0.70$). This scale was developed based on studies conducted by Zeithaml et al. (1996), and Cermak et al. (1994). Customer loyalty refers to the customer's favourable attitude toward the brand/organisation that results in repeat buying behaviour (Oliver, 1997; Srinivasan et al., 2002). This multi-item scale captures the aspects of reducing the consideration set size and the amount of effort expended in searching for alternatives while increasing the individual's willingness to purchase in the future.

- LOY_1: I seldom consider switching to another brand/organisation when I buy such a product/service.
- LOY_2: As long as the present brand/organisation continues, I doubt that I would switch brand/organisation.
- LOY_3: I try to use this brand/organisation whenever I need to purchase such a product/service.
- LOY_4: When I need to purchase such a product/service, this brand/organisation is my first choice.
- LOY_5: I like using this brand/organisation.
- LOY_6: To me this brand/organisation is the brand/organisation to do business with.
- LOY_7: I believe that this is my favourite brand/organisation of such a product/service.

4.3.4 Affective Commitment (COM) Measurement

Affective commitment (COM) measures a customer's feelings of belonging and sense of attachment to a brand or an organisation (Harrison-Walker, 2001). It is based on liking and identification, and it represents an enduring desire to maintain a valued consumption relationship between a consumer and an organisation (Fullerton, 2003; Morgan & Hunt,

1994). The scale used in this study is a thirteen-item scale adapted from Harrison-Walker's work (2001) ($\alpha=0.95$). The scale captures customer's affective attachment to the goals and values of the brand or the organisation; to his/her role in relation to the goals and values; and to the brand or the organisation for its own sake (Buchanan, 1974). Although the COM construct operationalised for the current study was adapted from the measures for customer commitment to a service provider, it can be applied in product consumption situations as suggested by Harrison-Walker (2001) and Fullerton (2003). The wording of the measures was modified to measure customer commitment to a product brand in the case of product purchase and consumption.

- COM_1: For me, this is one of the best brands/organisations of its kind.
- COM_2: I am proud that I use the product/service of this brand/organisation.
- COM_3: I usually agree with this brand/organisation's policies and procedures on important matters.
- COM_4: This is a good brand/organisation to use.
- COM_5: I care about the fate of this brand/organisation.
- COM_6: This brand/organisation inspires the best in me in the ways of being a good customer.
- COM_7: I like the way this brand/organisation operates.
- COM_8: This brand/organisation understands my needs.
- COM_9: I like this brand/organisation.
- COM_10: I have a special relationship with this brand/organisation.
- COM_11: I want to help this brand/organisation achieve its goals.
- COM_12: Doing business with this brand/organisation is enjoyable.
- COM_13: I do business with this brand/organisation because I like it.

4.3.5 Perceived Value (PVAL) Measurement

A dominant view on customer perceived value is that it consists of several components, and is a multidimensional construct (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994; Sheth et al., 1991; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Sweeney and Soutar (2001) developed a four-dimensional scale of this construct consisting of 19 items in total (α of linear composite of scale = 0.96) and tested it in both pre-purchase and post-purchase situations. This scale demonstrates that consumers assess products, not just in functional terms of quality and price, but also in terms of emotion and social consequences derived from the product. This four-dimensional measurement is adapted in the current study.

4.3.5.1 Perceived Quality Value (QUAL)

The perceived quality value (QUAL) refers to the utility derived from the perceived quality and expected performance of the product. It is measured using a six-item scale (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001) ($\alpha=0.91$):

- PVAL_1: This brand/organisation has consistent quality.
- PVAL_2: The product/service of this brand/organisation is well made.
- PVAL_3: The product/service of this brand/organisation has an acceptable standard of quality.
- PVAL_4: The product/service of this brand/organisation has poor workmanship. (reverse coded)
- PVAL_5: The product/service of this brand/organisation would not last a long time. (reverse coded)
- PVAL_6: The product/service of this brand/organisation would perform consistently.

4.3.5.2 Perceived Emotional Value (EMO)

The perceived emotional value (EMO) refers to the utility derived from the feelings or affective states that a product generates. It is a five-item scale (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001) ($\alpha=0.94$). The scale demonstrates that customers assess products in terms of the enjoyment or pleasure derived from the product.

- PVAL_7: The product/service of this brand/organisation is one that I would enjoy.
- PVAL_8: The product/service of this brand/organisation would make me want to use it.
- PVAL_9: The product/service of this brand/organisation is one that I would feel relaxed about using.
- PVAL_10: The product/service of this brand/organisation would make me feel good.
- PVAL_11: The product/service of this brand/organisation would give me pleasure.

4.3.5.3 Perceived Price Value (PRI)

The perceived price value (PRI) refers to the utility derived from the product due to the reduction of its perceived short-term and longer-term costs. It is a four-item scale (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001) ($\alpha=0.80$):

- PVAL_12: The product/service of this brand/organisation is reasonably priced.
- PVAL_13: This brand/organisation offers value for money.
- PVAL_14: The product/service of this brand/organisation is a good product/service for the price.
- PVAL_15: The product/service of this brand/organisation would be economical.

4.3.5.4 Perceived Social Value (SOC)

The perceived social value (SOC) refers to the utility derived from the product's ability to enhance social self-concept. It is a four-item scale adapted from Sweeney and Soutar (2001) ($\alpha=0.82$). The scale demonstrates that customers assess products in terms of the social consequences of what the product communicates to others.

- PVAL_16: The product/service of this brand/organisation would help me to feel acceptable.
- PVAL_17: The product/service of this brand/organisation would improve the way I am perceived.
- PVAL_18: The product/service of this brand/organisation would make a good impression on other people.
- PVAL_19: The product/service of this brand/organisation would give its owner social approval.

4.3.6 Respondent Profile Variables

Respondents' individual cultural orientation toward collectivism (CULT) is measured by a six-item scale adapted from Yoo (2009) ($\alpha=0.81$ for American sample; $\alpha=0.79$ for Korean sample) and Yoo and Donthu (2005). The scale was based on Hofstede's works (Hofstede, 1980, 2001), but was applied and validated in a number of studies by Yoo and his associates measuring cultural orientation at the individual level (Yoo, 2009; Yoo & Donthu, 2001, 2002, 2005; Yoo, Donthu, & Lenartowicz, 2001, 2011). A study conducted across a number of countries, including China, also validated the collectivism scale ($\alpha=0.85$) at the individual level (Schumann et al., 2010).

- CULT_1 Individuals should sacrifice self-interest for the group that they belong to.
- CULT_2 Individuals should stick with the group even through difficulties.
- CULT_3 Group welfare is more important than individual rewards.

CULT_4 Group success is more important than individual success.

CULT_5 Individuals should pursue their goals after considering the welfare of the group.

CULT_6 Group loyalty should be encouraged even if individual goals suffer.

Demographic variables, including gender, age, city of residence, occupation, income, marital status and education were measured using a categorical format. Two variables were used, also in categorical form, to measure the Internet usage of the respondent in general, including the frequency of Internet usage and daily Internet usage.

4.4 Survey Refinement and Implementation

Following the steps of survey development described in Section 4.2.2, the English version of the questionnaire was refined and pre-tested before being translated into Chinese. The Chinese version was then pilot-tested before implementation.

4.4.1 Panel Evaluation and Question Testing

Two academic staff members from the School of Marketing and International Business at Victoria University of Wellington verified the meaning of the constructs prior to pre-test. They were asked to review the scale items intended to measure each construct, as well as the appropriateness of the scales within the research context (Litwin, 1995; Nevo, 1985). The purpose was to ensure that the attributes of each construct were captured by the scales (Hardesty & Bearden, 2004). In addition, the wording of individual scale items and the appropriateness of the overall questionnaire structure was verified, or modified further based on the feedback.

4.4.2 Questionnaire Translation

As the original scales used to measure the constructs were developed in English-speaking Western cultural contexts, translation into the Chinese language was performed. When conducting rigorous questionnaire-based studies in different cultural settings, translation may provide a systemic source of error, and proven procedures were used to overcome this potential problem. Back-translation was used, where the source instrument is translated into the target language and then independently translated back into the source language (Brislin, 1970).

Forward-translation (English to Chinese) was conducted by the native Chinese researcher who understood the purpose and the context of the questionnaire. This Chinese version of the questionnaire was then e-mailed to a bilingual translator in China, who had a New Zealand postgraduate qualification in business and research experience in Marketing, to be back-translated into English. After the back-translation, the original and back-translated questionnaires were compared by the researcher and points of divergence were noted. After a follow-up discussion with the translator in China to clarify the differences in the wording and meaning of corresponding questions, the researcher identified two translation issues – errors due to literal translation, and omission (loss of a word or phrase). The questions with translation issues were addressed after consulting a bilingual lecturer from the School of Marketing and International Business at Victoria University of Wellington. Questions with errors of literal translation were reworded to accommodate phraseology commonly used in Chinese. Questions with errors of omission were corrected to more accurately reflect the intent of the wording in English. The final Chinese version was reviewed at the meeting with the bilingual lecturer, ensuring an equivalent meaning with the original English version.

4.4.3 Pre-testing

Pre-testing was conducted in order to reduce measurement error. The process involved checking for errors in the wording of questions, any lack of clarity of instructions, and other factors that could impede the instrument's ability to collect data in a systematic fashion (Dillon, Maden, & Firtle, 1987).

1. Before translation was conducted, the original English version of the questionnaire was made available online to a few academic staff and PhD students at the School of Marketing and International Business at Victoria University of Wellington. They were asked to consider “are the questions and responses valid and reliable”, “are they appropriate?”, and “are they both necessary and sufficient?”, and to provide feedback. Written feedback was obtained and further discussed with each member. The questionnaire was revised as needed.
2. The Chinese version of the questionnaire was then administered to five people who were potential target respondents in China. They were informed that the pre-test was a practice run; they were able to take this online survey more than once, and they could complete the survey at any time. The researcher measured how much time it took to

complete each questionnaire, and then debriefed the respondents via audio conferencing after they completed the questionnaire. They were asked to consider reactions to question form, wording, order, and response categories. Based on the feedback, the researcher determined if the questions were understandable and appropriate for inclusion.

3. The final revision of the questionnaire was then made based on the feedback. One modification made in this step included randomising statement order. This was achieved by using the “Randomisation” function in Qualtrics software. The respondents were presented the statements in a different order to prevent respondents from guessing or predicting which kinds of statements would be in which position in the group (and therefore trying to guess the judgements, instead of actually judging the statements) (Litwin, 1995).

A pilot test was conducted to examine the entire survey administration process, including the readiness for deployment of the survey instrument (the HTML survey form downloaded by the respondents) and the data collection software – Qualtrics (Burkey & Kuechler, 2003). The layout of the survey webpages was tested for appearance, and hyperlinks were double-checked. Some variation in display across browsers was acceptable.

4.4.4 Research Sample

The sample frame consisted of Chinese Internet users aged over 18, who had initiated WOM online regarding the product/service they had purchased and consumed.

4.4.5 Administration of the Survey

The survey data collection was conducted in two stages. Stage One involved sampling through open online invitation, and Stage Two involved sampling via email invitation. Both stages were supplemented by respondent-driven snowball sampling.

Stage One: Open online invitation

Stage one used a combined sampling, with online invitation sampling as the major sampling method and respondent-driven snowball sampling as the complementary method.

Potential respondents were asked to fill out a questionnaire hosted at a specific website (Burns & Bush, 2002). The online invitation sampling method was used to increase the yield of the sample in terms of the characteristics of interest, and to obtain a wide variety of participants (both open- and closed-accessed OWOM programme participants, such as bloggers, members of forums and third-party websites, instant messenger users, and email users).

To solicit the largest sample, assistance from administrators of information portals, social networking sites and product-related communication venues (i.e., product-related forums, chat-rooms, bulletin boards) was sought. However, no contacted information portals were willing to offer assistance without charge, and the cost of placing the solicitation was beyond the research budget. Online communication venues gave no reply to several attempts at contact, or rejected the request for reasons such as: 1) a message designed to recruit participants for a survey is not allowed according to the company's policy, or 2) only a government-sponsored survey is allowed, such as CNNIC surveys.

A number of online product-related forums and bulletin boards were used to post a brief description of the study and link to the survey at the discretion of site administrators. The message also encouraged the participants to pass along the information about the survey to their networks in the hope of gaining second-contact respondents (i.e., respondent-driven snowballing).

Stage Two: E-mail Invitation

The second stage consisted of e-mail invitations to a specific group of individuals. A Guangzhou-based online B2C service company provided access to their database of 56,922 customers (accounts active in the last three months). Only one e-mail outlining the research was allowed per customer.

An e-mail invitation containing an embedded URL link to the website hosting the questionnaire was sent to each of the 56,922 potential respondents. The e-mail also contained a brief description of the study and encouraged participation in the survey. Subsequent procedures were the same as Stage One, including the use of snowball recruitment. In both stages, when respondents clicked on the survey link to take part in the study, they were shown an information sheet including the details of the research and instructions on how to

complete the study. Initially, the respondents were asked two screen questions that ensured they were eligible to participate. Then they were asked to answer a series of questions related to their OWOM behaviour. The final series of questions included the demographic information of the respondents. When the survey was completed, they were given a confirmation that the survey was successfully completed and information about how and when they could access the results.

4.5 Data Analysis and Hypothesis-testing Procedures

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is widely used by researchers in marketing and consumer research (Baumgartner & Homburg, 1996; Hershberger, 2003). The use of SEM yields benefits not possible with first-generation statistical methods (e.g., correlation analysis, exploratory factor analysis, multiple regression, and ANOVA). One important benefit is that the types of error confounding first-generation procedures can be taken into account in the analysis (Chin, 1998; Iacobucci, 2009). Random or measurement errors in indicators can be modelled and estimated explicitly. Systematic or method errors can also be represented. Other advantages of SEM include the provision of methods to assess construct validity in broader and deeper ways than possible with traditional correlation analyses, and ways to correct for systematic bias in tests of substantive hypotheses (Bentler & Stein, 1992). Use of SEM also helps researchers to be more precise in the specification of hypotheses and operationalisation of constructs (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). It also takes into account the reliability of measures in tests of hypotheses in ways going beyond the averaging of multi-measures of constructs.

Covariance-based structural equation modelling (SEM) was conducted using the statistical analysis programme AMOS. The objective of covariance-based SEM is to show that the null hypotheses – the assumed research model with all its paths – is insignificant, meaning that the complete set of paths as specified in the model being analysed is plausible, given the sample data. In other words, it is conducted to show that the operationalisation of the theory under examination is corroborated and not disconfirmed by the data (Bollen, 1984; Hair, Andersen, & Tatham, 1998).

Covariance-based SEM allows the simultaneous testing of several hypotheses concerning relationships between a number of variables. It is a technique best used with relatively simple, well-defined frameworks, where measurement is established and models are not overly

complicated (Baumgartner & Homburg, 1996). This approach is ideal when the goal is to obtain population parameter estimates for explaining covariances with the assumption that the underlying model is correct, which is the case in the current study.

A number of data analysis techniques were performed following data collection. Data summaries were analysed using the statistical software SPSS. The scales used in the current study were based on existing literature; therefore, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed. This was done using SEM to assess convergent and discriminant validity. SEM was also used for hypothesis testing – examining the relationships among the constructs.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the research methodology used in this study. The thesis adopts a mixed method approach with exploratory interviews with a limited number of informants, followed by a web-based survey of a sample from the population. The key purpose of the interviews is to 1) gain a rich understanding of the customer's OWOM initiation, 2) assist in informing the survey instrument, and 3) to help validate the conceptual model.

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with a limited number of informants in China via online conferencing software and face-to-face. The web-based survey was developed based on the extant literature, and refined by incorporating the interview findings from Phase One. The online survey was distributed in two stages – online invitation sampling, followed by e-mail invitation sent to 56,922 potential respondents. Both approaches were supplemented by respondent-driven snowball sampling. Structural equation modelling (SEM) and other data analysis techniques were discussed in the chapter.

CHAPTER 5. Data Analysis and Results

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the findings and key themes from the in-depth interviews that were conducted with 18 OWOM initiator-type respondents in mainland China, and presents a full analysis of the relevant data collected from the quantitative survey. The key insights from the interviews are explored. A detailed analysis and the results from the survey are also presented, including the multivariate analysis techniques undertaken, and the results of the hypotheses-testing.

5.2 Phase One Analysis and Results

5.2.1 Interview Informant Profiles

Twenty interviews were scheduled. One person dropped out due to other commitments at the time of the scheduled interview. Furthermore, one online text-based interview was excluded due to incomplete information provided by another informant. Both informants were followed up for possible rescheduled interviews by other media (e.g., telephone, Skype/QQ), but both decided to discontinue their participation. In the end, a total of 18 interviews were conducted.

The informant profiles shown in Table 5.1 indicate that the participants were different along a number of criteria (e.g., location, age, occupation). The informants comprised 6 males and 12 females. Figure 5.1 shows the locations of the interviewees. They were located in eleven different cities: mostly first and second-tier cities in China. In order to preserve anonymity, the names of the informants have been codified (e.g., “R1, R2, etc.).

Table 5.1 Interview Informants' Profiles

Respondent Number	Method	Location	Age	Occupation	Marital Status	Education	Annual Income (RMB)	Monthly Income (RMB)	Product(s) in OWOM	Purchase place	OWOM History
R1	F2F	Beijing (T1)	25	Administration secretary in an AUS Biz in Beijing	Single	Junior College	>24000	±2000	Skin care (DHC); MP3 Player	Online; Offline	<1 year
R2	F2F	Beijing (T1)	28	Translator in a translation service company	Single	Undergraduate Degree	60000-72000	>5000-6000	Skin care (MiShang); Duvet cover set	Online; Online	4 years
R3	F2F	Beijing (T1)	26	Marketing manager in a Safe-Tech company	Single	Junior College	>60000	>5000	Laptop (MAC); Cell Phone (SE)	Offline; Offline	7 years
R4	QQ Audio	Huhhot (T2)	22	Electrical technician in a coal company	Single	Undergraduate Degree	36000	3000	Movie	Offline	6 years
R5	QQ Audio	Jinan (T1)	27	Newspaper editor (junior)	Married	Undergraduate Degree	±24000	±2000	Fashion accessories	Online	3 years
R6	F2F	Guangzhou (T1)	30	Cross-border case investigator at a government agency	Single	Undergraduate Degree	120000	10000	Hotel	Offline	2 years
R7	F2F	Shenzhen (T1)	27	Customer service at BMW	Single	Undergraduate Degree	72000-120000	6000-10000	Storage basket	Online	1.5 years
R8	F2F	Shenzhen (T1)	21	Real Estate Agent	Single	Junior College	>72000	>6000	Draw curtain/partition	Online	1-2 years
R9	F2F	Yinchuan (T2)	41	Bank manager	Married	Postgraduate Certificate	60000	5000	Casual dress	Online	2 years
R10	F2F	Nanjing (T1)	40	Manager in media industry	Married	Junior College	50000	4200	Kids clothing; Shampoo	Online; Online	3 years

Respondent Number	Method	Location	Age	Occupation	Marital Status	Education	Annual Income (RMB)	Monthly Income (RMB)	Product(s)	Purchase place	OWOM History
R11	QQ Video	Xiamen (T1)	26	Assistant manager in a car entertainment company	Single	Undergraduate Degree	>48000	>4000	Digital camera (Sony); Cell Phone (SE-X10)	Online; Offline	6 years
R12	QQ Audio	Xiamen (T1)	23	Secretary in a parking equipment manufacturer	Single	Junior College	24000	2000	Casual dress	Online	5 years
R13	F2F	Yinchuan (T2)	37	Self-employed, agent in education	Married	Junior College	±50000	±4200	Hoodie, T-shirt	Online	5 years
R14	F2F	Wuxi (T2)	29	Sales representative in baking machinery company	Married	Undergraduate Degree	60000	5000	Jade accessories	Online	10 years
R15	QQ Audio	Ma'anshan (T3)	55	Retired primary school teacher	Married	Technical School	>48000	>4000	Floor porcelains	Offline	3 years
R16	F2F	Shanghai (T1)	31	Supervisor in a logistics company	Single	Junior College	72000	6000-7000	Cosmetics (SKII)	Offline	7 years
R17	QQ Audio	Guangzhou (T1)	26	Self-employed, family business	Married	Technical School	60000-120000	5000-10000	Books	Offline	8 years
R18	F2F	Yinchuan (T2)	25	Accountant (Junior)	Single	Undergraduate Degree	>24000	>1200	Badminton Bag; Coat	Online; Online	1 year

Note: T1=Tier 1 city; T2=Tier 2 City (Tiers are developed to classify the cities and regions through the vast country); F2F: Face-to-Face; QQ Audio/Video: Build-in voice/video chat application of an instant messaging software platform



Figure 5.1 Locations of Interview Participants

5.2.2 Results from the Interviews

The 18 interviews from Phase One were analysed following the established guidelines provided by Miles and Huberman (1994). As outlined in Chapter 4, the research design of the qualitative component of the study involved prior conceptualisation of issues developed from the literature review and conceptual model (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thus the conceptual model guided the coding of the interviews. In addition, the coding process included “a-posterior” categorisation with open coding to take into account the emergence of new themes and patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Sinkovics, Penz, & Ghauri, 2008).

The interview findings were classified into the following key themes in terms of the antecedents, measurement of OWOM, and adoption of online channels for WOM:

- Customer satisfaction
- Customer loyalty
- Customer affective commitment
- Customer perceived value
- Elements of OWOM

The key themes of the interviews are summarised in Table 5.2. Each antecedent is discussed in this section and representative quotes from the interview data are presented to exemplify the results. The key insights gained from the interviews are discussed.

Table 5.2 Summary of Key Themes

Category	Issue	Selected Illustrative Quote
Customer satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Happiness about the decision - Regret about the decision - Satisfied and wise decision 	<p>“I am happy that I bought it.”</p> <p>“I was upset and felt regret to spend 200 yuan on that dress.”</p> <p>“I was very satisfied, it exceeded my expectation.”</p>
Customer loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Best and favourite - First choice - Like using - Switching avoidance 	<p>“Sony Ericsson is my favourite brand, I’ve been using it for more than 5 years...I think it’s a very long time.”</p> <p>“An old Chinese saying goes: ‘ask the price at three shops before you buy’. I’m sure there are better ones out there, but Sony Ericsson is always my first choice.”</p> <p>“I like using Sony, and I have got lots of Sony products at home.”</p> <p>“I’ve been using it for 3 years, and never thought of changing to another brand.”</p>
Customer Perceived Value (Quality Value) (Price Value) (Emotional Value)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consistent performance - Well-made - Good quality - Value for money - Economical - Enjoy to use - Want to use - Giving pleasure 	<p>“Sony has consistent quality and their products last.”</p> <p>“Their clothes are good in material and the handicraft.”</p> <p>“‘Guanzhu’ [brand] has great colour and is of good quality.”</p> <p>“It’s well worth the money I spent on the jade necklace. You can hardly get such high quality jade at this price.”</p> <p>“I saved a lot. I’ve spent a few thousand yuan on the tiles for a kitchen and two bathrooms. Some people spent more than 10,000 yuan.”</p> <p>“I enjoyed having it installed.”</p> <p>“I want to use Sony products.”</p> <p>“I really like that racquet bag. I was delighted when I received it by post. I wrote about it as I was in such a good mood.”</p>
Customer Perceived Social Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social acceptable - Social approval 	<p>“I heard from my friends and schoolmates that they’ve used this brand. It’s not like Aigo, those big brands, but it’s a decent one.”</p> <p>“The bookstore has got such a good location, elegant interior. I like to be seen in there.”</p>

Category	Issue	Selected Illustrative Quote
Customer Affective Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Best of its kind - Agree and understand operation - Care and help - Like to do business with - Maintain relationship 	<p>“‘Sanlian’ bookstore is one of the top in China.”</p> <p>“The shop gets new arrivals every Monday.”</p> <p>“I care about this company. I wrote on the company’s website, giving my honest opinion about what I like and don’t like about their product. I think it benefits the company too, so they know how to improve.”</p> <p>“We like to buy from this shop. We go to check on their site every Monday: that’s when they get new arrivals.”</p> <p>“I had a good relationship with the shop owner. She always gives me a discount, and I always bring new customers.”</p>
Customer OWOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Frequency of incidents - Detail of information -Positive/negative information 	<p>“For this shampoo, I recommended it to more than 50 people on my QQ account.”</p> <p>“I wrote a lot of details about his mobile phone, the look, features like capacity, etc ...”</p> <p>“I wrote pretty much all good things about it.”</p> <p>“I wrote things like: ‘some threads were visible and could be pulled out from the dress; quality is like the ones you can get from the night market’.”</p>

5.2.3 Key Themes Regarding Antecedents

Customer satisfaction was one of the major concepts to emerge from the interviews. Some informants indicated that they tend to initiate WOM about the products they are satisfied with, and are less likely to talk about the ones they are not.

“I posted quite a lot of details of this MP3 player, the look, features, etc. I’d done some research before I made the purchase, so I pretty much knew what I was expecting, even the possible defect of the battery compartment lid – it seems a common issue with this model. But mine works perfectly fine, and has no defects at all.” [R1, female, mid-20s].

“I am not happy with my recent purchase of a Sony Ericsson phone, but I didn’t write about it. I just gave it to my mum and bought a different one.” [R3, male, mid-20s].

In some interviews, the informants discussed their motivations to avoid giving negative WOM online. The motivations strongly reflect their collectivism cultural orientation. In

order to preserve social harmony and avoid a display of negative emotions, frowned upon in collective cultures, they tend to avoid offering WOM that sounds complaining. In addition, they withhold negative comments in their OWOM activities in order to maintain acceptance and inclusion and/or to make favourable impressions in their social groups. One respondent stated:

“I try not to tell people bad things about the products or services I am dissatisfied with, like the coat I bought. I’d rather say ‘I don’t know much about it’, than telling the truth [negative comments]. I don’t want to criticise because it might be just me...I’m sure there must be people who like it. I don’t want to create some kind of discomfort and give people a bad impression of myself.” [R18, female, mid-20s]

However, satisfaction appears to influence customer OWOM in different ways, as other informants tend to share their experience only when their expectations are either exceeded or unfulfilled, and not when they are met. This U-shaped relationship between satisfaction and OWOM is supported by the participants. For example, two respondents stated:

“I’m very satisfied with this hotel and it definitely exceeded my expectation – they offered more than I expected, so I wrote about it. I travel a lot and have stayed at many hotels. If it’s within my expectation, I wouldn’t bother. I would write about it when my satisfaction is far below or above my expectation.” [R6, male, early-30s].

“I was very unhappy with the coat when I received it...I was actually angry. I felt I had spent 200 yuan on something sold at the night market [where cheap items with poor quality are usually sold]. I told everyone on my friend list about it and warned them.” [R13, female, late-30s].

“Most of the skincare products are pretty much what I expected, nothing particularly good or bad, I’m satisfied, I just don’t bother [to write about it].” [R16, female, early-30s].

Participants indicated that *customer loyalty* is one of the underlying reasons they initiate WOM about a product/service. When they continue to patronise a given company or service provider, they are more likely to give recommendations or positive reviews about the company to their social networks. One respondent stated:

“To me, this is my favourite brand of cell phone, although I know there are thousands of brands out there. There might be more expensive and better ones, like Apple that lots of people talk about. I stick to this one. I told all my friends, even people online whom I don’t know, to buy this brand.” [R3, male, mid-20s].

Affective commitment is another common theme that was stated frequently. Customers who hold feelings of attachment to the company tend to engage in positive WOM to maintain valued relationships with the company. One participant described:

“The owner is about the same age as me and we always chat on QQ [instant messenger], sometimes on non-product-related stuff. She always throws in a few small items with my purchase, which are not expensive but something she thinks I would need for my son. I feel she’s my friend, and I care about her and her business.” [R10, female, early-40s].

Perceived value is a concept that is extensively discussed across all interviews, including quality, price, emotional and social values. It is clear that interviewees tend to view value as a trade-off between quality and price, with a few indicating pleasure and enjoyment derived from the product/service they purchased and consumed. The respondents who perceived a high value received from the product or service engaged in WOM and gave recommendations online. One respondent stated:

“It’s good value for money. This brand has offered top quality ceramic tiles for many years. I’m very proud of my choice. My friends came to visit my new apartment, were impressed, and said I bought good tiles. Every time I walk in, I see it, and think about what my friends said, it makes me very happy.” [R15, female, mid-50s].

5.2.4 Findings on Elements of Constructs

The interviews showed general support for the constructs in the model, as presented in Table 5.2 above. Interviews revealed some contradictory findings regarding the elements of the perceived value construct and customer OWOM construct: customer perceived social value is a related but distinct concept from the other three perceived values; and valence of customer OWOM is not independent to the detail of customer OWOM.

Some researchers believe that quality and price have opposite influences on perceived value; quality having a positive and price a negative effect (e.g., Dodds, Monroe & Grewal, 1991).

Consequently, they believe the two factors contribute separately to perceived value and should be measured separately. However, the interview findings suggest that quality and price are weighted on the basis of the other. They are interrelated. For example, the quality value of a dress is perceived as high because it is linked with, and/or weighed against, the price, which is lower than expected (with department store price as the reference price). In Sheth, Newman and Gross' study (1991), they argue that functional value was created by attributes such as reliability, durability and price. The first two of these attributes have often been seen as aspects of quality, and thus, quality and price should be measured together as functional value. An informant also commented:

"I was very happy because I got a bargain. It was definitely worth more than what I paid. I always look for the performance-to-price ratio, especially when it comes to electronics, like the camera I bought...the features and price..." [Male, mid-20s].

Interview findings also suggest that functional value and emotional value are interrelated. This finding contradicts Sheth et al.'s (1991) view that value dimensions are independent. However, some researchers suggest that the hedonic and utilitarian components of attitude may be related (e.g., Osgood, Suci & Tannenbaum, 1957). For example, the purchase of excellent bathroom/kitchen tiles increases the chances of both favourable emotional and favourable functional responses (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001), as the mid-50s female informant commented in section 5.2.3. Consequently, value dimensions may not be independent. The interview findings thus suggest that functional value (i.e., quality and price value) and emotional value are interrelated, and should be measured as one construct containing components measuring quality, emotional and price (QEP value in short).

Social value is considered by some interviewees as a related but different concept from the other three perceived values. Social acceptance and social approval derived from the product or the brand is a domain that is independent to the QEP value. In addition, the QEP value affects the social value that customer's perceived with the product or the brand. This is illustrated by the following statements of two informants.

"I can afford buying "Aigo"[premium brand], but most of my schoolmates use this ["Newsmy" brand]... I don't want to stand out. Besides, this works okay." [Female, mid-20s].

“I am a bank manager. My staff expects to see me in ... dresses like this – of quality and a reasonably high price. It’s appropriate for my position. It’s professional and fits my status. [Female, early-40s].

Interview participants engaged in WOM using online channels. These channels were either publicly accessible, such as forums, or privately accessible, such as instant messengers, or both. Interviews provide support for the customer OWOM construct in terms of the aspects of which the construct is comprised. They described the details contained in the WOM messages, and the number and type of people to whom they sent their WOM. However, the valence (positive or negative) is not considered an aspect that is independent to the detail of the customer OWOM. The Chinese translation of WOM is *Koubei*, which implies a statement about an offering being positive, unless it needs to be emphasised that the statement is bad or negative, in which case “*bad Koubei*” is used. Most participants discussed their good experience and considered their WOM message detail generally positive and recommending. The positive message is contained as a part of information being spread. The detail of WOM implies positive messages.

For example:

“I loved this Hetian jade necklace. I certainly wrote a lot about it – the good lustre, the great cold and smooth feeling in hand, the compactness of the inner structure, the delicacy of the craftwork, the knowledgeable seller. People commented on my post saying it’s an excellent choice, too.” [Male, late 20s].

Some participants agreed that their WOM messages created ambiguity in terms of valence when they provided comments with both positive and negative information. When bad experiences were shared online, the participants described their WOM detail as “less positive WOM in general” or “not very good WOM”. Because the meaning of *Koubei* implies positive WOM, the customer OWOM in this study should be considered as a one dimension construct, containing OWOM activity and praise and capturing the three aspects of enthusiasm, detail and positive valence.

5.2.5 Insight on Cultural Context

Cultural aspects were not explicitly expressed in the interviews. However, personal cultural orientation was found to play a role in customers’ engagement in OWOM. The following statement is an example of how, in a collectivist culture, negative WOM about a personally

unsatisfactory experience may not be expressed if the collective view is generally favourable (Buttle, 1998). There is a motivation to avoid expressing negative WOM in order to preserve social harmony and avoid a display of negative emotions, which is often frowned upon in collective cultures.

“I try not to tell people bad things about the products or services I am dissatisfied with, like the coat I bought... I’d rather say ‘I don’t know much about it,’ than tell the truth – giving negative comments. I don’t want to criticise because it might be just me. ... I’m sure there must be people who like it. As you know, I am a junior in this company. I don’t want to create some kind of discomfort or give people a bad impression of me.” [Female, mid-20s].

This tendency to give a favourable impression was also shown when participants were reluctant to use “bad” and “negative” WOM to describe their messages. The preference of using “less positive WOM” or “not very good WOM” would avoid being seen as negative and standing out. This finding is expected due to the existence of strong *face* culture in China. Preserving one’s *face* is considered a typical value for collectivists (Niles, 1998). People feeling socially inferior are hesitant to speak about their dissatisfaction, fearing they might be challenging someone with greater knowledge or social power (Hunt, 1977a). Avoiding losing *face* is one of the social factors widely seen in Chinese culture. The interview results also indicated the unwillingness of spreading negative WOM online due to the feeling of inferiority and self-image/*face* preserving.

In addition, people in collectivist cultures are more likely to develop strong emotional connections to products and services when there are signs of group membership. They may engage in positive WOM in order to develop strong, trusting relationships with specific suppliers (Buttle, 1998). For example:

“All the girls at work buy accessories from that shop and we bulk purchase whenever they have new arrivals. It’s a kind of thing we do as a group. We even have a group set up on QQ, sharing our pictures of ‘this necklace matching that bracelet’ ... kind of stuff. They are cheap accessories, but everyone at work wears those: ... a kind of dress code.” [Female, mid-20s].

5.2.6 Support and Confirmation of the Model

The interviews were intended to test the suitability and relevance of the conceptual model, thus seeking initial confirmation and validation. There is an overall support for the proposed conceptual model, as discussed in section 5.2.3.

Social value of the product or the brand appeared to be a separate concept that emerged from the interviews, rather than an aspect interrelated to the functional (quality and price) and emotional values. Interviewees agreed that social acceptance by their colleagues or peers largely depends on the price and quality of the product or the brand. They tend to talk about it in their social groups when they believe the product/price will help to improve their image or make them socially accepted. This can be illustrated by revisiting the previous quote, and one from another informant:

“They are cheap accessories, but everyone at work wears those, we love them: a kind of dress code. Looking at self, the wedding ring is the only accessory worth something.”
[Female, mid-20s].

“I always post the new things I get on my colleague QQ groups. We are dealing with car entertainment devices; surely we’ve got to know the ways these things were made, and can pick good ones. Sony has the best quality in most electronic products I use, well ... the group agreed.” [Male, mid-20s].

Based on the interview findings, social value is assumed to be influenced by the functional (quality and price value) and emotional value (QEP value for short) that customers perceive they received from their purchase and consumption.

The price range, degree of price and quality approval in the group, and pleasure derived from the product or service were discussed at length in the interviews. These values determine how customers perceive they were accepted and included in their social groups. The two examples given here, “group agreed brand” and “cheap accessories as dress code at work,” are the social value they derived from the product they purchased. The model was revised to include this modification.

5.2.7 Adoption of Channels

Interviewees exhibited different perceptions of specific online communication channels when they spread WOM. The interviews’ excerpts lend support to technology acceptance studies,

such as the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989). The choice of channel is influenced mainly by their perceptions of how useful it is for helping and improving the effectiveness in communicating WOM messages. Channels perceived to be easy to use (free of effort) are more likely to be selected (Davis, 1989). In addition, feelings of enjoyment in using particular channels also affected channel choice (Igarria, Schiffman, & Wieckowshi, 1994). The following statements are indicative.

“QZone [blog] is simple, convenient, and it’s easy to put up pictures of me wearing that dress. All my friends can see my QZone so I don’t have to tell them individually.”
[Female, early-20s].

“Using QQ is fun. I can talk with my friends about recently purchased cosmetics in real time, send the images of the cosmetic. ... It has games that I can play, either alone or with my friends.” [Female, early-40s].

Highly referable channels were used when respondents showed a high level of enthusiasm and detail in their WOM activity. As the enthusiasm increased, WOM was more openly available and freely accessed. For example, a forum channel was selected when a respondent was impressed with his purchase:

“I posted [a review of that jade] on ‘China Hetian Jade Forum,’ the largest and the most widely accessed forum on jade. ... I would like everyone who knows about jade to see my high quality jade: a bit of show-off I guess.” [Male, late-20s].

These positive perceptions enhanced the choice of certain channels. Findings also suggest that respondents selected less referable channels when they perceived highly referable channels as being difficult to use. One respondent explained:

“I only know QQ. It’s easy. Of course I want to let more people know that this is a great tile brand. But trying to use those forums, I think you need to have an account, right? And [to] navigate here and there [is] too complicated for me, I can’t figure [it] out.” [Female, mid-50s].

The exploratory interviews were the first step in the mixed-methods approach adopted in this thesis. The next section discusses the detailed analysis and results from Phase Two: the quantitative survey.

5.3 Phase Two Survey Response Analysis

5.3.1 Response Rate and Initial Data Screening

Stage One of the online survey data collection took place between 17 December 2010 and 31 January, 2011. There were 230 people that responded to the link and 76 completed the survey. Stage Two data collection ran from 11 January to 31 January, 2011. A total of 56,922 e-mail invitations were sent out with one undeliverable notice. In total, 2,517 members responded to the link in the e-mail and 798 completed the survey. Due to company policy on privacy, only one e-mail was sent to the prospective respondents. Therefore, there was no pre-notification or follow-up that might have increased responses. Excluding 224 ineligible and incomplete responses, this yielded a 1.53% response rate.

In terms of non-response, 10 people responded via e-mail during and after the survey period to explain their reasons for non-participation, which included:

- Never engaged OWOM activity
- Survey invitation e-mail filtered into spam folder
- Too difficult to fill-in the survey due to accessing via mobile phone
- Not accessible from work due to blocked access to servers located overseas
- Not interested
- Too busy, no time
- Survey too long
- Suspicious of survey website as unsafe (never heard of Qualtrics).

Table 5.3 Initial Data Screening Results

Initial Screening Criteria	Stage One (N=230)	Stage Two (N=2517)	Total (N=2747)
Did not proceed after information sheet page	25	271	296
Ineligible – aged under 18	19	258	277
Ineligible – no OWOM activity	54	671	725
Ineligible – unable to recall a product/service	1	18	19
Early Drop out (< 10% questions completed)	55	501	556
Eligible responses	76	798	874

A total of 2647 responses from both stages underwent an initial screening for data completeness. Table 5.3 presents the initial data screening results and the number of cases involved.

After the initial data screening, a further check was conducted to prepare the data for analysis. While participant motivation has always been a concern, there are reasons to suspect that data collected via the Internet from uncontrolled environments is likely to be of poorer quality than is typical of paper and pencil-based measures administered under controlled conditions (Meade & Craig, 2011). Thus, each case was further checked for usability. Translation of inputted text into English was also completed. Table 5.4 shows the number of cases removed in this process. The most significant number of exclusions, 281 of 300 total, were due to participants offering incomplete surveys with a considerable number of unanswered questions. Apart from design-specific causes (e.g., Dillman, Tortora, Conradt, & Bowker, 1998), other factors such as survey length (Hoerger, 2010) and multi-tasking on the Internet could also cause respondents to miss questions or refuse to answer. Participants who fill in web-based surveys may do so while doing something else or having something else competing for their attention (Albert, Tullis, & Tedesco, 2010).

Table 5.4 Cases Removed from Analysis

Data Usability Check	Responses
Drop out (missing essential questions)	281
Unrecognisable text (flawed data)	17
WOM using offline channels only	2
Total unusable responses	300
Total usable responses	574

5.3.2 Respondent and Demographic Profiles

Table 5.5 shows the demographic profile of research respondents. The profile shows a relative balance in gender, with 53% male and 45.8% female respondents (1.2% unidentified). Younger and higher-educated people are over-represented with 80.7% of respondents aged between 18 and 29 years old, 14.6% in the range of 30-39 years, and 4.5% of respondents aged over 40 years. These gender and age structures are consistent with CNNIC's report of Internet citizens demographic profiles (CNNIC, 2010). Males were slightly more likely to engage in Internet activities and younger people are more familiar with accessing the Internet. Over 98% of respondents have a tertiary educational qualification. This is somewhat expected because the survey invitations were mainly distributed through emails and 83.6% of Chinese email users have a tertiary education (iResearch, 2011). A recent online review study conducted in China's largest online opinion platform "dianping.com" also reported the majority of their respondents were aged between 19 and 28 and had a bachelor degree or above (Jin et al., 2010). Because the government's official reports include Internet users aged

as low as 6 years old, the educational level is not comparable with the sample data of this study. Although 67% of the Chinese Internet population is reported to have a tertiary education (Sebellin-Ross & Kornfeld, 2007) and highly educated customers tend to demonstrate strong cognitive skills and high computer literacy in terms of Internet use, it needs to be noted that the sample possibly over-represents this group. The majority of respondents (73.6%) have an average to high income of CNY2,000 to CNY 10,000 per month. In terms of marital status, 72% of respondents are single, 22.6% are married and 5% are divorced or in other marital arrangements. Respondents are from a range of occupations. There are 74.1% of respondents living in Guangdong Province. This overrepresentation of Guangdong respondents is due to the database used in recruitment.

Table 5.5 Respondent Profile

Profile	Description	Respondents	
		No.	%
Gender	Male	304	53.0
	Female	263	45.8
	Undisclosed	7	1.2
Age	18-29 years old	463	80.7
	30-39 years old	84	14.6
	40-49 years old	20	3.5
	50 years old and over	6	1.0
	Undisclosed	1	0.2
Highest educational qualification	Secondary Education or below	6	1.0
	Tertiary Education	564	98.3
	Undisclosed	4	0.7
Monthly income	No income	57	9.9
	Under CNY 2,000	55	9.6
	CNY2,001- CNY5,000	316	55.1
	CNY5,001- CNY100,000	106	18.5
	Over CNY100,000	36	6.3
	Undisclosed	4	0.7
Marital status	Single	413	72.0
	Married	130	22.6
	Divorced	8	1.4
	Other	20	3.5
	Undisclosed	3	0.5

Occupation	Professional technicians	254	44.3
	Self-employed/freelancers	17	3.0
	Works from industry and service	24	4.2
	Ordinary employees of enterprise/company	159	27.7
	Managers of enterprise/company	36	6.3
	Students	61	10.6
	Unemployed	12	2.1
	Undisclosed	11	1.9
Location	Guangdong Province	414	72.1
	Outside Guangdong Province	149	26.0
	Undisclosed	11	1.9

In terms of Internet usage, as shown in Table 5.6, more than 85% of the respondents used the Internet on a daily basis, and spent at least one hour online every day for information acquisition, communication, entertainment, or commercial exchange. This is expected because people who engage in WOM online tend to see the Internet as an essential part of life.

Table 5.6 Respondent Internet Usage

Internet Usage	Description	Respondents	
		No.	%
Frequency of Usage	Almost Never	4	0.7
	Less than once a month	8	1.4
	A few times a month	19	3.3
	A few times a week	41	7.1
	Daily	108	18.8
	Several times a day	389	67.8
	Undisclosed	5	0.9
Daily Usage	Almost Never	3	0.5
	Less than 1/2 hour	17	3
	From 1/2 hour to 1 hour	57	9.9
	1-2 hours	118	20.6
	2-3 hours	99	17.2
	More than 3 hours	276	48.1
	Undisclosed	4	0.7

The degree to which respondents were orientated toward a collectivist culture was measured using six items of collectivism-ordination statement on a 7-point Likert scale - 1 being strongly disagree (the least collectivism-oriented) and 7 being strongly agree (the most collectivism-oriented). The results indicate an inclination toward collectivism with the mean value ranging from 4.48 to 5.38. The composite mean is 4.83, which is significantly lower,

using t-test comparison, than the reported value of a study conducted with a mainland Chinese and Hong Kong student population (see Appendix 6). Because Schumann et al.'s (2010) study does not provide item values, the t-test could not be performed to compare the difference at item level. The item mean reported in a study conducted with an American adult population (low collectivist orientation) (Yoo & Donthu, 2005) was used to see if the collectivism item means under this study were significantly different from the American sample. All six item means are significantly higher than the ones from American respondents (Yoo & Donthu, 2005), indicating that the Chinese respondents in this current study are more orientated toward collectivism than the more individually orientated Americans.

The t-test results showed that the composite variable mean is significantly lower than the means from Chinese and Hong Kong student respondents (Schumann et al., 2010), indicating that the Chinese respondents in this study are not orientated toward collectivism as much as has been found in Schumann et al.'s study (2010). There are a few possible reasons. First, nearly 70% of respondents in this study live in metropolitan cities, including Guangzhou and Shenzhen. Sociologists explain that in an urban environment, some behaviours manifest themselves, such as reservation and an emphasis on personal freedom (Frisby & Featherstone, 1997; Simmel, 1950). Due to the intensification of external and internal stimuli in the city, the metropolis fosters a situation where one must buffer him or herself from a constantly changing environment. The development of such a protective and rational barrier has a profound impact on individuals living in a metropolis (Simmel, 1950). Frisby and Featherstone (1997) suggest that these individuals tend to reduce the number of possible human interactions, and this reservation leads to a large degree of personal freedom and less emphasis on personal relationships. As an individual in an urban setting, one is freed from the kind of boundaries that one might feel in political communities. The urban setting dissolves "the barriers against individual independence" (Simmel, 1950, p. 417). It is characterised by its essential independence. Therefore, the respondents of this study may demonstrate certain individualistic characteristics, such as being independent, embracing competition, and pursuing achievement and self-interest. Second, Guangdong is more open and developed than much of mainland China. Being one of the first two areas (another is Shanghai) to embrace Western culture, Guangdong is widely exposed to external cultures and has a high cultural tolerance. Mixed-culture values are present in the society, which is greatly influenced by a Western and individualistic culture. Third, Schumann et al.'s (2010) study used a narrow data base of college students aged 20-25 with a majority of males (89%). Students have "a

stronger need for peer approval, manifested in dependency, conformity and overidentification with peers,” thus showing strong collectivist orientation (Sears, 1986, p. 521). The data for this study are more heterogeneous because they were collected from adults aged 18 and over with a relative balance of gender. Therefore, participant responses are expected to differ in terms of their collectivist cultural orientation. Despite the urban setting and more cross-cultural interactions, collectivism still prevails over individualism in the study’s sample, as compared with other nationalities such as Americans (see Appendix 6).

5.3.3 Non-Response and Response Bias

Non-response takes place when a sampled individual refuses to participate in a survey. The bias occurs when answers to questions differ among the observed and non-respondent units. Even after taking into consideration all recommended survey design and delivery strategies (e.g., professional introduction, clear and concise wording, and mindfulness of the time and day the survey invitation is delivered), non-responses are still likely to occur.

The common practice to check non-response bias is to compare two wave samples (i.e., initial sample survey and later sample survey). A comparison was made, reminiscent of Mittal, Kumar and Tsiros’ (1999) study, between the first stage web invitation of 51 responses and the last 51 responses of the second stage email invitation. The results are presented in Appendix 7. The comparison showed that respondents were similar in terms of gender, age, educational level, occupation, and income ($p > .05$).

The ratings on the key construct scales were statistically the same (all $p > .05$) apart from only one item, PVAL_GPP (“The product of this brand/organisation is a good product for the price”), which has a difference at the significant level of .05 ($p = 0.036$) (See Appendix 8 and 9). Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that the data set used in this study is not biased.

5.4 Statistical Procedures and Initial Analysis

5.4.1 Overview

The recommended model-building approach involving two stages was used (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The first stage involved conducting Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for pre-existing validated scales to purify and validate the measures. The second stage involved

using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to build and test the structural model (Hair et al., 2006). Before the appropriate data analysis techniques were used, the underlying data assumptions were tested.

5.4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 5.7 presents means and standard deviations for all of the continuous variables used in the models. The median values for each of the variables were close to the mean values.

Table 5.7 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Label	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
SAT_SP	Satisfied with Purchase	5.37	6.00	1.496
SAT_FBD	Feel Bad about Decision	5.58	6.00	1.334
SAT_FD	Feel different	5.43	6.00	1.536
SAT_WD	Wise Decision	5.28	6.00	1.418
SAT_UD	Unhappy about Decision	5.60	6.00	1.392
SAT_RTD	Right Thing about Decision	5.46	6.00	1.431
LOY_SSW	Seldom consider switching	3.42	3.00	1.527
LOY_BS	Best to do business	3.67	4.00	1.466
LOY_PSS	Use when possible	4.08	4.00	1.609
LOY_FS	First choice	4.06	4.00	1.602
LOY_LU	Like using	4.37	4.00	1.520
LOY_DSW	Doubt Switch	3.30	3.00	1.510
LOY_FAV	Favourite	3.92	4.00	1.559
PVAL_CQ	Consistent quality	4.92	5.00	1.231
PVAL_WM	Well made	5.02	5.00	1.230
PVAL_AQ	Acceptable quality	5.24	6.00	1.147
PVAL_PW	Poor workmanship	5.14	5.00	1.275
PVAL_NLL	Not last long	4.74	5.00	1.299
PVAL_PC	Perform consistently	5.03	5.00	1.175
PVAL_ENJ	Enjoy this brand/org product	4.98	5.00	1.268
PVAL_RLX	Relaxed using	4.77	5.00	1.300
PVAL_WTU	Wanting to use	5.13	5.00	1.215
PVAL_FG	Feel good	4.91	5.00	1.267
PVAL_PLS	Giving Pleasure	4.83	5.00	1.206
PVAL_RPR	Reasonable Price	4.90	5.00	1.314
PVAL_VM	Value for Money	5.01	5.00	1.296
PVAL_GPP	Good product for price	5.22	5.00	1.227
PVAL_EC	Economical	4.87	5.00	1.352
PVAL_FA	Help feel acceptable	4.97	5.00	1.229
PVAL_IP	Improve perception	3.68	4.00	1.368

Variable	Label	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
PVAL_GI	Good impression	4.26	4.00	1.402
PVAL_SA	Social approval	4.42	4.00	1.368
COM_BS	Best of its kind	4.81	5.00	1.365
COM_PRD	Proud of using	4.03	4.00	1.326
COM_AG	Agree with company	4.49	4.00	1.180
COM_GC	Good company	5.10	5.00	1.170
COM_CF	Care company fate	4.43	4.00	1.362
COM_ISP	Inspire being good customer	4.15	4.00	1.284
COM_OPE	Like operation	4.55	4.00	1.205
COM_ND	Understand needs	4.76	5.00	1.147
COM_LCO	Like company	4.79	5.00	1.222
COM_RLP	Special relationship	3.98	4.00	1.425
COM_HLP	Help company	4.49	4.00	1.289
COM_EDB	Enjoy doing business with Company	4.62	5.00	1.261
COM_DLK	Do business because like it	4.40	4.00	1.345
OWOM_MF	Mention frequently	3.81	4.00	1.455
OWOM_TM	Told more people about this one	4.09	4.00	1.452
OWOM_SM	Seldom miss opportunity to tell	3.49	3.75	1.383
OWOM_TD	Tell in great detail	3.55	3.71	1.384
OWOM_GT	Have good things to say	4.19	4.00	1.395
OWOM_PR	Proud to tell	4.08	4.00	1.432

5.4.3 Missing Data

As reported in some studies, internet surveying tends to result in data of poorer quality than paper and pencil-based surveys due to the former's uncontrolled environments (Meade & Craig, 2011). Respondents are more likely to overlook some questions in online surveys for reasons such as multi-tasking, speed-filling, or multi-stage participation (resuming the survey after one or more breaks). The items of interest in Section B were the most important for this study; therefore, this section used the "force response" function in Qualtrics. Respondents were reminded to answer all the questions in order to proceed to the next page of questions. This function helped address the concern of missing data.

5.4.4 Assumption Testing

The use of covariance-based SEM involves constraints in the form of parametric assumptions, sample size, model complexity, identification, and factor indeterminacy.

5.4.4.1 Normality of the Data

In SEM, one of the main concerns about the data is whether the sample has normal distribution, because this determines what estimation method will be used and to what extent the estimates obtained will be trustworthy. Univariate and multivariate normality were examined.

Analysing univariate normality of distribution involves an assessment of skewness and kurtosis values. The skewness value of responses provides an indication concerning the symmetry of the distribution (Sharma, Durvasula, & Dillon, 1989) and kurtosis values present information regarding the peakedness and tailedness of the distribution (DeCarlo, 1997). Skewness values of ± 1 and kurtosis values of ± 2 are considered mild and fall within the 'normal' range (Heck, 1998; Kline, 2005). A significantly positive or negative skewness can result in scores tending towards either higher or lower ends of research scales, and a significant positive or negative kurtosis value can cause an underestimation of the variances of scores. A summary of the skewness and kurtosis values for data obtained in the research is presented in Table 5.8. Both skewness and kurtosis scores are within the acceptable normal range.

Table 5.8 Normality Test

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Std. Error Skewness	Kurtosis	Std. Error Kurtosis
SAT_SP	5.37	1.496	-1.200	.102	.855	.204
SAT_FBD	5.58	1.334	-1.336	.102	1.284	.204
SAT_FD	5.43	1.536	-1.331	.102	1.063	.204
SAT_WD®	5.28	1.418	-.914	.102	.286	.204
SAT_UD	5.60	1.392	-1.360	.102	1.384	.204
SAT_RTD®	5.46	1.431	-1.263	.102	1.122	.204
LOY_SSW	3.42	1.527	.531	.102	-.674	.204
LOY_BS	3.67	1.466	.219	.102	-.673	.204
LOY_PSS	4.08	1.609	-.063	.102	-1.066	.204
LOY_FS	4.06	1.602	-.030	.102	-1.069	.204
LOY_LU	4.37	1.520	-.305	.102	-.750	.204
LOY_DSW	3.30	1.510	.557	.102	-.538	.204
LOY_FAV	3.92	1.559	.083	.102	-.892	.204
PVAL_CQ	4.92	1.231	-.534	.102	.161	.204
PVAL_WM	5.02	1.230	-.888	.102	.545	.204

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Std. Error Skewness	Kurtosis	Std. Error Kurtosis
PVAL_AQ	5.24	1.147	-1.125	.102	1.348	.204
PVAL_PW®	5.14	1.275	-.791	.102	.213	.204
PVAL_NLL®	4.74	1.299	-.470	.102	-.084	.204
PVAL_PC	5.03	1.175	-.823	.102	.755	.204
PVAL_ENJ	4.98	1.268	-.835	.102	.499	.204
PVAL_RLX	4.77	1.300	-.526	.102	-.044	.204
PVAL_WTU	5.13	1.215	-1.009	.102	1.006	.204
PVAL_FG	4.91	1.267	-.739	.102	.317	.204
PVAL_PLS	4.83	1.206	-.747	.102	.485	.204
PVAL_RPR	4.90	1.314	-.678	.102	.015	.204
PVAL_VM	5.01	1.296	-.783	.102	.267	.204
PVAL_GPP	5.22	1.227	-.966	.102	.878	.204
PVAL_EC	4.87	1.352	-.667	.102	-.005	.204
PVAL_FA	4.97	1.229	-.739	.102	.310	.204
PVAL_IP	3.68	1.368	-.017	.102	-.575	.204
PVAL_GI	4.26	1.402	-.267	.102	-.341	.204
PVAL_SA	4.42	1.368	-.422	.102	-.296	.204
COM_BS	4.81	1.365	-.533	.102	-.109	.204
COM_PRD	4.03	1.326	-.078	.102	-.069	.204
COM_AG	4.49	1.180	-.143	.102	.225	.204
COM_GC	5.10	1.170	-.835	.102	.854	.204
COM_CF	4.43	1.362	-.316	.102	-.246	.204
COM_ISP	4.15	1.284	-.108	.102	.055	.204
COM_OPE	4.55	1.205	-.284	.102	.301	.204
COM_ND	4.76	1.147	-.344	.102	.163	.204
COM_LCO	4.79	1.222	-.512	.102	.178	.204
COM_RLP	3.98	1.425	.038	.102	-.424	.204
COM_HLP	4.49	1.289	-.362	.102	.135	.204
COM_EDB	4.62	1.261	-.467	.102	.277	.204
COM_DLK	4.40	1.345	-.303	.102	-.312	.204
OWOM_MF	3.81	1.455	-.062	.102	-.798	.204
OWOM_TM	4.09	1.452	-.269	.102	-.677	.204
OWOM_SM	3.49	1.383	.156	.102	-.512	.204
OWOM_TD	3.55	1.384	.224	.102	-.505	.204
OWOM_GT	4.19	1.395	-.230	.102	-.456	.204
OWOM_PR	4.08	1.432	-.177	.102	-.491	.204
Multivariate					805.809	131.287*

®=Reverse Coded; *= Critical ratio.

According to Hair, Black, Babin, and Andersen (2010), in most cases of conducting multivariate regression, assessing and achieving univariate normality for all variables is sufficient. However, an important assumption underlying SEM is that the data are multivariate normal. In other words, the observed variables need to follow a specific multivariate distribution (normality in the case of the Maximum Likelihood (ML) function) and have observations independent of one another (Chin & Newsted, 1999). It is a condition that needs to be met to obtain parameter estimates that are efficient and unbiased. Violation of this assumption can seriously invalidate statistical hypotheses-testing such that the normal theory test statistic may not reflect an adequate evaluation of the model under study (Browne, 1984; Hu et al., 1992).

Multivariate normality was inspected through evaluation of the multivariate value represented by Mardia's coefficient of multivariate kurtosis. Mardia's (1970) test of multivariate normality is based on sample measures of multivariate skewness and kurtosis, and a Mardia's coefficient greater than ± 8 is an indication of infringement of the assumption of multivariate normality (Kline, 2010). A more conservative view is that multivariate kurtosis values greater than ± 10 may suggest a problem and values greater than ± 20 may indicate a more serious problem (Hoyle, 1995; Kline, 2005). In addition, the critical ratio associated with the multivariate kurtosis value exceeding ± 3 indicates statistically significant degrees of non-normality, although the critical ratio is sensitive to the sample size (Bentler, 2001a; Ullman, 2006a). As shown in Table 5.8, the multivariate kurtosis is large ($> \pm 20$) (Hoyle, 1995; Kline, 2005), indicating that the sample has a multivariate non-normal distribution. The critical ratio (i.e., normalised estimate of Mardia's coefficient) is 131.287. This is a z score and even with consideration of the large sample size ($N=574$) (Ullman, 2006b) this is very large ($> \pm 3$) and therefore indicates that the variables multivariate distribution is non-normal, $p < .001$.

A few remedies were suggested to address the multivariate non-normality issue. The approach of transforming data to better approximate normality was ruled out because it can 1) lead to difficulties in interpretation (Ullman, 2006b), and 2) affect existing useful linear relationships (Mayer & Sykes, 1989).

Another method to reach a multivariate normal distribution is to remove multivariate outliers (Kline, 2005). A multivariate outlier is defined as a case that is associated with a Mahalanobis distance greater than a critical distance specified typically by a $p < .001$

(Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Upon evaluation of the Mahalanobis distance, the critical ratio falls close to the threshold value of 1.96 (significant at the .05 level) only after 100 observations are deleted, which means that more than 15% of the observations would need to be deleted in order to achieve the desired critical ratio. Considering that it is a large amount of observations to remove, deleting cases would have been inappropriate. Furthermore, deleting outliers means a loss of observations. A reduced sample satisfying a multivariate normal distribution would have excluded some observations containing potentially important and crucial information about the covariance among the variables. Therefore, these observations were carefully examined and kept even if the critical ratio of the multivariate kurtosis was large. In addition, the kurtosis measure is influenced by sample size, i.e., a large sample size is likely to result in a non-normal distribution (Gallagher, Ting, & Palmer, 2008). After consideration of the suggested remedies to reach data multivariate normality at data preparation stage, no procedure was taken because of the drawbacks of each approach discussed above. The dataset remains non-normal after careful examination of the cases.

Due to the presence of non-normality in the data at the multivariate level, the decision was made to pursue parameter estimation using the bootstrapping method to correct for non-normality and to identify unbiased standard error confidence intervals for parameters in the model fit (Nevitt & Hancock, 2001). The bootstrap method, developed by Efron in the late 1970s, is a general, distribution-free method that is used to estimate parameters of interest from data collected from studies. Some estimation methods that do not make distributional assumptions (e.g., the asymptotically distribution-free estimator or weighted least squares based on the full asymptotic variance–covariance matrix of the estimated variances and covariances) are available but they require large sample sizes to work satisfactorily ($N > 1,000$) (Browne, 1984; Curran et al., 1996; Hu et al., 1992). Bootstrapping is often referred to as a re-sampling method that involves repeatedly drawing samples from the original data set. By repeating this process multiple times, an empirical approximation of the sampling distribution of the path is built and used to construct confidence intervals for parameters of interest. All significance tests and confidence intervals reported are from the bootstrap analysis.

5.4.4.2 Sample Size and Power

There is little guidance regarding statistical power in SEM literature. Chin (1998) suggests factor analysis criteria, while Hair et al. (2010) provide guidelines for identifying significant

factor loadings for factor analysis depending on sample size. To obtain a statistical power level of 80 percent, with .05 significance level, it is necessary to have a minimum sample size of 200 for a factor-loading value of .40 to be considered significant (Hair et al., 2010). According to Nunnally (1978), at least 300 responses are recommended for factor and regression analysis. The sample size of 574 responses meets these assumptions. As suggested, factor loadings should be evaluated at considerably stricter levels. The more conservative .70 level was used to assess factor loadings for this study.

5.4.5. Common Method Variance

There is the possibility that relationships among variables may be inflated or deflated for a number of reasons (Slater & Atuahene-Gima, 2004). First, the survey conducted in this study involved examining the relationships among two or more self-reported measures of constructs of interest. Secondly, the data were collected through the same questionnaire during the same period of time. This could lead to both Type I and Type II errors (Bagozzi & Yi, 1990).

Common method variance (CMV) has the potential to produce spurious results. Following the recommendations by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), and Spector and Brannick (1995), some effective strategies were applied to the research design to reduce the likelihood of CMV. The specific steps used in this study included:

- 1) avoiding any implication that there was a preferred response;
- 2) making responses to all items of equal effort;
- 3) paying close attention to details of item wording;
- 4) using items that are less subject to bias;
- 5) providing clear instructions;
- 6) randomising the ordering of scale items through the use of “Randomization” function in Qualtrics software; and
- 7) reverse-coding some items so that the same end of a Likert-type response format was not always the positive end.

Although these procedures were applied in the design process of data collection, a common method effect could exist due to a consistency motif (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986), where respondents try to maintain consistency in their responses to similar questions or to organise

information in consistent ways. This effect is likely to be particularly problematic in situations in which respondents are asked to provide retrospective accounts of their attitude, perceptions and/or behaviours (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Jeong-Yeon, & Podsakoff, 2003).

To examine the extent to which common method variance is present in the data, the most commonly used method is Harman's single factor test (cf. Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). In this technique, exploratory factor analysis is used to evaluate the amount of variance in observed variables that can be explained by a single factor. This is determined by examining the first factor of the unrotated factor solution. If either a single strong factor emerges or the first factor loads significantly on all items, common method variance is most likely present in the data. All the variables were entered into an exploratory factor analysis in SPSS using unrotated principal components factor analysis. The result showed that a single factor (one general factor) explains 33% of the variance. It does not account for the majority of the covariance amongst the measures; therefore, it is concluded that no substantial amount of common method variance is present.

5.5 Measurement Evaluation

It is recommended that researchers ensure their construct measures are reliable and valid before attempting to draw conclusions about the relationships between constructs (Plouffe et al., 2001). Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to determine if the number of factors and the loadings of measured indicators on the factors conform to what is expected based on pre-established theory (Thompson, 2004). The items are assumed to load on a specific construct based on prior theoretical, conceptual or empirical evidence (Brown, 2006; Hair et al., 2006).

There are strong advantages to using CFA measurement modelling in SEM, including psychometric analysis of a scale and confirming the structure of a scale in a new set of individuals (Noar, 2003). These advantages are widely acknowledged in social science literatures (e.g., MacCallum & Austin, 2000). Furthermore, CFA can provide additional information about the dimensionality of a scale (Rubio, Berg-Weger, & Tebb, 2001). This would have implications for ensuring appropriate uses of a scale, and considering alternative versions of a scale by testing various models against one another (Noar, 2003).

5.5.1 Evaluation Criteria of Measures

When CFA fits and displays construct validity and reliability, the measurement model is supported (Hair et al., 2006). Construct validity deals with the accuracy of measurement by assessing the extent to which a set of items actually reflects the construct those items are designed to measure (Hair et al., 2006). Two important components of construct validity are reported here.

Convergent Validity means that the items that are indicators of a specific construct should converge or share a high proportion of variance in common (Hair et al., 2006). It was assessed by three measures: item reliability, construct reliability (composite reliability of the overall scale), and average variance extracted (Chau, 1997). Item reliability was assessed by examining the loadings of the items on their respective construct. The loadings of the items should be .70 or higher to demonstrate good item reliability (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Construct reliability estimates the extent to which a set of items share in their measurement of a construct. Composite reliability (CR) is often used with SEM models. CR is the amount of scale score variance that is accounted for by all underlying factors – without the rarely met assumption of all items in a scale having the same true-score variance (Bacon, Sauer, & Young, 1995). Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommend to report CR which does not assume all indicators are equally reliable – a test also supported by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). CR was used to check the internal consistency, and was calculated based on a formula given by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Hair et al. (1998) and Nunnally & Bernstein (1994) suggest that evidence of CR is found above .70. Some proposed that the cut-off point of .60 may be acceptable provided that other items of a model's construct validity are good (Hair et al., 2006; Tseng, Dörnyei, & Schmitt, 2006).

Lastly, the average variance extracted (AVE) is the variance in the indicators explained by the common factor, and average trait-related variance extracted (Hair et al., 2006). AVE measures were calculated based on Fornell and Larcker's (1981) formula. An AVE less than .50 indicates that the convergent validity of the construct is weak.

Based on the final model, Construct Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were calculated manually by computing formulas given by Fornell and Larcker (1981) using

Microsoft Excel 2010. The CR and AVE values of more than .60 and .50 respectively indicate good construct reliability and adequate convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Discriminant Validity is the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs. High discriminant validity provides evidence that a construct is unique and captures some phenomena other measures do not (Hair et al., 2006). The discriminant validity was evaluated by comparing the squared correlation between two constructs with their respective AVE (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2006). Discriminant validity is demonstrated if the AVE of both constructs are greater than the square of the correlation between the two constructs. Or in other words, discriminant validity is demonstrated if the square root of AVE is larger than the correlations between the two constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

5.5.2 Overall Fit – Model Fit Indices

Model fit indices were used to examine the goodness-of-fit of the model to the data describing the variables. Many indices of goodness-of-fit exist. These indices serve as a basis for accepting, rejecting or modifying the model (Byrne, 2005). The recommended technique is to use multiple indices of different types. This study used the generally recognised and recommended practical fit indices, as suggested by Bagozzi and Yi (2012). These indices were shown in Table 5.9 in conjunction with the acceptable values to indicate goodness-of-fit between the data and the model.

The chi-square (χ^2) statistic has been acknowledged to be sensitive to sample size and it is often difficult to achieve satisfactory model fits (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). Although there is no clear-cut guideline about what value of CMIN/df is acceptable, a frequent suggestion is that this ratio should be less than 3 (Kline, 2010). Recent development of other fit indices has led to a decline in usage of GFI and AGFI. These two indices are less frequently used in favour of the other indices that are not as affected by sample size and model complexity (Hair et al., 2010). Bagozzi and Yi (2012) state that no commonly accepted cut-off criteria have been proposed for the GFI and AGFI, although over 0.90 is recommended by some researchers (Hair et al., 2010). The previous three indices are dependent on sample size and do not perform as well as the CFI, TLI (or NNFI), and RMSEA (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). CFI and TLI are incremental fit indices, assessing how well the estimated model fits relative to some alternative baseline model. RMSEA is an absolute fit index, measuring how well the

specified model reproduces the observed data. RMSEA better represents how well a model fits a population, not just a sample used for estimation (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Hu and Bentler (1999) suggest that it is insufficient to rely on a single index to evaluate model fit; a more stringent standard would be to use a combination of an incremental fit index (e.g., either CFI or TLI) and RMSEA. The set of three indices, including CFI, TLI and RMSEA, collectively provides satisfactory criteria for overall model evaluation.

Table 5.9 Goodness of Fit Indices Used in Model Evaluation

Goodness of Fit Indices	Description	Acceptable Values
Model Chi-square (χ^2) Statistic	Tests the difference between the actual data and the model	Insignificant p-values.
CMIN/df (χ^2/df)	Relative χ^2 , tests how much the fit of data to the model has been reduced by dropping one or more paths	No commonly accepted cut-off criteria, generally below 3.00 (Carmines & McIver, 1981; Kline, 2010).
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	Compares the hypothesised model fit (i.e., between actual data and model) with a null model	Over .90 (Hair et al., 2010).
Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) or Tucker and Lewis Index (TLI)	Compares the specified theoretical model and the null model taking into account model complexity	Over .90 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	Gives the average amount of misfit for a model per degree of freedom (df), used to counter check the χ^2 result which tends to reject models with large samples or a large number of observed variables	Under .08 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). Under .07 with CFI of .90 or higher (Hair et al., 2010).
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	Shows the percent of observed covariances explained by the covariances implied in the model	No commonly accepted cut-off criteria (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). Generally over .90 (Hair et al., 2010).
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	Adjusts the GFI to account for model complexity	No commonly accepted cut-off criteria (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012).

Sources: (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012; Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Carmines & McIver, 1981; Hair et al., 2010; Hu & Bentler, 1998, 1999; Kline, 2010)

5.5.3 Measurement Model

Following the two-step SEM approach recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the first step is to establish a measurement model. CFA was conducted to assess the construct validity and reliability of the measurement model. In doing so, CFA was performed as outlined below.

Defining Individual Constructs

The theoretical and conceptual definitions of the constructs were well-established (Hair et al., 2006), and the measures of each construct were adopted from a previously validated research instrument.

Developing the Overall Measurement Model

Items were assigned to specific constructs, and the constructs were reflective functions of the items. Each construct has three items apart from Valence of customer OWOM with two items, meeting the minimum criterion (Hair et al., 2006).

Producing Empirical Results

The statistical program Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS) version 19 was used in this analysis.

5.5.4 Guidelines for Diagnosing Problems and Model Modification

A number of guidelines are suggested by Bagozzi and Yi (1988) and De-Villis (1991) involving the use of diagnostic measures. Items were considered for removal if standardised loadings were below .50. Brown (2006) suggests that low and insignificant loadings warrant the possibility of excluding such items. Items were also considered for removal if they did not load higher on their intended factor than the other factor, or if they cross-loaded on two or more factors through inspection of modification indices. Further reason for removal was considered for items that consistently resulted in within-factor correlated measurement error, across-factor correlated measurement error, or both (e.g., exhibited a large number of absolute standardised residuals: >4.0 with other items). Hair et al. (2006) also pointed out that standardised residuals with values greater than 4.0 suggest a significant degree of error worthy of closer investigation, and values between 2.5 and 4.0 also deserve attention. Lastly, items were considered for removal if they were highly redundant in terms of wording with other items.

examination of each variable and construct, the issues appear to be mainly related to the subsets of customer-perceived value (PVAL) and customer OWOM (OWOM) measures. The subsets of these two construct measurements were examined to establish their validity.

Table 5.10 Summary of Initial Measurement Model Quality – Convergent Validity

Construct	Label		Loadings	Com*	Sig.	AVE	CR
Satisfaction (SAT)						0.622	0.907
Satisfied with purchase	SAT_SP	SAT_1	0.867	0.752	0.001		
Feel bad about decision	SAT_FBD	SAT_2	0.736	0.542	0.001		
Feel different	SAT_FD	SAT_3	0.742	0.551	0.001		
Wise decision	SAT_WD	SAT_4	0.859	0.738	0.002		
Unhappy about Decision	SAT_UD	SAT_5	0.618	0.382	0.001		
Right thing about decision	SAT_RTD	SAT_6	0.878	0.771	0.001		
Loyalty (LOY)						0.662	0.932
Seldom consider switching	LOY_SSW	LOY_1	0.745	0.555	0.001		
Best to do business	LOY_BS	LOY_2	0.841	0.707	0.001		
Use when possible	LOY_PSS	LOY_3	0.840	0.706	0.002		
First choice	LOY_FS	LOY_4	0.841	0.707	0.002		
Like using	LOY_LU	LOY_5	0.796	0.634	0.001		
Doubt switch	LOY_DSW	LOY_6	0.771	0.594	0.001		
Favourite	LOY_FAV	LOY_7	0.855	0.731	0.001		
Quality Value (QUA)						0.538	0.870
Consistent quality	PVAL_CQ	PVAL_1	0.787	0.619	0.002		
Well made	PVAL_WM	PVAL_2	0.875	0.766	0.002		
Acceptable quality	PVAL_AQ	PVAL_3	0.827	0.684	0.001		
Poor workmanship	PVAL_PW	PVAL_4	0.576	0.332	0.001		
Not last long	PVAL_NLL	PVAL_5	0.454	0.206	0.001		
Perform consistently	PVAL_PC	PVAL_6	0.787	0.619	0.001		
Emotional Value(EMO)						0.676	0.913
Enjoy this brand/org product	PVAL_ENJ	PVAL_7	0.850	0.723	0.001		
Relaxed using	PVAL_RLX	PVAL_8	0.817	0.667	0.001		
Wanting to use	PVAL_WTU	PVAL_9	0.825	0.681	0.002		
Feel good	PVAL_FG	PVAL_10	0.829	0.687	0.001		
Giving pleasure	PVAL_PLS	PVAL_11	0.790	0.624	0.001		
Price Value (PRI)						0.671	0.890
Reasonable Price	PVAL_RPR	PVAL_12	0.799	0.638	0.001		
Value for Money	PVAL_VM	PVAL_13	0.861	0.741	0.001		
Good product for price	PVAL_GPP	PVAL_14	0.849	0.721	0.002		
Economical	PVAL_EC	PVAL_15	0.763	0.582	0.002		
Social Value (SOC)						0.449	0.760
Help feel acceptable	PVAL_FA	PVAL_16	0.637	0.406	0.001		
Improve perception	PVAL_IP	PVAL_17	0.487	0.237	0.001		
Good impression	PVAL_GI	PVAL_18	0.729	0.531	0.001		
Social approval	PVAL_SA	PVAL_19	0.788	0.621	0.001		

Construct	Label		Loadings	Com*	Sig.	AVE	CR
Affective Commitment (COM)						0.549	0.940
Best of its kind	COM_BS	COM_1	0.760	0.578	0.002		
Proud of using	COM_PRD	COM_2	0.715	0.511	0.001		
Agree with company	COM_AG	COM_3	0.736	0.542	0.001		
Good company	COM_GC	COM_4	0.786	0.618	0.001		
Care company fate	COM_CF	COM_5	0.720	0.518	0.001		
Inspire being good customer	COM_ISP	COM_6	0.764	0.584	0.001		
Like operation	COM_OPE	COM_7	0.714	0.510	0.001		
Understand needs	COM_ND	COM_8	0.631	0.398	0.001		
Like company	COM_LCO	COM_9	0.820	0.672	0.002		
Special relationship	COM_RLP	COM_10	0.684	0.468	0.002		
Help company	COM_HLP	COM_11	0.751	0.564	0.001		
Enjoy doing business with Company	COM_EDB	COM_12	0.783	0.613	0.002		
Do business because like it	COM_DLK	COM_13	0.748	0.560	0.002		
OWOM Activity (ACT)						0.638	0.876
Mention frequently	OWOM_MF	OWOM_A1	0.820	0.672	0.001		
Told more people about this one	OWOM_TM	OWOM_A2	0.835	0.697	0.001		
Seldom miss opportunity to tell	OWOM_SM	OWOM_A3	0.769	0.591	0.001		
Tell in great detail	OWOM_TD	OWOM_A4	0.770	0.593	0.001		
OWOM Praise (PRA)						0.634	0.774
Have good things to say	OWOM_GT	OWOM_P1	0.712	0.507	0.001		
Proud to tell	OWOM_PR	OWOM_P2	0.872	0.760	0.001		

*Com=Communality; AVE (Average Variance Extracted) and CR (Construct Reliability) were calculated manually based on the formulas given by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Table 5.11 Summary of Initial Measurement Model Quality – Discriminant Validity

	SAT	LOY	QUA	EMO	PRI	SOC	COM	ACT	PRA
AVE	0.622	0.662	0.538	0.676	0.671	0.449	0.549	0.638	0.634
SAT	0.789								
LOY	0.411	0.814							
QUA	0.614	0.618	0.733						
EMO	0.631	0.668	0.951	0.822					
PRI	0.587	0.534	0.827	0.857	0.819				
SOC	0.456	0.617	0.718	0.830	0.641	0.670			
COM	0.472	0.673	0.722	0.769	0.667	0.710	0.741		
ACT	0.300	0.586	0.464	0.516	0.423	0.564	0.664	0.799	
PRA	0.401	0.598	0.559	0.616	0.561	0.631	0.700	0.858	0.796

Square root of AVEs in the diagonals;

Implied correlations for each construct in the model in the lower half of the table

5.6.2 Examination of Perceived Value (PVAL) Subset Measurement

CFA was conducted to validate the measurement for Perceived Value (PVAL). Although the model demonstrated a reasonable fit ($\chi^2/df=4.64$, CFI=.93, TLI=.92, RMSEA=.08) with discount on χ^2/df (over 3), the measurement did not demonstrate adequate convergent and discriminant validity. Table 5.12 shows that two items for quality value (QUA) and two items for social value (SOC) had item loadings below .70, and the value of AVE of Social value was below .50, indicating the presence of a convergent validity issue.

Table 5.12 PVAL Model Quality – Convergent Validity

Construct	Label		Loadings	Com*	AVE	CR
Quality Value (QUA)					0.538	0.870
Consistent quality	PVAL_CQ	PVAL_1	0.788	0.621		
Well made	PVAL_WM	PVAL_2	0.876	0.767		
Acceptable quality	PVAL_AQ	PVAL_3	0.826	0.682		
Poor workmanship	PVAL_PW	PVAL_4	0.576	0.332		
Not last long	PVAL_NLL	PVAL_5	0.452	0.204		
Perform consistently	PVAL_PC	PVAL_6	0.787	0.619		
Emotional Value(EMO)					0.676	0.913
Enjoy this brand/org product	PVAL_ENJ	PVAL_7	0.847	0.717		
Relaxed using	PVAL_RLX	PVAL_8	0.814	0.663		
Wanting to use	PVAL_WTU	PVAL_9	0.829	0.687		
Feel good	PVAL_FG	PVAL_10	0.829	0.687		
Giving pleasure	PVAL_PLS	PVAL_11	0.792	0.627		
Price Value (PRI)					0.671	0.890
Reasonable Price	PVAL_RPR	PVAL_12	0.797	0.635		
Value for Money	PVAL_VM	PVAL_13	0.861	0.741		
Good product for price	PVAL_GPP	PVAL_14	0.849	0.721		
Economical	PVAL_EC	PVAL_15	0.765	0.585		
Social Value (SOC)					0.447	0.758
Help feel acceptable	PVAL_FA	PVAL_16	0.649	0.421		
Improve perception	PVAL_IP	PVAL_17	0.474	0.225		
Good impression	PVAL_GI	PVAL_18	0.725	0.526		
Social approval	PVAL_SA	PVAL_19	0.785	0.616		

*Com=Communality; AVE (Average Variance Extracted) and CR (Construct Reliability) were calculated manually based on the formulas given by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

As reported below in Table 5.13, the squared root of AVE of each construct is less than their respective correlations. After systematically removing the items with loadings below the required cut-off points and cross-loadings, the quality QUA, EMO and PRI remained exceptionally highly correlated to each other with correlation coefficient ranging from .83 to .95, indicating they are not distinct factors and underlie one factor. Further discriminant

validity also suggested the non-distinctiveness of these three factors, with their squared correlations exceeding their AVE values.

Table 5.13 PVAL Model Quality – Discriminant Validity

	QUA	EMO	PRI	SOC
AVE	0.538	0.676	0.671	0.447
QUA	0.733			
EMO	0.951	0.822		
PRI	0.827	0.857	0.819	
SOC	0.723	0.833	0.646	0.669
Square root of AVEs in the diagonals				
Correlations for each construct in the model in the lower half of the table				

This result is consistent with some of the literature (e.g., Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957; Sheth et al., 1991; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). These researchers proposed conceptual links between QUAL, EMO and PRI. Perceptions of a product's quality and price contribute to its functional value, and they are interrelated with an emotional response to the purchase or consumption of a product or service. These studies suggest that these three factors may not be distinct. The interview findings also suggest that quality, emotional and price values are interrelated and should be measured as one construct, as discussed in Section 5.2.4.

It is suggested that if CFA results do not support construct validity, it is possible to use the results to revise the scale for future re-evaluation. For example, items with a complex loading structure or high unique variance might be omitted to better represent a latent variable (MacCallum & Austin, 2000). The PVAL measurement model was modified by reviewing the literature and the interview findings, and by examining the CFA results.

5.6.2.1 Final Measurement for PVAL

Following the guidelines suggested by Bagozzi and Yi's (1988) and De-Villis' (1991) studies, CFA diagnostic measures, including factor loading, modification indices, and standardised residuals, served as criteria to improve the model fit as well as the construct validity. Items (shaded in Table 5.12) were removed systematically from the model when they 1) still exhibited correlated measurement errors after an examination of standardised residuals; 2) had cross-factor loadings relatively equal to within-factor loadings (i.e., a cross-loading

issue); 3) had standardised factor loadings <.60; and 4) reflected redundancy in terms of wording with other items.

Although re-specification may be either theory- or data-driven, the ultimate objective is to find a model that is both substantively meaningful and statistically well-fitting (Joreskog, 1993). As demonstrated here, the modifications of the model were made based on both the theoretical integrity of Perceived Value (PVAL) and methodological reasons. That is, quality value (QUA), emotional value (EMO) and price value (PRI) were highly interrelated and measured the perceived functional and emotional value of the product/brand. QUAL, EMO and PRI factors were combined into one factor named quality, emotional and price (QEP) value. Social value (SOC) remains distinct from the others through the examination process. As a result, two factors, as opposed to four proposed by Sweeney and Soutar (2001), underlie the Perceived Value (PVAL), including QEP value (QEP) and Social value (SOC) (See Figure 5.3).

Model Fit Indices (PVAL Final Model)

Modifications to the model were performed based on substantive information (i.e. similarity of item content, factor loadings, modification indices and residuals) to improve the model fit as well as construct validity.

The analyses yielded the results shown in Table 5.14. As previously discussed, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA gave adequate indications on the overall fit of the model (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hair et al., 2010). Results indicated excellent overall model fit as evidenced by empirical fit indices, $\chi^2=126.1$, $df=43$, $p<.001$.

Table 5.14 Model Fit Indices – Measurement Model Subset PVAL

Index	Value	Recommended values
χ^2	126.1	N/A
χ^2/DF	2.93	<3.00
CFI	0.98	>.90
NNFI/TLI	0.98	>.90
RMSEA	0.06	<.07

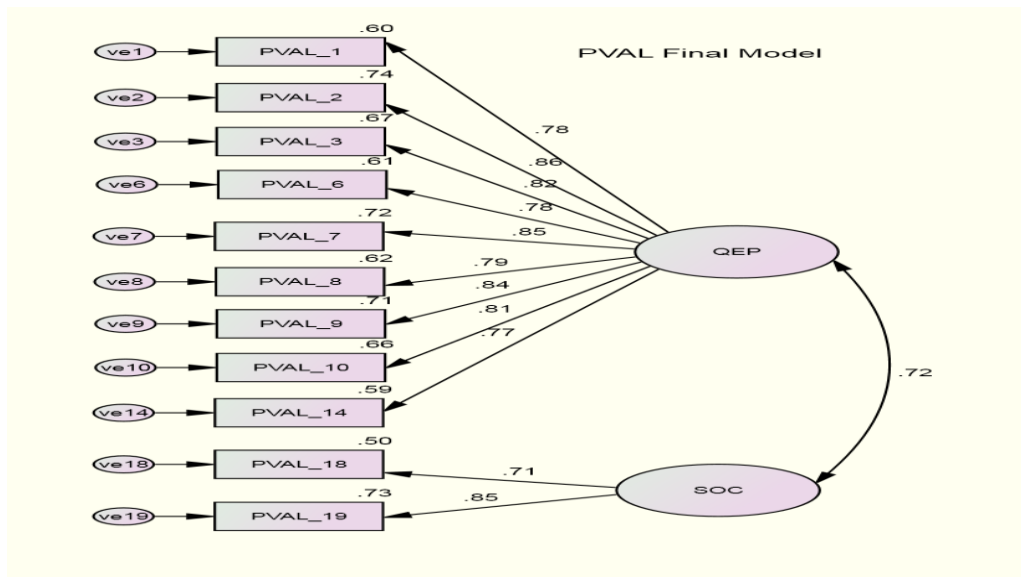


Figure 5.3 Subset of Measurement Model – Perceived Value ML Solution

Construct Validity Assessment (PVAL Final Measurement Model)

Table 5.15 shows the item loadings, communalities, variance extracted, and construct reliability. The measures demonstrated convergent validity. All the item loadings were above the desired cut-off point of .70, ranging from .71 to .86. Both AVE and CR suggested satisfactory reliabilities with values above the threshold of .50 and .70 respectively.

Table 5.15 Measurement Model Subset PVAL Validity Assessment

Construct	Label	Loadings	Com*	AVE	CR
Quality, Emotion and Price Value (QEP)				0.658	0.945
Consistent quality	PVAL_CQ	PVAL_1	0.775	0.717	
Well made	PVAL_WM	PVAL_2	0.861	0.616	
Acceptable quality	PVAL_AQ	PVAL_3	0.820	0.714	
Perform consistently	PVAL_PC	PVAL_6	0.781	0.659	
Enjoy this brand/org product	PVAL_ENJ	PVAL_7	0.847	0.601	
Relaxed using	PVAL_RLX	PVAL_8	0.785	0.741	
Wanting to use	PVAL_WTU	PVAL_9	0.845	0.672	
Feel good	PVAL_FG	PVAL_10	0.812	0.591	
Good product for price	PVAL_GPP	PVAL_14	0.769	0.610	
Social value (SOC)				0.614	0.759
Good impression	PVAL_GI	PVAL_18	0.708	0.501	
Social approval	PVAL_SA	PVAL_19	0.852	0.726	

*Com=Communality; AVE (Average Variance Extracted) and CR (Construct Reliability) were calculated manually based on the formulas given by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Discriminant Validity

As discussed above, discriminant validity is demonstrated if the squared roots of AVE of both constructs are greater than the correlation. Table 5.16 showed the correlation between

the two constructs ($\gamma=0.721$) is less than the square root of the AVEs of both constructs, indicating a satisfactory discriminant validity of the two constructs.

Table 5.16 Estimated Correlations between QEP and SOC

	QEP	SOC
AVE	0.658	0.614
QEP	0.811	
SOC	0.721	0.783
Square root of AVEs in the diagonals		
The construct correlation is less than the corresponding square root of the AVEs		
Implied correlation for two constructs in the model in the lower half of the table		

5.6.3 Examination of Online Word-of-Mouth (OWOM) Subset Measurement

CFA was conducted to validate the measurement for the endogenous variable Online Word-of-Mouth (OWOM). Harrison-Walker (2001) proposed that there are two dimensions underlying WOM, including OWOM activity (ACT) and OWOM Praise (PRA). The measurements were reworded for the OWOM context and captured three aspects of OWOM (i.e., enthusiasm, detail and valence).

The CFA results showed a poor fit of the model ($\chi^2/df=11.8$, CFI=.96, TLI=.92, RMSEA=.14), with the key fit index RMSEA value above the least acceptable point of .10. Further examination of the model showed that although the convergent validity of the measures was demonstrated (with item factor loadings above .70, ranging from .71 to .88, composite reliability (CR) above .70 with .88 for ACT and .78 for PRA, and AVE above .50 with both factors of .64, (see Table 5.17), the measurement lacked discriminant validity. The correlation between ACT and PRA is .852 and was above the square root of AVEs of ACT ($\sqrt{AVE}=.799$) and PRA ($\sqrt{AVE}=.798$). This indicated that ACT and PRA were not sufficiently different from each other and they measured one underlying factor.

In Harrison-Walker's (2001) study, ACT and PRA were initially thought to be two aspects of a single, more generalised WOM construct. Although her study found that they were distinct, there has not been research clearly supporting the notion of two WOM constructs, as she also acknowledged. As with the result shown here, OWOM activity and OWOM praise were not sufficiently distinct from each other, and they represented three aspects of a more generalised OWOM construct.

Table 5.17 OWOM Model Quality – Convergent Validity

Construct	Label		Loadings	Com*	AVE	CR
OWOM activity (ACT)					0.639	0.876
Mention frequently	OWOM_MF	OWOM_E1	0.827	0.684		
Told more people about this one	OWOM_TM	OWOM_E2	0.832	0.692		
Seldom miss opportunity to tell	OWOM_SM	OWOM_E3	0.768	0.590		
Tell in great detail	OWOM_TD	OWOM_E4	0.767	0.588		
OWOM praise (PRA)					0.636	0.776
Have good things to say	OWOM_GT	OWOM_V1	0.706	0.498		
Proud to tell	OWOM_PR	OWOM_V2	0.880	0.774		

*Com=Communality; AVE (Average Variance Extracted) and CR (Construct Reliability) were calculated manually based on the formulas given by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

The interview results also indicated that the OWOM was a one dimensional construct, including three components, as discussed in Section 5.2.4. OWOM activity and OWOM praise appeared to be underlying this factor. Based on the above theoretical ground and empirical reason, OWOM was regarded as one generalised construct consisting of six items measuring three aspects of OWOM – enthusiasm, detail, and valence (favourableness).

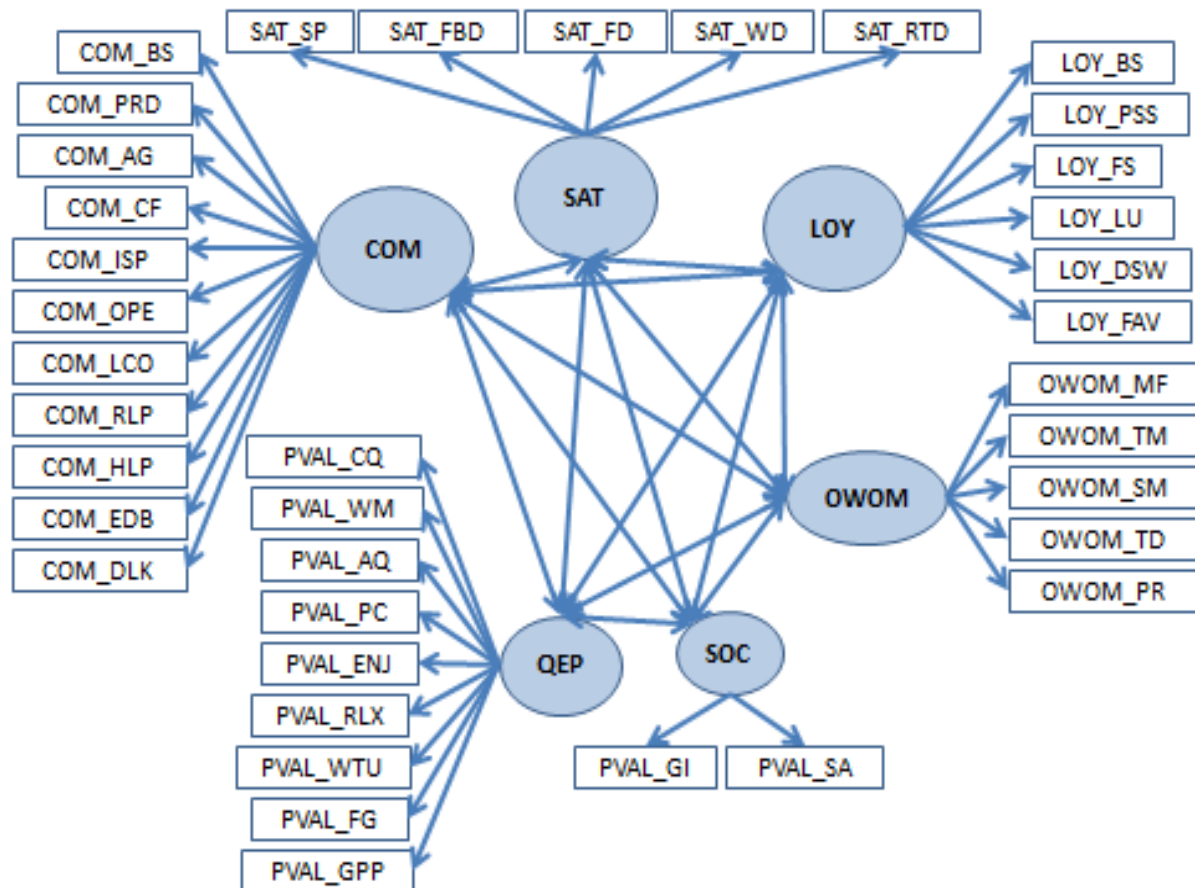
5.6.4 Final Overall Measurement Model

After the examination and modification of the subset measurements of perceived value (PVAL) and customer OWOM (OWOM), CFA was conducted to validate the overall measurements for the constructs.

Although the model appeared to fit the data at the minimum acceptable level ($\chi^2=2675.99$, $df=845$, $p<.001$, $CFI=.90$, $TLI=.90$, $RMSEA=.06$) based on the recommended set of three indices, the model had a poor GFI and AGFI value ($GFI=.79$, $AGFI=.76$) with both below .90, and χ^2/df ($\chi^2/df=3.17$) above 3 (Hair et al., 2006). Most importantly, the measurements did not have good construct validity. Therefore, modifications were made to improve construct validity as well as the model fit.

The indicators were deleted systematically from the model based on the guidelines suggested by Bagozzi and Yi (1988) and De-Villis (1991). The modification resulted in five indicators being removed across four constructs, including item SAT_UD, LOY_SSW, COMGC, COM_NC, and OWOM_GT (also shaded in Table 5.10). The remaining indicators that reflected good measurement exhibited:

- 1) item factor loadings $>.70$;
- 2) item standardised residuals <4.0 (items with values between 2.5 and 4.0 were carefully scrutinised);
- 3) item cross-factor loadings less than within-factor loadings; and
- 4) no or little item wording redundancy present.



Note: Residual errors in variables not shown.

Figure 5.4 Final Overall Measurement Model

After the modification, the final measurement model consisted of six constructs: Quality, Emotion and Price Value (QEP), Social Value (SOC), Satisfaction (SAT), Loyalty (LOY), Affective Commitment (COM), and Customer OWOM (OWOM) (see Figure 5.4). All constructs had more than three items apart from SOC, which had two items. Although it is recommended that all factors have at least three items, the factor model with two significant items per factor can be identified as long as each factor also has a significant relationship with some other factor (Hair et al., 2006).

Model Fit Indices (Final Measurement Model)

The final measurement model had good fit, as shown in Table 5.18. All three indices of CFI, TLI, and RMSEA met the recommended fit criteria ($\chi^2=1822.1$, $df=650$, $p<.001$).

Table 5.18 Measurement Model Fit Indices

Index	Value	Recommended values
χ^2	1822.1	N/A
χ^2/DF	2.80	<3
CFI	0.93	>.90
NNFI/TLI	0.92	>.90
RMSEA	0.06	<.07

Construct Validity Assessment (Final Measurement Model)

Table 5.19 shows the results of the CFA on the six constructs, including the loadings, communalities, significance value of the items, and construct AVE and CR. All of the items loaded significantly on specific factors at the $p<.002$ level. An examination of the standardised residual matrix revealed that no absolute residual value exceeded the threshold of 4.0 (See Appendix 10).

Item loadings above .70 are considered to be evidence of convergent validity (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). All of the item loadings were more than .70. Construct reliability (CR) indicated very good internal consistency for all the factors in the final model, being well above .70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Lastly, the average variance extracted (AVE) estimates a range from .56 for COM to .68 for LOY. All exceeded the .50 criteria, supporting convergent validity. Taken together, the evidence supports the convergent validity of the measurement model.

Discriminant Validity

Having concluded measures of convergent validity and internal consistency, discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the correlation values between two constructs with their respective square root AVE value (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As presented in Table 5.20, the square root AVE values for the constructs were between .749 and .822. All construct

correlations were less than the corresponding square root AVE values, providing evidence that each construct exhibited high discriminant validity.

Table 5.19 Summary of Final Measurement Model Quality (BS=2000, BCCI=95%)

Construct	Label		Load ings	Com*	sig.	AVE	CR
Customer Satisfaction (SAT)						0.67	0.91
Satisfied with Purchase	SAT_SP	SAT_1	0.871	0.759	0.002		
Feel Bad about Decision	SAT_FBD	SAT_2	0.719	0.517	0.002		
Feel different	SAT_FD	SAT_3	0.744	0.554	0.002		
Wise Decision	SAT_WD	SAT_4	0.866	0.750	0.002		
Right Thing about Decision	SAT_RTD	SAT_6	0.879	0.772	0.002		
Customer Loyalty (LOY)						0.68	0.93
Best to do business	LOY_BS	LOY_2	0.837	0.701	0.002		
Use when possible	LOY_PSS	LOY_3	0.836	0.699	0.002		
First choice	LOY_FS	LOY_4	0.845	0.714	0.002		
Like using	LOY_LU	LOY_5	0.806	0.649	0.001		
Doubt Switch	LOY_DSW	LOY_6	0.747	0.557	0.001		
Favourite	LOY_FAV	LOY_7	0.857	0.734	0.002		
Customer Perceived Quality, Emotion and Price Value (QEP)						0.67	0.95
Consistent quality	PVAL_CQ	PVAL_1	0.773	0.597	0.001		
Well made	PVAL_WM	PVAL_2	0.857	0.735	0.001		
Acceptable quality	PVAL_AQ	PVAL_3	0.818	0.669	0.002		
Perform consistently	PVAL_PC	PVAL_6	0.781	0.609	0.001		
Enjoy this brand/org product	PVAL_ENJ	PVAL_7	0.851	0.724	0.001		
Relaxed using	PVAL_RLX	PVAL_8	0.792	0.627	0.001		
Wanting to use	PVAL_WTU	PVAL_9	0.841	0.707	0.001		
Feel good	PVAL_FG	PVAL_10	0.815	0.664	0.002		
Good product for price	PVAL_GPP	PVAL_14	0.768	0.590	0.001		
Customer Perceived Social Value (SOC)						0.61	0.76
Good impression	PVAL_GI	PVAL_18	0.716	0.512	0.001		
Social approval	PVAL_SA	PVAL_19	0.844	0.712	0.001		
Customer Affective Commitment (COM)						0.56	0.93
Best of its kind	COM_BS	COM_1	0.742	0.551	0.001		
Proud of using	COM_PRD	COM_2	0.737	0.543	0.002		
Agree with company	COM_AG	COM_3	0.733	0.537	0.001		
Care company fate	COM_CF	COM_5	0.729	0.531	0.001		
Inspire being good customer	COM_ISP	COM_6	0.783	0.614	0.001		
Like operation	COM_OPE	COM_7	0.709	0.502	0.001		
Like company	COM_LCO	COM_9	0.801	0.642	0.001		
Special relationship	COM_RLP	COM_10	0.710	0.504	0.002		
Help company	COM_HLP	COM_11	0.755	0.571	0.001		
Enjoy doing business with Company	COM_EDB	COM_12	0.768	0.590	0.001		
Do business because like it	COM_DLK	COM_13	0.768	0.590	0.001		
Customer OWOM (OWOM)						0.62	0.89
Mention frequently	OWOM_MF	OWOM_E1	0.812	0.660	0.001		
Told more people about this one	OWOM_TM	OWOM_E2	0.834	0.696	0.001		
Seldom miss opportunity to tell	OWOM_SM	OWOM_E3	0.764	0.584	0.001		
Tell in great detail	OWOM_TD	OWOM_E4	0.763	0.583	0.001		
Proud to tell	OWOM_PR	OWOM_V2	0.772	0.596	0.001		

BS=Bootstrapping Sample;BCCI=Bias-Corrected Confidence Interval; COM*= Communalities; AVE (Average Variance Extracted) and CR (Construct Reliability) were calculated manually based on the formulas given by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Table 5.20 Estimated Correlations

	SAT	LOY	COM	QEP	SOC	OWOM
AVE	0.670	0.676	0.561	0.658	0.612	0.623
SAT	0.819					
LOY	0.431	0.822				
COM	0.449	0.684	0.749			
QEP	0.629	0.673	0.718	0.811		
SOC	0.421	0.605	0.672	0.725	0.783	
OWOM	0.332	0.612	0.699	0.529	0.578	0.790

Square root of AVEs in the diagonals

All construct correlations are less than the corresponding square root of the AVEs

Implied correlations for each construct in the model in the lower half of the table

5.6.5 Summary of CFA

CFA was performed using SEM to examine the measurements used in this study. Model fit and construct validity were reported and several measures were used to analyse the results. The model was modified following the recommended guidelines by Bagozzi and Yi (1988) and De-Villis (1991). Thirteen of the original 51 items were eliminated from the model. The modified model ultimately confirmed six factors: Perceived Quality, Emotion and Price Value (QEP), Social Value (SOC), Satisfaction (SAT), Loyalty (LOY), Affective Commitment (COM), and Customer OWOM (OWOM).

This confirmed model was structurally similar to the original hypothesised factor model, but was based on fewer items. The final model demonstrated good model fit (CFI=.93, TLI=.92, RMSEA=.06), satisfactory convergent validity (item loadings>.70, CR>.70, AVE>.50) and good discriminant validity.

5.7 Hypotheses Testing

The research objectives, as well as the expected relationships between identified variables, are reflected in the research hypotheses presented in Table 5.21. The research hypotheses were tested using covariance-based structural equation modelling (SEM).

Table 5.21 Research Hypotheses

	Primary Hypotheses
H1	The extent of customer satisfaction is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise.
<i>Alternative H1</i>	<i>The extent of customer satisfaction has a U-shaped relationship with customer OWOM activity.</i>
H2	The extent of customer loyalty is positively related to customer OWOM.
H3	The extent of customer affective commitment is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise.
H4	The extent of customer perceived value is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise.
H4a-c	The extent of customer perceived QEP value is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise.
H4d	The extent of customer perceived social value is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise.
H4e	The extent of customer perceived QEP value is positively related to customer social value. (Suggested in interviews; see section 5.2.4)
H5	The extent of customer perceived QEP value is positively related to customer satisfaction.
H6	The extent of customer satisfaction is positively related to customer loyalty.
H7	The extent of customer perceived QEP value is positively related to customer affective commitment.

5.7.1 Alternative Hypothesis 1 Testing

Hypothesis 1 proposes that customer satisfaction has a positive linear relationship with customer OWOM activity and praise. The alternative hypothesis proposes a U-shaped curvilinear relationship between customer satisfaction and customer OWOM activity. To test this quadratic equation – proposed curvilinearity – a hierarchical multiple regression approach was used. The method of detecting curvilinearity is to routinely run regression analyses that incorporate curvilinear components (squared curvilinear terms) (Cortina, 1993; Goldfeld & Quandt, 1976) .

The scatter plot of the data is presented in Figure 5.5 to see whether it follows a curvilinear pattern. It is difficult to discern if a quadratic curve or straight line provides a better fit to the observed points. The paired t-test of residual differences approach (Garson, 2012a) was used to confirm that a linear model and quadratic model are not significantly different from each other ($t=-.919, p=.518$).

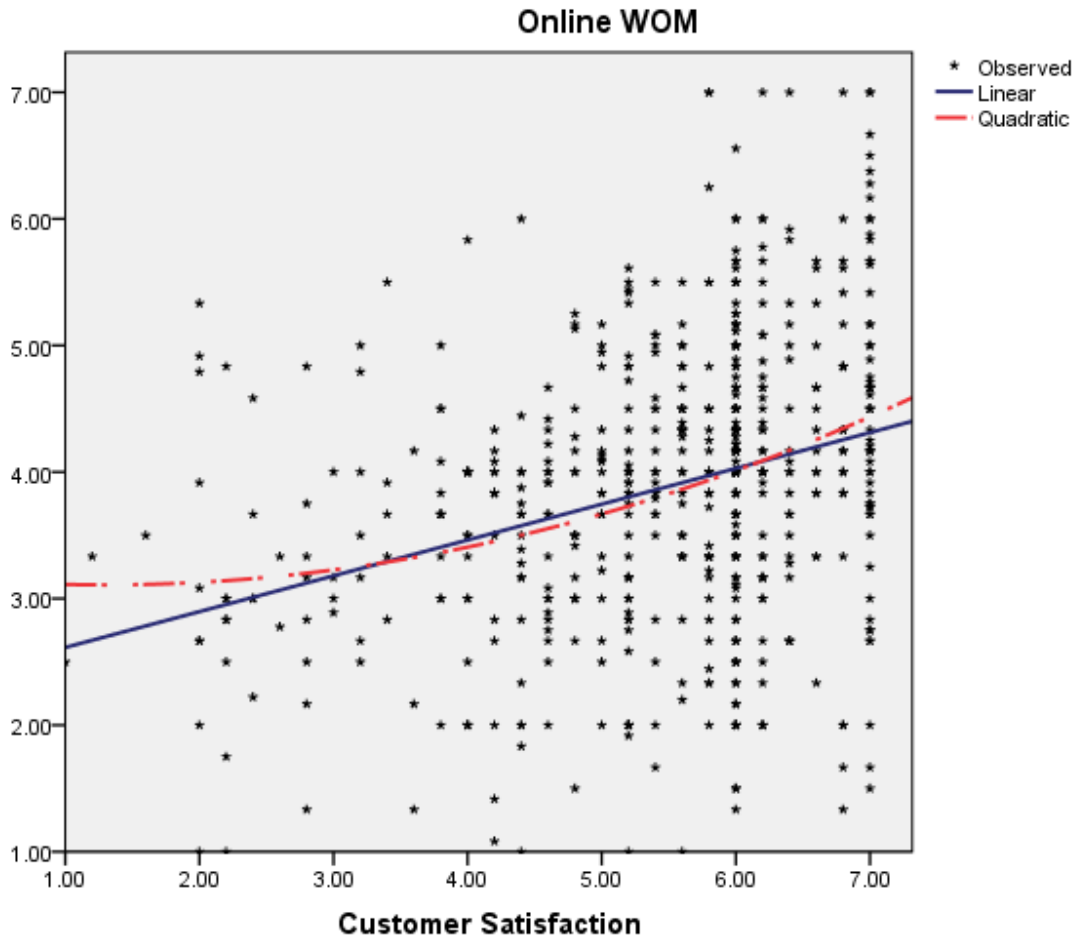


Figure 5.5 Scatter Plot of Customer Satisfaction and OWOM

Using hierarchical multiple regression to test for curvilinearity, two steps were performed. The test was as follows:

$$Y = B_0 + B_1(X) + \quad \text{[STEP1]}$$

$$B_2(X^a) \quad \text{[STEP2]}$$

where Y=the predicted variable, X=the linear predictor variable, 'a' is nonzero and, thus X^a represents X taken to a power other than 1 (nonlinear predictor variable), and B's are structural parameters or regression weights (Cortina, 1993).

In Step 1, only the independent variable SAT is entered (Model 1 – linear equation). Step 2 inserted the SAT_squared variable into the equation (Model 2 – combined linear and non-linear). The SAT_squared variable represented the hypothesis or the term that there was one bend in the scatter plot. This curvilinear term was added as an independent variable to

explore the curvilinear effect (Cortina, 1993). Although there are an infinite number of possibilities (i.e., X^2 , X^3 , etc.) for a nonlinear term, Cortina (1993) recommended using only one squared term.

Table 5.22 Summary of Linear and Non-Linear Models

Hierarchical Multiple Regression^c

Model	R	R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.	Parameter Estimates			Change Statistics		
						Constant	b1	b2	R ² Change	F Change	Sig. F Change
1 SAT	.304 ^a	.093	1.093	58.453	.000	2.331	.283		0.005	3.132	.077
2 SAT+SAT ²	.313 ^b	.098	1.091	30.902	.000	3.177	-.106	.041			

a. Predictors: (Constant), SAT; b. Predictors: (Constant), SAT, SAT_squared; c. Dependent Variable: OWOM

Table 5.22 presents a summary of the linear model (Model 1) and the model of combined linear and non-linear effects (Model 2). Both Model 1 ($R^2=.093$, $f=58.453$, $p<.001$) and Model 2 ($R^2=.098$, $f=30.902$, $p<.001$) are statistically significant, which is common in practice, although neither has great predictive capacity.

The curvilinear hypothesis is tested by examining the variance explained by a power term (i.e., SAT_squared) over and above that explained by individual predictors (Cortina, 1993). The key to estimating this non-linear effect is the R^2 change. The value of R^2 increased 0.5% from .093 for the linear specification of the regression equation (Model 1) to .098 for the quadratic specification (Model 2). The R^2 change was .005, which meant that only 0.5% of the variability in OWOM was accounted for by the addition of the non-linear effect. The R^2 change value of .005 was associated with a non-significant f change value of 3.132 ($p=.077$), which was important for the addition of the non-linear effect on its own, independent of the effects accounted for by the linear effect. It was concluded that the non-linear term should not be included in the regression equation. In other words, there was no quadratic effect observed in the data. Because OWOM construct was found to be unidimensional in this study, the dependent variable includes one item (OWOM_PR) from OWOM praise. To further examine the result, an additional test was conducted excluding this item. The results were consistent (R^2 change=.003, f change=1.590, $p=.208$). Therefore, there was no curvilinear relationship between customer satisfaction and customer OWOM activity, and alternative hypotheses 1 was rejected.

5.8 Structural Model Evaluation

Once the reliability and validity of the measures have been satisfied, the structural parameters of the model can be determined through SEM analysis. This stage tests whether the relationships in the specified model are supported by the sample data.

The six-factor measurement model served as a baseline model for the structural model. The expected relationships among the latent variables were tested using SEM. SEM was performed using the Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation method to test the hypothesised relationships among measures of Quality, Emotion and Price Value (QEP), Social Value (SOC), Satisfaction (SAT), Loyalty (LOY), Affective Commitment (COM), and OWOM. The primary aim of such analysis is to maximise the explanation of variance in the dependent constructs (Hulland, Chow, & Lam, 1996), providing a holistic view of model performance as a whole. Bootstrapping was used to assess the stability of parameter estimates.

5.8.1 Model Fit

Model fit was assessed using the chi-square test statistic and the aforementioned guidelines for the CFI, TLI, and RMSEA value, as shown in Table 5.23.

Table 5.23 Structural Model Fit Indices

Index	Value	Recommended values
χ^2	2117.323	N/A
χ^2/DF	3.23	<3.00
CFI	0.91	>.90
NNFI/TLI	0.91	>.90
RMSEA	0.06	<.07

The nature of measure and construct relationships is established through the path diagram and path coefficients. Structurally, path coefficients should be significant at the .05 level and be in the expected direction (MacCallum & Austin, 2000). The significance of path coefficients is identified by the path coefficient *t* statistics, and the explanatory value of a SEM model is determined by examining the R^2 values for the dependent construct's matrix (Hulland, 1999). Figure 5.6 shows the parameter estimates and R^2 value for the dependent constructs. The standardised structural parameter estimates have been drawn on the path diagram below to more easily comprehend the model results. The non-significant paths from SAT to OWOM

and from QEP to OWOM have dashed lines. All other paths are statistically significant and shown with solid lines.

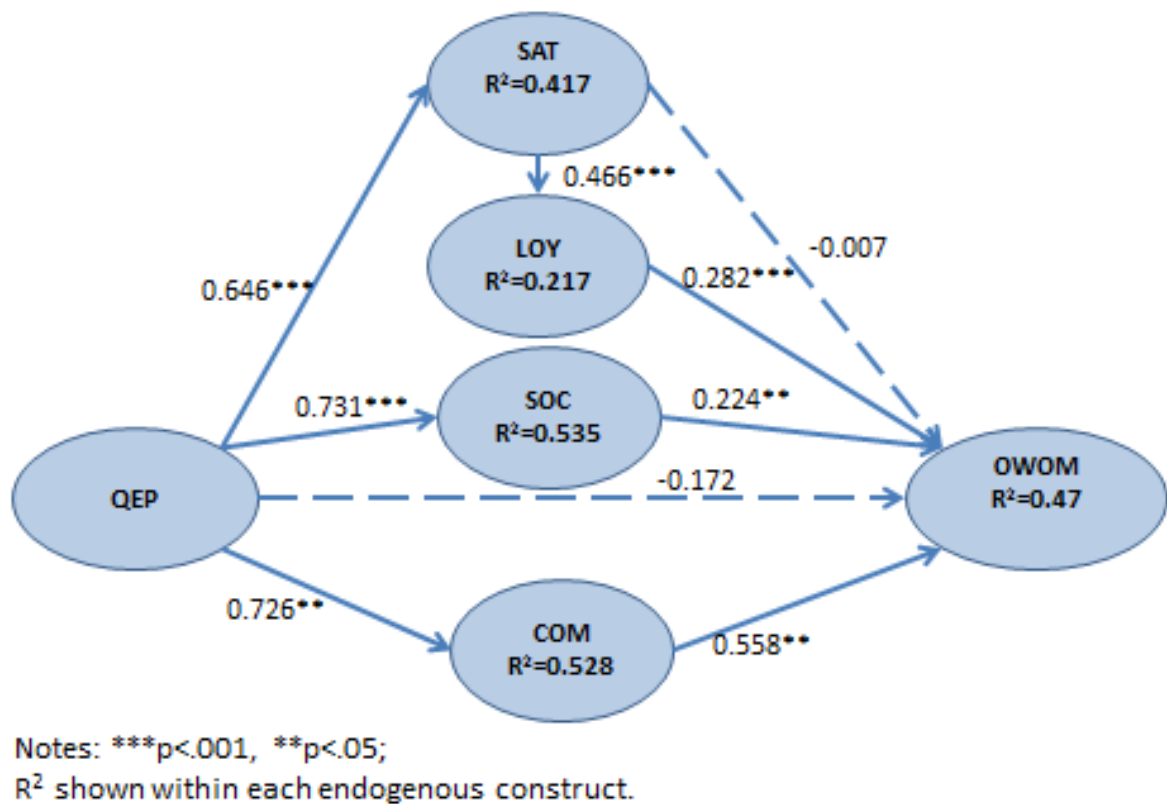


Figure 5.6 Standardised Direct Effects of the Structural Model

The path coefficients matrix, shown in Table 5.24, identifies the results of this analysis. The summation of the direct and indirect effects yields the total effects of the model variables on the endogenous variables in the model. The results indicate that all of the research hypotheses are upheld, or partially supported. Table 5.24 presents the direct effects in their standardised form of the estimation structural model. Most estimates are significant at the .001 level, and three estimates are significant at the .05 level. The signs of the estimates are as expected.

AMOS output does not provide a critical ratio for standardised estimates, which is also one way to ascertain significance of a regression path. The critical ratio reported in Table 5.24 were calculated by dividing path estimates by their standard errors (Byrne, 2001). Estimates with critical ratios of more than 1.96 are significant at the .05 level, which indicate the paths are significant, suggesting an important contribution to the model.

Table 5.24 Structural Model Results

	Path		Path coefficient	Standard Error	C.R.	Sig. Level
QEP	-->	SAT	0.646	0.037	17.459	p<.001
SAT	-->	LOY	0.466	0.038	12.263	p<.001
QEP	-->	COM	0.726	0.043	16.884	p<.05
QEP	-->	SOC	0.731	0.037	19.757	p<.001
COM	-->	OWOM	0.558	0.094	5.936	p<.05
SOC	-->	OWOM	0.224	0.074	3.027	p<.05
QEP	-->	OWOM	-0.172	0.113	-1.522	p>.05
LOY	-->	OWOM	0.282	0.06	4.700	p<.001
SAT	-->	OWOM	-0.007	0.057	-0.123	p>.05

Note: C.R. = Critical Ratio. Bootstrapping N=2000; 95% BCCI (bias-corrected confidence interval)

5.8.2 Revised Model

According to Byrne (1998), insignificant parameters can be considered irrelevant to the model and should, based on the parsimony criterion, be deleted. The insignificant paths (i.e., QEP → OWOM and SAT → OWOM) were removed. Only significant regression paths were included in the final model testing (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004).

After deletion of these paths and re-estimation of the model, the obtained model fit ($\chi^2 = 2123.23$, $df=658$, $p<.001$), as shown in Table 5.25 indicates that this more parsimonious model did not fit the data significantly worse ($\Delta\chi^2_{\Delta d.f.=2} = 5.908$, $p = .052$). The index χ^2/DF is slightly above the recommended value of 3, but some authors suggest that a value less than 4 (Bollen, 1989) or even 5 (Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin, & Summers, 1977) indicates acceptable model fit.

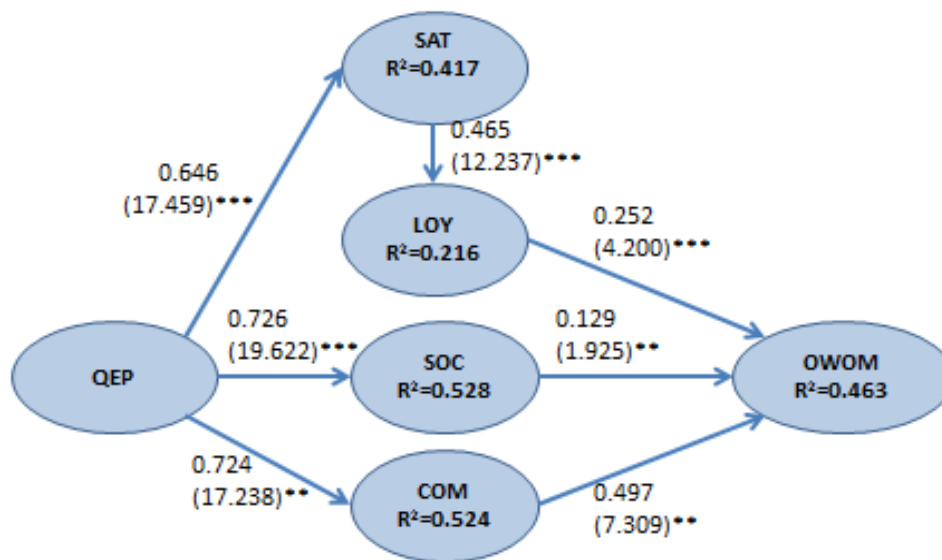
Hence, it can be concluded that, for the data set in this study, the direct effect of QEP on OWOM is fully mediated through the other model variables. In other words, the mediator variables render the direct effect between QEP and OWOM. QEP value exerts its effect on OWOM in part through satisfaction and loyalty, as well as social value, and affective commitment. Furthermore, the effect of SAT on OWOM is mediated through LOY.

The path coefficients in Figure 5.7 are from the trimmed model. All path coefficients were statistically significant ($p<0.05$). None of the path coefficients in the trimmed model were

particularly affected by the trimming (i.e., their values in the more saturated model were comparable to those in the trimmed model). All were statistically significant before trimming and all remained statistically significant after trimming.

Table 5.25 Model Fit Indices of the Revised Model

Index	Value	Recommended values
χ^2	2123.23	N/A
χ^2/DF	3.23	<3.00
CFI	0.91	>.90
NNFI/TLI	0.91	>.90
RMSEA	0.06	<.07



Notes: t-statistics shown in parentheses, ***p<.001, **p<.05; R² shown within each endogenous construct.

Figure 5.7 Standardised Direct Effects of the Revised Structural Model

Figure 5.7 presents the direct effects, in their standardised form, of the re-estimation structural model. Three estimates are significant at the 0.05 level, and the rest are significant at the .001 level. The signs of the estimates are as expected. The proportions of explained variance (R²) are presented inside the ellipses. Table 5.26 provides further information of the significant value, as well as the lower and upper bounds of the 95% confidence interval.

Table 5.26 Standardised Total Effects and Proportions of Explained Variance

	COM	SOC	SAT	LOY	OWOM
QEP	0.724	0.726	0.646	0.300	0.529
COM					0.497
SOC					0.129
SAT				0.465	0.117
LOY					0.252
Explained Variances	52.4%	52.8%	41.7%	21.6%	46.3%
95% CI	(0.382-0.621)	(0.423-0.636)	(0.325-0.512)	(0.15-0.296)	(0.375-0.537)
sig (p value)	0.002	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.003

Note: Bootstrapping N=2000; 95% BCCI (bias-corrected confidence interval)

5.8.3 Direct Effects and Indirect Effects

Table 5.27 presents the summation of the direct and indirect effects, which yields the total effects of the model variables on the endogenous variables in the model.

Table 5.27 Revised Structural Model Results (Standardised)

	Effect	Estimates	Standard Error	C. R.	Sig
Direct Effect					
QEP	--> SAT	0.646	0.037	17.459	0.001
QEP	--> SOC	0.726	0.037	19.62	0.001
QEP	--> COM	0.724	0.042	17.238	0.002
SAT	--> LOY	0.465	0.038	12.237	0.001
SOC	--> OWOM	0.129	0.067	1.925	0.046
COM	--> OWOM	0.497	0.068	7.309	0.002
LOY	--> OWOM	0.252	0.060	4.200	0.001
Indirect Effect					
QEP	--> LOY	0.300	0.039	7.692	0.001
QEP	--> OWOM	0.529	0.036	14.694	0.001
SAT	--> OWOM	0.117	0.030	3.900	0.001

Note: C.R. = Critical Ratio. Bootstrapping N=2000; 95% BCCI (bias-corrected confidence interval)

Direct Effects

Direct effect between Loyalty and Customer OWOM (LOY→OWOM)(H2)

It was hypothesised that customers who are more loyal to a brand or organisation would be more likely to have engaged in OWOM than less loyal customers. Customers keep the brand

or organisation in their consideration set, and discuss past experiences positively, even if they do not necessarily repurchase. OWOM occurs if customers exhibit high loyalty. Loyal customers are more likely to share their purchase experiences than non-loyal customers, creating a potential for WOM (Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999). The occurrence or not of OWOM communication depends on customers' loyalty. The findings show that customer loyalty has a direct positive effect on customer OWOM, and the effect size ($\beta=.252$) is considered medium (Cohen, 1988). This relationship is statistically significant at the .001 level. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Direct effect between Affective Commitment and OWOM (COM \rightarrow OWOM) (H3)

It has been suggested that a potential consequence of commitment may include WOM communication (Dick & Basu, 1994). Customers who have high affective commitment, meaning those who see value and want to maintain involvement with a brand or organisation, are more willing to exert considerable effort or behaviour to help the brand or organisation achieve their goals (Mayer & Schoorman, 1992; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982b). WOM communication is a behaviour by a customer that affects the strategic health of the brand or organisation (Boulding et al., 1993). It was hypothesised that affective commitment is positively related to OWOM. The results show that affective commitment has a direct positive effect on online OWOM with an effect size of .497 ($p=.002$). Thus, Hypothesis 3 is supported.

Direct effect between Social Value and Customer OWOM (SOC \rightarrow OWOM) (H4d)

It was hypothesised that customers perceiving high social value from using a product or service would be more likely to engage in OWOM to share their experience. Whereas functional, economic and emotional elements of perceived value are importantly related to the product or service, the social element is tightly connected to the individual's self-perception. To a certain extent, social value is also a means of conveying symbolic information to an individual's social environment (Koller, Floh, & Zauner, 2011). Higher levels of customer-perceived social value lead to higher levels of customer OWOM through which customers engage with their social networks. Although the impact of social value on OWOM is small ($\beta=.129$), it is statistically significant at the .05 level. Thus, Hypothesis 4d is supported.

Direct effect between QEP Value and Social Value (QEP → SOC) (H4e)

Quality, emotional and price (QEP) values enhance perceived social value. QEP value relates to the perceived performance of a product or service, the affective states and/or feelings aroused from consumption of an offering, and the perceived monetary sacrifice for the consumption. The QEP values derived from the offering shape and determine the social image that the customer wants to project to other people. Customers' perceived QEP values suggest a certain degree of expected social acceptance and social approval. Individuals develop a self-image. Some products seem to match and enhance this self-image while others do not. The higher value the customers perceive in terms of the quality, emotion and price, the higher social value they perceive regarding the product or service. The result shows that QEP value has a direct positive effect on social value and the effect size ($\beta=.726$) is considered large (Cohen, 1988). This relationship is statistically significant at the .001 level. Thus, Hypothesis 4e is supported.

Direct effect between QEP Value and Satisfaction (QEP → SAT) (H5)

Customer satisfaction occurs when their expectations are met or exceeded. According to Bolton and Drew (1991) customer satisfaction is the perception customers have after they receive and consume a product or service. It is viewed as a post-choice evaluative judgement of a specific purchase occasion (Oliver, 1981). It has been suggested that customers who perceive that they received value for money are more satisfied than customers who do not perceive such value (Zeithaml, 1988). The result shows that QEP value has a direct positive effect on customer satisfaction, with an effect size of .646 ($p=.001$). Thus, Hypothesis 5 is supported.

Direct effect between Satisfaction and Loyalty (SAT → LOY) (H6)

Customers become loyal as a result of the satisfaction they experience with their purchase. It was hypothesised that customer satisfaction has an impact on loyalty. Customer satisfaction is regarded as a primary determining factor of repeat shopping and purchasing behaviour. The greater the degree to which a customer experiences satisfaction with a retailer, for instance, the greater the probability the customer will revisit the retailer and the less likely they will look for alternative products on their next purchase (Dillon et al., 1987; Duffy, Smith, Terhanian, & Bremer, 2005). The result shows that customer satisfaction has a direct positive effect on customer loyalty with an effect size of .465 ($p=.001$). Thus, Hypothesis 6 is supported.

Direct effect between QEP Value and Affective Commitment (QEP → COM) (H7)

It was hypothesised that customers' QEP value has an impact on their affective commitment to the brand or organisation. Affective commitment is a factor that develops through the degree of personal involvement that the customer has with a company or a brand, which results in a high level of commitment (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). Emotional value is especially important for committed customers, and helps to build closer emotional links to the brand or organisation (Butz & Goodstein, 1996). Affective commitment can be enhanced through building emotional and functional value. Customers who perceive a high level of QEP value from the consumption of the product/service tend to develop a favourable affective reaction (Kumar, Scheer, & Steenkamp, 1995). The result shows that QEP value has a direct positive effect on affective commitment and the effect size ($\beta=.724$) is considered large (Cohen, 1988). This relationship is statistically significant at the .001 level. Thus, Hypothesis 7 is supported.

Apart from the direct effects discussed above, there are several indirect effects presented in the model. The next section focusses on the examination of these effects and the remaining hypotheses are discussed.

5.8.4 Examination of the Indirect Effects

Indirect effects represent the influence of an independent variable on a dependent variable as mediated by one or more intervening variables. Mediation is useful for conceptualising and explaining the relationships among three or more variables. Establishing the significance of an initial direct effect is a pre-condition for testing any mediation effect. In other words, QEP value first must be shown to have a significant direct effect on OWOM. The bivariate test shows this direct effect is significant at the .001 level.

There are a variety of options when investigating the presence of indirect effects in mediation models. The most common approaches are the Baron and Kenny (1986) method and the Sobel test (1982). However, neither is sufficient when examining a model with more than one mediator (Briggs, 2006; MacKinnon, 2000; MacKinnon et al., 2002; Preacher & Hayes, 2008b). When several simple mediation hypotheses are each tested with a simple mediator model, these separate models may suffer from the omitted variable problem, which can lead to biased parameter estimation (Judd & Kenny, 1981). Preacher and Hayes (2008b) suggest

when multiple potential mediators are present in the model, multiple mediation is the appropriate analytical strategy. It is recommended that simultaneous multiple mediation should be conducted, because it allows researchers to determine whether an overall effect exists for all mediators (total indirect effect), and to assess the effect of each mediator (specific indirect effects). This reduces the likelihood of parameter bias due to omitted variables (Preacher & Hayes, 2008b)

5.8.4.1 Use of Bootstrapping

Bootstrapping is considered one of the better methods for estimating and testing hypotheses regarding mediation (Bollen & Stine, 1990; Preacher & Hayes, 2008a; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). It has been a highly recommended method in recent years, and most methodologists agree that bootstrapping is a logical way to quantify an indirect effect (MacKinnon & Warsi, 1995; Preacher & Hayes, 2008b; Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

If the variables have measurement errors, the significance of the indirect effect is likely to be underestimated. Bootstrapping can assess the stability of parameter estimates. MacKinnon et al.'s (2002) and MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams's (2004) simulation results of the different mediation testing methods suggest that bootstrapping the indirect effect is superior to the traditional methods, such as causal steps methods, both in terms of power and Type I error rates. In addition, an increasing number of statisticians are advocating a move away from traditional statistical procedures that rely on assumptions, particularly when they are unrealistic (Efron & Tibshirani, 1993; Preacher & Hayes, 2008b). Using bootstrapping for testing mediation does not impose the assumption of normality of the sampling distribution, and as a result, it produces a more accurate inference (Preacher & Leonardelli, 2010). It is preferred over methods that assume symmetry or normality of the sampling distribution of the indirect effect (Preacher & Hayes, 2008a).

5.8.4.2 Bootstrapping Procedure

Bootstrapping is an appropriate way to control and check the stability of the results. It provides stable inference in regards to the specific effects. To be more specific, it provides the most powerful and reasonable method of obtaining confidence limits for specific indirect effects under most conditions, in particular, bias-corrected (BC) bootstrapping, and is thus a highly recommended method (Briggs, 2006; Preacher & Hayes, 2008a; Williams & MacKinnon, 2008). The bias-corrected bootstrap contains a correction for the bias created by

the central tendency of the estimate. Bias-corrected confidence intervals are considered to yield more accurate values than percentile confidence intervals, as they correct for skew in the population, and are therefore recommended in testing for mediation (Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007).

The indirect effect of QEP value OWOM was bootstrapped using the AMOS bootstrapping function. There is no consensus as to how many bootstrap samples should be generated, except that more is better. Preacher and Hayes (2008c) suggest at least 1,000. In the end, 2,000 re-samples were used for final reporting. A bootstrap was performed using the ML estimator, and bias-corrected confidence intervals for each of the parameter bootstrap estimates were set to the 95% level.

5.8.4.3 Indirect effects

Determination of the indirect effects in the model was based on examining the significance of the effects from the bootstrap procedure. Table 5.28 contains the estimated effect size for indirect effects, as well as bootstrap-derived standard errors and, the lower and upper endpoints of the bootstrap confidence interval for the effects (95% bias corrected).

Table 5.28 Unstandardised Indirect Effects (BS=2000, BCCI=95%)

	QEP	SAT	SOC	COM	LOY	OWOM
SAT	0	0	0	0	0	0
SOC	0	0	0	0	0	0
COM	0	0	0	0	0	0
LOY	0.425*** (0.057) [0.321-0.547]	0	0	0	0	0
OWOM	0.624*** (0.056) [0.515-0.736]	0.104*** (0.027) [0.054-0.161]	0	0	0	0

***:p<.001; standard errors of the estimates in parentheses; lower bound (LB) and upper bound (UB) of estimates in square brackets. BS=Bootstrapping; BCCI=bias-corrected confidence interval

The bootstrap procedure revealed significant total indirect effects between QEP value and OWOM through three different processes with (a) satisfaction and loyalty as mediators, (b) social value as mediator, and (c) affective commitment as mediator. Indirect effects are considered significant when the bias corrected confidence interval does not include zero

(Preacher & Hayes, 2008b). The total indirect effect size of QEP value on OWOM is .624 (SE=.057, BCCI=95% (LB=.515, UB=.736), $p<.001$), indicating that QEP value has a large effect at Cohen's (1988) standard ($\beta>.50$) on OWOM in part through satisfaction (SAT) and loyalty (LOY), as well as social value (SOC) and affective commitment (COM).

Table 5.29 presents the indirect effects from the AMOS output. It needs to be noted that the indirect effect of QEP on OWOM is the total indirect effect. In the literature, components of this nature are referred to as *specific* indirect effects (Sobel, 1986). In a multiple mediation model, the researcher is concerned not only with the total indirect effect of QEP on OWOM, but also with specific indirect effects. There are three processes that taken together completely mediate the relationship between QEP and OWOM. The total indirect effect of QEP on OWOM can be decomposed into a component that affects OWOM through SAT and LOY (QEP→SAT→LOY→OWOM), a component that affects OWOM through SOC only (QEP→SOC→OWOM), and a component that affects OWOM through COM only (QEP→COM→OWOM). Three specific indirect effects were calculated “by multiplying the unstandardized parameter estimates of the mediating variables” (see Table 5.30) (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000, p. 70). Sobel's multivariate delta method was used to calculate the standard error of the estimates (MacKinnon et al., 2002; Sobel, 1982). In the case of three path mediation (QEP→SAT→LOY→OWOM), an extended Sobel's multivariate delta method was used (Taylor, MacKinnon, & Tein, 2008).

Table 5.30 shows the total indirect effect of QEP on OWOM of .624, which is the summation of the three indirect effects (calculated and presented in the lower part of the table).

Specifically, the size of specific indirect effects are: *Component 1 Effect*

(QEP→SAT→LOY→OWOM) of 0.089 ($z=3.74$, $p<.001$); *Component 2 Effect*

(QEP→SOC→OWOM) of 0.111 ($z=1.91$, $p<.10$); and *Component 3 Effect*

(QEP→COM→OWOM) of 0.425 ($z=5.59$, $p<.001$). These specific effects represent the ability of each mediator to mediate the effect while controlling for all other mediators. Thus, a specific indirect *Component 3 Effect* represents COM's unique ability to mediate the relationship between QEP and OWOM.

The model shows that affective commitment (COM) is affected by changes in QEP value – one unit change in QEP value is associated with a change of .768 units in COM (see Table 5.29). Changes in COM are associated with changes in OWOM, above and beyond the direct effect of QEP value on OWOM – a unit change of COM is associated with a change of .553

units in OWOM when QEP value is held constant. The same rationale applies to the mediators satisfaction and loyalty, and social value. As a result, QEP has a significant indirect effect on OWOM through the set of mediators (i.e., social value (SOC), affective commitment (COM), and customer satisfaction (SAT) and loyalty (LOY)).

Table 5.29 Unstandardised Direct Effects (BS=2000, BCCI=95%)

	QEP	SAT	SOC	COM	LOY
SAT	0.859*** (0.077) [0.717-1.013]				
SOC	0.901*** (0.060) [0.719-1.033]				
COM	0.768*** (0.075) [0.623-0.919]				
LOY		0.494*** (0.048) [0.401-0.593]			
OWOM			0.123* (0.064) [0.005-0.260]	0.553** (0.083) [0.384-0.707]	0.210*** (0.050) [0.106-0.310]

***:p<.001; **:p<.002; *:p<.05; standard errors of the estimates in parentheses; lower and upper bound of estimates in square brackets. BS=Bootstrapping; BCCI=bias-corrected confidence interval

Table 5.30 Total Indirect Effects and Specific Indirect Effects (BS=2000, BCCI=95%)

Indirect Effect	Estimates	SE	C. R.	Sig
Total Indirect Effect				
SAT ->LOY->OWOM	0.104	0.027	3.852	0.001
QEP->SAT->LOY	0.425	0.057	7.456	0.001
QEP->OWOM	0.624	0.056	11.143	0.001
Specific Indirect Effect Components				
1: QEP->SAT->LOY->OWOM	0.089	0.024*	3.740	0.001
2: QEP->SOC->OWOM	0.111	0.058*	1.914	0.056
3: QEP->COM->OWOM	0.425	0.076*	5.592	0.001

*: The three standard errors of specific indirect effects (in the lower part of this table) were calculated using the multivariate delta method. Note: C.R. = Critical Ratio. Bootstrapping N=2000; 95% BCCI (bias-corrected confidence interval)

Apart from the total indirect effect of QEP on OWOM, there are two more indirect effects on OWOM (see Table 5.30). The first is the indirect effect of satisfaction on OWOM via loyalty (SAT→LOY→OWOM). It is shown that satisfaction is significantly positively related to OWOM through loyalty ($\beta=.104$, $z=3.85$, BCCI=95% (LB=.054, UB=.161) $p<0.001$), but the effect is considered small. The second indirect effect is between QEP and loyalty via

satisfaction (QEP→SAT→LOY), which is also significant ($\beta=.425$, $z=7.46$, BCCI=95% (LB=.321, UB=.547) $p<0.001$).

To conclude, significant total indirect effects exist between the latent construct of QEP value and that of OWOM. Significant specific indirect effects were observed a) between QEP value and OWOM with satisfaction and loyalty as mediators; b) between QEP value and OWOM with social value as mediator; c) between QEP value and OWOM through affective commitment; d) between QEP value and loyalty through satisfaction; and e) between satisfaction and OWOM through loyalty.

Indirect effect between Satisfaction and Customer OWOM (SAT → LOY → OWOM)(H1)

It was hypothesised that customers who feel greater satisfaction with their purchase would be more likely to engage in OWOM than less satisfied customers. However, the results show no direct relationship between customer satisfaction and customer OWOM. The relationship between customer satisfaction and customer OWOM was shown to be significant through customer loyalty, and thus, H1 is partially supported.

Indirect effect between QEP and Customer OWOM (QEP → OWOM)(H4a-c)

It was hypothesised that customers with high perceived QEP value of the product or service would be more likely to engage in OWOM than those who perceived less value. However, the results show no direct relationship between customers' perceived QEP value and customer OWOM. Instead, the relationship between customers' perceived QEP value and customer OWOM was shown to be significant through a) satisfaction and loyalty, b) social value, and c) affective commitment. Thus, H4a is partially supported.

5.8.5 Summary of Structural Model

The proposed model obtained good model fit and the hypotheses were upheld, or partially supported. After the model was revised by removing non-significant paths, a more parsimonious model was obtained with good model fit (CFI=.91, TLI=.91, RMSEA=.06). The findings support the modified multiple-mediation model in which customer loyalty, perceived social value and affective commitment exert direct positive effects on customer OWOM, and customer-perceived QEP value and customer satisfaction exert indirect positive effects on customer OWOM. The positive relationship between QEP value and customer satisfaction, perceived social value and affective commitment, are shown to be statistically

significant. The relationship between QEP value and OWOM is mediated through affective commitment, perceived social value, satisfaction and loyalty. More specifically, the results showed a significant specific indirect effect between QEP value and OWOM with affective commitment as the mediator. Similarly, social value mediated the effect of QEP on OWOM; satisfaction and loyalty mediated, acting in turn, the effect of QEP on OWOM. Two more specific indirect paths were found to be statistically significant: the indirect effect between QEP value and loyalty with satisfaction as the mediator, and the indirect effect between satisfaction and OWOM with loyalty as the mediator.

5.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the results from the interviews, and discussed how the key insights drawn from the interview data were used to inform the development of the survey. The chapter described the survey data collected and the process of measurement refinement, established measurement validity and reliability, and presented results from factor analysis, measurement model, and structural model analysis. Nine of eleven hypotheses were supported, and two were partially supported. The alternative hypothesis H1 was not supported. A re-specified structural model provided a more parsimonious solution to the data. The hypotheses testing summary is presented in Table 5.31.

Table 5.31 Hypotheses Testing Summary

	Primary Hypotheses	Accepted
H1	The extent of customer satisfaction is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise.	Yes (Indirectly)
<i>Alternative H1</i>	<i>The extent of customer satisfaction has a U-shaped relationship with customer OWOM activity.</i>	No
H2	The extent of customer loyalty is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise.	Yes
H3	The extent of customer affective commitment is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise.	Yes
H4	The extent of customer perceived value is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise.	Yes (Indirectly)
H4a-c	The extent of customer perceived QEP value is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise.	Yes (Indirectly)
H4d	The extent of customer perceived social value is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise.	Yes
H4e	The extent of customer perceived QEP value is positively related to customer social value. (Suggested in interviews; see section 5.2.4)	Yes

	Primary Hypotheses	Accepted
H5	The extent of customer perceived QEP value is positively related to customer satisfaction.	Yes
H6	The extent of customer satisfaction is positively related to customer loyalty.	Yes
H7	The extent of customer perceived QEP value is positively related to customer affective commitment.	Yes

In addition to its initially hypothesised direct effect on OWOM, QEP was expected to have an indirect effect on OWOM via SAT and LOY, SOC, and COM. It can be seen that its full impact was channelled through the other four variables. Overall the conceptual model's explanatory value held up well, according to the structural model analysis. These findings are discussed in detail in the final chapter of this thesis.

CHAPTER 6. Discussion and Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

This research aimed to: 1) better understand reasons customers engage in post-purchase OWOM, 2) develop an integrative model of customer OWOM, and 3) investigate if collectivist cultural context affects customers' OWOM engagement.

This research answers the following questions that hold significant interest for marketing scholars and managers yet have remained largely unexplored. The questions were: what antecedents influence Chinese customers' WOM activity online? What role, if any, does Chinese collectivist culture play in customers' OWOM initiation? The study sought to extend previous research in the marketing literature by investigating and providing clear answers to these questions.

In this concluding chapter, the findings and implications for marketing theory and practice will be provided. Specifically, this chapter will first provide a further discussion of the results presented in Chapter Five. These research findings will be compared with other studies to uncover the reasons for the differences and similarities. The following sections will discuss the contribution of the thesis. Finally the limitations of this thesis will be examined to pave the way for future directions of the research.

6.2 Effect of OWOM Antecedents

It is recognised that customers initiate post-purchase WOM online as an outcome of a number of states they experience in relation to the product or the service they purchased and consumed. The research examined the antecedents of customer OWOM and the findings showed support for the hypothesised relationships in the model. The findings confirmed that customer loyalty, perceived social value and affective commitment to the brand or the organisation make a direct positive impact on customer OWOM. Customer affective commitment appears to affect customer OWOM the most. Customer satisfaction, and perceived quality, emotion and price value (QEP Value) influence customer OWOM indirectly. The results of the analyses mostly support the hypothesised relationships. The effect of each antecedent on customer OWOM is discussed.

6.2.1 Effect of Customer Satisfaction on OWOM [SAT→OWOM]

H1 posits that customer satisfaction is positively related to customer OWOM. The empirical evidence provided by the literature about the relationship between customer satisfaction and WOM intentions or behaviour is equivocal. Some researchers found significant positive influence of satisfaction on WOM (e.g., Heckman & Guskey, 1998; Mittal et al., 1999; Swan & Oliver, 1989). Yet the result of this study is consistent with the findings of researchers who did not find evidence of a direct relationship between customer satisfaction and WOM (e.g., Arnett, German, & Shelby, 2003; Bettencourt, 1997). For example, Reynolds and Beatty (1999) did not find support that satisfaction with a retailer leads to greater positive WOM about that retailer. In their sample of university alumni, Arnett et al. (2003) found no direct relationship between satisfaction with the university and efforts of alumni to promote the university to others.

However, the results of this study do not support scholars in their criticism of the predictive power of satisfaction on WOM in an online context. There are a number of possible alternative behavioural responses to customer satisfaction (Bolfing, 1989; Howard, 1989). Research has found a relatively weak link between satisfaction and specific behaviours (e.g., Gustafsson, Johnson, & Roos, 2005). When aggregated patterns of multiple, rather than individual, behaviours are studied, the relationship between satisfaction and behaviour is stronger (e.g., Heitmann, Lehmann, & Heitmann, 2007; Jones et al., 2006). This study concentrates on the specific behaviour of OWOM engagement, rather than aggregate behaviours including other alternative behavioural responses such as complaining and product usage (Howard, 1989). In this case, the result is consistent with the aforementioned studies, finding no direct relationship between customer satisfaction and customer OWOM.

Other antecedents of customer OWOM and their interactive effects with customer satisfaction also offer a possible explanation for the conflicting findings of the satisfaction-WOM relationship in the existing research. Wirtz and Chew (2002) found that satisfied customers are a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for getting positive WOM. Rather than a direct relationship, the findings of this study show that the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer OWOM is indirect through customer loyalty. Thus, loyalty is the more immediate antecedent of customer OWOM behaviour.

Even though a few scholars do not agree on the significant influence of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty (e.g., Neal, 1999), the explanation of customer-oriented business has shifted back from satisfying customers to creating loyal customers (Oliver, 1980). According to the expectation-disconfirmation model, customers develop expectations about a product before purchasing. When the actual consumption experience is better than their expectations, this leads to positive disconfirmation, which means that the customer is highly satisfied and will develop a positive attitude toward the brand or the organisation and be more willing to make repeat purchases (Oliver, 1980). Customers become loyal as a result of the satisfaction they experience with their purchase. Satisfaction has a very important role in determining loyalty because it influences the choice of brand or organisation, and the decision to return, with researchers further affirming a link between customer satisfaction and loyalty (Kozak, 2001; Oliver, 1980; Rust & Zahorik, 1993). Previous studies on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty confirmed that they are very closely related, and that customer satisfaction functions as an antecedent of customer loyalty (Chan et al., 2010; Dick & Basu, 1994; Kozak, 2001; McGee & Ford, 1987). It prevents customer churn and consolidates retention, thereby constituting an important cause of customer loyalty (Fornell, 1992; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Söderlund, 1998). This study is consistent with the view of the majority of previous studies (Donio, Massari, & Passiante, 2006; Prus & Brandt, 1995), and confirms a significant positive relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty – an increase in satisfaction has been shown to result in increased customer loyalty.

However, previous studies noted that satisfaction has an impact on loyalty, but the degree of impact is not the same for all industries (Fornell, 1992), and not the same in all situations (McCleary, Weaver, & Hsu, 2007). Additional analysis of the path estimates across four industries shows significant effect of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty (effect size of .481 for electronics, .672 for skincare products, .427 for apparels, and .332 for other products), but the impact is not significantly different from one another (all $p > .05$).

The possibility of a U-shaped relationship between the effect of customer satisfaction and customer OWOM activity was investigated (Alternative H1). The findings of the examination of this curvilinear relationship revealed no U-shaped effect observed in the data, and thus provided no evidence in supporting Anderson's (1998) conclusion that a U-shaped curvilinear relationship exists in this context. This could probably be explained with consideration of collectivism-oriented culture in China. As interview findings suggest,

negative WOM about a personally unsatisfactory experience may not be engaged in when the collective view is generally favourable. Customers conform to social standards and withhold negative comments in their OWOM activities in order to preserve attractiveness of his or her identity and maintain acceptance and inclusion in their social groups. For example an interview participant expresses her concern that giving negative WOM would “create discomfort and give people a bad impression of myself” (R18, female, mid-20s).

6.2.2 Effect of Customer Loyalty on OWOM [LOY→OWOM]

H2 posits that customer loyalty is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise, which is supported by the findings. This is not a surprising finding since one could reasonably expect that customers who form a favourable attitude towards a brand after purchase or consumption would not hesitate to communicate their positive opinion to other customers. Loyal customers do seem to contribute positive WOM communication for the brand or the organisation.

Loyalty is conceptualised from an attitudinal perspective in the study as consisting of a strong internal disposition towards a brand or organisation leading to repeated purchases. As such, the attitudinal approach conceives of loyalty based on stated preferences or repurchase intentions. In the case that customers do not repurchase for various reasons, including situational, social or financial motives, the attitudinal loyalty is an appropriate factor to affect customer OWOM. It seems logical to accept that customers in this situation are willing to share their unfulfilled desire for a specific product or service. This finding is also consistent with previous studies, which took different approaches to studying loyalty. For example, brand loyalty is the focal construct in Gounaris and Stathakopoulos’s (2004) model, and they found loyalty led to a number of customer-related behavioural consequences. Covetous and premium loyalty, both involving strong positive predispositions towards the brand, are found to be associated with WOM communication. This study supported previous research investigating the influence of customers’ loyalty on generating positive WOM (Dick & Basu, 1994; Ellis, 2000) and agree with Dick and Basu’s (1994) suggestion of WOM being a potential consequence of loyalty.

6.2.3 Effect of Customer Affective Commitment on OWOM [COM→OWOM]

H3 posits that customer affective commitment is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise. The findings of the study indicate that customers experiencing high levels

of affective commitment to the brand or the organisation are more likely to engage in OWOM. There is evidence in the marketing literature to suggest that affective commitment is associated with customer voluntary performance, such as “helpful, discretionary behaviours of the customer that support the ability of the firm to deliver service quality” (Bettencourt, 1997, p. 384). This study showed that customer affective commitment is indeed associated with customer OWOM, which potentially benefits the brand or organisation.

Affective commitment deals with the customer’s inner emotional or psychological attachment to the brand or organisation. It relates to the customer’s sense of belongingness, their happiness in being a customer, and their feeling of being emotionally attached and part of the family of the brand or organisation. Customers who are committed to a relationship have a greater propensity to act because of their need to remain consistent with their commitment (Moorman et al., 1992). A desire to maintain and continue a relationship, and a willingness to make efforts to do so, imply higher chances of engaging in positive WOM about the brand or organisation. This genuine want to ‘stay’ is driven by personal consideration of emotional attachment toward the brand or organisation. When customers feel attached to a brand or organisation, they commit to the achievement of its goals, and expend more voluntary effort on its behalf. It explains why the customer is willing to (or unwilling to) engage in voluntary WOM behaviour (Chu & Li, 2012). Previous work found that customers with high levels of affective commitment tend to be guided by their emotions when making future purchase decisions (Dick & Basu, 1994). It appears that the emotions of customers with high levels of affective commitment also guide their engagement of OWOM after their purchase or consumption. When committing affectively, the action is manifested through customers’ generation of positive WOM. Customers who love doing business with the brand or organisations are willing and happy to spread the love and tell their friends, and even strangers. They tell their social networks, for example, on their blogs, Facebook pages, and in their tweets. Some even love the business or the brand so much they become their evangelists and start selling for them, which is beyond the scope of this study.

The results of the study clearly indicate that affective commitment plays a pivotal role in influencing customer OWOM. Among the antecedents examined in this study, affective commitment appears to affect the customer OWOM the most with an effect size of 0.497 ($p < .05$). The findings indicate that emotionally-bonded customers are willing to spread positive WOM online about the brand or organisation. The results add credence to the

importance of affective commitment, and this finding also substantiates Harrison-Walker's (2001) proposition that customers with high affective commitment would tend to engage in positive WOM in a non-service context.

6.2.4 Effect of Customer-Perceived Social Value on OWOM [SOC→OWOM]

H4d posits that customer perceived social value is positively related to customer OWOM. Social value is the utility a product or service provides through its ability to enhance the individual's social self-concept (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Customers perceive this utility as being acquired from a product's or service's association with one or more specific social groups. The perceived social value derived from their purchase or consumption has been found to have a direct impact on their initiation of WOM online. However, the influence of perceived social value on customer OWOM is limited in the sense that it only has a small positive effect of 0.13 on customer OWOM.

Previous research has examined social value as a component under the concept of overall perceived value to study its aggregated effect (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). This study investigated social value itself in terms of its effect on customer OWOM behaviour. Customers' perceived social value derived from the product/service enhances their social self-concept. Their possession or consumption is a reflection of how they want others to perceive them, and that they see their possessions as a part of or extensions of themselves. The study found that customers are more likely to engage in OWOM when they perceive that they received high social value from their purchase or consumption. The interpretation of social value varies for different people depending on their cultural background and social circles. Customers base their perception of a brand's/organisation's social value upon interactions with people (e.g., aspired and/or peer reference group). Such interactions occur at personal and societal levels (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). This relationship between perceived social value and customer OWOM is particularly interesting in the Chinese research setting in terms of cultural aspects.

Collectivism aspects of the Social Value–OWOM relationship

People tend to behave in a socially desirable way, and this depends on whether their cultural self-construal is independent or interdependent (Lalwani, 2009). In collectivist culture, people have an interdependent self-construal, and are driven to seek social approval and avoid social disapproval. Therefore, they tend to provide normatively desirable and socially

appropriate responses (Lalwani, 2009). When making a purchase, customers often value the social meanings of the product/service in order to display his or her position in the group and get the approval of others.

Some researchers argue that customers engage in WOM to gain social reward (e.g., friendship, social acceptance and inclusion) (Ellis, 2000). They do so by talking up a brand or organisation in order to remind their social groups that they are similar to their group because they buy what the group buys. In collectivist culture, social networks provide one's bearings and help to define who one is (Myers, 1999). People seek to express their interdependent self and tend to provide WOM to express their identity to the group. They conform to group standards and seek to make favourable impressions. For instance, an interview participant (R11, male, mid-20s) gave positive WOM on his instant messenger group about a Sony product to show the group that he is also a Sony-owner. This need for approval resulted in his engagement of OWOM.

Face aspects of the Social Value–OWOM relationship

Customers may engage in OWOM for social enhancement reasons. This is particularly evident among Chinese customers because of the role of *face* in their day-to-day activities. *Face* is a social need – a desire to have favourable social self-worth and to be respected in relation to others and in social activities (Ting-toomey & Kurogi, 1998). It is interpersonal and is addressed more to a collectivist culture, which represents a more social concept of the self (Liao & Wang, 2009). *Face* is a primary personality characteristic of Chinese, and saving and enhancing *face* are extremely important issues in Chinese society (Lu, 1934). China is largely Confucian, and is thus status-driven and ambitious (Doctoroff, 2005). Chinese are typically more concerned about how they are perceived by others, and try to maintain their social status through recognition from others. By telling others about their purchase or consumption, they gain face and recognition from their social circle. For example, a jade-buyer interview participant acknowledged that he spoke of his supreme-quality He-Tian jade to his juniors as “a bit of show-off” (R14, male, late 20s). Likewise, when customers perceive low social value in a product or service, they are less likely to engage OWOM in order to avoid disapproval from their social groups.

The above sections discussed more immediate antecedents of customer OWOM (i.e., customer loyalty, customer affective commitment, and customer-perceived social value). The

next section will address the relationship between customer OWOM and Quality, Emotional and Price value (QEP value).

6.2.5 Effect of Perceived QEP Value on OWOM [QEP → OWOM]

After the purchase and during the consumption period, the product or service chosen delivers facets of value to the customer. Consumers evaluate the product or service on the basis of the magnitude and direction of the gap between their expectation and their perceived value of the product or service actually delivered (Zeithaml et al., 1996). These benefits, gained throughout the consumption process, are always subject to the customer's individual perceptions. Quality, emotional, and price value were considered as three separate values in some studies (Hall, Shaw, Lascheit, & Robertson, 2000; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). However, this study shows the three are so closely intertwined that they should be considered as one - QEP value.

H4a-c posits that customer perceived QEP value is positively related to customer OWOM activity and praise. The results suggest that there is no evidence that customer OWOM is influenced directly by customers' perceived QEP value (H4a, $t=-1.52$, $p>.05$). Nevertheless, this research suggests that customer perceived QEP value influences OWOM through three sets of mediators, i.e., multiple mediation effects. After investigating the statistical significance of the mediation effects, it is important to separately consider whether or not the effects are practically important and meaningful, which relies on the context and background knowledge (Little et al., 2007). It is the particular interest of this study to examine the antecedents of customer OWOM, and hence the indirect effects of QEP value on customer OWOM. Perceived QEP value varies for different people and affects customer satisfaction and in turn customer loyalty, customer perceived social value, as well customer affective commitment. Customer satisfaction and loyalty, perceived social value, and affective commitment toward a brand or organisation are further anticipated to influence their OWOM activity and praise.

Firstly, customer perceived QEP value affects customer OWOM indirectly first through customer satisfaction, and then through customer loyalty (QEP → SAT → LOY → OWOM). This indirect positive effect of QEP value on customer OWOM is statistically significant with an effect size of 0.089 ($z=3.14$, $p<.001$). It is reasonable to expect that customers who perceived high levels of quality, emotional and price value were more satisfied with their

purchase or consumption, which led to higher loyalty toward the company or the brand, which in turn increased their engagement with OWOM. This finding supports previous studies (e.g., Bojanic, 1996; Yang & Peterson, 2004), and affirms that high perceived value results in customer satisfaction and loyalty (also hypothesised in H5), with perceived value being a precursor of satisfaction, and satisfaction leading to loyalty. It should be pointed out that Yang and Peterson (2004) took a behavioural approach to studying the mediating role of customer satisfaction in the value-loyalty relationship, treating WOM as one of the loyalty behavioural components.

Secondly, customer perceived QEP value affects customer OWOM indirectly through customer-perceived social value (QEP→SOC→OWOM). This indirect positive effect of QEP value on customer OWOM is statistically significant with an effect size of .111 ($z=1.91$, $p<.10$). It should be noted that this indirect effect is significant at the .10 level, although the direct effect of QEP→SOC is significant at the .001 level and the direct effect of SOC→OWOM is significant at the .05 level. This could be explained by the presence of other mediators examined in the same model that could potentially cancel each other out. Nevertheless, this relationship is significant and important in explaining the relationship between customer perceived value and customer OWOM. QEP value and social value were found to be distinct but related both in interviews and survey results in this study. This is an interesting finding because: 1) some customer value studies did not include social value (e.g., Lesaffre, 1983; Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000); and 2) the previous studies applying the same measurement have reported social value to be a component of the overall perceived value and that the same relationships exist among social, quality, emotional and price values. The finding of this study indicated that social value is considered by Chinese customers as a distinct concept, and is influenced by the quality, emotional and price value (QEP value) they perceived from the product or service purchased and consumed.

One possible explanation for this differentiation and relationship could be the emphasis on social contexts that Chinese customers often place on their consumption. Chinese are often *face* conscious and are more concerned with how they are appraised by others. *Face* conscious consumers usually buy products and brands conveying the social status and prestige that they approve of (Ting-toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Their consumption is the process of preserving or gaining *face*. The Chinese culture is particularly characterised by a strong desire to gain or protect *face* (Hoare & Butcher, 2008). The products and brands have

the ability to communicate messages to others and determine how consumers who own particular products are perceived by others. In either case, the social value derived from the product or service is determined by the quality, emotional and price value of the product or service. This is particularly evident in conspicuous consumption, which signals wealth and, by inference, power and status. For example, the consumption of the Hetian jade (Interviewee R14, male, late-20s) and the dress (R9, female, early-20s) were viewed as a signal of superior social status. The quality and price of these products (premium and expensive by normal standards) enhanced the value of such a signal (i.e., allowing the consumers to gain *face* in their social circle at work). A high level of QEP value derived from a product or service provides customers with the benefit of higher perceived social status in the eyes of others. When customers perceive that they received a high level of social value, they tend to engage in OWOM about their purchase or consumption to gain social rewards in the form of improving their social standing or maintaining their current social status.

Further adding to the point of the important role that social context plays in this relationship, social identification and categorisation theory suggests that individuals tend to identify with a social category, and in order to preserve the attractiveness of their social identity they engage in various behaviours that relate positively to that category (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; He & Li, 2011). This is more so for Chinese customers because they often reference their social groups in their acquisition and consumption of products or services. Prior to purchase, they tend to make decisions to purchase and consume certain social group-associated products. They seek “linking value” from the product or service, and this value allows them to manifest the desire to integrate with, or to dissociate from, the group of individuals that make up their social environment (del Rio, Vazquez, & Iglesias, 2001). This is beyond the consumption value of products and services. The level of social value, i.e., the certain degree of social acceptance and social approval, is suggested and determined by the customer-perceived QEP value of the product or the service. There is a tendency for customers to evaluate the QEP value from the perspective of a member of a social group, rather than an independent individual. For instance, an interview participant (R1, female, mid-20s) purchased an MP3 player, considering it to be of good QEP value, in the hope that it would help her blend into her circle of school friends despite it being below her criteria of the price and quality for an MP3 player. This example reflects the fact that Chinese customers typically view themselves as a part of the collective, and their perception of the product or service’s values are based on their interdependent self. They hope to receive approval from other people in their social

groups. This level of social value is determined by customers' (interdependent selves') perception of the functional and emotional value of their purchased product or service, i.e., QEP value.

Thirdly, customer-perceived QEP value affects customer OWOM indirectly through customer affective commitment (QEP→COM→OWOM). This indirect positive effect of QEP value on customer OWOM is statistically significant with an effect size of .425 ($z=5.59$, $p<.001$). Customers who perceived high levels of quality, emotional and price value (QEP value) from the consumption of the product or service are more committed to the brand or organisation. This commitment leads customers to develop and maintain this precious attribute in their relationship with the brand or organisation. Affective commitment is higher among individuals who perceive high QEP value from the acquisition of products or services, thus highly committed customers are more willing to reciprocate effort on behalf of a brand or organisation due to the benefits received (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982a). Committed customers are willing to perform voluntary behaviours, such as an increased engagement with OWOM as examined in this study, because they identify with the brand or organisation's goals and values and are interested in the welfare of the organisation (Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995). This finding is in line with previous studies which found commitment had a positive relationship with customer advocacy, i.e., acting as advocates for the organisation to which they feel affiliated (Fullerton, 2003; Price & Arnould, 1999). Customers can be bound by an emotional attachment to brands/organisations, which is caused by positive emotional experiences (Ellis, 2000), together with high functional values they perceived from the products or services.

6.3 Contribution

The contributions of the study are structured according to the conceptual model and research methodology. They are discussed in the following.

Contribution in terms of conceptual model

From an academic point of view, this study contributes to the growing research on customers' OWOM behaviour (e.g., Chen & Xie, 2008; Cheung & Thadani, 2010; Jalilvand, Esfahani, & Samiei, 2011; Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010) by developing and empirically testing the customer OWOM model from the WOM sender's perspective. The model

establishes clear links between the antecedents and customer OWOM. The study empirically addresses the relationship across customer perceived value, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, customer affective commitment, and customer OWOM. This study joined a number of articles (e.g., Brown et al., 2005; Harrison-Walker, 2001) that focus the attention on the customers' offline WOM behaviour, and extends the scope to the OWOM. It provides a comprehensive conceptualisation of customer OWOM – consumption and brand/organisation-related behaviour, and explains the underlying reasons for customers' engagement of post-purchase OWOM.

The study was undertaken with the intent to contribute to the current literature on consumers' OWOM behaviour. The study combines customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, customer affective commitment and customer perceived value to predict customer OWOM. Although a moderate amount of empirical research has been conducted to examine the individual relationships among these constructs, such as affective commitment – WOM relationship (Harrison-Walker, 2001), customer satisfaction – WOM relationship (Holmes & Hanzlick, 1988; Keiningham et al., 2007), the present study simultaneously investigates this particular set of antecedents for OWOM. It examines these constructs in a single framework, and thus provides a more holistic view of the relationship between customer OWOM and its antecedents. A model of customer OWOM was developed based on the literature review relevant to WOM behaviour, refined based on interviews, and tested with collected data through survey. The proposed links in the model were empirically tested and the results of the analysis were mostly supportive of the hypothesised relationships between customer OWOM and its antecedents. Most of the primary results reported here support the common nature of already established understanding and perception regarding traditional WOM initiation behaviour. This suggests that, from the WOM sender's perspective, the relationships between WOM engagement and its antecedents are also applicable in the online context.

This thesis also contributes to the body of relationship marketing knowledge by empirically highlighting the significance of customer perceived value, particularly the quality, emotional and price value (QEP value) that enables the formation of customer satisfaction and perceived social value of the product or service, and customer affective commitment with brands or organisations. The body of knowledge about customer value is fragmented - different views are advocated with no widely accepted way of pulling views together, and related empirical study is very limited. Despite the growing body of research in this area, it is

still not clear how customer perceived value interacts with related marketing variables. Egger and Ulaga (2002) also called for research toward investigating the interaction of customer value with other core marketing constructs. This study emphasises the critical role of customer perceived values in OWOM initiation by simultaneously investigating the various components of perceived value in an online context. The study highlights, in particular, the aspects of perceived social value in the Chinese collectivistic cultural context. The social value was previously examined in the overall perceived value together with quality, price and emotional value, and it was assumed that relationships among them were the same (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). The current research suggests that their emphasis maybe misplaced, at least in OWOM studies.

This study includes multiple product categories and OWOM channels to provide heterogeneity and improve the generalisability of the findings, and to obtain a more complete picture of customer OWOM and its antecedents. Many quantitative WOM studies have focussed on a single sector, particularly in services such as restaurants, veterinaries or hotels (e.g., Babin, Lee, Kim, & Griffin, 2005; Harrison-Walker, 2001; Kim et al., 2001). With the similar assumption that WOM is more important in service industries due to its intangible and heterogeneous nature of increasing perceived high risk, many OWOM studies have also been focussing on services, such as the hospitality industry (e.g., Bronner & de Hoog, 2011; Jin et al., 2010; Lim & Chung, 2011). Among a few studies that focussed on the WOM of products, single products were usually selected, such as chocolate cookies, for examining offline WOM (Bone, 1995) or single software programmes for studying customer OWOM (Zhang, Craciun, & Shin, 2010). This study includes participants' responses to multiple product categories that had been indicated in the interviews as popular in OWOM. This study provides a better understanding of the dynamics of the relationships between customer OWOM and its antecedents by investigating OWOM in multiple product categories. This study also includes WOM on multiple online channels or platforms. Most researchers have focussed on studying WOM on single online channel, with individual product review websites being the mostly widely studied (cf., Chan & Ngai, 2011). One-to-many and many-to-many channels are among the most common channels used in OWOM studies, including discussion forums and company websites. One-to-one channels, such as email and instant messenger are less often researched channels due to their public inaccessibility. This study included all the available channels at the time of data collection. Instant messenger appeared to be the most popular

channel used in customers' OWOM activities, thus allowing more understanding of the WOM on this channel.

Contributions in terms of research methodology

This thesis offers a contribution to the literature through its methodological approach. A mixed methods approach was adopted with a sequential research design of exploratory, qualitative interviews and a subsequent quantitative survey instrument. In studies of OWOM, a number of methods have been used thanks to the advance of Internet technology, such as data mining and content-based analysis. The current trend is to study the content that customers made on a particular online channel in order to understand what customers say about a brand or an organisation. Because customers can express their opinions by posting their reviews or making comments on companies' sites, web forums, discussion groups, blogs and other online channels, techniques are being developed to exploit these sources. Social media analysis industries and consultancies have merged, offering a broad range of social media intelligence and reputation management services that involve a range of methods, including sentiment analysis, opinion mining, and natural language processing. Academic studies also extended the range of data sources and focussed on secondary data analysis (e.g., Arnett et al., 2003; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Westbrook, 1981). However, the majority of OWOM studies have used a single approach, such as pure qualitative methods like site/topic-centred content-based case studies (e.g., Au, Law, & Buhalis, 2010; Bronner & de Hoog, 2011; Ye, Law, Gu, & Chen, 2011) and interview-led case studies (e.g., Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007), or pure quantitative methods, such as surveying (e.g., Cheung, Luo, Sia, & Chen, 2009; Chu & Choi, 2011) and experiments/simulations, with the latter being the mainstream method (e.g., Bampo et al., 2008; Berger & Schwartz, 2011; Cheema & Kaikati, 2010). There is a scarcity of studies in the WOM literature that have adopted mixed methods. In a review of 84 empirical research articles on eWOM published in 49 academic journals, Chan and Ngai (2011) reported that about 70 per cent of the studies followed quantitative methods, and qualitative methods account for about 30 per cent. The application of mixed methods is scarce. It is recommended that future studies in OWOM consider incorporating a mixed methodology of both qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to strike a balance among objectivity, detailed description, and the predictability of the studies (Chan & Ngai, 2011). The use of mixed methods in this thesis increased the rigour of the study, thus enhancing its validity and leading to a richer examination of the antecedents of OWOM.

Apart from the use of mixed methods, this study also investigated a somewhat under-researched population in terms of OWOM behaviour. Many of the empirical studies employ college students as samples (cf., Chan & Ngai, 2011). Aside from being convenient, some researchers argue that it is logical to use students as samples because “undergraduate students are among the most wired and more likely than average customers to spend time online” (Bailey, 2004, p. 20). However, as once wired students moved in to the workforce and mobile Internet technology advanced rapidly, the general public became as virtually connected as students. In China, about 70 per cent of Internet users are non-students (CNNIC, 2011). This research fills the gap and provides more understanding of non-students’ OWOM behaviour. The study also widens the geographic and cultural scope of OWOM research by exploring the customer’s OWOM behaviour in China. The study explicitly investigates the post-purchase antecedents of OWOM by Chinese consumers. The table presented in Appendix 11 was compiled from 94 OWOM related articles published from 2000 to 2009. The USA. represents the most researched culture in the world, as well as the sample basis for much consumer research theory. China is culturally very different from the USA and has been the subject of relatively little research (Fong & Burton, 2008). Chan and Ngai (2011) suggest this type of research be undertaken in less developed and transitional economies, such as China.

6.4 Managerial Implication

WOM provides a highly credible means of persuasion, for instance in converting unfavourable or neutral predispositions into positive attitudes (Mazzarol et al., 2007). Businesses are increasingly recognising the growing popularity of OWOM among customers, and are devising marketing strategies to cater to their needs, thus fostering a satisfying experience for the customer. Manufacturers extract product features that have been commented on by customers, and marketers identify opinion sentences in the review and decide whether it is positive or negative. China has been a fast-growing market for international companies in recent years. Despite the recent global financial crisis, the fundamentals still remain healthy for the growth of the Chinese economy (IMF, 2012). China has the world’s largest Internet population with huge marketing opportunities. Understanding Chinese customers’ OWOM behaviours is crucial for marketing practitioners in developing more effective strategies to capture this market in the future. Based on the results of this study, a few implications for practitioners are discussed.

The empirical results from the survey conducted in this study highlighted the importance of customer perceived value in motivating the Chinese customer to engage in OWOM activities. This was also a key theme in the interviews where all OWOM senders displayed a strong perception of the values of their purchased and consumed products or services. The research suggests that quality, emotional and price value (QEP value) must first be created by a company for its customers. It is then experienced by customers and translated into satisfaction and loyalty, social value, and affective commitment, and thus results in positive WOM. These findings generally support the literature conducted in Western contexts, and this study shows them to be true in China as well. This is despite the suspicion of some scholars that conclusions from studies made under the Western cultural environment may not be able to explain OWOM communication in China (Cheng & Zhou, 2010). This study suggests that in order to encourage Chinese customers to engage in more frequent and positive WOM online, marketers should build strong customer loyalty and offer high social value in their products or services to customers, particularly through the development of affectively committed customers.

The key indication is that businesses in China that seek positive customer WOM online should focus primarily on offering quality, emotional and price values (QEP value). Given the significance of customer perceived QEP value found in this study, marketers should focus on how to increase the value they offer through their products or services. Although values are subject to the customer's individual perceptions, they can be triggered by a company's efforts regarding the communication of value-based product specifics and advantages. Marketers in China should carefully focus on selecting appropriate QEP values to build into a brand and communicate to its target market.

Although customer loyalty, perceived social value and affective commitment can all increase customer OWOM engagement, affective commitment has the most pronounced effect, and this underlines the importance of creating and managing affective bonds with customers. The stronger the commitment, the more likely the customer is to overcome potential obstacles in the buyer-seller relationship, resulting in positive WOM communication. China is a relation-oriented society (Hwang, 1987). It is in marketers' best interests to cultivate affective relations with customers. Businesses should put an emphasis on building an actual affective relationship with customers by offering the value that caters not only to the expectations of customers but also to their desires and un-anticipations. Businesses may be able to enhance

affective commitment through efforts to increase customer involvement in the product or the service, or by ensuring that consumers identify strongly with the company or the brand. It calls for an excellent customer relationship management programme. For example, in service industries, Rodie and Kleine (2000) suggest that this could be accomplished by increasing the customer's participation in the production and delivery of service.

When developing communication strategies targeting Chinese consumers, an important consideration for marketers is the type of values used in their communication. Apart from the information designed to appeal to functional and emotional value-seeking consumers, this study also suggests that marketers can use a cultural strategy of focussing on offering social values, and incorporating the *face* concept, to improve customers' initiation of OWOM. In other words, marketers should consider incorporating aspects that appeal to Chinese consumers' desires for social value. Marketing practitioners should create value for the customers by offering potential benefits of recognition among their social groups, creating positive feelings and aiding self-expression. They should invest in actions that promote a positive and desirable social image for their brand or organisation. This is particularly important in China, as social status is the ultimate goal of the consumers and social approval and expectation is important in collectivist societies. In doing so, practitioners should understand the key attributes of their products or services that appear desirable to consumers in the social environment of the target group. Then a well-designed communication plan aimed at this audience, for example one that enhances the element of social status in marketing management and advertisement originality, should be undertaken.

The bottom line is that businesses in China should understand that consumers will talk positively, frequently and in detail about the product or the brand/company when they perceive superior value. There is no doubt that delivering an outstanding product or service creates impassioned customers, and that these consumers can serve as a powerful marketing tool for companies. Particularly as Chinese consumers are increasingly becoming social media savvy, getting high value product/service to them, creating customer satisfaction and loyalty, and building affective relationships with them can improve their engagement of positive OWOM, and thus help businesses grow.

6.5 Limitations of the Study

The implications drawn from this study should be considered in the light of several limitations. The first limitation of the study is its country-specific context. Consumers' behaviour is known to be influenced by cultural factors. Although the hypotheses were developed mainly based on the studies conducted in Western and individualistic societies, it seems that the factors are applicable to collectivist Chinese consumers as well. However, as the current study was undertaken in a single country, the generalisation of the results to other collectivist contexts must be made carefully. There is a possibility that OWOM behaviour of consumers in other political, economic and social environments could vary from those revealed in this study. Therefore, there is a limitation in generalising the findings of this research to other collectivist countries.

The second limitation of this study lies in the nature of the sample in the survey. For the quantitative survey, it would be ideal if a probability sampling technique could be employed that is based on a list of the population. However, it is nearly impossible to obtain a list of Chinese customers engaging in OWOM activities. The lack of probability sampling prevents the researcher from making generalisations about the population studied from the data collected in this research. In addition, due to the limited resources, the study's sample is mostly drawn from consumers in a large urban Chinese setting. The study assumes a low level of OWOM involvement of consumers in rural areas because the level of Internet access is significantly lower in rural areas with only 18 per cent of residents compared with 50 per cent of urban residents (CNNIC, 2011). There has been an increase in the Internet penetration rate in rural areas in the last few years, and Internet use is becoming more widespread across all sectors of the population (CNNIC, 2012). It would be beneficial to include this rural group and explore their OWOM activities, which have not been studied due to their previously low level of Internet access.

Additionally, because the data were collected using mainly Guangdong Internet user samples with an over representation of the highly educated, the findings may have limited generalisability within China. Although Guangdong is one of the three areas with the highest Internet penetration rate in China, the sample was drawn from the list provided by the company based in Guangzhou, which may not resemble the whole Internet user population in China in terms of demographic indicators and profile. Research on OWOM to date has been

disproportionately oriented to younger and heavier Internet users, as is the case in this study. While the participants in this study ranged considerably in age, they were for the most part adults. A more age-diverse sample could allow for meaningful comparisons of the perception of values of participants at different stages in life, as well as consideration of their Internet use experiences. The results of this study may not be entirely representative of the total population of Chinese Internet-users. It would be beneficial to collect data from other regions to present a more demographically diverse population, which would make the results more generalisable.

The last limitation of the research is the data's positive bias. The study focusses on post-purchase and consumption WOM behaviour, and the replies of respondents in remembering their OWOM experiences from the past. Retrospective evaluations of consumption experiences tend to be biased positively (Mitchell et al, 1997). There are reasons to believe that positive experiences produce a stronger response than negative experiences under certain conditions. One is that pleasant items are processed more accurately and efficiently by human perceptual-cognitive structures (cf. Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994). Moreover, it has been argued that most individuals have a general propensity to strive for interpretation in positive rather than negative terms. That is to say, when consumers are faced with experiences which challenge their generally positive conceptions, they may try to reinterpret, distort or minimise the negative aspects (Taylor, 1991). Furthermore, it seems that social factors, such as the individual's desire to appear rational, may bias the individual towards spreading positive rather than negative information. The desire to appear rational is at least one explanation for the fact that results in many customer satisfaction surveys often contain a distribution heavily skewed towards the high satisfaction part of the scale (Peterson and Wilson, 1992). Given this, it is possible to believe positive bias exists in the data of this study.

Despite the above limitations, it is believed they would not detract from the overall conclusion. Nevertheless, this thesis can be seen as the first step to investigate the OWOM behaviour in the Chinese market as there was no previous study carried out on such consumers.

6.6 Future Research Directions

Cultural difference is a critical component affecting how the product/service consumption is evaluated and what response actions will be taken after evaluation (Au et al., 2010). The current research project of post consumption OWOM engagement was conducted in a single country, primarily in one single metropolitan area. The extent to which the findings can be generalised certainly requires further investigation. The future research should be extended to respondents from different nations as well as cultural contexts to allow for cross-country validation and to lead to conclusions that can be generalised. This calls for coordinated cross-cultural and cross-national studies using the same research instrument and identical methodology regarding the data collection in all countries involved. Due to cultural diversity in China and the existence of within culture difference, future research can further validate and generalise the results by using a sample reflective of the cross-section of Chinese society. It is also recommended to carry out further study on the impact of other dimensions of Chinese culture on customers' OWOM behaviour.

Another possible area for further research is the antecedents of customer perceived value. Before it is possible to develop a clear picture of what factors actually influence the development of various values that customers perceive in their purchase and consumption of certain products and services, an understanding is needed of the effect of various factors on the development of perceived value. Given the significance of customer-perceived value for their OWOM engagement, future research should focus on investigating the potential effects of alternative factors on the development of customer-perceived value. Such factors may include demographic characteristics (such as income and education), involvement in the purchasing decision, or the informing mechanisms that customers use to process the communication message about products or brands. Thus future research may attempt to investigate the possibility of a link between such factors and customer-perceived value. As the results of this study indicate, the social context factors can be of interest in investigating customer-perceived social value, which is found to be important in OWOM engagement.

Alternative measures should be explored in future research to reduce the possible positive bias in the data which is widely acknowledged in WOM research. For instance, it could be possible to obtain respondents' reports via actual online channels' records. This would

involve the research incorporating archival data and/or the application of integrative methodologies, such as quantitative case surveys.

This study takes the OWOM sender's perspective and does not include information about exactly when and by whom the OWOM was received. This pertains to the question of information search behaviour: that is, whether WOM was actively searched for or passively received. Pre-consumption and non-purchase OWOM can be investigated from the perspective of information searches. Researchers in the field of social exchange theory may be interested in studying this particular topic in different online contexts. For example, Brown and Reingen (1987) provide initial evidence in their study of traditional offline WOM that weak social ties frequently serve as bridges for information flows between distinct subgroups in the social system. Data from longitudinal studies would be particularly useful for capturing the process dynamics. This would involve the collection and analysis of data derived from consumer panels whose actual OWOM would be monitored over a period of time.

6.7 Conclusion

WOM is seen by consumers as a personal source of information that is trustworthy. Over the last two decades, the power and process of personal influence has manifested in various WOM commentaries on the Internet. Customers engage in WOM online as a consequence of their experiences in relation to the product or service they purchased and consumed. Building on existing literature in the area of traditional WOM, this study provides further understanding regarding customer OWOM and its antecedents from a WOM sender's perspective. A conceptual model was developed based on the literature and information obtained through one-to-one in-depth interviews with Chinese participants. Customer satisfaction, loyalty, affective commitment and perceived value were hypothesised and found to be antecedents to customer OWOM. Data collection began with 18 in-depth interviews used to inform the research model and scale refinement. An online survey provided the data that were analysed using multiple regression and SEM. The results were interpreted in light of the existing literature and the qualitative data were captured in the exploratory phase of the research.

The results show that affective commitment (COM) has the most pronounced effect on customers' engagement of OWOM among the antecedents examined in the study. As expected, emotionally bonded customers are willing to spread positive WOM online about the brand or organisation. This finding suggests that companies should strive to create and manage affective relationships with Chinese customers who are relation-oriented. This would potentially benefit the brand and organisation.

An interesting finding of the study is that customer satisfaction (SAT) does not appear to have a U-shaped curvilinear relationship with customer OWOM. The research reveals that given Chinese culture is largely collectivist, customers typically conform to social standards and withhold negative comments in their OWOM activities in order to maintain acceptance and inclusion, and/or to make favourable impressions. The results demonstrate that customer satisfaction can influence relationships through customer loyalty.

This study highlights the importance of customer perceived value in affecting Chinese customers' engagement of OWOM. The results also indicate that customer perceived QEP (quality, emotional and price) value is a less immediate but critical antecedent. The findings suggest that customer perceived QEP value must first be created by a company for its customers. It is then experienced by customers and translated into customer satisfaction and loyalty, perceived social value, and affective commitment, and thus results in positive OWOM.

In addition to perceived QEP value, this study indicates that perceived social value is regarded as a distinct value from QEP value and also influences Chinese customers' OWOM. Chinese consumers are typically collectivist-oriented, and they value the social meanings of the product or service. They tend to engage in OWOM when companies' offerings help them display their position in the group and gain the approval of others. This suggests that companies should consider incorporating social value into their strategy, which appeals to Chinese customers by helping them gain *face* and recognition from their social circle, thus increasing the likelihood they will initiate positive WOM online.

This study developed an integrative model for customer OWOM engagement and empirically addressed the relationship between customer OWOM and its antecedents. The study concluded that all five key antecedents (i.e., customer satisfaction, customer loyalty,

customer QEP value, customer perceived social value and customer affective commitment) significantly affect customer OWOM engagement, directly or indirectly. The study highlighted the significance of customer perceived QEP value, which enables the formation of the other antecedents of OWOM. It also revealed the impact of the social aspects of perceived value in Chinese customers' OWOM initiation. Taking into consideration the importance of China's collectivist-orientated and *face*-conscious culture, this study helps companies to better understand OWOM in China, and advises on how to tailor their strategies in order to better engage with Chinese consumers.

APPENDIXES

Appendix 1 Interview Protocol

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Name _____ Title _____ Date _____
姓名 _____ 称呼 _____ 日期 _____

Icebreaker:

熟悉过程:

- Hi, how are you?

你好吗?

- Would like a cup of tea or water?

你想来杯喝的吗?

- How was your May holiday? Did you travel anywhere on the holiday, had fun?

五一节假期过得好吗? 有去哪里旅游了吗? 玩得好吗?

1. Introduction to the research

1. 介绍研究课题

- Discuss the purpose of the research

- 介绍课题的研究目的

As you know, I am conducting my PhD research that is to examine consumers' online WOM activities after purchase of products. I'm interviewing several people to find out about their experiences of engaging in online WOM communication.

你知道,我正在进行我的博士研究课题,我的课题主要是研究消费者在购买商品后的网络口碑活动。我正在访问一些人,了解他们在网络口碑活动的经验和体会。

- Explain what is 'online WOM' (Any other words for this activity?).

解释什么是“网络口碑”(询问是否有其他的词汇形容这项活动)。

I am more interested in understanding the reasons or motivations of consumers engaging in online WOM after their purchase of products. The information you provide in this interview will be put into a written thesis on an anonymous basis. The interview takes about one hour and will be audio-recorded. No other person besides me and my supervisors will be able to access this information.

我感兴趣的是了解大家在购买商品后进行网络口碑活动的原因或动机是什么,你在访问中提供的信息可以帮助我的研究,会以匿名的形式出现在我的博士论文中。访问时间大约一个小时,我会录音以帮助我访问后整理,除了我和我的两位导师,没有人可以接触到这些资料。

- Provide participant with information and consent forms to read

请受访者阅读“参加者知情书”与“受访者知情同意书”。

Do you have any questions?

你有什么问题吗?

- Consent agreed (Obtain written consent or voice record consent)

- 获取受访者同意书(签名或录音)

2. Leading to main discussion

2. 访问前热身

- Tell me what you know about WOM

- 你对口碑这个行为了解多少呢?

- Is it important in your life?

- 它在你的生活中重要吗?

3. Discussion

3. 访谈内容

a) About the participant's online word-of-mouth activity

a) 关于受访者的网络口碑活动

To begin, I'd like to learn about your online WOM activity. What do you know about online WOM?
开始前，我想了解一下你的网络口碑活动？你对网络口碑活动了解多少？怎么看待它呢？

1. How long have you been engaged in online WOM activity? 1. 你在网络进行口碑传播活动有多长时间？		
2. Can you recall a product or two that you recently purchased and talked about online? Can you describe more details about this product? 2. 请你想想一两个你最近购买的在网上谈过的产品，请详细介绍一下这个产品。		
Product A: 产品一：		
Product B: (Optional) 产品二：（可选）		
3. Briefly tell me about the experience that you had with purchasing and using product A? 3. 请形容一下你购买和使用这个产品的经验。		
4. What online channel(s) did you use to engage in WOM about your experience with this product? 4. 你通过什么样的网络渠道谈论你对这个产品的体验？	Blog <input type="checkbox"/> 博客（包括微博） <input type="checkbox"/> Personal e-mail <input type="checkbox"/> 个人电子邮件 <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion forum <input type="checkbox"/> 论坛 <input type="checkbox"/> Instant messenger <input type="checkbox"/> 即时通 <input type="checkbox"/>	Mailbags <input type="checkbox"/> 公司网站 <input type="checkbox"/> Chat room <input type="checkbox"/> 聊天室 <input type="checkbox"/> E-mailing list <input type="checkbox"/> 电子邮件组 <input type="checkbox"/> Posted review <input type="checkbox"/> 产品评论网站 <input type="checkbox"/>
5. You mentioned that you used _____(channel) to talk about your experience, who do you think are the receivers of such communication, i.e., who read this personal blog, email and instant messenger? 5. 你认为都是什么人阅读你谈论的产品体验？（什么阅读你的博客，邮件或接收即时通的信息）	close friends <input type="checkbox"/> 好朋友们 <input type="checkbox"/> real life friends <input type="checkbox"/> 现实中的朋友们 <input type="checkbox"/> online friends <input type="checkbox"/> 网友 <input type="checkbox"/> family & relatives <input type="checkbox"/> 亲属家人 <input type="checkbox"/>	strangers <input type="checkbox"/> 陌生人 <input type="checkbox"/> colleagues <input type="checkbox"/> 同事 <input type="checkbox"/> school mates <input type="checkbox"/> 同学 <input type="checkbox"/>
6. How much information did you talk about your experience of this product on _____ (channel)? 6. 通过这个渠道，你谈论多少你的产品体验？	Channel _____ 渠道 _____ Content : 内容： Negative <input type="checkbox"/> Positive <input type="checkbox"/> 负面 <input type="checkbox"/> 正面 <input type="checkbox"/>	

	How often: _____ 多少次 _____
	Channel _____ 渠道 _____
	Content: _____ 内容: _____
	Negative <input type="checkbox"/> Positive <input type="checkbox"/> 负面 <input type="checkbox"/> 正面 <input type="checkbox"/>
	How often: _____ 多少次 _____
	Channel _____ 渠道 _____
	Content: _____ 内容: _____
	Negative <input type="checkbox"/> Positive <input type="checkbox"/> 负面 <input type="checkbox"/> 正面 <input type="checkbox"/>
	How often: _____ 多少次 _____

b) Reasons for engaging in word-of-mouth

b) 进行网络口碑活动的原因

What are the core factors that made you decide to talk about your experience with Product A?
(If given brief phrases, ask to elaborate).

是什么原因使你决定谈论你就产品一的体验? (跟进深度访问)

Role of Satisfaction in the decision (to what extent) 满意度在谈论产品体验决定中的作用 (什么程度)	
Decision Regret 对这个购买决定后悔	
Happiness about the decision 高兴做了这个购买决定	
General feelings about the decision 对这个购买决定的整体感受	
Role of Loyalty in the decision (to what extent) 忠诚度在谈论产品体验决定中的作用 (什么程度)	
Attitudinal (first choice/ favourite) 态度上的忠诚度 (首选/最喜欢的)	
Attitudinal (switching) 态度上的忠诚度 (换家公司购买)	

Behavioural (first choice/ favourite) 行为上的忠诚度 (首选/最喜欢的)	
Behavioural (switching) 行为上的忠诚度(换家公司购买)	
Role of Affective Commitment in the decision (to what extent) 情感上的承诺度在谈论产品体验决定中的作用 (什么程度)	
Identity relevance 如自己个人身份的密切联系	
Shared values (and agreeing with the company) 分享其价值观 (支持公司)	
Personal involvement (liking and proud of the company) 个人投入(喜欢这个公司，为它感到自豪)	
Effort to maintain this relationship 努力维持这样的关系	
Role of Perceived value in the decision (to what extent) 感觉上的价值在谈论产品体验决定中的作用 (什么程度)	
Quality value (consistent, good, last long) 质量价值 (一致，好，耐用)	
Emotional value (pleasure, relaxed, enjoy) 情感价值 (愉快，轻松，享受)	
Price value (reasonable, value for money) 价格价值 (合理，划算)	
<u>Social value (social approval, impression) – provide example</u> 社会价值(社会认可，社交印象)- 举例说明	
Role of Product Involvement in the decision (to what extent) 产品投入度在谈论产品体验决定中的作用 (什么程度)	
Interest 兴趣	
Pleasure 愉快	
<u>Sign value – provide example</u> 社会价值- 举例说明	
Risk probability 风险可能性	

Risk importance 风险重要性	

c) Perception of online word-of-mouth channels
c) 对网络口碑渠道的感受

You mentioned that you used _____(channel) to talk about your experience. Tell me more.
 你提到你使用_____（渠道）来谈论你购买商品后的体验，能多谈一些吗？

Why did you use this particular channel(s)? What are the strengths/weaknesses of this channel?
 为什么你选择这个渠道呢？对于你使用它谈论购物体验有什么优势，有什么缺点吗？

Channel 1: 渠道一：	
Perceived usefulness 有用性	
Ease of use 使用的简易程度	
Enjoyment of using it 使用它的乐趣	
Channel 2: (Optional) 渠道二：（可选）	
Perceived usefulness 有用性	
Ease of use 使用的简易程度	

Enjoyment of using it 使用它的乐趣	
Channel 3: (Optional) 渠道三：（可选）	
Perceived usefulness 有用性	
Ease of use 使用的简易程度	
Enjoyment of using it 使用它的乐趣	

d) Cultural influence in online word-of-mouth decision-making
d) 文化对决定网络口碑活动的影响

Let's talk something about culture values. As we know, people have different values they believe, for example, some are more self-reliant, more goal-driven, more competitive, or more social than others. What are the personal cultural values that you think influenced your decision of talking about the experience with this product(s) online?

我们谈一下你的文化价值观好吗？我们都知道，人与人不同，有着不同的价值观，有些非常自立，不达目的不罢休，很好斗，喜欢竞争，或喜欢社交等等。你认为有哪些你个人的文化价值观影响你决定在网上谈论你的产品体验？

- Give time to think about it. (Offer tea/water refill)
- 给时间考虑，续茶或续水

Apart from the ones you just talked about, I have a few specific questions that I'd like to ask.
除了你刚才提到的这些，我还想问几个比较具体的问题好吗？

Self different from others 自己与其他人很不一样	
Communal sharing/living 共同分享/居住	

Authority ranking 尊重权威	
Low freedom 自由感低	
Low equality 平等感低	
Communalism 共产主义	
Sociability 社交能力	
Value of harmony (avoidance of conflict) 和谐的重要性 (避免冲突)	
Value of personal communication 面对面交流的重要性	
Value of 'face' saving 给人家面子的重要性	

4. Background information about participant

4. 受访者的背景信息

- Method of Internet access
- 上网的方式
- Occupation
- 职业
- Income
- 收入
- Age
- 年龄
- Education
- 教育程度
- Marital status
- 婚姻状况

5. Closing the interview

5. 结束访谈

- Any final comments? Questions?
- 最后还有什么附加的信息？是否还有任何问题？
- Transcribed interview will be sent to you via email in one week time for your comments.
- 访谈后一周内会寄给您文本形式的访谈内容。
- Record email address.
- 记录受访者电子邮件
- Thank for participation and give gift.
- 感谢受访者的参加，赠送礼物。

Appendix 2 Interview Participant Information Sheet



School of Marketing and International Business
新西兰维多利亚大学市场学与国际商务系

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

参加者知情书

Word-of-Mouth Communication among Online Communities in a Collectivist Society – How Information Diffuses in China

集体主义社会中的网络口碑传播 – 信息如何在中国传播

PhD Student: Lin Yang

博士生：杨林

Supervisors: Associate Professor Kim-Shyan Fam

Dr. James E. Richard

博士生导师：Kim-Shyan Fam 副教授

James E. Richard 博士

You are being invited to participate in a research study conducted by Lin Yang because you fall within the group desired for this research. Thank you for showing an interest in this project. In order to decide whether or not you want to participate in this research study, you should understand what is involved. This form gives detailed information about the research study, which will be discussed with you.

本人（杨林）正在进行一项博士研究课题，根据研究所需参加者的要求，您受邀参加该课题。感谢您对本研究课题的兴趣。在您决定是否想参与该研究前，您应当了解该研究都涉及哪些内容，本知情书详细解释了该研究课题的相关信息。

WHAT IS THIS FORM?

This study has been approved by Victoria University's Human Ethics Committee. This form is to respect and acknowledge your rights, and to inform you of what the research is about.

此知情书是什么？

该项研究课题通过了维多利亚大学伦理委员会的审批，此知情书旨在尊重并告知您的权利，同时告知您该课题的相关信息。

WHY IS THIS RESEARCH BEING DONE?

As part of a doctoral degree at Victoria University of Wellington I am undertaking this research project leading to a thesis.

为什么要进行这项研究？

本人正在维多利亚攻读博士学位，该研究将成为本人博士论文的一部分。

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to examine consumers' online word-of-mouth activities after purchase of products.

该课题的研究目标是什么？

该课题的目标是研究消费者在购买商品后的网络口碑传播活动。

WHAT WILL MY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES BE IF I TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

Participation from you would involve being interviewed by me once, via face-to-face, telephone or online conferencing software as your preference, at a time that would be convenient to you. The audio-taped interview would take between 45 minutes and 1 hour but will only begin with your consent,

and it can be terminated at any time. You will be given a copy of the transcript and may provide change or comments to this within one week.

如果我参加这项研究，我的角色与责任是什么？

如果您参加这项研究，本人会对您进行一次访问，该访问可按您的要求通过面对面，电话或网络会议软件进行，访问会在您方便的时间进行。访问时长大约 45 分钟至 1 小时，只有在您同意的情况下，访问才会开始进行，本人会对访问进行录音，你可在任何时间终止访问。访问记录会在一周内以书面形式提供给您，您可以对其进行修正和补充。

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE INFORMATION I GIVE?

All information you provide will be kept confidential. No other person besides me and my supervisors, Dr. Kim-Shyan Fam and Dr. James E. Richard, will be able to gain access to the information. Information collected will form the basis of my research project and will be put into a written thesis on an anonymous basis. Your name will not be used in the study and any information traceable to you will be excluded from the analysis. The thesis will be submitted for examination to the School of Marketing and International Business and deposited in the University Library. It is intended that one or more articles will be submitted for publication in academic journals and be disseminated at academic conferences and no identifiable information which is traceable to you will be included.

我提供的信息会被如何处理？

您所提供的所有信息会被严格保密，除本人、Kim-Shyan Fam 导师与 James E. Richard 导师外，无人可以获取这些信息，您提供的信息会被用作研究课题的一部分，以匿名的方式出现在本人的博士论文中。您的名字不会出现在论文中，任何可追溯到您本人的信息都不会用于分析。博士论文将会被提交至维多利亚大学市场学与国际商务系进行评阅，之后会被收录于维多利亚大学图书馆，多篇文章会被提交并发表于学术性期刊及学术性研讨会，但绝不会包括任何可追溯到您本人的信息。

The voice recordings will be reviewed by the researcher and the supervisor for the sole purpose of this research, and will be securely stored. The raw data will be kept secured for 3 years upon the completion of the thesis before being destroyed.

录音记录将由本人与两位导师进行审核，记录仅作课题研究使用，会被安全储存，原始记录将在论文完成三年后被销毁。

If you would like a written summary of the study at the end of the project, please provide your contact details on the consent form. However, you can be reassured that the written summary would not contain any information that is traceable to you or any of the other participants.

如果您在课题完成时想要一份书面的研究结论，请您在受访者知情同意书留下您的联系方式，本人可再次向您保证，书面结论中不会包括任何可追溯到您或其他受访者的信息。

WILL I BE ABLE TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY?

You can discontinue or withdraw from the study at any time during the interview or up to one week after the interview. Any information traceable to you would be destroyed or returned to you, and confidentiality would be maintained at all times.

我可以退出这项课题吗？

您可以在访谈中或访谈后一周内的任何时间终止或退出这项研究题，任何可追溯到您本人的信息会被销毁或归还给您，本人会在此期间对这些信息会严格保密。

IF I HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, WHOM CAN I CONTACT?

如果我有进一步问题，可以与谁联系？

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By taking part in this interview, participants agree that the information they provided during the interview can be used by Lin Yang in her research and thesis.

一旦受访者参与访问，受访者即同意杨林可以在她的研究与论文中使用受访者在访问中提供的信息。

Appendix 3 Interview Participant Consent Form



新西兰维多利亚大学

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

受访者知情同意书

Please tick all the boxes before signing.

请您在签字前阅读下列各项表述并在空格中打勾。

- ☐ I have been provided with adequate information relating to the nature and objectives of this research project.
我已经获知关于这个课题研究目标及内容的相关信息。
- ☐ I have understood this information and have been given the opportunity to seek further clarification of explanations.
我理解这些信息，并有机会提问及寻求解释。
- ☐ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time during the interview or up to one week after the interview, and if I do so, all related data will be destroyed.
我理解我可以在访谈中或访谈后一周内的任何时间终止或退出这项研究课题，如果我这样做，任何与我相关信息会被销毁。
- ☐ I understand that I will be given a copy of transcript and will have one week to provide changes or feedback.
我理解我会在访问结束一周内得到一份书面访问记录，我可以对其进行修正和补充。
- ☐ I understand that I will be participating in a digitally recorded interview.
我理解我将参加一个数码录音的访问。
- ☐ I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential and reported only in a non-attributable form.
我理解我提供的任何信息或想法都会得到严格的保密，仅以不可具名方式报告。
- ☐ I understand that the supervisors have access to the raw data.
我理解导师可获取原始数据。
- ☐ I understand that when this research is completed the raw data will be kept for 3 years upon the completion of the thesis before being destroyed.
我理解原始数据将在这项研究完成三年后被销毁。
- ☐ I understand that the results may be published in academic journals, and/or academic conference proceedings but my name will have been changed, and no identifiable information which traceable to me will be included.
我理解研究结果可能会发表于学术性期刊或/及学术性研讨会，但其中绝不会包括任何可追溯到我本人的信息。
- ☐ I would like a written summary of the study at the end of the project. My contact details are:
在课题完成时我想要一份书面的研究结论，我的联系方式是：

(Please write your email address or postal address)

(请写下您的电子邮件地址或邮寄地址)

Participant's Name

受访者姓名

Participant's Signature

受访者签名

(Please print clearly)

(请书写清晰)

Date:

(日期)

Appendix 4 Survey Questionnaire (English)



ONLINE WORD-OF-MOUTH RESEARCH

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Thank you for showing an interest in this research – before you proceed, please read the information below:

My name is Lin Yang and I am a PhD candidate at the School of Marketing and International Business, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. This survey is being undertaken as part of my PhD degree. The purpose of this research is to examine consumers' online word-of-mouth activities after purchase of products or services.

Your participation is completely voluntary. The survey should take around 15 minutes to complete, and it can be terminated at any time. All information you provide is completely anonymous. The survey software does not collect any identifying information from you thus it is not possible for any respondent to be identified. The data will be kept under password protection and accessible only to me and my supervisors named below. The data will be destroyed 3 years after the completion of the thesis.

A summary of the results will be posted on the School of Marketing and International Business website (<http://vuw.ac.nz/smb>). You will be able to access it by 31 December, 2011.

By completing this survey, you consent to participate.

If you have any queries or need further information please contact:

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Next



Are you aged 18 or above?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

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In the last 4 weeks, which of the following products or services have you purchased **AND** talked about on the Internet? (Please select one only. You will be given an opportunity to select another one later)

- ☐ Electronic Products
- ☐ Cosmetics / Skincare Products
- ☐ Apparels and Fashion Accessories
- ☐ Services
- ☐ Other
- ☐ None of the above

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Before you proceed, there is some information that we would like you to know.

Your answer will be automatically recorded when you respond to each statement. You may find some of the statements similar, however we are conducting this research in a scientific manner. Please read each statement carefully and choose the answer that best describes your opinion. Your feedback is extremely important to us.

Click on the next button at the bottom of the page to begin the survey.

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You stated that you have purchased and talked about Cosmetics / Skincare Products online in last 4 weeks. Please specify this product or service, but not the brand name.

For example, for a Sony MP3 player, you would write "MP3 player".

Cosmetics / Skincare Products

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Is this the first time you purchased the Lotion?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

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The following statements concern your experience with the Lotion.

For each of the following statements, please select the answer that best expresses the extent to which you either agree or disagree with each statement. (Only ONE answer must be selected for each statement.)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
If I had it to do all over again, I would feel differently about the purchase of the Lotion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My choice to purchase the Lotion was a wise one.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel bad about my decision concerning the purchase of the Lotion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with my decision to purchase the Lotion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am not happy with my decision to purchase the Lotion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think that I did the right thing when I decided to purchase the Lotion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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The following statements concern your involvement toward Lotion.

For each of the following statements, please select the answer that best expresses the extent to which you either agree or disagree with each statement. (Only ONE answer must be selected for each statement.)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
When I buy Lotion, I can never be quite certain about my choice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It does not matter too much if I make a mistake buying Lotion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Lotion a person buys, says something about who they are.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I should be annoyed with myself, if it turned out I made the wrong choice when buying Lotion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I really enjoy buying Lotion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You can tell a lot about a person from the Lotion he or she buys.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is very irritating to purchase Lotion which is not right.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am really interested in Lotion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Lotion I buy reflects the sort of person I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I buy Lotion, I can never be quite sure it was the right choice or not.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Which Lotion I buy is extremely important to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To me, Lotion is quite a pleasure.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Whenever I buy Lotion, it's like giving myself a present.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could not care less about Lotion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Choosing Lotion is rather difficult.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I purchase Lotion, I always feel rather unsure about what to pick.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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The following statements concern your opinion about the Lotion brand/organization.

For each of the following statements, please select the answer that best expresses the extent to which you either agree or disagree with each statement. (Only ONE answer must be selected for each statement.)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I like using this brand/organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to use this brand/organization whenever I need to purchase Lotion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I need to purchase Lotion, this brand/organization is my first choice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To me this brand/organization is the best brand/organization to do business with.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe that this is my favourite brand/organization of Lotion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
As long as the present brand/organization continues, I doubt that I would switch brand/organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I seldom consider switching to another brand/organization when I buy Lotion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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The following statements concern your view of the Lotion brand/organization.

For each of the following statements, please select the answer that best expresses the extent to which you either agree or disagree with each statement. (Only ONE answer must be selected for each statement.)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Lotion of this brand/organization would perform consistently.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand/organization has consistent quality.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Lotion of this brand/organization would be economical.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Lotion of this brand/organization would not last a long time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Lotion of this brand/organization is one that I would enjoy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Lotion of this brand/organization is reasonably priced.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Lotion of this brand/organization would help me to feel acceptable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Lotion of this brand/organization would make me want to use it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Lotion of this brand/organization is the one that I would feel relaxed about using.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Lotion of this brand/organization is good for the price.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Lotion of this brand/organization would give its owner social approval.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Lotion of this brand/organization would give me pleasure.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand/organization offers value for money.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Lotion of this brand/organization has acceptable standard of quality.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Lotion of this brand/organization has poor workmanship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Lotion of this brand/organization would improve the way I am perceived.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Lotion of this brand/organization would make a good impression on other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Lotion of this brand/organization would make me feel good.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Lotion of this brand/organization is well made.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The following statements concern how you feel about the Lotion brand/organization.

For each of the following statements, please select the answer that best expresses the extent to which you either agree or disagree with each statement. (Only ONE answer must be selected for each statement.)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Doing business with this brand/organization is enjoyable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For me, this is one of the best brand/organization of its kind.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am proud that I use the Lotion of this brand/organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I usually agree with this brand/organization's policies and procedures on important matters.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand/organization inspires the best in me in the ways of being a good customer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do business with this brand/organization because I like it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This is a good brand/organization to use.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a special relationship with this brand/organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I care about the fate of this brand/organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like the way this brand/organization operates.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand/organization understands my needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like this brand/organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want to help this brand/organization achieve its goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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The following statements concern the program(s) you have used to talk about the Lotion.

Did you use the following programs to talk about the Lotion?

(If you are not sure which category the program belongs to, please use 'Other program'.)

- ☐ Discussion forum
- ☐ Instant messenger (e.g. QQ, MSN)
- ☐ Chat room
- ☐ Blog (e.g. QZone)
- ☐ Micro-blog
- ☐ Third-party website (e.g. personal website)
- ☐ Company website (e.g. taobao.com)
- ☐ Personal email (e.g. QQmail, Hotmail)
- ☐ Other program

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How often do you use this type of channel for general use?

Discussion forum	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Instant messenger (e.g. QQ, MSN)	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Chat room	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Blog (e.g. QZone)	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Micro-blog	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Third-party website (e.g. personal website)	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Company website (e.g. taobao.com)	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Personal email (e.g. QQmail, Hotmail)	<div><div></div><div></div></div>

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You stated that you used the following program(s) to talk about the Lotion. Please specify the name of the program(s).

Instant messenger (e.g. QQ, MSN)

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The following statements concern your online word-of-mouth about the Lotion on/in QQ .

For each of the following statements, please select the answer that best expresses the extent to which you either agree or disagree with each statement. (Only ONE answer must be selected for each statement.)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. On/in QQ, I mention this brand/organization to others quite frequently.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. On/in QQ, I've told more people about this brand/organization than I've told about most other brands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. On/in QQ, I seldom miss an opportunity to tell others about this brand/organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. On/in QQ, when I tell others about this brand/organization, I tend to talk about the brand/organization in great detail.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. On/in QQ, I have only good things to say about this brand/organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. On/in QQ, I am proud to tell others that I use this brand/organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

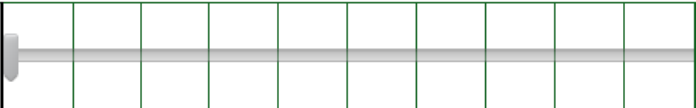
How accessible is this content on/in QQ?

(0 being no access by anyone but you, 100 being fully accessible by the public)

No Access Restricted access Public access

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Please drag the slider to fit your answer.



Next

The following statements concern your opinion about QQ.

For each of the following statements, please select the answer that best expresses the extent to which you either agree or disagree with each statement. (Only ONE answer must be selected for each statement.)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Learning to use QQ would be easy for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I would find it easy to use QQ to do what I want to do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. It was easy for me to become skillful at using QQ.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I would find QQ easy to use.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Using QQ would improve my performance in communicating WOM messages to others (e.g. save time).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Using QQ would increase my productivity in online WOM communication (e.g. get the message to the intended receiver(s) within the shortest time frame).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I found QQ useful for my online WOM communication.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Using QQ enhances my effectiveness in communicating WOM messages (e.g. allow pictures to be attached).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Using QQ provides me with better WOM communication.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please rate the scales below according to how you feel about using QQ.

Using QQ is:

Frustrating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Fun
Unpleasant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Pleasant
Negative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Positive
Painful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Pleasurable
Dull	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Exciting
Foolish	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Wise
Unenjoyable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Enjoyable

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The following statements concern your view on collectivism.

For each of the following statements, please select the answer that best expresses the extent to which you either agree or disagree with each statement. (Only ONE answer must be selected for each statement.)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Individuals should sacrifice self-interest for the group that they belong to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Individuals should stick with the group even through difficulties.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Group welfare is more important than individual rewards.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Group success is more important than individual success.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Individuals should pursue their goals after considering the welfare of the group.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Group loyalty should be encouraged even if individual goals suffer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Next

Please tell us about yourself (tick ONE answer only).

Please indicate your gender:

Male
☐

Female
☐

Which year were you born?

Which city do you normally live? (Please specify)

What is your occupation? (Please specify)

In which of the following categories does your current monthly income fall? (Before tax)

- ☐ No income
☐ Under CNY¥2,000
☐ CNY¥2,000 to CNY¥5,000
☐ CNY¥5,001 to CNY¥10,000
☐ Over CNY¥ 10,000

Please indicate your marital status:

- ☐ Single
☐ Married
☐ Divorced
☐ Other

Please indicate your highest education level:

- ☐ Primary Education and below
☐ Secondary Education
☐ Tertiary Education

On the average, how frequently do you use the Internet for (a) information acquisition; (b) communication; (c) entertainment; and (d) commercial exchange?

- ☐ Less than once a month
☐ A few times a month
☐ A few times a week
☐ Daily
☐ Several times a day

On the average working day, how much time is spent on the Internet for (a) information acquisition; (b) communication; (c) entertainment; and (d) commercial exchange?

- ☐ Almost never
☐ Less than 1/2 hour
☐ From 1/2 hour to 1 hour
☐ 1-2 hours
☐ 2-3 hours
☐ More than 3 hours

How did you find out about this survey?

Referred by a friend
☐

Referred by another site
☐

Web search
☐

Other (Please specify)

Thank you for your response regarding the Lotion.

Your response is very important to us. We would like you to recall another product or service you have purchased AND talked about on the Internet over the last 4 weeks, and to continue this survey by clicking on "Continue".

However, if you do not wish to continue, please click "Submit" to submit your response.

- ☐ Submit
☐ Continue



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Thank you for participating in our survey. You have successfully completed this survey!

A summary of the results will be available by 31 December 2011 on the website of School of Marketing & International Business at Victoria University of Wellington [<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/smib>].

Now, please continue to forward and invite your friends to participate in this survey. Your assistance is very much appreciated. Simply copy/paste the link below and send it to your friends.

http://vuw.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_3NNHbaL8eMPzrYU

Thank you for your cooperation!



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Appendix 5 Survey Questionnaire (Chinese)



网络口碑传播行为研究调查

参加者知情书

感谢您对该研究的参与，此知情书旨在尊重您对该研究课题的知情权利，在您开始参与问卷调查之前，请阅读以下信息：

本人姓名杨林，目前正在新西兰惠灵顿维多利亚大学市场营销与国际商务系攻读博士学位，该研究调查将成为本人博士论文的一个重要部分，旨在了解中国消费者在购买商品或服务后的网络口碑传播行为。

如果您愿意参加这项研究，您将受邀完成这份网上问卷调查，大约需要15分钟完成。您的参与完全自愿，您可以在任何时候退出或终止调查。该研究调查完全是匿名的，网上问卷调查软件不会收集任何可追溯到参与者的信息，问卷中的问题不会涉及任何个人识别信息，收集到的数据不会用于该学术研究以外的其他任何用途，因此，请确保根据您的实际情况填写。调查数据将受到密码保护，除本人，及两位导师Kim-Shyan Fam教授和James E. Richard博士之外，无人可以获取这些数据，数据将按大学相关规定于论文完成三年后销毁。

该研究的书面结论将会在2011年12月31日之前公布在新西兰惠灵顿维多利亚大学市场营销与国际商务系网站上，网址 <http://vuw.ac.nz/smib>，你可以访问该网站阅读。成功提交问卷表明您同意参与该调查。

如果您对该研究调查有任何问题，请联系本人或导师，联系方式如下：

博士研究生：杨林，新西兰维多利亚大学市场营销与国际商务系，邮政信箱600号，邮编6140，办公电话：+64 (4) 4635233 转8820，电子邮件：lin.yang@vuw.ac.nz

导师：Kim-Shyan Fam博士，教授，新西兰维多利亚大学市场营销与国际商务系，邮政信箱600号，邮编6140，办公电话：+64 (4) 4636459，电子邮件：kim.fam@vuw.ac.nz

导师：James E. Richard博士，高级讲师，新西兰维多利亚大学市场营销与国际商务系，邮政信箱600号，邮编6140，办公电话：+64 (4) 4635415，电子邮件：james.richard@vuw.ac.nz

请点击下一页开始

下一页



您的年龄在18周岁以上吗？

- ☐ 是的
☐ 不是

上一页 下一页



请问，您在过去一个月内，以下哪种产品或服务是您购买和使用过，并且在网上针对它谈论过的？

（注：这个产品或服务必须是您在网上谈论过的，包括通过QQ，聊天室、博客、官网、电子邮件等）

- ☐ 电子产品
☐ 化妆品或护肤品
☐ 服装或配饰
☐ 服务
☐ 其它类产品
☐ 以上都没有

上一页 下一页

在您继续之前，有一些信息提醒您，您对每个问题的选择和回答会被实时自动记录，如果中途您需要离开，只要再次打开该问卷地址，您会自动回到您离开的那一页，可以继续回答剩下的问题。

您可能会发现一部分问题会相当类似，这是因为我们试图以最科学的方式进行调研，所以请您仔细回答每一个问题，您的回答对我们的研究非常重要！

请点击下一页继续。

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您之前说您在过去的一个月里购买过并在网上讨论过化妆品或护肤品，请问您具体购买的是什么化妆品或护肤品？

请不要填写这个化妆品或护肤品的品牌或店名。例如您购买并谈论的是诺基亚手机，请只填写“手机”。)

化妆品或护肤品

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请问您在网上谈论的是该面霜的品牌还是店家（公司）？

- ☐ 品牌
☐ 店家（公司）

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您是第一次购买该品牌的面霜吗？

- ☐ 是的
☐ 不是

[上一页](#) [下一页](#)

以下问题是有关您对该面霜的感受。

对于下列每个表述，请您在程度表上做出最符合您意见的选择。（您需要回答全部问题）

	非常不赞同	不赞同	略不赞同	既不赞同也不反对	略赞同	赞同	非常赞同
我对购买该面霜的决定感到很满意。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
购买该面霜是一个不好的决定。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
我不后悔购买了该面霜。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
购买该面霜是一个正确的决定。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
我对购买了该面霜的决定感到很不高兴。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
购买该面霜是一个明智的决定。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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以下问题是有关您对面霜的看法。

对于下列每个表述，请您在程度表上做出最符合您意见的选择。（您需要回答全部问题）

	非常不赞同	不赞同	略不赞同	既不赞同也不反对	略赞同	赞同	非常赞同
对我来说，面霜会带来快乐。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
买面霜时，我并不清楚哪个品牌是最正确的选择。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
一个人购买什么样的面霜会反映出他是哪种类型的人。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
对于面霜，我总是觉得不确定选择哪个品牌。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
当购买面霜时，我很难有十分的把握。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
我非常喜欢购买面霜。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
我非常关注面霜。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
买错了面霜我会迁怒自己。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
我对面霜非常感兴趣。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
购买该面霜能够显示我的个性。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
我买面霜时，就象在给我自己买礼物。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
你可以通过一个人购买的面霜对这个人有一定了解。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
购买什么面霜对我来说非常重要。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
买错面霜会令我非常生气。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
选择面霜是件困难的事情。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
购买到不是十分理想的面霜也没有很大关系。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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以下问题是有关您对该面霜的品牌看法。

对于下列每个表述，请您在程度表上做出最符合您意见的选择。（您需要回答全部问题）

	非常不赞同	不赞同	略不赞同	既不赞同也不反对	略赞同	赞同	非常赞同
对我来说，这个品牌是最好的。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
当我需要购买面霜，我尽量购买这个品牌的。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
购买面霜，我很少考虑换另一个品牌。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
只要这个品牌继续存在，我觉得我不会换品牌。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
购买面霜时，这个品牌是我的首选。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
对于面霜，我相信这个品牌是我最喜欢的。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
我喜欢选用这个品牌。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

上一页 下一页

以下问题是有关您对该品牌的认知。

对于下列每个表述，请您在程度表上做出最符合您意见的选择。（您需要回答全部问题）

	非常不赞同	不赞同	略不赞同	既不赞同也不反对	略赞同	赞同	非常赞同
这个品牌的面霜使用寿命短。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
我愿意使用这个品牌的面霜。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
这个品牌的面霜制造良好。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
使用这个品牌的面霜会改善别人对我的看法。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
这个品牌的面霜经济实用。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
这个品牌的面霜物有所值。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
使用这个品牌的面霜会得到大家的认同。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
这个品牌的面霜让我觉得愉快。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
这个品牌的面霜会让我感觉它很好。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
这个品牌的面霜做工差。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
这个品牌的面霜使用起来让我感觉放松。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
这个品牌的面霜定价合理。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
这个品牌的质量一向可靠。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
这个品牌的面霜是我身边的人能够接受的。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
在相应的价格范围内，这个品牌的面霜是不错的。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
我乐意使用这个品牌的面霜。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
使用这个品牌的面霜会给别人留下好的印象。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
这个品牌的面霜质量标准可以接受。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
这个品牌的面霜状况稳定。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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以下问题是有关您对该品牌的感受。

对于下列每个表述，请您在程度表上做出最符合您意见的选择。（您需要回答全部问题）

	非常不赞同	不赞同	略不赞同	既不赞同也不反对	略赞同	赞同	非常赞同
我愿意支持这个品牌实现它的目标。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
这个品牌的一些理念激励我做一个好的消费者。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
使用这个品牌的面霜让我感到很自豪。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
我因为喜欢这个品牌，所以与它打交道。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
这是个不错的品牌。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
我喜欢这个品牌经营的方式。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
与这个品牌打交道很愉快。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
我关心这个品牌的未来发展。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
对我来说这个品牌是购买面霜中最好的几个品牌之一。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
我喜欢这个品牌。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
这个品牌了解消费者的需求。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
我对这个品牌有种特殊的情感。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
我认同这个品牌在处理问题上的原则和程序。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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以下问题是有关您谈论该面霜所使用的网络传播工具。

您是否使用以下传播工具谈论该面霜及其品牌？（如果您不确定您使用的工具属于哪一类，请选择“其它工具”。）

- ☐ 论坛
- ☐ 即时通信（如：QQ、阿里旺旺、MSN）
- ☐ 聊天室
- ☐ 博客
- ☐ 微博
- ☐ 第三方网站（如：您的个人网站）
- ☐ 公司网站（如：官网、淘宝）
- ☐ 个人电子邮件（如：QQ邮箱、新浪邮箱）
- ☐ 其它工具

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请问您平时使用以下各类工具的频繁程度？

论坛	<input type="text"/>
即时通信（如：QQ、阿里旺旺、MSN）	<input type="text"/>
聊天室	<input type="text"/>
博客	<input type="text"/>
微博	<input type="text"/>
第三方网站（如：您的个人网站）	<input type="text"/>
公司网站（如：官网、淘宝）	<input type="text"/>
个人电子邮件（如：QQ邮箱、新浪邮箱）	<input type="text"/>

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您之前表示您在“即时通信 (如：QQ、阿里旺旺、MSN)”上谈论该面霜与其品牌，请您写明具体是什么即时通信 (如：QQ、阿里旺旺、MSN)？

即时通信 (如：QQ,阿里旺旺, MSN)

上一页 下一页

以下问题是有关您使用 QQ 谈论该面霜的活动。

对于下列每个表述，请您在程度表上做出最符合您意见的选择。（您需要回答全部问题）

	非常不赞同	不赞同	略不赞同	既不赞同也不反对	略赞同	赞同	非常赞同
在 QQ 上，我对别人提起很多次这个品牌。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
在 QQ 上，与大多数其它品牌相比，我告诉更多人这个品牌。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
在 QQ 上，我很少错过告诉别人这个品牌的机会。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
在 QQ 上，我对这个品牌谈论得非常详细。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
在 QQ 上，我对这个品牌的谈论都是正面的。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
在 QQ 上，我很自豪地告诉别人我使用这个品牌的面霜。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

您在 QQ 上谈论的这些内容是否容易被大众浏览？

（0 代表完全不开放，表示只有您自己可以看到；100 代表完全开放，表示任何人都可以看到）

完全不开放 部分开放 完全开放

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

请用鼠标将滑块拖到您的选择。

下一页

以下问题是有关您对QQ的看法。

对于下列每个表述，请您在程度表上做出最符合您意见的选择。（您需要回答全部问题）

	非常不同	不赞同	略不赞同	既不赞同也不反对	略赞同	赞同	非常赞同
QQ很容易上手。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
使用QQ谈论产品很方便。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
QQ我很快就用熟练了。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
QQ用起来非常容易。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
QQ可以帮助我和他人进行有关该面霜的沟通。（例如：节约时间）	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
QQ可以使我快速地把有关该面霜的信息传达出去。（例如：在最短的时间内把信息传达给对方）	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
QQ对我在网上传播信息很有用。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
使用QQ能很清楚地表达我的意思。（例如：可以附加图片进行交流）	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
QQ可以让我更好地在网上进行信息传播。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

请您在程度表上选出最符合您对使用QQ的感受。

使用QQ让我感觉：

（注：靠近左右选项的距离，表达您对此种感觉的倾向程度）

沮丧	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	有趣
不愉快	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	愉快
不好	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	很好
麻烦	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	轻松
无聊	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	兴奋
笨拙	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	明智
不舒服	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	舒服

请针对以下的描述表明你的观点。(以下“集体”无具体界定)

(请您在程度表上做出最符合您意见的选择，您需要回答全部问题)

	非常不赞同	不赞同	略不赞同	既不赞同也不反对	略赞同	赞同	非常赞同
集体利益高于个人利益。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
当集体遇到困难时，个人不应该抛弃集体。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
为了忠于集体我可以牺牲一定的个人目标。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
集体的成功高于个人的成功。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
追求个人目标应该首先考虑集体目标。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
为了集体我可以牺牲个人的利益。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

下一页

下面的问题是关于您的个人资料，请放心填写，这些问题不涉及任何个人识别信息。

请选择您的性别：

男

女

☐

☐

您的出生年份？

请填写您的常住城市：

请填写您的职业：

上一页 下一页

您的最高教育程度。

- ☐ 小学或低于小学
- ☐ 中学（包括中专、职业中学、中师）
- ☐ 大学（包括专科、本科、研究生及以上）

您的月收入属于以下哪个范围？(税前)

- ☐ 无收入
- ☐ 低于2,000元人民币
- ☐ 2,001元—5,000元人民币
- ☐ 5,001元 - 10,000元人民币
- ☐ 超过10,000元人民币

请选择您的婚姻状况。

- ☐ 单身
- ☐ 已婚
- ☐ 离异
- ☐ 其它

您平均多久使用互联网获取信息、交流沟通、网络娱乐或商务交易？

- ☒ 几乎不用
- ☐ 少于一个月一次
- ☐ 一个月几次
- ☐ 一星期几次
- ☐ 大约每天一次
- ☐ 每天几次

您平均每天花多少时间使用互联网获取信息、交流沟通、网络娱乐或商务交易？

- ☐ 几乎不用
- ☐ 少于半个小时
- ☐ 半个小时至1小时
- ☐ 1 - 2小时
- ☐ 2 - 3小时
- ☐ 3小时以上

您是如何得知这项研究调查的？

通过朋友

☐

通过另一个网站

☐

通过网络搜索

☐

其它方式，请说明：

☐

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非常感谢您对有关该面霜的回答，您的回答对我们的研究非常重要。

如果您愿意，请您继续回忆在过去一个月内您购买过并且在网上谈论过的另一个产品或服务，继续回答接下来的问题请点击“继续”。

如果您不愿意再继续，请选择“提交”并点击下一页结束问卷调查，您之前的回答已经保存。

☐ 提交

☐ 继续



上一页

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非常感谢！

非常感谢您的参与，您已经成功地完成了这个问卷调查。调查结果将会在**2011年12月31日**之前公布在维多利亚大学市场营销与国际商务系的网站上
[<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/smib>]。

我们仍在寻求更多的参与者，请您把这个研究告诉您的朋友，请他们也来参加。非常感谢您的帮助，您只需复制调查的链接

http://vuw.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_4Z5VtKYTE4VohjC

把它发给您的朋友即可。

再次感谢您的合作！

如果您对该问卷调查有任何疑问，请与杨林联系，杨林的电邮是：lin.yang@vuw.ac.nz。



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Appendix 6 Comparing Respondents Collectivism Variable Responses (n=574)

t-test for Equality of Means												
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Test Value	Source	Sample
								Lower	Upper			
Composite Collectivism	4.831	1.084	.045	-15.003	573.000	.000	-.679	-.768	-.590	5.510	Schumann, et al (2010)	Chinese students
Composite Collectivism	4.831	1.084	.045	-15.445	573.000	.000	-.699	-.788	-.610	5.530	Schumann, et al (2010)	Hong Kong students
Composite Collectivism*	3.451*	.774	.032	12.396	573.000	.000	.401	.337	.464	3.050	Yoo & Donthu (2005)	American Adults
Sacrifice self-interest*	3.202*	.983	.041	10.281	573.000	.000	.422	.341	.502	2.780	Yoo & Donthu (2005)	American Adults
Stick with group*	3.841*	.859	.036	16.494	573.000	.000	.591	.521	.662	3.250	Yoo & Donthu (2005)	American Adults
Group welfare important*	3.385*	1.004	.042	8.225	573.000	.000	.345	.262	.427	3.040	Yoo & Donthu (2005)	American Adults
Group success important*	3.468*	.977	.041	8.533	573.000	.000	.348	.268	.428	3.120	Yoo & Donthu (2005)	American Adults
Pursue individual goals after groups*	3.468*	.949	.040	6.771	573.000	.000	.268	.190	.346	3.200	Yoo & Donthu (2005)	American Adults
Group loyalty encouraged*	3.340*	.979	.041	10.036	573.000	.000	.410	.330	.490	2.930	Yoo & Donthu (2005)	American Adults

* Value was converted to 5-point scale for comparison (1 being strongly disagree with the collectivism statement and 5 being strong agree with the collectivism statement; Test value is the mean value reported in published studies.

Note: 1. The value for China in Shumann **et al's** study (2010) was reversed coded for their analysis. The coding in the current study thus was adjusted for t-test.

2. Items were converted to 5-point scale in order to compare composite and item mean value with the published data by Yoo and Donthu (2005).

Appendix 7 Non-Response Bias

Appendix 5.1.1 Comparing waves of respondents demographics

		Count		Pearson Chi-Square Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2- sided)
		First Wave	Last Wave			
Gender	Male	24	26	.090	1	.765
	Female	26	25			
Age	18-29 years old	33	38	3.062	3	.382
	30-39 years old	12	11			
	40-49 years old	4	2			
	50-56 years old	2	0			
Occupation	Professional technicians	25	17	10.088	6	.121
	Self-employed/freelancers	2	2			
	Works from industry and service	1	1			
	Ordinary employees of enterprise/company	9	21			
	Managers of enterprise/company	1	4			
	Students	10	6			
	Unemployed	1	0			
Education level	Secondary Education and below	3	0	3.154	1	.076
	Tertiary Education and above	47	51			
Income level	No Income	10	4	7.087	4	.131
	Under 2000 yuan	5	6			
	2,001—5,000 yuan	19	28			
	5,001 yuan - 10,000 yuan	11	12			
	Over 10,000 yuan	5	1			
Marital Status	Single	22	36	10.096	3	.018*
	Married	20	14			
	Divorced	3	0			
	Other	5	1			

* Significant at $p < .05$; ** Significant at $p < .001$

Appendix 8 Two Waves of Respondents Key Variable Statistics (n=102)

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SAT_SP	Website Invitation	51	5.57	1.446	.202
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.37	1.549	.217
SAT_FBD	Website Invitation	51	5.71	1.119	.157
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.61	1.429	.200
SAT_FD	Website Invitation	51	5.82	1.307	.183
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.53	1.391	.195
SAT_WD	Website Invitation	51	5.69	1.140	.160
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.22	1.390	.195
SAT_UD	Website Invitation	51	5.43	1.578	.221
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.47	1.433	.201
SAT_RTD	Website Invitation	51	5.65	1.324	.185
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.49	1.447	.203
LOY_SSW	Website Invitation	51	3.84	1.629	.228
	Last Email Invitation	51	3.63	1.649	.231
LOY_BS	Website Invitation	51	4.29	1.474	.206
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.14	1.497	.210
LOY_PSS	Website Invitation	51	4.57	1.628	.228
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.45	1.665	.233
LOY_FS	Website Invitation	51	4.41	1.525	.214
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.45	1.579	.221
LOY_LU	Website Invitation	51	4.51	1.617	.226
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.96	1.385	.194
LOY_DSW	Website Invitation	51	3.90	1.591	.223
	Last Email Invitation	51	3.47	1.701	.238
LOY_FAV	Website Invitation	51	4.47	1.488	.208
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.47	1.666	.233
PVAL_CQ	Website Invitation	51	4.98	1.364	.191
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.22	1.045	.146
PVAL_WM	Website Invitation	51	5.02	1.349	.189
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.37	.979	.137
PVAL_AQ	Website Invitation	51	5.18	1.292	.181
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.41	.898	.126
PVAL_PW	Website Invitation	51	4.96	1.428	.200
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.18	1.144	.160
PVAL_NLL	Website Invitation	51	4.80	1.497	.210
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.78	1.301	.182
PVAL_PC	Website Invitation	51	5.20	1.184	.166
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.18	1.212	.170
PVAL_ENJ	Website Invitation	51	5.14	1.281	.179
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.27	.981	.137
PVAL_RLX	Website Invitation	51	4.73	1.297	.182
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.98	1.068	.149

				Std.	Std.
	Group	N	Mean	Deviation	Error Mean
PVAL_WTU	Website Invitation	51	5.02	1.241	.174
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.41	1.004	.141
PVAL_FG	Website Invitation	51	5.12	1.291	.181
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.22	1.064	.149
PVAL_PLS	Website Invitation	51	4.98	1.257	.176
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.20	1.000	.140
PVAL_RPR	Website Invitation	51	4.75	1.309	.183
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.88	1.211	.170
PVAL_VM	Website Invitation	51	5.25	1.111	.156
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.16	1.286	.180
PVAL_GPP	Website Invitation	51	5.00	1.342	.188
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.49	.946	.132
PVAL_EC	Website Invitation	51	4.78	1.301	.182
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.94	1.223	.171
PVAL_FA	Website Invitation	51	5.24	1.142	.160
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.31	.905	.127
PVAL_IP	Website Invitation	51	4.12	1.395	.195
	Last Email Invitation	51	3.86	1.000	.140
PVAL_GI	Website Invitation	51	4.73	1.297	.182
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.67	1.260	.176
PVAL_SA	Website Invitation	51	4.69	1.241	.174
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.69	1.122	.157
COM_BS	Website Invitation	51	5.20	1.217	.170
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.24	1.193	.167
COM_PRD	Website Invitation	51	4.69	1.393	.195
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.24	1.124	.157
COM_AG	Website Invitation	51	4.71	1.221	.171
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.63	1.095	.153
COM_GC	Website Invitation	51	5.37	1.183	.166
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.39	.961	.135
COM_CF	Website Invitation	51	4.96	1.371	.192
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.49	1.223	.171
COM_ISP	Website Invitation	51	4.51	1.377	.193
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.33	1.052	.147
COM_OPE	Website Invitation	51	4.61	1.218	.171
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.69	1.104	.155
COM_ND	Website Invitation	51	4.92	1.146	.160
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.14	.917	.128
COM_LCO	Website Invitation	51	5.10	1.330	.186
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.02	1.086	.152
COM_RLP	Website Invitation	51	4.37	1.562	.219
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.27	1.115	.156
COM_HLP	Website Invitation	51	4.80	1.386	.194
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.67	1.178	.165
COM_EDB	Website Invitation	51	4.73	1.328	.186
	Last Email Invitation	51	5.00	1.058	.148

				Std.	Std.
	Group	N	Mean	Deviation	Error Mean
COM_DLK	Website Invitation	51	4.78	1.331	.186
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.76	1.226	.172
OWOM_MF	Website Invitation	51	4.17	1.363	.191
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.08	1.389	.194
OWOM_TM	Website Invitation	51	4.62	1.273	.178
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.28	1.276	.179
OWOM_SM	Website Invitation	51	3.90	1.453	.203
	Last Email Invitation	51	3.71	1.331	.186
OWOM_TD	Website Invitation	51	4.08	1.277	.179
	Last Email Invitation	51	3.65	1.208	.169
OWOM_GT	Website Invitation	51	4.31	1.294	.181
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.01	1.243	.174
OWOM_PR	Website Invitation	51	4.59	1.196	.168
	Last Email Invitation	51	4.19	1.394	.195

Appendix 9 Comparing Waves of Respondents Key Variable Responses (n=102)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
SAT_SP	Equal variances assumed	.481	.490	.661	100	.510	.196	.297	-.393	.785
	Equal variances not assumed			.661	99.531	.510	.196	.297	-.393	.785
SAT_FBD	Equal variances assumed	1.363	.246	.386	100	.701	.098	.254	-.406	.602
	Equal variances not assumed			.386	94.546	.701	.098	.254	-.407	.603
SAT_FD	Equal variances assumed	.793	.375	1.101	100	.274	.294	.267	-.236	.824
	Equal variances not assumed			1.101	99.617	.274	.294	.267	-.236	.824
SAT_WD	Equal variances assumed	2.316	.131	1.869	100	.065	.471	.252	-.029	.970
	Equal variances not assumed			1.869	96.307	.065	.471	.252	-.029	.970
SAT_UD	Equal variances assumed	.279	.598	-.131	100	.896	-.039	.299	-.631	.553
	Equal variances not assumed			-.131	99.088	.896	-.039	.299	-.632	.553
SAT_RTD	Equal variances assumed	.441	.508	.571	100	.569	.157	.275	-.388	.702
	Equal variances not assumed			.571	99.216	.569	.157	.275	-.388	.702
LOY_SSW	Equal variances assumed	.200	.656	.664	100	.508	.216	.325	-.428	.860
	Equal variances not assumed			.664	99.986	.508	.216	.325	-.428	.860
LOY_BS	Equal variances assumed	.193	.661	.533	100	.595	.157	.294	-.427	.740
	Equal variances not assumed			.533	99.976	.595	.157	.294	-.427	.740
LOY_PSS	Equal variances assumed	.068	.795	.361	100	.719	.118	.326	-.529	.765
	Equal variances not assumed			.361	99.949	.719	.118	.326	-.529	.765
LOY_FS	Equal variances assumed	.162	.688	-.128	100	.899	-.039	.307	-.649	.571
	Equal variances not assumed			-.128	99.882	.899	-.039	.307	-.649	.571
LOY_LU	Equal variances assumed	3.042	.084	-1.513	100	.134	-.451	.298	-1.042	.141
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.513	97.694	.134	-.451	.298	-1.043	.141

LOY_DSW	Equal variances assumed	1.193	.277	1.323	100	.189	.431	.326	-.216	1.078
	Equal variances not assumed			1.323	99.552	.189	.431	.326	-.216	1.078
LOY_FAV	Equal variances assumed	.974	.326	.000	100	1.000	.000	.313	-.620	.620
	Equal variances not assumed			.000	98.755	1.000	.000	.313	-.621	.621
PVAL_CQ	Equal variances assumed	2.349	.129	-.978	100	.330	-.235	.241	-.713	.242
	Equal variances not assumed			-.978	93.676	.331	-.235	.241	-.713	.242
PVAL_WM	Equal variances assumed	1.510	.222	-1.512	100	.134	-.353	.233	-.816	.110
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.512	91.233	.134	-.353	.233	-.817	.111
PVAL_AQ	Equal variances assumed	5.049	.027	-1.068	100	.288	-.235	.220	-.672	.202
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.068	89.203	.288	-.235	.220	-.673	.202
PVAL_PW	Equal variances assumed	3.307	.072	-.842	100	.402	-.216	.256	-.724	.293
	Equal variances not assumed			-.842	95.456	.402	-.216	.256	-.724	.293
PVAL_NLL	Equal variances assumed	2.638	.107	.071	100	.944	.020	.278	-.531	.571
	Equal variances not assumed			.071	98.094	.944	.020	.278	-.531	.571
PVAL_PC	Equal variances assumed	.001	.979	.083	100	.934	.020	.237	-.451	.490
	Equal variances not assumed			.083	99.945	.934	.020	.237	-.451	.490
PVAL_ENJ	Equal variances assumed	.995	.321	-.607	100	.545	-.137	.226	-.586	.311
	Equal variances not assumed			-.607	93.657	.545	-.137	.226	-.586	.311
PVAL_RLX	Equal variances assumed	1.675	.199	-1.083	100	.281	-.255	.235	-.722	.212
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.083	96.425	.281	-.255	.235	-.722	.212
PVAL_WTU	Equal variances assumed	.408	.525	-1.755	100	.082	-.392	.223	-.835	.051
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.755	95.810	.082	-.392	.223	-.836	.051
PVAL_FG	Equal variances assumed	2.235	.138	-.419	100	.676	-.098	.234	-.563	.367
	Equal variances not assumed			-.419	96.495	.676	-.098	.234	-.563	.367
PVAL_PLS	Equal variances assumed	.533	.467	-.959	100	.340	-.216	.225	-.662	.231
	Equal variances not assumed			-.959	95.209	.340	-.216	.225	-.662	.231
PVAL_RPR	Equal variances assumed	.335	.564	-.550	100	.584	-.137	.250	-.633	.358
	Equal variances not assumed			-.550	99.396	.584	-.137	.250	-.633	.358
PVAL_VM	Equal variances assumed	1.667	.200	.412	100	.681	.098	.238	-.374	.570

	Equal variances not assumed			.412	97.918	.681	.098	.238	-.374	.570
PVAL_GPP	Equal variances assumed	6.220	.014	-2.132	100	.035	-.490	.230	-.946	-.034
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.132	89.863	.036*	-.490	.230	-.947	-.034
PVAL_EC	Equal variances assumed	.218	.642	-.627	100	.532	-.157	.250	-.653	.339
	Equal variances not assumed			-.627	99.623	.532	-.157	.250	-.653	.339
PVAL_FA	Equal variances assumed	1.694	.196	-.384	100	.701	-.078	.204	-.483	.326
	Equal variances not assumed			-.384	95.061	.702	-.078	.204	-.483	.327
PVAL_IP	Equal variances assumed	3.016	.086	1.060	100	.291	.255	.240	-.222	.732
	Equal variances not assumed			1.060	90.672	.292	.255	.240	-.223	.732
PVAL_GI	Equal variances assumed	.008	.930	.232	100	.817	.059	.253	-.444	.561
	Equal variances not assumed			.232	99.913	.817	.059	.253	-.444	.561
PVAL_SA	Equal variances assumed	.062	.804	.000	100	1.000	.000	.234	-.465	.465
	Equal variances not assumed			.000	99.009	1.000	.000	.234	-.465	.465
COM_BS	Equal variances assumed	.079	.779	-.164	100	.870	-.039	.239	-.513	.434
	Equal variances not assumed			-.164	99.961	.870	-.039	.239	-.513	.434
COM_PRD	Equal variances assumed	2.795	.098	1.800	100	.075	.451	.251	-.046	.948
	Equal variances not assumed			1.800	95.735	.075	.451	.251	-.046	.948
COM_AG	Equal variances assumed	.477	.491	.341	100	.733	.078	.230	-.377	.534
	Equal variances not assumed			.341	98.825	.733	.078	.230	-.377	.534
COM_GC	Equal variances assumed	3.511	.064	-.092	100	.927	-.020	.213	-.443	.404
	Equal variances not assumed			-.092	95.977	.927	-.020	.213	-.443	.404
COM_CF	Equal variances assumed	.402	.528	1.830	100	.070	.471	.257	-.040	.981
	Equal variances not assumed			1.830	98.724	.070	.471	.257	-.040	.981
COM_ISP	Equal variances assumed	5.284	.024	.727	100	.469	.176	.243	-.305	.658
	Equal variances not assumed			.727	93.549	.469	.176	.243	-.305	.658
COM_OPE	Equal variances assumed	.720	.398	-.341	100	.734	-.078	.230	-.535	.378
	Equal variances not assumed			-.341	99.058	.734	-.078	.230	-.535	.378
COM_ND	Equal variances assumed	.733	.394	-1.049	100	.297	-.216	.206	-.623	.192
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.049	95.403	.297	-.216	.206	-.624	.192
COM_LCO	Equal variances assumed	1.212	.273	.326	100	.745	.078	.240	-.399	.556

	Equal variances not assumed			.326	96.146	.745	.078	.240	-.399	.556
COM_RLP	Equal variances assumed	5.697	.019	.365	100	.716	.098	.269	-.435	.631
	Equal variances not assumed			.365	90.464	.716	.098	.269	-.436	.632
COM_HLP	Equal variances assumed	1.193	.277	.539	100	.591	.137	.255	-.368	.642
	Equal variances not assumed			.539	97.458	.591	.137	.255	-.368	.643
COM_EDB	Equal variances assumed	4.612	.034	-1.155	100	.251	-.275	.238	-.746	.197
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.155	95.260	.251	-.275	.238	-.747	.197
COM_DLK	Equal variances assumed	.867	.354	.077	100	.938	.020	.253	-.483	.522
	Equal variances not assumed			.077	99.330	.938	.020	.253	-.483	.522
OWOM_MF	Equal variances assumed	.018	.893	.327	100	.744	.089	.272	-.451	.630
	Equal variances not assumed			.327	99.965	.744	.089	.272	-.451	.630
OWOM_TM	Equal variances assumed	.001	.982	1.322	100	.189	.334	.252	-.167	.834
	Equal variances not assumed			1.322	100.000	.189	.334	.252	-.167	.834
OWOM_SM	Equal variances assumed	.017	.895	.668	100	.506	.184	.276	-.363	.732
	Equal variances not assumed			.668	99.241	.506	.184	.276	-.363	.732
OWOM_TD	Equal variances assumed	.012	.912	1.743	100	.084	.429	.246	-.059	.917
	Equal variances not assumed			1.743	99.691	.084	.429	.246	-.059	.917
OWOM_GT	Equal variances assumed	.580	.448	1.177	100	.242	.296	.251	-.203	.794
	Equal variances not assumed			1.177	99.844	.242	.296	.251	-.203	.794
OWOM_PR	Equal variances assumed	.243	.623	1.521	100	.131	.391	.257	-.119	.901
	Equal variances not assumed			1.521	97.751	.132	.391	.257	-.119	.902

* Significant at p<.05; ** Significant at p<.001

Appendix 10 Standardized Residual Matrix

	PVAL_6	OWO_M_A4	OWO_M_A3	OWO_M_A2	OWO_M_A1	OWO_M_P2	PVAL_19	PVAL_18	PVAL_14	PVAL_10	PVAL_9	PVAL_8	PVAL_7	PVAL_3	PVAL_2	PVAL_1	COM_13	COM_12	COM_11	COM_10	COM_9	COM_7	LOY_7	COM_1	COM_2	COM_3	COM_5	COM_6	LOY_2	LOY_3	LOY_4	LOY_5	LOY_6	SAT_1	SAT_2	SAT_3	SAT_4	SAT_6
PVAL_6	0																																					
OWOM_A4	-0.642	0																																				
OWOM_A3	-0.611	2.068	0																																			
OWOM_A2	2.007	-1.089	-1.009	0																																		
OWOM_A1	0.014	0.072	-0.339	1.384	0																																	
OWOM_P2	2.646	-0.189	0.289	-0.076	-0.937	0																																
PVAL_19	0.102	-1.076	0.015	-0.202	-0.282	1.332	0																															
PVAL_18	0.246	-0.213	-0.266	-0.073	-0.618	2.01	0	0																														
PVAL_14	-0.645	-2.203	-2.668	1.342	-0.712	2.021	-0.854	-0.982	0																													
PVAL_10	0.411	-0.943	-1.745	1.693	-0.949	1.694	0.891	1.505	-0.135	0																												
PVAL_9	-0.178	-2.445	-1.844	1.039	-0.972	1.573	-0.831	-0.769	0.297	-0.443	0																											
PVAL_8	-0.399	0.43	-0.815	2.491	0.594	3.442	0.969	1.496	0.496	0.381	-0.33	0																										
PVAL_7	-0.016	-1.547	-1.082	1.777	-0.7	2.26	0.93	-0.09	-0.515	0.16	0.342	0.079	0																									
PVAL_3	-0.043	-2.477	-3.154	0.413	-1.411	0.608	-0.794	-1.287	0.602	-0.364	1.021	-0.419	-0.416	0																								
PVAL_2	0.207	-2.569	-2.307	0.53	-1.063	1.513	-0.161	-0.971	0.333	-0.15	-0.067	-0.482	-0.24	0.369	0																							
PVAL_1	0.558	-1.856	-0.757	2.02	0.739	2.084	0.279	0.303	0.008	-0.468	0.04	-0.537	-0.234	-0.382	0.916	0																						
COM_13	0.283	-0.45	0.128	0.191	-0.821	0.789	-0.033	-0.418	-1.663	-0.12	-1.186	0.54	-0.174	-2.022	-1.362	0.337	0																					

	PVAL	OWO	OWO	OWO	OWO	OWO	PVAL	PVAL	PVAL	PVAL	PVAL	PVAL	PVAL	PVAL	PVAL	PVAL	PVAL	COM	COM	COM	COM	COM	COM	LOY	COM	COM	COM	COM	COM	LOY	LOY	LOY	LOY	LOY	SAT	SAT	SAT	SAT		
	_6	M_A4	M_A3	M_A2	M_A1	M_P2	_19	_18	_14	_10	_9	_8	_7	_3	_2	_1	_13	_12	_11	COM	_10	_9	_7	7	COM	_1	_2	_3	_5	_6	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	_3	4	_6
COM_12	0.316	-0.839	-1.156	0.631	-2.177	1.072	-0.296	0.211	1.501	1.245	1.53	2.798	1.128	0.388	0.567	0.93	-0.626	0																						
COM_11	-1.051	-0.753	-0.602	-0.418	-1.794	1.269	-1.197	-0.337	-0.062	-0.708	-0.503	0.805	-0.442	-0.932	-0.897	-0.727	-0.835	-0.012	0																					
COM_10	-1.345	2.297	1.448	1.202	0.744	2.085	-0.256	-0.512	-1.93	-0.941	-2.102	1.179	-0.299	-2.774	-1.8	-0.518	2.034	-2.108	-0.204	0																				
COM_9	2.877	-0.679	-1.736	1.417	-1.461	1.641	0.158	-0.169	2.381	2.758	2.346	2.412	2.532	2.327	2.449	3.212	0.151	1.098	-0.403	-0.449	0																			
COM_7	-0.088	-1.261	-1.074	-1.487	-2.667	-0.189	-0.455	-1.209	0.968	-0.471	0.142	0.031	-1.133	-1.046	-1.038	-0.513	-0.23	1.546	0.723	-1.223	-0.816	0																		
LOY_7	1.001	-0.254	-0.284	0.184	-1.236	0.959	0.436	0.267	-1.393	0.528	-1.424	0.85	0.589	-1.005	-0.927	0.29	0.435	-1.103	-0.471	1.298	1.575	-1.144	0																	
COM_1	2.772	-0.491	-0.973	2.368	0.649	1.825	0.991	1.051	2.753	3.484	1.429	2.591	2.125	2.765	2.814	2.666	-0.253	0.002	-0.542	-0.799	1.465	-1.049	1.822	0																
COM_2	-1.262	1.086	0.451	0.547	-0.473	2.315	2.599	2.955	-1.933	-0.119	-2.08	0.757	-0.461	-2.485	-1.658	-0.994	0.304	-1.359	0.085	1.878	-1.156	-0.925	0.623	-0.109	0															
COM_3	-0.086	-0.585	-1.374	-0.721	-1.807	0.133	-1.755	-0.097	0.237	0.298	-0.299	0.859	0.083	-1.101	-0.03	-0.071	-0.285	2.353	0.936	-1.609	-0.289	2.155	-1.712	-0.997	-1.075	0														
COM_5	-1.267	-0.036	-0.456	-0.146	-0.685	1.181	-0.749	-0.402	-1.437	-1.638	-1.987	-0.812	-1.774	-2.726	-2.302	-1.044	0.405	-1.097	1.103	0.809	-0.775	1.201	-0.387	-0.355	0.518	-0.112	0													
COM_6	-1.416	0.505	1.046	0.046	-0.571	1.831	-0.131	0.808	-1.723	-0.773	-1.886	1.212	-1.953	-2.4	-2.088	-1.59	0.075	-0.33	0.593	0.906	-1.191	0.341	-0.666	-1.005	1.83	0.143	0.328	0												
LOY_2	0.236	-0.045	-0.471	0.701	-0.123	0.857	0.266	-0.121	-1.002	0.444	-1.963	0.439	0.681	-1.619	-0.567	0.527	0.418	-0.664	-1.009	1.949	0.795	-0.958	0.338	1.749	0.991	-1.333	0.415	-1.052	0											
LOY_3	1.317	-0.897	-0.073	1.02	-0.437	1.685	0.205	-0.248	-0.259	0.73	-0.508	1.497	1.041	-0.628	-0.013	1.132	0.034	-0.5	-0.848	0.805	1.481	-0.948	-0.708	1.102	-1.147	-1.602	-0.982	-0.896	-0.143	0										
LOY_4	0.036	-1.571	-1.513	0.586	-1.145	0.68	-0.502	-0.12	-1.202	-0.045	-1.808	0.407	0.828	-1.973	-0.946	0.22	0.518	-1.202	-0.315	0.851	0.956	-1.909	0.033	1.191	-0.491	-1.421	-0.617	-1.411	-0.27	0.741	0									
LOY_5	2.54	-0.177	-1.364	2.106	-0.202	1.507	0.864	0.405	0.999	2.703	1.523	2.128	2.67	2.132	1.82	2.781	0.681	1.224	-0.304	1.48	3.496	-0.466	0.461	2.837	0.002	-0.501	-0.433	-0.426	-0.825	-0.112	-0.05	0								
LOY_6	-1.151	-0.431	-0.007	-0.409	-1.072	0.329	-1.219	-1.696	-2.586	-1.323	-2.677	-0.367	-0.454	-2.534	-2.519	-1.451	0.039	-0.784	-0.73	2.071	0.264	-0.439	0.024	-0.686	-0.341	-2.366	0.138	-0.55	1.219	0.27	-0.185	-0.777	0							
SAT_1	-0.719	-1.136	-1.485	1.195	-0.314	2.041	0.434	-0.549	0.068	-0.504	0.132	0.328	0.548	0.516	-0.402	-1.512	-2.306	0.83	0.116	-1.605	0.594	0.149	-0.746	1.07	-1.241	-0.067	-1.483	-0.836	0.176	-0.219	-1.575	0.613	-0.329	0						
SAT_2	0.335	-1.807	-1.812	0.6	-0.774	0.343	1.389	0.256	1.178	1.11	0.064	0.803	0.582	1.467	0.341	-0.307	-1.606	0.131	-0.605	-1.98	0.907	0.359	-0.27	2.251	-2.05	-1.313	-0.834	-1.848	0.108	0.041	-1.482	0.43	-0.428	-0.274	0					
SAT_3	-0.09	-1.889	-1.817	0.453	-0.606	1.65	-0.131	0.072	0.05	-0.077	0.04	0.554	1.22	0.986	0.278	-1.333	-0.735	0.961	-0.211	-1.021	0.901	0.353	-0.717	0.833	-0.641	0.132	-0.356	-1.183	0.278	0.198	-1.412	0.264	-0.907	0.054	-0.638	0				
SAT_4	-1.626	-1.095	-0.744	1.219	-0.303	2.72	0.407	-1.053	-0.398	-0.536	-0.702	0.237	-0.269	0.298	-1.154	-2.011	-0.512	1.623	0.681	-0.388	1.348	0.918	0.067	2.287	-0.447	0.334	-0.04	-0.338	1.173	0.653	-0.063	0.99	0.442	0.227	0.308	-0.052	0			
SAT_6	-0.438	-2.014	-2.001	1.247	-0.441	1.808	-0.131	-0.918	0.212	0.414	0.298	0.692	0.721	1.317	0.196	-0.492	-1.254	1.395	-0.111	-1.147	2.035	0.157	-0.296	2.528	-0.66	-0.227	-1.247	-0.542	0.992	0.498	-0.872	1.008	0.015	-0.082	0.113	0.171	-0.153	0		

Appendix 11 Country of OWOM Studies (Year 2000-2009)

Country of study	Number of articles (Total 53)
China	3
Finland	1
Germany	2
Hong Kong	1
Hong Kong, Taiwan and China	1
Israel	1
Japan	1
Korea	7
Spain	1
Taiwan	2
USA	29
USA and China	2
USA and Korea	1
Canada	1

Source: Chan and Ngai (2011, p. 502)

Note: 41 out of 94 articles reviewed by Chan and Ngai either do not indicate the location of samples or do not have a specific web site

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