

ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH: PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS
THAT AFFECT CONSUMERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS AND
ACCEPTANCE OF ONLINE OPINION PLATFORMS IN PURCHASING
TECHNOLOGY PRODUCTS

IRMAK YEŐİLADA

109680014

İSTANBUL BİLGİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
MEDYA VE İLETİŐİM SİSTEMLERİ
YÜKSEKLİSANS PROGRAMI

YRD.DOÇ.DR. ÖZLEM HESAPÇI SANAKTEKİN

2011

ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH: PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS
THAT AFFECT CONSUMERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS AND
ACCEPTANCE OF ONLINE OPINION PLATFORMS IN PURCHASING
TECHNOLOGY PRODUCTS

ELEKTRONİK AĞIZDAN AĞIZA İLETİŞİM (EWOM):
TÜKETİCİLERİN TEKNOLOJİ ÜRÜNLERİ SATIN ALIRKEN ONLINE
FİKİR PAYLAŞIM PLATFORMLARINA KARŞI TUTUMUNU
ETKİLEYEN PSİKOLOJİK FAKTÖRLER

Irmak Yeşilada

109680014

Tez Danışmanı: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Özlem Hesapçı Sanaktekin.....

Jüri Üyesi: Prof. Dr. Yonca Aslanbay.....

Jüri Üyesi: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Erkan Saka.....

Tezin Onaylandığı Tarih: 21.10.2011

ABSTRACT:

The new era of Internet, Web 2.0, has brought new platforms to consumers where they are able to create contents, share information and build social networks. Besides, through these online platforms consumers started to talk about brands and share product experiences. As more and more consumers engage in these websites, Word of Mouth communication has been carried to online platforms. This new communication type which is called Electronic Word of Mouth has great impact on consumers' decision making process. Considering these developments, the investigation of factors affecting consumers' eWOM behaviors, have been a great concern of researchers and practitioners. Current study examines psychological factors and motives that influence the intention addressing to online comments. A survey was conducted with a sample of 318 participants, the majority of university students in Istanbul and Ankara. The findings revealed that trust, perceived integrity, perceived ability and perceived risk are significant psychological factors influencing consumers' reading intentions. Moreover, risk reduction is found to be the primary motive of reading online comments. In the new Internet era, consumers are more active and have the ability to direct the market. The study includes valuable information to understand consumers' behavior in online platforms which could be beneficial in e-marketing strategies.

Keywords: Electronic Word-of-Mouth, online consumer review, Internet marketing, consumer behaviour

ÖZET:

İnternetin yeni çağı olarak tanımlanan Web 2.0, tüketicilere içerik üretebilecekleri yeni platformlar sunmuştur. Tüketiciler bu platformlarda çeşitli konularda bilgi paylaşarak, birbiriyle etkileşimde bulunmaya başlamışlardır. Böylece ağızdan ağıza iletişim (Word of Mouth) online platformlara taşınmış, tüketicilerin ürünler ve markalar hakkında konuşup, deneyimlerini paylaştıkları bir ortam meydana gelmiştir. Elektronik ağızdan ağıza iletişim (Electronic Word of Mouth) olarak adlandırılan bu yeni iletişim tarzı son dönemlerde popüler olmuş ve tüketicilerin alım kararlarını etkiler duruma gelmiştir. Tüm bu gelişmeler göz önünde bulundurulduğunda tüketicilerin elektronik ağızdan ağıza iletişim (eWOM) davranışlarını etkileyen faktörleri araştırmak önemli bir araştırma konusu olmuştur. Bu çalışma, online yorumları okumayı etkileyen psikolojik faktörleri incelemektedir. Çoğunluğu İstanbul ve Ankara'dan üniversite öğrencilerinin oluşturduğu 318 kişilik bir örnekleme anket uygulanmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre güven, algılanan dürüstlük, algılanan yetenek ve algılanan risk faktörleri tüketicilerin online yorum okuma niyetlerini etkilemektedir. Ayrıca, risk azaltma (risk reduction) online yorum okumadaki en önemli neden olarak bulgulanmıştır. Yeni internet çağında tüketiciler çok daha aktiftir ve pazarı yönlendirme gücüne sahiptir. Yapılan araştırma, tüketicilerin online platformlardaki davranışlarını anlamaya yardımcı ve e-pazarlama stratejileri için faydalı olabilecek önemli bilgiler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Sosyal medya, online tüketici yorumları, internetten pazarlama, tüketici davranışı

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

I am heartily thankful to my supervisor, Ass.Prof.Özlem Hesapçı Sanaktekin, whose guidance and support helped me in all the time of research and writing of this thesis. I could not have imagined having a better supervisor for my study.

Besides my supervisor, I would like to thank my professors Prof. Yonca Aslanbay and Ass. Prof. Erkan Saka for their patience and encouragement. My special thanks to Özge, Su and Damla for helping me get through the difficult times, and for all the emotional support, to Ilgar for his kindly help and motivation.

I wish to thank my entire family; my sister Yaprak and my brother in law Atakan and my little nephew Defne for encouraging me in all the time of my graduate study. My uncle Mustafa, my sister in law Ayşe and my cousins for hosting me in their house and providing me a lovely environment during my studies.

Thanks to Starbucks for helping me concentrate on my thesis.

Words fail me to express my appreciation to my parents Akgül and Erdem Yeşilada and my grandmother Sevim Ürgen supporting me throughout my life. This thesis would not have been possible unless they were near me with their invaluable help and patience. I feel lucky for having them.

Table of Contents:

1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 . The Concept of Word of Mouth (WOM)	2-5
1.2 . Web 2.0 and Virtual Communities.....	5-7
1.3 . The Concept of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)..	7-13
2. Conceptual Framework.....	13-16
2.1. Motives.....	16-19
2.2. Psychological Factors.....	19-30
3. Methodology.....	30
3.1. Measures.....	30-34
4. Analyses and Results.....	34-35
4.1. Data Collection and Participants.....	35-36
4.2. Internet and Social Media Use.....	36-39
4.3. Characteristics of the variables measured in the study.....	39-40
4.4. Factor Analysis.....	40-43
4.5. Correlation Analysis.....	43-44
4.6. Hypothesis Testing	44-45
4.7. Other Findings.....	45-46
5. Discussion	46-52
6. Limitations.....	52-53
7. Conclusion.....	53-55
8. Bibliography	

1. INTRODUCTION:

The power of traditional WOM on influencing consumer decision making process has been known for a long time. Nevertheless, WOM has gained a new significance with the advent of Internet; through Internet, consumers have had the chance to communicate with each other via emails and chat rooms. Also, brands have benefited from these communication tools, especially, e-mail marketing has become very common during the past several years. Recently, a new era, Web 2.0 has begun across Internet. Web 2.0 has provided consumers, not only contacting with their friends and social networks but also, exchanging ideas with people that they have not known previously. Besides, they are able to create contents. Entire platforms which give these opportunities are defined as social media channels and all these channels are being used as a tool of WOM.

Social media users give advices to each other, share opinions, make comments and create online consumer communities for several products. This new medium is called electronic word of mouth (eWOM) which is so powerful that one negative comment could spread very rapidly and damage the reputation of a company. For that reason, understanding eWOM behavior of consumers' has been the concern of several scholars and practitioners. Previous studies investigated eWOM from different aspects (Jansen et al. 2009; Youn 2009; Huang et al. 2008). Some concentrated on the factors that affect consumers' purchase intentions after involving eWOM (Lee&Youn 2009; Prendergas 2010). Some of them focused on underlying motives and psychological factors in engaging eWOM (Hennig -

Thurau 2004). Generally these studies observed incentives of recommenders, little attention has been paid to the receiver side. Regarding this gap, current study was designed for investigating the motives and psychological factors affecting eWOM receivers.

In this research, consumers' eWOM reading motives; psychological factors affecting consumers purchase intentions such as; trust, perceived risk, perceived integrity, perceived ability, attitude towards online opinion sharing and eWOM were investigated through a survey. Before describing the methodology, concepts of Word of Mouth and Electronic Word of Mouth; Web 2.0 and virtual communities and theoretical background for the hypothesized relationships are set forth in the following sections.

1.1. The Concept of Word of Mouth (WOM):

Word of mouth (WOM) communication is a process of transferring information from one person to another in a face-to-face situation (Sun et al. 2006; Money et al. 1998; Brown et al. 2005). Consumers share their experiences and reactions about any business with other consumers voluntarily (Jansen et al. 2009). Due to the fact that WOM communication involves an opinion exchange with friends and relatives, it is considered as an effective information source and a powerful marketing tool. It is commonly known that consumers intent to seek information from others while deciding a product purchase (Gildin 2003). Lau&Ng (2001) defined WOM as an “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”. On account of this definition, WOM

communication “allows consumers to share information and opinions that direct buyers towards and away from specific products, brands, and services” (Litvin et al. 2005). Thus, people without any commercial connections talk about a product or a brand spontaneously (Davis & Khazanchi 2008). The value of WOM arises from its impact on consumer’s choices (Lau & Ng 2001) and product judgments (Lee & Youn 2009). In case those consumers’ have positive attitude towards a brand, product sales will increase accordingly (Godes&Mayzlin 2004). On the contrary, negative opinions would decrease sales rate (Ennew et al. 2000). Among the varied marketing channels, WOM is considered by consumers as the most credible and reliable source, compared to firm dominated channels (Brown et al. 2007; Godes&Mayzlin 2004; Bickart & Schindler 2001; Lau & Ng 2001). It affects awareness, expectations, perceptions and behavioral intentions of consumers (Buttle 1998). Besides, WOM reduces perceived risk of consumers in case of a purchase failure (Ennew et al. 2000). Furthermore, satisfaction and trust are prominent factors affecting WOM behavior (Augusto de Matos&Rossi 2008; Garbarino&Johnson 1999). It is suggested that satisfied consumers are likely to recommend a product to others. On the other hand, unsatisfied consumers share their negative comments undoubtedly, thus they feel regret and frustration; in other words, they need to take a sort of revenge. Satisfaction is related to trust and trust takes place within an organization and the consumer. High level of customer satisfaction with the organization brings high level of trust towards it (Ranaweera&Prabhu 2003).

In WOM communication, the key role belongs to the opinion leader; in other words, to the recommender who diffuses the primary message to others (Litvin 2005). For that reason, catching opinion leaders is the major goal of many companies. Sernovitz (2009, p.6) determined four rules of WOM marketing to influence opinion leaders to talk about a brand. First of all, a boring company is not attractive for consumers, there should be something exciting or interesting for people to talk about. Secondly, the message of the company must be simple. If consumers do not understand the message, they would not share it. Thirdly, a happy customer is the best advertisement channel, thus creating a remarkable experience would be a great way to touch consumers. Finally, if people do not trust a company, they will not talk positively about that company. Unfulfilled needs and disrespectful attitudes would end with losing the customer with several negative opinions.

All of the rules that are mentioned above indicate a general view of the role of WOM communication in marketing strategies. Even though the rules seem to be simple, it is not easy to attract consumers and affect their purchase choices. However, a well known company always has more advantages while competing with various companies. In recent years, the competition has reached its top level, due to the new media technologies. WOM communication which is limited with social connections has evolved, and gained a new meaning (Lau & Ng 2001) Now, a message diffuse through online connections (Dellarocas 2003). Innovations have not been limited with WOM communication, it has been an occasion affects all media content, especially after Web 2.0 was developed. Web 2.0 provides

an opportunity for all people to get involved in a media production process. Hence, traditional media has struggled to maintain their presence. In order to achieve a better understanding of this evolution, it is necessary to examine how the process is generated.

1.2. Web 2.0 and Virtual Communities:

Traditional types of media allow one to communicate in many ways. For instance, a tv advertisement reaches many consumers. However, while watching the advertisement, consumers are passive, so they only receive the media message (Hoffman 1995). Similarly, first phase of Internet has involved solely one to many communication through websites and e-mail. The next phase of Internet which is called Web 2.0 is based on collaboration and participation providing free flow of ideas and content” (Jenkins 2006, p.18) and offers not only one to many but also many to many communication (Karanikova 2008). McWilliam (2000) mentions that a Web 2.0 site has distinct properties such as visitors can contribute to the content and comment, share contents with each other, rate a content, form communities, and influence the opinions of others, etc.

The major properties of new media are interactivity and ubiquitousness. In other words, new media allows reaching any information from everywhere by interacting with other people (Peterson 2003). To facilitate this interaction, people form online communities. In these new communities, geographical distance is not an obstacle against coming together through reciprocal exchange of knowledge. Community is; a group of people interacting with each other involuntarily and usually united by common values and norms within a shared geographical location (Kozinets 1999). On

the other hand, virtual community refers to a group of people who come together voluntarily with a moral commitment for realizing a common purpose (Komito 1998). In this community type, people act with a sense of collective identity and mutually assist each other in an online platform (Kozinets 1999).

The activity of information gathering in online communities is defined as “collective intelligence” by Pierre Levy (Jenkins 2004). Collective intelligence refers to the contributions of people who create contents in virtual platforms, such as Youtube, Facebook, Wikipedia. Several creative and knowledgeable people come together abolishing geographical distances (Gruber 2008). According to Gruber (2008), user generated content creates a human-machine synergy. Machines enable human to originate more knowledge through communicating with each other. People report their experiences about a product or a service in an online platform forming a collective knowledge system. This system offers consumers a coverage of various information when they search for any recommendation.

According to Wind&Vijay (2002), new media changed behaviors of consumers. The new consumer has a desire for social interaction, options, value, personalization and making better decisions. New media technologies have reduced distribution costs and provide a proliferation of marketing channels where consumers create media content (Jenkins 2004). Further, new media create opportunities for new business models and offers several ways of communicating with consumers (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010). For attracting more consumers, companies seek for the alternative ways.

Generally, they reward the consumer for supporting the brand. Many well-known brands host online communities through bulletin boards and forums, blogs and social network pages such as; Dove, Coca Cola ; Intel, etc

Regarding these developments, WOM communication, an ancient system which provides diffusing a message, has been adapted to Internet and eWOM arose. In the following section, the focus concept of current study; eWOM, will be explained thoroughly.

1.3. The Concept of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM):

People generally trust their friends and families more than any other information source (Jansen et al. 2009), and WOM takes place between these social connections. However, with the innovations Internet brought into our lives, people not only trust the opinions of their intimate social connection, but also they rely on strangers. Using the Internet, consumers are able to provide information from other consumers via virtual opinion platforms (Hennig-Thurau & Walsh 2003). This kind of information exchange is called eWOM. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) defines eWOM communication as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet”. Through online WOM, consumers share experiences and comments in a virtual platform without knowing each other. They are free to make product evaluations anonymously (Dellarocas 2003). For this reason, they may write both positive and negative comments about a product. This makes online WOM more trustworthy and credible than advertisements (Bickart & Schindler 2001). Additionally, consumers prefer online WOM because of its

easy accessibility. In this way, they are able to reach any kind of information from Internet anytime (Yee et al. 2009).

Several types of electronic media provide the opportunity of sharing, with their distinct properties. By Bickart & Schindler (2001), online WOM platforms are listed as product review websites, retailers' websites, brands' websites, personal blogs, forums and social networking sites.

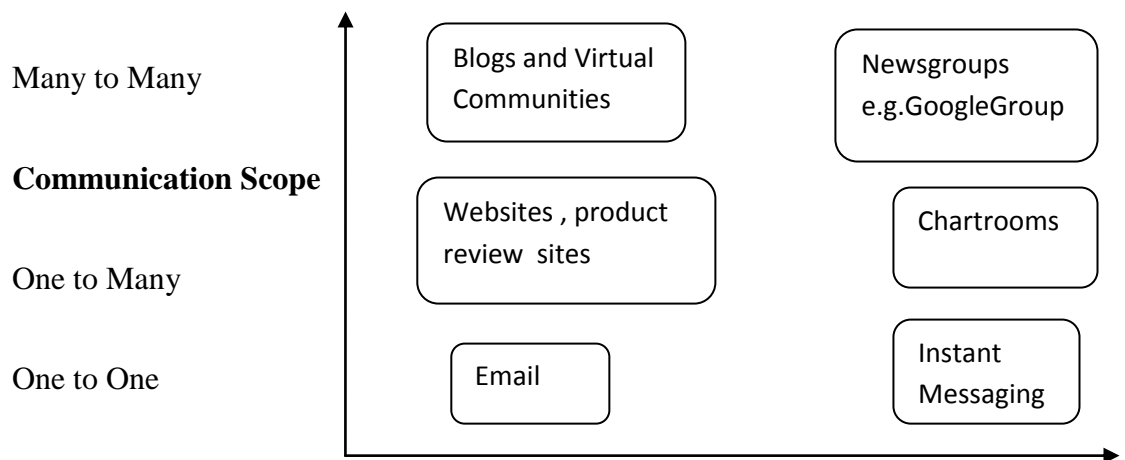


Figure 1. A typology of electronic word of mouth channels (Litvin et al., 2008)

Through these platforms, consumers are able to read and write reviews for a product or a service. When eWOM is posted on a brands' website, generally consumers perceive that the reviewer would be influenced by the marketer (Lee 2009). On the other hand, product review websites and retailers' websites are considered by consumers more independent and credible than brands' websites. For instance, Hepsiburada.com encourages consumers to rate a product by making comments. Also, it gives the chance to compare a product with similar

products (Fig 2). Moreover, product experiences posted on blogs, forums (Fig 3) and social networking sites (Fig 4) are commonly preferred due to the fact that consumers could develop virtual communities where they share interests and interact with each other.

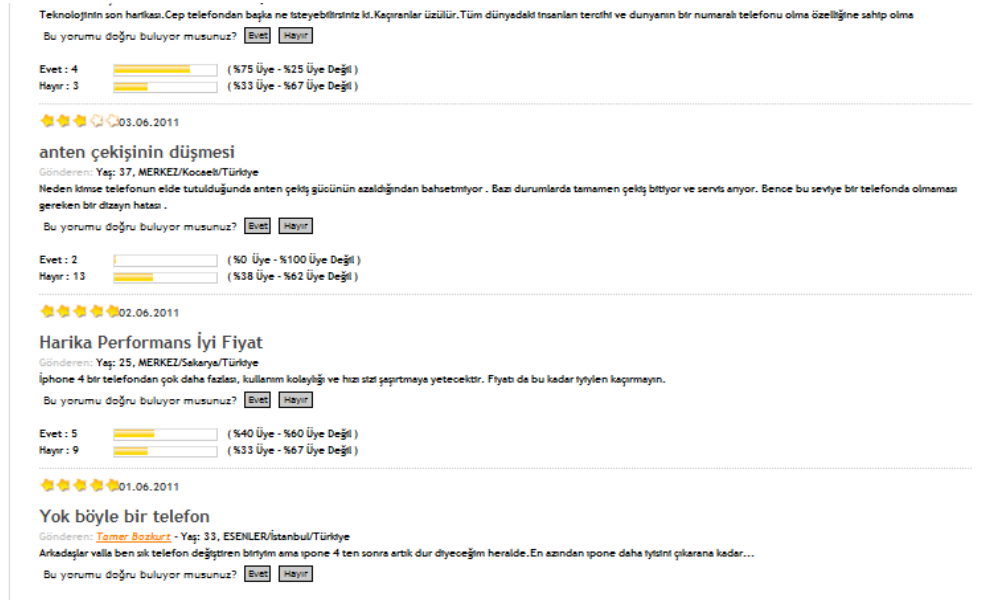


Figure 2. A comment wall in retailer website



Figure 3. A comment wall in a forum



Figure 4. A comment wall in a social networking site.

Overall, all kinds of virtual opinion platforms let consumers read the experiences of other consumers. Those who consult for an opinion can also publish their own comments, and they do not need any expertise for doing this (Hennig-Thurau 2003). Regarding these developments, it is obvious that eWOM has an important role in consumer's perception of a product and a precise effect on a brand's image and brand awareness (Jansen et al. 2009).

The key characteristic of eWOM is providing easy access to the information source (Litvin et al. 2005). New age consumers do not want to be managed by advertisements. They are no more just receivers, but they can also create contents. Therefore, consumers give priority to their own and the others' experiences more than marketing channels. However, Cheung Man et al. (2009) suggest that readers do not follow comments blindly; they pay attention to the property of the recommendation. Hence, online opinion readers accept the information which is consistent with their prior beliefs and trust more to the comments that are similar to their personal thoughts.

Doh & Hwang (2009) found that participants rely on eWOM messages with high credibility and they suggest that involvement with the product influence word of mouth effects.

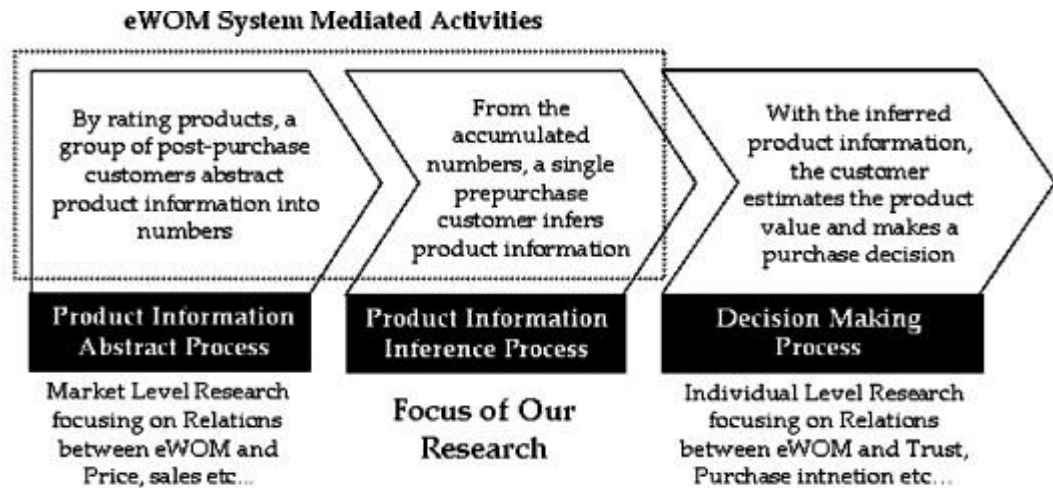


Figure 5. eWOM activities (Lee&Lee, 2009)

By sharing their personal thoughts, reactions and opinions, consumers play an active role in marketers' behaviors. Thus, the marketers build new strategies to provide and protect consumers' trust because they know that online WOM is a very powerful medium that could shape the attitude toward a brand. Besides, it has a significant effect on consumers' purchase decisions (Lee&Youn 2009), and the information diffuse very fast (Prendergast et al. 2010). Due to the fact that one negative comment could damage brand's reputation, many companies have begun monitoring online communities of their customers (Dwyer 2007). Firms manage several marketing campaigns such as viral marketing campaigns whose purpose is to create viral messages through word of mouth and are designed for increasing brand awareness (Dellarocas 2006). According to Thomas (2006), nowadays, viral marketing has been transformed and buzz

marketing replaced its function. Buzz marketing is defined as “the amplification of initial marketing efforts by third parties through their passive or active influence” (Thomas 2006). There are specific buzz marketing organizations which either pay people or seek volunteers to try new brands; and accordingly, they provide agents who talk about those brands among their social connections. At this point, WOM communication can be divided into two. One is; “everyday” WOM which involves casual talks among people about an organization or a product which are held online or offline. The other is; “institutional” WOM or buzz which is designed for a specific WOM campaign where at least one participant is from an institution or an organization (Carl Walter J. 2006).

Buzz is “all the word of mouth about a brand” and it “travels in invisible networks”. (Carl Walter J. 2006, p.7). Network is something that you have with your social connections, but it also refers to the connections with other people whom one does not know personally. Through buzz, you are able to communicate with strangers and accordingly your invisible networks come into being. There are three reasons for the increased importance of buzz: noise, skepticism and connectivity. Noise refers to the fact that consumers are exposed to several advertisements and commercial messages every day; hence, to protect themselves from information overload, they ignore some messages and listen to their social networks. Skepticism can be explained as consumers’ generally feeling doubt for some brands, especially if they had a disappointed experience. Through the opportunity which buzz provides, consumers are able to share their doubts with other consumers. Connectivity denotes to the fact that consumers have

always talked to each other, and now, thanks to Internet, they have a new tool for giving or asking advice easier than ever (Rosen 2000, p.14-15).

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

Online word-of-mouth has become a common topic of research in the area of computer-mediated communication, particularly in the context of consumer-to-consumer interactions. eWOM communication has helped give rise to different types of online communities. Members of these communities aroused the interest of several researchers.

Yee et al. (2009) explored how informational and normative determinants influence the perceived credibility of online consumer recommendations. It is found that informationally based determinants such as; name, argument strength, source credibility and confirmation with receiver's prior belief significantly influence perceived eWOM credibility. Readers frequently rely on eWOM messages with high credibility (Doh&Hwang 2009). Lee and Youn (2009) examines whether and how various eWOM platforms, such as brand websites, product review websites and personal blogs affect consumers' product judgment. They indicate that the effect of eWOM platforms on consumer willingness to recommend the product is significant only when the review is positive. However, they have found some determinal factors that can affect consumers' desire to recommend the product to friends when the review is negative. Generally, negative WOM is considered more effective in consumers' purchase decisions. For instance, in their research, Tsuifang et al. (2010) focused solely on the impact of online negative word of mouth on consumer's

purchase decisions. This study suggests that strength of information, sender's expertise and the strength of relationship between sender and receiver have effects on consumer's purchase decisions. Besides, it is found that trust plays a mediator role between negative WOM and consumer's purchase decisions. Considering the great role of trust in consumers' intention to purchase products, Hsiao et al. (2010) have observed certain antecedents of trust in product recommendation in a social networking site and they have indicated that perceived ability, perceived benevolence/integrity, perceived critical mass and trust in a website are four prominent antecedents of trust that influence consumers' intention to purchase the products.

Another research focuses on which factors affect and encourage adoption of online opinions in virtual online communities. It is suggested that information relevance and information comprehensiveness are the major elements influencing information adoption in an online community (Cheung et al.2008). Dwyer (2007) proposed a metric and investigated the impact of highly valued discourse on the evolution of online community social networks. On the other hand, Sun et al.(2006) have developed a model to explore the antecedents and consequences of eWOM. This study indicates that innovativeness, Internet usage and Internet social connection are significant predictors of online word of mouth. Besides, online forwarding and online chatting are found as behavioral consequences of online word of mouth.

Godes and Mayzlin (2004) have investigated two distinct dimension of WOM which are more useful for companies in understanding consumers'

buying intentions. They suggest that firms should consider volume and dispersion factors while building their strategies. Further, measuring these dimensions require low cost and effort for the firms, which means they are able to determine consumers' attitudes by looking how much WOM is there. Senecal and Nantel (2004) focus on three determinants that can influence the impact of online recommendations on consumers' online product choices. These are the nature of the product recommended, the nature of the website on which the recommendation is proposed, and the type of recommendation source. This study also suggests that the type of recommendation source and the type of product influence consumers' online choices.

While examining eWOM behavior, it should be considered that consumers from different cultural backgrounds would have distinct attitudes towards online articulations. With regard to this idea, Fong and Burton (2006) have observed the behavior of consumers from different cultures on discussion boards. They examined and compared the frequency and the content of postings on a US based website and a China based website. The findings of that study show that there are considerable differences on the behavior of consumers on a US based site compared to China based site. Another research (Lau&Ng 2001) which takes cultural differences factor into consideration, examined negative word of mouth behavior in Singapore and Canada. This study illustrate that product involvement, purchase decision involvement, self-confidence, perceived worthiness of complaining, and proximity of others influence negative word of mouth behavior in both Singapore and Canada. Furthermore, some researches have

indicated that Japanese consumers consult more WOM communication in their purchase behavior than Americans do (Money et al.1998).

Some studies observed eWOM through determining a specific virtual platform and conducted a research accordingly. For instance, Huang et al. (2008) explored the motives and responses of blog readers. They found that blog readers, who had effective exchange motive, relied on blog messages and spread the message to others. On the other hand, some researches focused on forums; Prendergast et al. (2010) suggest that source similarity and attitude towards an online forum are directly related to the intention to purchase products discussed in the forum. Besides, Dumrongsri (2010) demonstrated that membership time and propensity to trust affect purchasing decision and adoption of opinions on forums. In other words, if a consumer has been a member of a particular forum for a long time, and has high level of propensity to trust, it is easier for him/her to trust the opinions in that online community; thus, adopt the eWOM more quickly.

Furthermore, Jansen et.al (2009) has studied the power of Twitter as an electronic word of mouth tool which is called microblogging. After analyzing more than 150.000 microblog postings including branding comments, they found that microblogging is a notable online tool for consumers to discuss and share opinions about brands.

2.1. Motives:

Motives are the “general drivers that direct a consumer’s behavior toward attaining his or her needs” (Assael 1998, p. 78). For understanding WOM behavior, motives play an important role. Sundaram et al. (1998) examined the underlying motives of consumers engaging in positive and

negative WOM. The findings of this study reveal that consumers are likely to engage in positive WOM communication because of altruism regarding the receiver, product involvement, and self-enhancement. On the other hand, it is found that consumers engage in negative WOM with motives of altruism, vengeance, anxiety reduction, and solicitation of advice. These motives are related to consumption experiences. Besides, Ennew et al.(2000) suggested that customer satisfaction is another motive in WOM participation. When consumers are satisfied with a product, they intent to share this satisfaction with others and they feel a desire to recommend that product. Another research conducted by Brown et al. 2005 also supports that satisfaction influence WOM behavior and illustrates that commitment and identification are the other factors.

Wang and Fesenmaier (2003) found that enduring involvement is the prominent factor of participating in online community. In addition to this, they found that seeking benefits for oneself and suggesting help to others are two other important motives of eWOM. On the other hand, in their article Hennig-Thurau et al.(2004) suggest 11 motives for engaging in eWOM, regarding to their literature review. These motives are; concern for other consumers, desire to help the company, social benefits received, exertion of power over companies, post purchase advice seeking, self-enhancement, economic rewards, convenience in seeking redress, hope that the platform operator will serve as a moderator, expression of positive emotions and venting of negative feelings. As a result of this review, researchers conducted a research for better understanding the motivations of consumer's in participating in eWOM communication and they suggested

that consumers' desire for social interaction, desire for economic incentives, their concern for other consumers and the potential to enhance their own self-worth are the vital factors in eWOM behavior.

Determining motives will be useful to explain why consumers read other consumers' comments on virtual opinion platforms. Consumers' reading motives of online comments are noted as save decision making time and make better buying decisions (Hennig-Thurau&Walsh 2003).

After reviewing researches that focused on consumers' reading motives of online opinions, 3 major motives were verified in this study. These are; risk reduction, reduction of search time and dissonance reduction motives.

Risk reduction:

Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003) has suggested that risk reduction is one of the prominent motive to read online comments before buying a product. Through WOM, consumers have the chance to get informed about a product before decision making and this reduces risk by decreasing the likelihood that the purchase would fail. Moreover, if the purchase does fail, WOM reduces the feeling of loss and consumers can tolerate it more easily (Ennew et al., 2000). Accordingly, the first hypothesis of this study is:

H1: Risk reduction is a significant motive for reading online comments

Reduction of search time:

As the market is full of choices, consumers are overwhelmed with information and products. Thus, by reading comments before purchasing a product, they prevent loss of time which they spend while searching for the appropriate product (Ennew et al., 2000). Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003)

has suggested that reduction of search time motive has an impact on reading online comments before buying a product. Considering this suggestion, this study proposes that:

H2: Reduction of search time is a significant motive for reading online comments

Dissonance reduction:

After purchasing, consumers sometimes feel dissonance about the alternatives they have rejected (Ennew et al., 2000). Reading online opinions reduces that conflict. According to a study, dissonance reduction is the main motive for consumers to read online comments (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003). Regarding this finding, it is suggested in the current study that dissonance reduction is a significant motive in reading online comments.

H3: Dissonance reduction is a significant motive for reading online comments.

2.2. Psychological Factors:

Trust:

Trust is debatable in all kinds of relationships: friendships, business relationships, relationship of two lovers, relationships between organizations, etc. If trust is removed, all of these relationships will be destroyed (Covey 2006). The definition of trust has been made and it reflects different perspectives. From one point of view, it is defined as “*voluntary transfer of a good or favor to someone else, with future reciprocation expected but not guaranteed*” (Gunnthorsdottir et al. 2002). Donney and Cannon (1997) have described trust as a “*trustor’s expectations*

about motives and behaviors of a trustee”. Trust is generally treated as part of an individual’s response to other actors and as part of the interaction between societal actors. Within the study of trust as an individual trait, researches consist of two main perspectives. According to the first perspective, trust is an action taken by the individual, while trust is a condition present in the individual according to the second one. The first view indicates that trust is a choice between faith and mistrust. The second view; on the other hand, implies that trust is an emotionally driven expectation about the belief of others’ honesty. (Larsson 2007). From a sociological perspective, trust is a property of collective units not of isolated individuals. Being a collective attribute, trust is applicable to the relations among people rather than to their psychological states taken individually (Lewis and Weigert 1985). Gefen et al.(2003) define antecedents of trust as knowledge-based trust, and it refers to the familiarity with the other party through experience. They also explain institution-based trust which focuses on trusting an institution or third party. The third one is cognition-based trust which concentrates on first impression. The next one is personality-based trust, and it refers to effect of individuals’ personalities on trust building. Similarly, Lewis and Weigert (1985) mention that trust has cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. First, trust is based on a cognitive process which varies according to individuals or institutions. In this sense, trust is based on individuals’ judgement to whom they will trust and under which circumstances. Each assumes that the other also trusts and they need to have shared values. An emotional base trust consists of an emotional bond among all the participants of the relationship. Similar to the

bonds of friendship and love, trust creates a social situation in which an emotional investments are made. The behavioral dimension of trust is expecting others will act competently. The behavioral content of trust is reciprocally related to cognitive and emotional trust. After exploring in which ways trust is defined, this research will continue with an analysis of how it functions on online platforms.

Individuals interacting with each other through computer-mediated communications experience a trust building process (Hsiao et al.2010) First, they get familiar with each other through interactions, and it establishes trust between them. After the individuals gain more information through participation, the relationship between trustee and trustor develop in a virtual platform. Trusting other members provides individual's participation such as sharing knowledge with others or getting information from online platforms (Ridings et al. 2002). Meanwhile, a research has investigated the influence of recommendations in online platforms and found that trust between members cause members to be more willing to accept recommendations from peer recommenders (Lu et al. 2010) . It means, when a member recommends a vendor or supplier with a good reputation in the virtual communities, other members are more likely accept such information when they have a high level of trust in this member. Hsaio et al. (2010) has observed the effect of trust in recommendation to product purchase. According to a report by eMarketer (2008), before making a purchase, most consumers are willing to take shopping cues from product reviewers on the Internet. Virtual platforms are considered more trustworthy than advertisements. However, the fact that the recommenders of virtual

platforms are usually anonymous and do not engage in direct face-to-face communication, trustworthiness of comments is a great concern of some consumers (Lu et al. 2010). According to Grabner-Kraeuter (2002), “*Trust is a mechanism to reduce the complexity of human conduct in situations where people have to cope with uncertainty*”. Consistent with the definition, trust has a prominent role while dealing with the uncertainty of Internet environment where consumers always experience some level of risk. (Dan et al. 2007).

H4: The more consumers trust in recommendations on virtual platforms, the more they read online comments.

Having reviewed the literature on characteristics of trust, Mayer et al. (1995) suggest the three main trust beliefs as integrity, benevolence, and ability. These beliefs, together with the individual’s tendencies to trust, are the main factors affecting trust. On the other hand, Hsaio et al. (2010) conducted a survey which revealed that perceived ability, perceived integrity and perceived critical mass of the recommenders are trust antecedents the most frequently mentioned reasons for trusting the recommendation. If the trustor perceives a trustee's or recommender’s ability, benevolence, and integrity to be sufficient, the trustor develop trust toward the trustee. (Dan et al. 2007). Current study observes perceived integrity and perceived ability of recommenders in online platforms.

Perceived Integrity:

Perceived integrity is trustors' belief that "*the trustee has a strong sense of justice and is honest*" (Mayer et al.1995). It is an "*expectation that the trustee will act in accordance with social norms or principles that the trustor accepts*" (Lu&Zhao 2010). A trustee who give importance to moral standards such as honesty could gain a trustor's confidence.

In electronic word of mouth concept, perceived integrity refers to the belief of consumers that recommenders in virtual communities would make honest comments in favour of other consumers.

H5: The more the perceived integrity of the recommenders in virtual platforms, the more online comments are read by consumers.

Perceived Ability:

"Ability is a group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that allow a party to have influence within some domain"(Mayer & Davis 1999).

Ability is also the influential antecedent in building trust relationships among members of a group sharing similar interests (Hsiao et al.2010). In virtual opinion platforms consumers' perceived ability is related to the expectation that recommenders' abilities and expertise are satisfactory for evaluating a product unbiased and correctly.

H6: The more the perceived ability of the recommenders in virtual platforms, the more online comments are read by consumers.

Perceived Risk:

Generally, consumers perceive some risk while making a purchase decision. Perceived risk is defined as "*the uncertainty that consumers face*

when they can not foresee the consequences of their purchase decisions”

(Schiffman&Kanuk 2009, p.187).

In classical decision theory, risk is mostly conceived as reflecting the distribution of possible outcomes, their likelihoods and their values.

Mitchell (1999) mention philosophical beliefs about perceived risk.

According to relativism and positivism, risk has two dimensions namely, objective and subjective risk. For relativism, subjective risk can only exist if it can be measure and objective risk does not exist because it is relative to the perceiver. On the other hand, positivism accepts the existence and measurement of subjective risk, and suggests objective risk should be directed at conceptualising and measuring this where possible (Mitchell 1999).

Bauer (1960) originally introduces the concept of perceived risk. He defines risk in terms of the uncertainty and consequences associated with a consumer's actions. Consumer researchers define perceived risk as a consumer's perceptions of the uncertainty and troubles associated with buying a product (Lu et al. 2005).

In the literature several types of risk have been identified such as functional risk, physical risk, financial risk, social risk, psychological risk, time risk, convenience risk. . (Pires et al. 2004; Lu et al. 2005). Financial risk is the likelihood of suffering a financial loss due to hidden costs, maintenance costs or lack of warranty in case of faults. Physical risk is the probability of the purchase resulting in physical harm or injury. Economic risk is the possible loss of the monetary cost. Social risk is the likelihood of the purchase resulting in others thinking of the consumer less favourably.

Convenience risk is the probability of the purchase resulting in lost time in terms of delivery (Pires et al. 2004). Information risk is associated with transaction security and privacy (Dan et al. 2007).

Product risk is associated with the product itself; for example, the product may turn out to be defective (Dan et al. 2007). For instance, Cox (1964) has found that consumers who use the phone shopping perceive risk because they cannot personally inspect products or compare the quality, size, or style of products. Consumers who perceive high risk in a product category which interests them seek information to reduce their risk. In doing so, they develop a certain level of knowledge and expertise about the product category. This expertise may be recognized and valued by other consumers who then seek information from the high perceived risk consumers at least about high risk product categories.

Consumers initially perceiving higher risks among high or medium risk product categories would start and lead group discussions to attempt to reduce the perceived risk. Thus, opinion leadership would be positively related to consumers' perceptions of risk except for extremely low perceived risk product categories (Woodside 1976)

After defining several kinds of risks, this research will focus on the concept of functional and psychological risk which are found to be the predominant risk dimensions in technology product purchase (Stone & Gronhaug 1993). Herein, functional risk and psychological risk levels toward purchasing technology products are analyzed.

Functional Risk:

Functional risk is about the performance of the product. Consumers worry if the product does not come out as they expected. The chances of the item failing to meet the performance requirements originally intended of the purchase. (Pires et al. 2004)

H7: The more consumers feel functional risk while purchasing a technology product, the more they read online comments.

Self efficacy:

Self-efficacy refers to “one's capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands” (Wood&Bandura 1989). It depends on individuals' personalities, experiences and choices (Gist&Mitchell 1992). According to Hsu et al. (2007) self-efficacy is a psychological factor which determines our behaviors while facing difficulties or unexpected situations.

Individuals feel satisfaction with the things they are capable of performing. On the other hand, they tend to feel antipathy for those they could not succeed (Bandura 1997). These constitute self-efficacy and accordingly, it is indicated that people with high self efficacy can struggle with problems (Matsuhima&Shiomi 2003) and have the ability to motivate themselves, while people with low self-efficacy tend to avoid tasks requiring effort (Bilgin 2011).

Gist and Mitchell (1992) have pointed out that self-efficacy has three aspects. Firstly, self-efficacy reflects an individual's comprehensive judgment on whether they are capable of performing a specific task.

Secondly, the judgment on self-efficacy when the individual obtains new information and experiences. Thirdly, a self-efficacy judgment includes a motivational factor that directly affects the individual's behavior.

Some studies (Matsuhima&Shiomi 2003; Gresham 1984) examined social self-efficacy which is defined as one's perception about the others adequate response in relationships. They found that social self-efficacy is significant factor in social behaviors.

Self-efficacy has been studied in different categories. Several studies (Deng et.al 2004; Compeau&Higgins 1995; Gist & Mitchell.,1992) have examined the relationship between self-efficacy and use of computers. Compeau and Higgins (1995) have found that computer self-efficacy has a significant role in affecting beliefs and behavior of computer users.

Generally, users have different knowledge, skills and cognitive abilities. Accordingly, they influence computer self-efficacy and usage. Chen, I. Y. L. et al. (2009) have divided self-efficacy into categories as Web-specific self-efficacy and knowledge creation self-efficacy. Web specific self-efficacy refers to the belief of users about their abilities in using virtual platforms effectively. Knowledge creation self-efficacy refers to the belief of users about their abilities in collecting valuable information from different sources and sharing the ideas and experiences. Accordingly, the researchers have suggested that there is positive relationships between two types of self-efficacy and intentions of online knowledge sharing. In other words, users with high web specific self-efficacy and knowledge creation self-efficacy benefit from virtual platforms than those with low web

specific self-efficacy and knowledge creation self-efficacy. Some studies analyzed effect of self-efficacy in knowledge sharing intentions (Bock&Kim 2002, Hsu et al.2007). These studies suggest that people with high self-efficacy are more confident in sharing their opinions in virtual platforms.

Self-efficacy is affected by various sources such as mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion and physiological states. Mastery experience is based on the consumption that successes raise and failures lowers self-efficacy of an individual while performing a specific task. Vicarious experience is achieved by observation of others' capabilities of a specific task. In this process, an individual determines his/her own capabilities observing others perceived to be similarly competent in failure and success. Social persuasion is related to the influence of other people's opinions on an individuals evaluations of themselves. Positive words could increase self-efficacy while negative ones could decrease it. Finally, physiological states such as stressful situations or pain may affect behaviors of people altering self-efficacy levels of the individual (Milne et al. 2009).

Word of mouth can contribute to vicarious experience in online environment. Self-efficacy in information searching is affected by actual experiences with the specific task. Negative experiences in information searching can be regarded as unfavorable information for individuals, whereas positive experiences can be considered favorable information (Chiou &Wan 2007). Hsu & Chiu (2004) demonstrate empirically that self-efficacy has a moderating role in explaining the customer decisions in electronic services. In the electronic service context, self-efficacy refers to

judgments customers make concerning their ability to use computers and Internet . Unlike traditional services, electronic services require customers to have self-efficacy themselves in order to use them (Youjae&Taeshik 2008). Customers with greater self-efficacy can be expected to have more confidence in their ability to use electronic service (Dabholkar & Bagozzi 2002).

Customers who are satisfied with a service are more likely to provide positive word of mouth. (McKee et al. 2006). For example, online customers need to learn how to navigate the Web and search for relevant information. In contrast, this is not an important issue in traditional services, because offline customers learn how to purchase at an early stage and it is essentially a “natural” skill (Hsu & Chiu 2004). Youjae&Taeshik (2008) found that the relationship between customer satisfaction and word of mouth is stronger for customers with high self-efficacy than for customers with low self-efficacy. The research shows that customer self-efficacy systematically strengthens the relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. Consumers higher in self-efficacy have more cognitive resources for choosing the most suitable alternative. Such consumers plan more extensive searches because they know where to find the most useful information (Brucks 1985; Johnson & Russo 1984). When product choice is believed complex, consumers high in self-efficacy plan more extensive information searches because they believe such searches are a prerequisite for good decisions. When product choice is believed simple, these consumers plan limited information searches because they believe

choosing the most suitable alternative does not require an extensive search (Hu et al. 2007).

Computer self-efficacy is differentiated from general self-efficacy by its focus on computer mediated task. Deng et.al (2004) examined effects of computer self efficacy on the use of information technology.

Considering high self-efficacy could encourage people to share their knowledge, it is proposed in this study that low self-efficacy would cause consulting more to others opinions.

H8: The more lack of self-efficacy, the more online comments are read.

3. METHODOLOGY:

For the current study, a structured questionnaire was administered to 318 subjects. Online opinion reading motives; risk reduction, reduction of search time and dissonance reduction and psychological factors influencing online opinion reading intentions such as; trust, perceived risk, perceived ability, perceived integrity, self efficacy are empirically tested through a survey. The survey sample includes the consumers who actively use Internet and social media. This study provides insight into different motives of eWOM and psychological factors addressing to eWOM before decision.

3.1. Measures:

The survey consisted of five sections. In the first section of the survey, use of Internet and social media were examined in general to understand the usage behaviors of consumers. At the beginning of the section, respondents were asked to answer questions about Internet use. The first question was “Do you use Internet?” and “No” answers were asked to leave the survey. Next, the respondents indicated frequency of Internet

usage in weekdays and weekends. After Internet use questions, respondents mentioned whether they use social media or not. Then, respondents were asked to evaluate the social networking sites according to frequency of visit.

Finally, a five-point Likert scale ranging from “never” to “always” was used to observe the purpose of social media use. The items included search for information, content sharing, use of social networks.etc.

The second section of the survey was designed to observe the tendency of reading online comments about technology product categories. First, the attitude toward information sharing was measured with a seven-point scale. Second, frequency of technology product purchase and average of technology product purchase per year were asked to respondents. Last question was “Do you read online comments before buying a technology product?”. “No” answers were asked to ignore next section of the survey.

In the third section, eWOM behaviors of consumers were examined. Primarily, technology products were categorized as telephone, computer, photography/video, visual, electronic devices, personal care, game, household and sport. Respondents evaluated the categories with a five point Likert scale ranging from “never” to “always” according to their intentions of reading online comments. Next, consumers were requested to evaluate online platforms which they consult before purchasing a technology product with a five point Likert scale ranging from “never” to “always” . Online platforms categorized as; product review websites, retailers websites, personal blogs, brand websites, forums and social networks. In the last part of this section reading motives of consumers and trust in online platforms were observed with scales. Factors were measured as follows:

Risk reduction:

Measured by 2 items adapted from Hennig-Thurau&Walsh (2004) with 5 point Likert scale (1=Never, 5=Always). Items included statements such as; because contributions by other customers help me to make the right buying decisions, to benefit from others' experiences before I buy a good or use a service.

Reduction of search time:

Measured by 4 items adapted from Hennig-Thurau&Walsh (2004) with 5 point Likert scale (1=Never, 5=Always). Items included statements such as; because one saves a great deal of time during shopping when informing oneself on such sites before shopping, because here I get information on the quality of products faster than elsewhere, to learn how a product is to be consumed, to find advice and solutions for my problems, because I find the right answers when I have difficulties with a product.

Dissonance Reduction:

Measured by 2 items adapted from Hennig-Thurau&Walsh (2004) with 5 point Likert scale (1=Never, 5=Always). Items included statements such as; because I feel much better when I read that I am not the only one who has a certain problem, because through reading one can get confirmation that one made the right buying decision.

Trust in Recommendation:

Measured by 3 items adapted from Gefen (2000) with 5 point Likert scale (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree). Items included statements such as;

I think that the product recommendations of this virtual community are credible, I trust the product recommendations of this virtual community, I believe the product recommendations of this virtual community are trustworthy.

Perceived Ability:

Measured by 3 items adapted from Ridings et al. (2002) with 5 point Likert scale (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree). Items included statements such as; the members of this virtual community have knowledge about the subject we discuss, the members of this virtual community are capable of participating in the subject we discuss, the members of this virtual community are well qualified in the subject we discuss.

Perceived Integrity:

Measured by 4 items adapted from Ridings et al. (2002) with 5 point Likert scale (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree). Items included statements such as; the members of this virtual community are concerned about what is important to others, the members of this virtual community will do their best to help others, the members of this virtual community are fair to others, the members of this virtual community are honest with others.

The fourth section included psychological factors affecting technology product buying behavior. Factors were measured as follows:

Functional Risk:

Measured by 3 items adapted from Stone&Gronhaug (1993). with 5 point Likert scale (1=Never, 5=Always). Items included statements such as; as I

consider the purchase of a technology product, I worry about whether the product will really perform as well as it is supposed to, If I were to purchase a technology product, I become concerned that the product will not provide the level of benefits that I would be expecting.

Self-efficacy:

Measured by 5 items adapted from Tipton & Worthington (1984) with 5 point Likert scale (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree). Items included statements such as; I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities, no matter what comes my way, I am usually able to handle it, I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.

In the last section of the survey demographic characteristics; gender, age, education and income were examined.

4. ANALYSES AND RESULTS

The data were analyzed using SPSS Statistical Program 18.

Descriptive statistics, multiple regression, one way anova, correlation and factor analysis were the major statistical techniques used in the study. First, descriptive analyses were performed to observe the characteristics of the sample, Internet use, social media and network use and technology product purchase. Second, a factor analysis was conducted and three new factors were obtained. Third, multiple regression analysis was conducted to test hypotheses and examine which factors explain reading online comments about technology products. Fourth, One Way Anova test was used to understand relationship between demographics and psychological factors' influencing reading online comments about technology products. Lastly,

correlation analysis was performed to understand the relationship between factors.

In this chapter, data collection and sample; Internet and social media use were first presented. Then, every analysis was explained in detail.

4.1. Data collection and participants

The data for this study were collected by a structured self-administered questionnaire with a convenience sample of social media users in Turkey. The survey instrument was tested between April and June 2011. Data was collected from social media users located in two major cities of Turkey, namely Istanbul and Ankara. Social media users were reached in universities. Data was collected from a total of 321 social media users and 100 of data were collected via online survey. Response rate was 35 %. Following the removal of submissions with missing data, and minors, 318 participants (62,6 % females) remained in the main analysis. When the demographics of the sample are considered, the majority of the participants are young-aged, educated and belong to middle- and upper middle-income groups. The mean age of the participants was 23.6 years, ranging between 17 and 57 (Std.dev. = 4.6 years). A total of 2.8 % of the participants were highly educated, 86.2% were university graduates, and 11 % were postgraduates. Detailed demographic information of the participants is reported in Table 1.

DEMOGRAPHICS		
Age	Mean /std. Dev.	Min. / Max.
	23.6 / 4.66	17 / 57
Sex	Frequency f	Percentage %
Female	199	62.6
Male	119	37.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>318</i>	<i>100</i>
Education	Frequency f	Percentage %
High school	9	2.8
Undergraduate	274	86.2
Post-graduate	35	11.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>318</i>	<i>100</i>
Income	Frequency f	Percentage %
0 - 800 TL	26	8.2
801 – 1000 TL	45	14.2
1001 – 3000 TL	100	31.4
3001 – 5000 TL	59	18.6
+5001 TL	88	27.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>318</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 1. Demographics of the participants

4.2. Internet and social media use:

Participants were firstly asked to indicate the hours of Internet use in weekdays and weekends. The descriptive analysis showed that consumers use Internet more in weekdays (M – 5,21, SD – 3,883) than weekends (M – 4,46, SD – 3,490). For analyzing the average of reading online comments before purchasing a technology product and social media use rate of consumers, the frequency of “yes” and “no” answers were examined. The first test showed that %86,8 percents of the respondents read online comments before buying a technology product.

The next test revealed that %97,2 of the participants use social media.

Lastly, another descriptive analysis was conducted to measure the frequency of technology product purchase (M - 3,22, SD - 2,292) and the average of technology product purchase in a year (min.1, max.7 times, M - 3,61, SD - 1,422) (Table 2).

Hours of Internet in weekdays:			
Min	Max	Mean	Std.Deviation
1	24	5,21	3,883
Hours of Internet in weekends:			
Min	Max	Mean	Std.Deviation
1	24	4,46	3,490
Social Media Usage:			
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	309	97,2	97,2
No	9	2,8	100,0
Total	318	100,0	100,0
Average of reading online comments before purchasing a technology product:			
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	276	86,8	86,6
No	42	13,2	100,0
Total	318	100,0	100,0
Frequency of technology products purchase:			
Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
0	20	3,22	2,692
Average of technology product purchase in a year:			
Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	7	3,61	1,422

Table 2. Internet and social media use

Descriptive statistics were performed to examine the general use of social sharing sites among the participants. Consistent with the findings from a recent report (Kazeniak 2009), Facebook was the most popular social media site (M - 4,02, SD – 1,246). Other popular sites such as Twitter (M – 2,92, SD – 1,669) LinkedIn (M-1,29, SD - ,702), Friendfeed (M -1,22, SD –

,696) surprisingly ranked fifth, ninth and twelfth of the list. Instead of these sites, Facebook followed by Youtube (M - 3,65, SD - 1,161) and Wikipedia (M - 3,33, SD - 1,143). This indicates that participants prefer video sharing and information sharing sites to social network sites except Facebook (Table 3).

Social Media Use:					
	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Facebook	318	1	5	4,02	1,246
Youtube	318	1	5	3,65	1,161
Wikipedia	318	1	5	3,33	1,143
Ekşisözlük	318	1	5	2,95	1,379
Twitter	318	1	5	2,92	1,669
Msn	318	1	5	2,77	1,241
Blogger	318	1	5	1,99	1,313
Flickr	318	1	5	1,67	1,111
Linkedin	318	1	5	1,29	,702
Xing	318	1	5	1,26	,497
Myspace	318	1	5	1,23	,566
Friendfeed	318	1	5	1,22	,696
Stumbleupon	318	1	5	1,19	,710
Del.ici.ous	318	1	5	1,13	,497
Scribd	318	1	5	1,12	,566
Digg	318	1	5	1,06	,348
Orkut	318	1	5	1,04	,288

Table 3.Social media use

While examining the purpose of social media use, three main factors were obtained through factor analysis. These factors were; information seeking, business and social sharing. According to descriptive analysis, information seeking (M - 3,96, SD - ,880) was the primary purpose of consumers. Business (M – 2,01, SD - ,947) and social sharing (M – 2,91, SD - ,826) were the others.

Finally, online platform choices and technology product categories were examined in the descriptives. Among the online platform list consisted of forums, brand websites, product review website, social networks, personal blogs and retailer website; forums (M – 3,42, SD – 1,298) were

the most popular choice for seeking information before buying a technology product. Other results can be seen in Table 4.

Online Platform Choices:					
	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Forums	276	1	5	3,42	1,298
Brand Website	276	1	5	3,40	1,173
Product Review Website	276	1	5	3,25	1,211
Social networks	276	1	5	3,04	1,313
Personal Blog	276	1	5	2,71	1,313
Retailer website	276	1	5	2,63	1,247

Table 4. Online Platform Choices

In the descriptive analysis of technology product categories, visual (M-3,23, SD-1,342) product category was the most popular category which participants consult online comments before purchase. Other product categories are demonstrated in Table 5.

Technology Product Categories:					
	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Overall Technology Products	318	1	5	2,92	1,135
Visual	318	1	5	3,23	1,342
Electronic Devices	318	1	5	2,97	1,145
Game	318	1	5	2,69	1,566

Table 5. Technology product categories

4.3. Characteristics of the variables measured in the Study:

As shown in Table 6 among reading motives, risk reduction is the primary motive of consumers with 3,36 mean value. Dissonance reduction (M-2,89) is the second and reduction of search time (M-3,11) is the third in

the list. The other result is; trust in recommendation (M-3,39) has more impact on reading online comment than perceived ability (M-3,08) and perceived integrity (M-2,93) of recommenders in a virtual platform.

Regarding the factors influencing technology product purchase, functional risk (M-2,94) is the primary factor the participants affected. Finally, among the social media use factors, information seeking is considered as the primary purpose of using social media. Means of other variables are shown in Table 6.

	# of Items	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD.	α
Motive 1: Risk reduction	2	1	5	3.36	1.237	.939
Motive 2: Reduction of search	4	1	5	3.11	1.131	.861
Motive 3: Dissonance reduction	2	1	5	2.89	1.235	.736
Trust in Recommendation	3	1	5	3.39	1.131	.946
Perceived ability	3	1	5	3,08	1,081	.948
Perceived integrity	4	1	5	2,93	,997	.930
Enduring involvement	3	1	5	2,93	,908	.722
Psychological risk	4	1	5	2,21	1,120	.925
Functional risk	3	1	5	2,94	1,026	.862
Online opinion seeking	8	1	5	3,79	.881	.910
Self efficacy	5	1	5	3,85	,842	.920
Social media use: Social sharing	9	1	5	2.91	.826	.832
Social media use: Info seeking	4	1	5	3.96	.880	.815
Social media use: Business	4	1	5	2.01	.880	.781

Table 6. Characteristics of the variables measured in the study

4.4. Factor Analysis:

Factor analysis extracted factors related to purposes of social media use. The factor analysis used a principal component solution and Varimax rotation to find variable groupings, and specified the retention of factors with eigen values greater than 1.0. This resulted in a total of three factors.

An item was considered significant if it had a primary loading at 0.50 or higher on one factor, and no secondary loading above a value of 0.40 on any other factor. A minimum reliability criterion (≥ 0.70) was also set for the retention of individual factors. To assess the relative predictive value of the various independent variables (i.e. attitude, risk and enduring involvement) they were entered into a multiple regression analysis with a particular technology product category as the dependent variable.

The Purpose of Social Media Use:

To examine the purpose of social media use of consumers, a principal component analysis with a Varimax rotation was run to determine the potential groups of seventeen items. The analysis extracted three factors with eigen values above 1.0, accounting for 55.01 % of the total variance (see Table 7). Factors are characterized as “social sharing”, “information seeking”, “business”.

	FACTORS				
	1	2	3	Mean	SD
Social Sharing					
Share personal video/photograph/link	.761			3.02	1.269
Share funny video/photograph/link	.690			3.17	1.318
Use social media through mobile devices	.630			3.13	1.551
Have profile in social network sites	.614			3.69	1.356
Write comments	.595			2.90	1.222
Meet new friends	.534			2.13	1.171
Read comments	.517			3.29	1.150
Use instant messengers	.499			3.27	1.266
Use social bookmark sites	.485			1.61	1.024
Information Seeking					
Search information		.791		4.19	1.026
Have knowledge of agenda		.765		4.16	1.053
Search about hobbies		.720		3.94	1.155
Have knowledge of social life		.598		3.54	1.153
Business					
Contact with clients/supplier			.832	1.76	1.187
Business connection			.799	2.17	1.232
Share product and market information			.793	1.96	1.193
Search job			.534	2.15	1.265
Eigenvalue	6.09	1.96	1.29		
Cronbach alpha (α)	.832	.815	.781		
Variance explained (%)	35.84	11.54	7.63		
Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO)	.880				
Total Variance explained	% 55.018				
Bartlett Test. χ^2	2164.341 (df = 136, p < .000)				

Table 7. Factor Analysis

The first factor was “social sharing”, which reflected the use of social media for sharing information, videos or comments as well as, for meeting new friends via social networks. The reliability of nine items as indicated by Chronbach’s alpha was .832. The second factor was “information seeking” ($\alpha = .815$). It included four items explaining all kinds of information research through social media. The third factor was “business”. It consisted of four items which indicate job related factors in social media use. The Chronbach’s alpha was high at .781.

These findings illustrated two main purpose of social media use. Information seeking and business factors indicated that search for a specific

content is one reason of using social media. In addition, social sharing factor demonstrated consumers prefer social media to develop social connections and share content with other people.

4.5. Correlation Analysis:

To understand the relationship between psychological factors and reading online comment intention, correlation analysis was applied in this study. The results from the bivariate correlation analysis in Table 8 show that reading online comments about overall technology products are positively related to all psychological factors of the study. Values of the factors are; risk reduction ($r = .702^{**}$, $p < .0$), reduction of search time ($r = .714^{**}$, $p < .0$), dissonance reduction ($r=.633^{**}$, $p < .0$), perceived ability ($r=.633^{**}$, $p < .0$), perceived integrity ($r=.633^{**}$, $p < .0$), functional risk ($r=.220^{**}$, $p < .0$), general trust in recommendation ($r=.714^{**}$, $p < .0$), self-efficacy ($r=.204$, $p < .0$), info seeking ($r=.381^{**}$, $p < .0$), business ($r=.258^{**}$, $p < .0$), social sharing ($r=.357^{**}$, $p < .0$). According to Ridings and Gefen (2004), generally those who benefit from social networks are those who mostly involves in them; therefore, there is an apparent relationship between the social media use categories such as info seeking, business and social sharing and reading online comment intention.

Same analysis was conducted to understand the relation between reading online comments about visual technology products, electronic devices, game products and psychological factors. As a result, all the factors are found to be positively related.

		Risk reduction	Red.of search	Dissonance red.	Per. ability	Per. integrity	Info seeking	Business	Social sharing	Self efficacy	Func.risk
Tech.Products	r	** ,702	** ,714	** ,633	** ,633	** ,633	** ,381	** ,258	** ,259	** ,164	** ,220
	p	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Visual	r	** ,682	** ,686	** ,593	** ,612	** ,612	** ,385	** ,196	** ,317	** ,171	** ,206
	p	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,002	,000
Elec.Devices	r	** ,701	** ,711	** ,623	** ,644	** ,637	** ,380	** ,250	** ,357	** ,209	** ,217
	p	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Game	r	** ,485	** ,504	** ,487	** ,396	** ,431	** ,277	** ,258	** ,181	** ,164	** ,109
	p	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,001	,000	,014	,052

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8. Correlation

4.7. Hypothesis Testing

The primary objective of the study was to examine which factors affecting consumers' eWOM behavior. It is proposed that three motives; risk reduction (H1), reduction of search time (H2), dissonance reduction (H3); and antecedents of trust; perceived ability (H4), perceived integrity (H5); perceived risk (H7); self-efficacy (H8) will be effective in reading online comments.

Separate multiple regression analyses were carried out to test hypotheses and to explain tendency of reading comments about technology products with various psychological factors. Pearson correlations, regression coefficients and F-statistics are reported in Table 8. Multi-collinearity checks are assessed by the variance inflation factor (VIF).

A total of 56.8 % of the variance in the composite measure of reading comments of technology products is significantly explained by self-efficacy, risk reduction, reduction of search time, dissonance reduction, perceived integrity variables.

		Self-efficacy	Risk reduction	Reduction of search time	Dissonance reduction	Perceived Integrity	Functional risk	Perceived ability	R Sq	Adjusted R Sq	F
Overall Technology Products	Beta	.073	.227	.248	.114	.129	.037	.101	.578	.568	60.608
	Sig.	.056	.003	.004	.054	.055	.330	.137			

Table 9. Regression

4.8. Other Findings:

One Way Anova analysis was performed to reveal other worthy findings. When gender factor was tested, dissonance reduction (F= 4.649, p=032) (Male) mean: 3.08, perceived ability (F=4.442, p=036) (Male) mean: 3.24, perceived integrity (F=8.341, p=004) (Male) mean: 3.13 factors were found significant while explaining the difference between male and female consumers' intentions of reading online comment. At this point, product category should be considered. The focus of this study was technology products and generally it is known that technology products are men targeted products. This study shows that male consumers read online comments more and they want to be sure about the ability and integrity of recommenders. Similar finding was revealed at Ha and Stoel's study (2004).

They found that there are gender differences in the use of the Internet for the purpose of information search for apparel products. Female consumers are more likely to use the Internet for this purpose than male consumers. Other study found that women perceive more risk in online purchasing than men (Garbarino and Strahilevitz, 2004).

Another finding of the analysis is the education of the consumers and some psychological factors have a significant relationship. These psychological factors are risk reduction ($F=1.479$, $p.043$), (Undergraduate) Mean: 3.43 perceived ability ($F=3.652$, $p.027$), (Undergraduate) Mean: 3.14 and perceived integrity ($F=5.294$, $p.005$), (Undergraduate) Mean: 3.00. It is illustrated that undergraduate consumers read online comments for the purpose of risk reduction, and they want to believe that the recommenders have the ability to write comments about products and their comments are reliable.

Reading online comments about technology products can be explained with income. Consumers with middle income Mean: 3.14 ($F=2.843$, $p.024$) prefer to search for online comments about technology products more when it is compared to other income levels.

5. DISCUSSION

Several research has studied eWOM from different aspects. However, little attention has been paid to the receiver of the eWOM message. The objective of this study was to examine which motives and psychological factors influence consumers' intentions of reading online

comments before buying a technology product. Various variables were observed in the study through different analysis.

Findings of the study indicate that consumers mostly use Internet in weekdays. It illustrates that Internet is not only a free time activity, but also a part of our lives. Now, with smart phones and other portable devices, it is easier to reach Internet every moment. According to findings presented in the study, %97,2 of the participants use social media. Thus, the major reason of using Internet frequently is to participate in social media. Social media consists of several platforms; however, some social networks are more popular than others. Facebook, is the most popular social networking site among the participants, mostly among the university students. This result is not surprising, regarding recent statistics of Facebook use. 29 663 140 million people, majority in 18-24 age group, use Facebook in Turkey (socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/turkey). Facebook attracts users by providing many services such as communicating with friends, sharing videos/photos, playing games, etc.

In the current study, three main purposes of social media use were determined through analysis. These are information seeking, business, social sharing. Among them, information seeking was found to be the principal activity which users prefer to do in social media. The others are social sharing and business. These results are parallel with several surveys, indicating that the major reasons people urging to join in social networking sites are to contact with friends or make new friends (Lenhart and Madden 2007). Other reasons include belonging and need for information (Ridings and Gefen 2004). All kinds of information can be investigated by consumers

in social media sites where searching for a product information is more common. In this study, a specific product category was chosen to be observed and it is found that %86,8 percent of the respondents read online comments before buying a technology product. Considering this finding, it is important to examine which online platforms the participants trust more and whether the trust degree changes according to the platform. In this study, participants mostly chose forums and secondly brand websites. Lee&Youn (2009) have suggested that a brand website is considered less trustworthy by consumers, thus it is marketer-generated. However, it is found that it does not have an impact on influencing consumers' product views whether the website is marketer-generated (brand website) or non marketer-generated (blogs, forums.etc). These findings reveal that consumers do not give importance to the platform, but they mind the comment quality. Hsaio et al. (2010) have found that trust in product recommendations is a more critical factor influencing consumers' purchase intentions than the platform itself.

Among reading motives, risk reduction is found to be the primary motive of consumers engaging in eWOM. Dissonance reduction is the second and reduction of search time is the third in the list. However, in the study of Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003), risk reduction was found to be the last motive among the two other motives. When the product categories were investigated, it is discovered that consumers consult more for online comments about technology products. Among technology products, electronic devices are major products in online buying (Usta, 2006). There could be a relation between online buying and reading online comments.

For analyzing attitude towards online opinion sharing, the relation between attitude and other psychological factors was analyzed through correlation analysis. According to the results attitude towards online opinion sharing is related to risk reduction, reduction of search time, dissonance reduction, general trust in recommendation, perceived ability, perceived integrity, functional risk, information sharing, business and social sharing. Same analysis was conducted to understand the relation between overall technology products and other psychological factors. It is found that risk reduction, reduction of search time, dissonance reduction, attitude, perceived ability, perceived integrity, functional risk, information sharing, business and social sharing are related to reading online comments about technology products.

The hypotheses of this study were analysed through regression analysis. A series of multiple regression analyses were performed to explain tendency of reading comments about technology products with various psychological factors. Findings illustrated that reading comments about technology products was significantly explained by self-efficacy, risk reduction, reduction of search time, dissonance reduction, trust in recommendation and perceived integrity. On the other hand, functional risk and perceived ability were not found significant. Trust is a prominent factor explaining consumers' online behaviors. Prior studies indicated that trust has a positive impact on the knowledge sharing. (Ho et al. 2010; Shu & Chuang 2011). Hsaio et al. (2010) have found that trust in product

recommendations is a critical factor influencing consumers' purchase intentions. Also, they have demonstrated that perceived ability and perceived integrity of the recommender are effective factors. Similarly, Smith et al. (2005) have suggested that the more consumers trust the recommender the more they influence by the recommender during decision making. These arguments are consistent with the finding of the study which indicates trust in recommendation, and perceived integrity of recommenders are determining factors in the intention of reading online comments.

Accordingly, the more consumers trust in recommendation, the more they read online comments and the more they believe the perceived integrity of the recommender, the more they trust the comment. Unlike other studies (Hsaio et al. 2010; Smith et al. 2005; Lin Hsu-Fen. 2006), perceived ability factor was not found significant in this study. This may be due to the fact that it is difficult for consumers to check the expertise of the recommender; on the other hand, integrity can be understood after experiencing the accurancy of the comments. Accordingly, it can be suggested that for receivers, the quality and honesty of the recommendation are more valuable. For recommenders, sharing knowledge is a form of "self-expression". When they are accepted by community members and gain a good reputation, they are more willing to share. This result shows that solely communication is not sufficient for knowledge sharing, there should be mutual trust among participants (Nelson, K. M., & Coopriider 1996). For this reason, it will be a good idea to follow recommenders whom have more fans and motivate those recommenders with rewards (Shu & Chuang 2011). However, just

focusing on recommenders will not be sufficient to build a strong relationship between consumers and online businesses. According to Hsaio et al. (2010), trust in product recommendation is also influenced by web site related factors such as perceived web reputation, perceived web quality and perceived institution assurance. It shows that people may be more willing to trust in the product recommendations on a website which they trust. Thus, online businesses should consider that consumers not only affected by recommender factor, but also they give importance to the properties of the website. Consumers should develop strategies enhancing websites reputation and quality.

Before purchasing a particular product, consumers generally feel a type of risk such as functional, psychological, financial, time. This study hypothesizes when consumers feel more functional risk before buying a product, the more they read online comments. Hypothesis was not verified in the analysis. When consumers faced with a purchase situation in which risk is involved, attempt to reduce that risk through one of several alternative ways. One of them is word of mouth communication, involves collecting information from peer consumer. In online markets risk perception increases due to the uncertainty of the Internet environment, information processing helps consumers reduce his/her perceived risk in purchasing a product online. According to Ha (2002) brand information helps to reduce consumers' performance and risks associated with online purchases. The findings of a study confirm that web site quality and web site brand affect consumers' trust and perceived risk, and in turn, consumer purchase intention (Chang & Chen 2008).

Finally, results have illustrated that self-efficacy factor is found significant in reading online comments. It is consistent with the study of Hsu et al. (2007) which has suggested self-efficacy plays critical role in knowledge sharing behavior. Although the current study has hypothesized that low self-efficacy levels are resulted in reading online comments more, correlation analysis revealed that there is a positive relationship between self-efficacy and reading online comments. This may be explained by considering new technology adoption. Individuals with low self-efficacy may not have confidence in their ability to find related information on the Internet (Chiou & Wan 2007). Because searching for information is related with learning new technology which involves different forms of self-efficacy such as computer self-efficacy (Deng 2004), web specific self-efficacy, knowledge creation self-efficacy (Chen, I. Y. L. et al. 2009).

6. LIMITATIONS:

Even though the findings of this study have useful implications, several limitations exist. The purpose of the research was to examine the psychological factors addressing to eWOM behavior of consumers. The majority of the participants were found to be reading online comments before buying technology products. This fact might have affected the hypothesis testing, such that, nearly all the psychological factors were found significant in explaining intentions of reading online comments. Future research could examine the psychological factors which have impact on refusing to read online comments. Furthermore, this study focuses on a

single product category. Similar investigation can be done considering other product categories. On the other hand, this study focuses on the purchasing intention of consumers, and it would be valuable to observe the effect of word of mouth on actual purchasing behavior of consumers. There are two ways in which individuals involve in a virtual community, they can either get information or give information. This study has observed the motives for getting information by reading online comments, examining motives for writing online comments will help to extend the study. A sample from Turkey's two major cities was used in the study, which might cause a difficulty in generalizing the results for all the country.

7. CONCLUSION:

Word of Mouth is a message diffusing one person to another. As mentioned at the beginning of the thesis, this message is known as buzz. To reach consumers, the buzz should be kept alive by the marketers. Buzz should be nourished from three vital factors; customer involvement, new customers and innovation (Rosen 2006 p.246-247). Customer involvement is an important factor in buzz, in the sense that the more customers are involved in a product, the more they will talk about it. Companies should keep the interest alive by supporting the product with other activities customers would involve. The second factor is finding new customers who have not heard the product yet. New customers are vital for the marketing of a product. Finally, companies ought to make innovations in a product and attract consumers with their improvements.

The main result of this research is based on trust factor. In virtual communities, trust is the main factor while building relationships. By reducing the feeling of frustration, trust facilitates interactions and influences knowledge sharing process (Nelson, K. M., & Coopridier 1996). Trust building is a prerequisite for using computers as a communication medium for conducting business, and it plays an increasingly important role as consumers face greater uncertainty (Lewis and Weigert, 1985). Trust in a company; on the other hand, reduces the social risk associated with a recommendation. Therefore, trusting a brand reduces the risk of disappointment of individuals who seek advice. In online platforms, trust involves members' belief of other members' ability, benevolence, and integrity. Trust of a consumer is a valuable and significant asset for a company. If a corporate brand no longer meets the expectations of a customer, another brand will be selected. As Sichtmann (2007) has suggested, there is a positive relationship between trust in a corporate brand and the WOM behaviour of consumers. Thus, an unsatisfied customer can spread the word about the bad quality. Overall, these findings may lead marketers to the conclusion that online businesses should provide useful web site systems and trustworthy platforms considering perceived ability, perceived benevolence and perceived integrity of the members to attract participation.

In conclusion, it is inferred in this study that it is necessary for companies to get benefit from social media channels in order to reach all types of consumers. As social media offers various platforms where companies can receive feedbacks and communicate with consumers, it has

become an important marketing tool. It is vital to examine factors and motives for understanding of the process of eWOM. The current study presents a general view of social media use, technology product purchase, attitude towards online comments and online platforms and analyses of the impact of psychological factors addressing to eWOM. More studies should be conducted to guide companies while developing their product strategies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Augusto de Matos Celso, Rossi Carlos Alberto Vargas (2008). Word of mouth Communications in Marketing: a meta-analytic review of the antecedents and moderators. *Journal of the Academy Marketing Science*.36, pp.578-596
- Bailey Ainsworth Anthony (2005). Consumer Awareness and Use of Product Review Websites. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*.6:1, pp.68-81
- Bickart Barbara, Schindler Robert M. (2001).Internet Forums as Influential Sources of Consumer Information. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*.15:3, pp.31-40
- Bilgin Mehmet. (2011). Relations among proposed predictors and outcomes of social self-efficacy in Turkish late adolescents. 1:40, pp.01-18
- Bock, G. W., & Kim, Y. G. (2002). Breaking the myths of rewards: an exploratory study of attitudes about knowledge sharing. *Information Resources Management Journal*, 15(2), 14-21.
- Brown Jo, Broderick Amanda J., Lee Nick (2007). Word of Mouth Communication within online communities: Conceptualizing the Online Social Network. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 21:3, pp.2-20
- Brown Tom J., Barry Thomas E., Dacin Peter A., Gunst Richard F (2005) Spreading the Word: Investigating Antecedents of Consumers' Positive Word of Mouth Intentions and Behaviors in a Retailing Context. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. 33:2, pp.123-138
- Brucks,M. (1985). The effect of product class knowledge on information search behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 12, 1–16.
- Buttle Francis A. (1998). Word of mouth: understading and managing referral marketing. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*. 6, pp.241-254
- Carl Walter J.(2006). What's All the Buzz about?: Everyday Communication and the Relational Basis of Word of Mouth and Buzz Marketing Practices. *Management Communication Quarterly*. 19:4, pp. 601-634
- Connolly Regina, Bannister Frank. Consumer Trust in Electronic Commerce:Social & Technical Antecedents *International Journal of Social Sciences* 2: 4, pp.221-230
- Corritore Cynthia L., Kracher Beverly, Wiedenbeck Susan. (2003). On-line trust: concepts, evolving themes, a model. *Int. J. Human-Computer Studies* 58, pp.737-758
- Covey Stephen M.R (2006).The speed of trust. Great Britain.Simon&Schuster UK
- Cox D .F., S.U. Rich, Perceived risk and consumer decision the case of telephone shopping, *J. Market. Res.* 1 (4) (1964) 32–39.
- Chang H.H, Chen S.W.(2008). The impact of online store environment cues on purchase intention. *Online Information Review*. 32:6, pp.818-841

- Chang Shu-Chen , Wang, Chih-Chien (2008) Online Word of Mouth as a Determination in Adolescents' Purchase Decision Making: the Influence of Expertise and Involvement. *Communications of the IBIMA*. Vol 4, pp.1-7
- Chen, I. Y. L., Chen, N.-S., & Kinshuk (2009). Examining the Factors Influencing Participants' Knowledge Sharing Behavior in Virtual Learning Communities. *Educational Technology & Society*, 12:1, pp. 134–148.
- Cheung Man Yee, Luo Chuan, Sia Choon Ling&Chen Huaping (2009). Credibility of Electronic Word of Mouth: Informational and Normative Determinants of On-line Consumer Recommendations. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*. 13:4, pp.9-38
- Cheung Christy M.K, Lee Matthew K.O & Rabjohn Neil (2008). The impact of electronic word of mouth: The adoption of online opinions in online customer communities. *Internet Research*.18:3, pp.229-247
- Chiou Wen-Bin, Wan Chin-Sheng. (2007). The Dynamic Change of Self-Efficacy in Information Searching on the Internet: Influence of Valence of Experience and Prio Self-Efficacy. *The Journal of Psychology*. 14:6, pp.589-603
- Compeau, R. R., & Higgins, C. A. (1995). Computer self-efficacy: Development of a measure and initial test. *MIS Quarterly*, 19, 189–211.
- Dabholkar, P. A., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2002). An attitudinal model of technology-based selfservice: Moderating effects of consumer traits and situational factors. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 30, 184–201.
- Dan J. Kim, Donald L. Ferrin, H. Raghav Rao. (2007). A trust-based consumer decision-making model in electronic commerce: The role of trust, perceived risk and their antecedents. Elsevier. pp.544-564
- Dash Satyabhusan Saji K.B. (2007). The Role of Consumer Self-Efficacy and Website Social-Presence in Customers' Adoption of B2C Online Shopping: An Empirical Study in the Indian Context. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*. 20:2, pp.33-48
- Davis Alanah, Khazanchi Deepak (2008). An empirical study of online word of mouth as a predictor for multi-product category e-commerce sales. *Internet Marketing*. 18:2, pp.130-141
- Dellarocas Chrysanthos(2003). The Digitization of Word of Mouth: Promise and Challenges of Online Feedback Mechanisms.*Management Science*.49:10, pp.1407-1424
- Dellarocas Chrysanthos, Narayan Ritu(2006). A Statistical Measure of a Population's Propensity to Engage in Post-Purchase Online Word-of-Mouth.21:2, pp.277-285
- Deng Xiaodong, Doll William J., Truong Dothang (2004) Computer self-efficacy in an ongoing use context. 23:6, pp.395-412

- Doh Sun-Jae, Hwang Jang-Sun (2009). How consumers evaluate eWOM (Electronic Word of Mouth) Messages. *Cyberpsychology&Behavior*. 12:2, pp.193-197
- Donney Patricia M., Cannon Joseph P. (1997) An examination of the Nature Trust in Buyer-Seller Relationships. *Journal of Marketing*. 61, pp.35-51
- Duan Wenjing, Gu Bin, Whinston Andrew B. (2008). Do online reviews matter? - An empirical investigation of panel data. 45, pp.1007-1016
- Duhan Dale F., Johnson Scott D., Wilcox James B. & Harrell Gilbert D. (1997). Influences on Consumer Use of Word of Mouth Recommendation Sources. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. 25:4, pp. 283-295
- Dumrongsiri Aussadavut (2010). Impact of Electronic Word of Mouth to Consumer Adoption Process in the Online Discussion Forum: A Simulation Study. *World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology*. 65, pp.180-189
- Dwyer Paul (2007). Measuring the value of electronic word of mouth and its impact on consumer communities. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*. 21:2, pp.63-79
- eMarketer (2008), "Consumer interactions: social shopping, blogs and reviews", available at:
http://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/597379/consumer_interactions_social_shopping_blogs.pdf (accessed 25 October 2011).
- Ennew Christine T., Banerjee Ashish K., Li Derek (2000). Managing word of mouth communication: empirical evidence from India. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*. 18:2, pp.75-83
- Fong John, Burton Suzan (2006). Online word of mouth: a comparison of American and Chinese discussion boards. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*. 18:2, pp.146-156
- Forbes Daniel P. (2005). The Effects of Strategic Decision Making on Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*. pp.599-626
- Garbarino E., Johnson M.S. (1999). The different roles of satisfaction, trust and commitment in customer relationships. *Journal of Marketing*. 63:2, pp.70-87
- Garbarino Ellen, Michael Strahilevitz. (2004). Gender Differences in the Perceived Risk of Buying Online and the Effects of Receiving a Site Recommendation. *Journal of Business Research*. 57, pp.768-775
- Gefen D. (2000). E-commerce: the role of familiarity and trust. *Omega*, 28:6, pp.725-737
- Gefen, D., Karahanna, E., and Straub, D. W. (2003). Trust and TAM in online shopping: an integrated model. *MIS Quarterly*, 27:1, pp.51-90.
- Gildin Suzana Z. Understanding the Power of Word of Mouth. n.1, pp.91-106

- Gist Marilyn, Mitchell Terencer (1992). Self-efficacy: A theoretical analysis of its determinants and malleability. *Academy of Management Review*. 17:2, pp.183-211
- Godes David, Mayzlin Dins (2004). Using Online Conversations to Study Word of Mouth Communication. *Marketing Science*.23:4, pp.545-560
- Goldman Eric.(2008). Online word of mouth and its implications for trademark law. *Trademark law and theory: A handbook of contemporary research*, pp.405-429
- Goldsmith Ronald E., Horowitz David. (2006). Measuring Motivations for Online Opinion Seeking. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 6:2 pp. 3-14.
- Goldsmith, R. E., & Hofacker, C. F. (1991). Measuring consumer innovativeness. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 19, pp.209–221.
- Grabner-Kraeuter.(2002). The Role of Consumers' Trust in Online-Shopping. *Journal of Business Ethics*. 39, pp.43-50
- Gruber Tom.(2008). Collective knowledge systems: Where the social web meets the semantic web. *Journal of Web Semantics*. 6, pp.4-13
- Gunnthorsdottir A.,McCabe K., Smith V.(2002). Using the Machiavellianism instrument to predict trustworthiness in a bargaining game.*Journal of Economic Psychology*.23.pp.49-66
- Gupta Sumeet, Kim Hee-Woong, Shin Seon-Jin (2010). Converting Virtual Community Members into Online Buyers. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*. 13:5, pp.513-520
- Ha Hong-Youl . (2002).The Effects of Consumer Risk Perception on Pre-purchase Information in Online Auctions: Brand, Word-of-Mouth, and Customized Information. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. 8:1, October
- Ha Young, Stoel Leslie. (2004). Internet Apparel Shopping Behaviors: The influence of General Innovativeness, *International Journal of Retail&Distribution Management*. 32:8/9, pp.377-385
- Hennig-Thurau Thorsten, Gwinner Kevin P., Walsh Gianfranco, Gremler Dwayne D.(2004) Electronic Word-of-mouth via Consumer-Opinion Platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the Internet?.*Journal of Interactive Marketing*. 18:1, pp.38-52
- Hennig-Thurau Thorsten, Malthouse Edward C., Friege Christian, Gensler Sonja, Lobschat Lara, Rangaswamy Arvind, Skiera Bernd. (2010). *Journal of Service Research*. 13, pp.311-330
- Hill Shawndra, Provost Foster, Volinsky Chris(2006).Network-Based Marketing: Identifying Likely Adopters via Consumer Networks.*Statistical Science*.21:2, pp.256-276
- Ho Li-An, Kuo Tsung-Hsien, Lin Chinho, Lin Binshan (2010). The Mediate Effect of Trust On Organizational Online Knowledge Sharing: An Empirical Study. *International Journal of Information Technology & Decision Making*. 9:4, pp.625–644

Hsiao Kuo-Lun, Lin Judy Chuan-Chuan, Wang Xiang-Ying, Lu Hsi-Peng & Yu Hueiju (2010). Antecedents and Consequences of Trust in Online Product Recommendations: An Empirical Study in Social Shopping. *Online Information Review*. 34:6, pp.935-953

Hsu Meng-Hsiang, Ju Teresa L., Yen Chia-Hui, Chang Chun-Ming.(2006). Knowledge sharing behavior in virtual communities: The relationship between trust, self-efficacy and outcome expectations. *Int.J.Human-Computer Studies*. 65. pp.153-169

Hsu Meng-Hsiang, Chiu Chao-Min. (2004). Predicting electronic service continuance with a decomposed theory of planned behaviour. 23:5, pp.359-373

Hu Jing, Huhmann Bruce A., Hymann Michael R.(2007).The Relationship between Task Complexity and Information Search: The Role of Self-Efficacy. *Psychology&Marketing*. 24:3, pp.253-270

Huang Li-Shia, Chou Yu-Jen, Lin Che-Hung (2008). The Influence of Reading Motives on the Responses after Reading Blogs. *CyberPsychology&Behavior*. 11:3, pp.351-355

Huang, L.-S., Chou, Y.-J. & Lan, I.-T. (2007) Effects of perceived risk, message types, and reading motives on the acceptance and transmission of electronic word of mouth communication. *Contemporary Management Research*, 3, 4, pp. 299–312.

Iwasaki, Yoshi and Mark E. Havitz (2004). Examining Relationships between Leisure Involvement, Psychological Commitment and Loyalty to a Recreation Agency, *Journal of Leisure Research*, 36 (1), pp.45-72.

Jansen Bernard J., Zhang Mimi, Sobel Kate, Chowdury Abdur (2009).Twitter Power: Tweets as Electronic Word of Mouth.*Journal of American Society for Information Science and Technology*.60:11, pp.2169-2188

Jenkins Henry.(2004). The cultural logic of media convergence. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*. 7(1), pp.33-43

Jenkins Henry (2006). *Convergence Culture*, NYU Press

Jones Scott A., Aiken K.Damon & Boush David M.(2009). Integrating Experience, Advertising and Electronic Word of Mouth. *Journal of Internet Commerce*. 8, pp.245-267

Kapferer, Jean-Noel and Gilles Laurent (1993), “Further Evidence on the Consumer Involvement Profile: Five Antecedents of Involvement,” *Psychology and Marketing*, 10, pp.347-355.

Karanikolova Milena. (2008). Soccer 2.0 Cyber change of a fan community into a virtual ownership community

Komito, L. (1998) The Net as a foraging society: flexible communities. *Information Society* 14, pp.97–106

- Kozinets Robert V.(1999). E-Tribalized Marketing?: The strategic implications of virtual communities of consumption. *European Management Journal*. 17:3, pp.252-264
- Larsson Larsake. (2007). Public trust in the PR industry and its actors *Journal of Communication Management*. 11:3, pp. 222-234
- Lau Geok Theng, Ng Sophia. (2001). Individual and situational factors influencing negative word of mouth behavior. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*. 18:3, pp.163-178
- Lee Jung, Lee Jae-Nam (2009).Understanding the product information inference process in electronic word-of-mouth: An objectivity–subjectivity dichotomy perspective. *Information & Management*. 46, pp. 302–311
- Lee Mira, Youn Seounmi(2009). Electronic word of mouth(eWom): How eWOM platforms influence consumer product judgement. *International Journal of Advertising*.28:3, pp.473-499
- Leung Louis. (2009). User generated content on the Internet: an examination of gratifications, civic engagement and psychological empowerment. *New media&society*. 11:8, pp.1327-1347
- Lewis, D.J. and Weigert, A. (1985), “Trust as a social reality”, *Social Forces*, Vol. 63 No. 4, pp. 967-85.
- Lin Tom M.Y&Fang Cheng-Hsi (2006).The Effects of Perceived Risk on the Word of Mouth Communication *Dyad*.34:10, pp.1207-1216
- Lin Hsiu-Fen. (2006). Understanding Behavioral Intention to Participate in Virtual Communities. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*. 9: 5, pp.540-547
- Litvin Stephen W.,Goldsmith Ronald E.,Pan Bing (2005).Electronic Word of Mouth in hospitality and tourism management. *Tourism Management*, pp.1-30
- Lu Hsi-Peng, Hsu Chin-Lung, Hsu Hsiu-Ying. (2005) An empirical study of the effect of perceived risk upon intention to use online applications. *Information Management & Computer Security* . 13: 2, pp. 106-120
- Lu Yaobin, Zhao Ling, Wang Bin. (2010).From virtual community members to C2C e-commerce buyers: Trust in virtual communities and its effect on consumers’ purchase intention *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications* 9, pp. 346–360
- Marsha L. Richins, Teri Root-Shaffer (1988), "The Role Of Evolvment And Opinion Leadership in Consumer Word-Of-Mouth: An Implicit Model Made Explicit", in *Advances in Consumer Research* Volume 15, eds. Micheal J. Houston, Provo, UT : Association for Consumer Research, Pages: 32-36.
- Matsushima, R., & Shiomi, K. (2003). Social self-efficacy and interpersonal stress in adolescence. *Social Behavior and Personality an International Journal*. 31, 4, 323-332.

- Mayer, R., C. and Davis, J.H. (1999). The Effect of the Performance Appraisal System on Trust in Management: A Field Quasi-Experiment, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol.84, No.1, pp. 123-136.
- Mayer, Roger C., Davis, James H., Schoorman & David F., "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust", *The Academy of Management Review*, Vol 20, No 3, 1995, pp.709-734.
- McKee, D., Simmers, C. S., & Licata, J. (2006). Customer self-efficacy and response to service. *Journal of Service Research*, 8, 207–220.
- McColl-Kennedy, Janet R. and Richard E. Fetter, Jr. (2001), "An Empirical Examination of the Involvement to External Search Relationship in Services Marketing," *Journal of Services Marketing*, 15, pp.82-98.
- McWilliam Gil (2000). Building Stronger Brands through Online Communities. *Sloan Management Review*, pp. 43-54
- Milne George R., Labrecque Lauren I., Cromer Cory.(2009). Toward an Understanding of the Online Consumer's Risky Behavior and Protection Practices. 43:3, pp.449-473
- Mitchell Vincent-Wayne. (1999). Consumer perceived risk: conceptualisations and models *European Journal of Marketing*, 33: 1/2, pp. 163-195
- Money R. Bruce, Gilly Mary C., Graham John L.(1998). Explorations of National Culture and Word of Mouth Referral Behavior in the Purchase of Unidustrial Services in the United States and Japan. *Journal of Marketing*. Vol.62, pp.76-87
- Nelson, K. M., & Coopridge, J. G. (1996). The contribution of shared knowledge to IS group performance. *MIS Quarterly*, 20(4), 409-429.
- Patrali Chatterjee (2001), "Online Reviews: Do CXonsumers Use Them?". *Advances in Consumer Research*.28, pp.129-133.
- Paunonen Sampo V., Hong Ryan Y.(2010). Self-Efficacy and the Prediction of Domain-Specific Cognitive Abilities. *Journal of Personality*. 78:1, pp.339-360
- Pires Guilherme, Stanton John, Eckford Andrew. (2004). Influences on the perceived risk of purchasing online *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*. 4:2, pp.118–131
- Peterson Robert A., Merino Maria C.(2003). Consumer Information Search Behavior and the Internet. *Psychology & Marketing*, 20:2, pp.99-121
- Pollach Irene. (2006). Electronic Word of Mouth: A genre analysis of product reviews on consumer opinion web sites. 39th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences. pp.1-10
- Prendergast Gerard, Ko David, Yuen Siu Yin V.(2010). Online word of mouth and consumer purchase intentions. *International Journal of Advertising*. 29:5, pp.687-708

- Ridings M.C., Gefen D., Arinze B.(2002). Some antecedents and effects of trust in virtual communities. *Journal of Strategic Information Systems*. 11:3-4, pp.272-295
- Rosen Emanuel. *The Anatomy of Buzz*. (2000). New York. Doubleday.
- Schiffman, L.G. and Kanuk, L.L. (2007), *Consumer Behavior*, Pearson Education, Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- Sernovitz Andy. *Word of Mouth Marketing*. 2009. New York. Kaplan Publishing
- Senecal Sylvain, Nantel Jacques (2004). The influence of online product recommendations on consumers' online choices. *Journal of Retailing*.80, pp.159-169
- Shu Wesley, Chuang Yu-Hao (2011). Why People Share Knowledge In Virtual Communities. *Social Behavior And Personality*, 39(5), pp.671-690
- Sichtmann Christina. (2007) An analysis of antecedents and consequences of trust in a corporate brand. *European Journal of Marketing*. 41:9, pp. 999-1015
- Simmons Geoff (2008).Marketing to postmodern consumers: Introducing the Internet chameleon. *European Journal of Marketing*. 42: 3/4, pp. 299-310
- Smith Donnavieve, Menon Satya, Sivakumar K. (2005). Online Peer and Editorial Recommendations, Trust and Choice in Virtual Markets. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*. 19:3., pp.15-37
- Stewart David W., Zhao Qin (2000). Internet Marketing, Business Models and Public Policy. *Journal of Public Policy&Marketing*.19:2, pp.287-296
- Stone Robert N., Gronhaug Kjell. (1993). Perceived Risk: Further considerations for the marketing discipline. *European Journal of Marketing*. 27:3, pp.39-50
- Sundaram D.S, Mitra Kaushik, Webster Cynthia (1998).Word-of-Mouth Communications: A Motivational Analysis. *Advances in Consumer Research* Volume 25, pp.527-531
- Sun Thao, Youn Seounmi, Wu Guohua&Kuntaraporn Mana (2006). Online word of mouth: An exploration of its antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 11, pp.1104-1127
- Tipton, R.M. and E.L. Worthington, Jr (1984) 'The Measurement of Generalized Selfefficacy: A Study of Construct Validity', *Journal of Personality Assessment* 48(5): 545-8.
- Thomas Greg Metz (2006). Building the buzz in the hive mind. *Journal of Consumer Behavior*. 4:1, pp.64-72
- Thorson Kjerstin S., Rodgers Shelly (2006). Relationships Between Blogs As Ewom and Interactivity, Perceived Interactivity and Parasocial Interaction. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*. 6:2, pp.34-44

Tsuifang Hsieh, Tzu-yin Wu, Yung-kun Chen(2010). The impact of online negative word-of-mouth on customer purchase decision for the travel websites. *Journal of US-China Public Administration*.7:7, pp.65-76

Wang Youcheng, Fesenmaier Daniel R. (2004) Understanding the Motivation of Contribution in Online Communities An Empirical Investigation of an Online Travel Community. National Laboratory for Tourism and e Commerce, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Wind Yoram, Mahajan Vijay (2002). Convergence Marketing. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*. 16:2, pp.64-79

Wood, R. E., & Bandura, A. (1989) Impact of conceptions of ability on self-regulatory mechanisms and complex decision making. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56: pp.407-415.

Woodside Arch G., Delozier M. Wayne. (1976) Effects of Word of Mouth Advertising on Consumer Risk Taking. *Journal of Advertising*, 5: 4, pp. 12-19

Wu Jyh-Jeng, Tsang Alex S. L. (2008). Factors affecting members' trust belief and behaviour intention in virtual communities. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 27: 2, pp.115 – 125

Yang Hui-Jen, Lay Yun-Long, Tsao Wen-Yu, Liou Yi-Chin, Lin Cheng-Kun.(2007). Impact of Language Anxiety and Self-Efficacy on Accessing Internet Sites. *CyberPsychology&Behavior*. 10:2, pp.226-233

Youjae Yi, Taeshik Gong. (2008). The Electronic Service Quality Model: The Moderating Effect of Customer Self-Efficacy. *Psychology&Marketing*. 25:7, pp.587-601

