DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

MASTER THESIS IN WEB ANALYTICS AND MARKETING

The Online Word of Mouth in the Motion Picture Industry

SUPERVISOR

Prof. Matteo De Angelis

CANDIDATE

Andrea De Stefano

702441

CO – SUPERVISOR

Prof. Maria Giovanna Devetag

Table of contents

CHAPTER 1 – THE IMPORTANCE OF WORD OF MOUTH

1.1 Word of Mouth

Word of Mouth, briefly called WOM, is a term commonly used to describe the flow of communication about services and products among consumers (Westbrook, 1987). In other words, it is a kind of interpersonal communication through which people share their personal experience about a brand, product, firm, service (Richins, 1984). It is a form of social exchange concerning evaluation of goods and services (Dichter, 1966; Fornell and Bookstein, 1982; Singh, 1988). Indeed, consumers communicate each other every day, in a plenty of occasions. For instance, friends may talk about the last new Netflix series, or about the next Martin Scorsese's film dozens of times per day (Barasch and Berger, 2014). This social exchange influences several consumption decisions. Even websites are on the list of what is consumed because of word of mouth (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Trusov, Bucklin and Pauwels, 2009). Colleagues could have a conversation about the bad supermarket services in their area or about the quality of food of the restaurant where they have had dinner in the weekend. Moreover, about their last travel. The hotel where they stayed, the restaurants where they ate, the tours they took etc. To understand the importance, about 3.4 billion conversations about brands take place every day (Keller Fay Group, 2006) among friends, family members, collegues, acquaintances, neighbours, strangers. The impact is enormous. Bone in 1995 stated that because of the great persuasive power in influencing consumers' behaviour and decisions, WOM has acquired significance in marketing field. Indeed, two-third of the industries are lead primary by WOM (Dye, 2000) and the 70% of all buying decisions are discovered to be influenced by the Word of Mouth (Balter, 2008). Word of mouth might even provide awareness or produce normative pressure (Van den Bulte and Wuyts, 2009), sales (Berger, Reghuram and Iyengar, 2013) and help to boost the spread of information (Goldenberg, Libai, and Muller, 2001). Leskovec, Adamic and Huberman in 2007 proved that people are more prone to buy those DVDs friends recommend and doctors prescribes those drugs they talk about with their colleagues (Iyengar, Van den Bulte and Valente, 2011). Another proof of its importance has been given by U.S. national survey taken in 2006 by Harris Interactive. The results of this research show that WOM and "recommendation from family, friends, colleagues etc." were given as the most credible and persuasive source of information to decide which product buy or which brand were the best one (Allsop, Bassett and Hoskins, 2007).

Several researches demonstrate its power (Allsop, Bassett and Hoskins, 2007). The reason behind its success is the fact that it is found to be more credible in comparison with marketing advertising paid by firms because, by definition, the message is generated and transmitted by "people like me", who are seen as unbiased source of information (Allsop, Bassett and Hoskins, 2007). Following the Allsop, Bassett and Hoskins study of 2007, WOM has a great influence both on the rational and emotional dimension. Indeed, next to personal experience, word of mouth has the best influential power. Its importance is due also to its

multiplie effect. Indeed, in the marketplace there are a plenty of sources of information about everything that is consumable. Word of mouth foster the effect of those other sources.

Word of mouth obviously not only influences, but it is also influenced by. How many people talks about a brand? Who is talking about and to whom? Are their relationships close or are they only acquittances? Those are just some of the questions that we need to know in order to deeply understand word of mouth. Moreover, people may talk a lot about a specific product or not at all. Then, they can do it positively or negatively or also neutrally as a result of their experience, or as a result if they are male or female, old or young. Moreover, consumers might engage in word of mouth on internet, at home, at work, in a bar; in front of a person or a large audience. The means has also a great influential power. There is difference if the WOM takes place on a blog, a social network, a virtual game? Is the message written or oral? If it is about high status goods, like the new Gucci bag, it is spread differently in comparison with every day consumption products like tomatoes or toothpaste for example. At the same time, the social presence is different if the message is shared in person or on Facebook. For example, on internet the conversation would be more asynchronous and the receiver of the message would not see the gesture of the sender. Moreover, there are some emotion that foster WOM like anger or happiness, while there are other who inhibit it like shame. Those questions and topics will be part of the following literature review. It is worth of note to state that a wide part of the literature about word of mouth has the aim to study all the antecedents behind this phenomenon, as we will review further. Generally, satisfaction or dissatisfaction are seen as the main factors behind the WOM generation or transmission (Arndt, 1967; Bitner, 1990; Dichter, 1966; Reichheld and Sasser, 1990; Rogers, 1962; Westbrook, 1987; Yi, 1991). Concerning WOM antecedents it is only the tip of the iceberg.

It is worth of note, compare paid traditional advertising with word of mouth. There are some differences that help understand the WOM phenomenon. In 1994, Barbara B. Stern conducted a study where clarifies this topic. The first difference that must be considered is the fact the WOM happens in real life, while advertising in virtual life. Indeed, even if advertising simulate WOM, the message used is created, thus not natural as in a typical real-life conversation. What is it meant for natural in this case? When real people engage in WOM, their dialogues about products and services are real and happen in specific occasions. Those utterances are spontaneous, have a personal motivation and are not previously created, written, reviewed; they just happen in real life thanks to specific motivations which I will deeply review in the next paragraphs. In other words, there is not a predetermined structure, like in poems or novels, but there is just the need to conduct the business of life (Martin, 1986). It just happens between individuals who want to share information about brands, products, services without economic purpose. On the other hand, advertising happens in virtual life with the specific purpose of sponsoring products, services, firms, brands etc. It is not a case that many commercials imitate the real life, with fake dialogues, between two or more individuals who play a fake role (Auerbach, 1953). Furthermore, in WOM conversation there are senders and receivers. Those are the only individuals who share the interest for an exchange of information. In contrast, in advertising there is a

sponsor, who is the person or entity who pays for the advertising (Elliott, 1982). Then, there are one or more authors, who are the message creators who are always anonyms. Finally, there are the persona, who are the actors who play the message created by authors and commissioned by the sponsor. They imitate real life spoken languages and their characters are created.

1.1.1 Traditional WOM and Online WOM

Arndt in 1967, defined WOM as "*oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, concerning a brand, a product, or a service*". From this definition, we discover that there are three main characteristics of word of mouth: it is a person-to-person exchange of information, it concerns brands, products, services, firms and it is transmitted orally. But this last characteristic has been lost, since that with the advent of the internet people now engage also in written WOM and it can be considered the first difference with traditional word of mouth. The internet has been recognised as a powerful means of communication that facilitated connections, conversations and exchange of information between individuals and entities (Huang and Leung, 2009). It is instantaneous, easy to use, accessible and, the most of the times, free.

In general, there are three key points which differentiate online WOM from traditional WOM (Berger, 2013; Berger and Iyengar, 2013; Huang and Leung, 2009) and from those, in turn, descend some consequences. The main difference is that online WOM is more likely to be written. Therefore, it is non-perishable, the environment in which it takes place is on internet and the potential reach is greatly enhanced. Through those differences with traditional WOM we will understand what is online WOM that is the main object of this thesis, but before reviewing those, we should consider the online word of mouth definition:

"*Any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or a company which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet*"
(Henning – Thurau et al, 2004)

From the definition, we can definitely state what I have said above. The *environment* where people engage in WOM is online. Indeed, on internet customers and prospects are enabled to get information from other people (or share those with others) more easily than ever (Henning – Thurau et al, 2004). Now, there exist several new means of communication thanks to internet: blog, social network, instantaneous message, online communities, email etc. (Alsopp et al, 2007). From the definition there is another evident feature. The fact that the WOM "*is made available to a multitude of people and institutions*". Here, we understand that, because of the written nature of the online word of mouth, it is permanent on the internet (*non-perishable*) and can be seen by a broader number of people in comparison to oral word of mouth that has the

characteristic to be perishable (Dellarocas and Narayan, 2007). Even though WOM exchanges are done in front of a crowd, potentially online WOM has more reach because it is extendable through the time because of its permanence. For example, on TripAdvisor, if anyone search for Disneyland parks reviews, the results are thousands of written statements that people had done during the years until now. In other word, the volume of the *reach* is enhanced for online word of mouth because of the multi-directional nature of the message (Dellarocas, 2003) and this is the third main feature highlighted by the definition above. On internet there are several communities, web sites, forums, social networking sites, that only a message can reach millions of people in a blink of the eyes. Moreover, the platform used greatly influence what and when is shared, who shares and why people share (King, Racherla and Bush, 2014). Finally, the non-perishable nature of the written messages, makes the online WOM effect persistent and observable. It means that, an online WOM message is able to influence not only other people word of mouth in the present day, but in the future too (King, Racherla and Bush, 2014).
Now we are going to review all those differences by comparing online communications, that is typical of online word of mouth, with offline communications, that characterizes traditional word of mouth.

Synchrony vs Asynchrony

The first consequence of the written nature of online word of mouth (Berger, 2013) can be seen on the synchrony of communication (Clark & Brennan; Morris & Ogan, 1996). On the one hand, when a face-to-face conversation is held, two people exchange information in synchrony, with little or no breaks and characterized by quick thinking. One says something, the receiver obtains instantaneously the information and usually responds quite immediately. In oral communications, the accessibility of a topic makes the conversation. It means that those topics that are top of mind, like famous brands, restaurants, places, are more likely to be discussed during a synchronous conversation because they need less effort to be retrieved in mind (Bergen and Schwartz, 2011). For example, it is more likely that, during a CrossFit training, people talk about the new Reebok CrossFit shoes instead of an unknown brand, even thought this last one is better. On the other hand, online written communications are characterized by asynchrony. One person writes something, another reads the information and answers in a not-prearranged moment. The modalities make the difference. Indeed, to run online conversation people have to use emails, text messages, instant messaging apps, social network chats, etc. Those modalities create delays during conversation, also with instant messaging and social networking chats that seems to be more rapid. Indeed, different means of written communication vary in terms of asynchrony (usually email are more asynchronous than instant messaging) (Berger and Iyengar, 2013). The conversations are slow and people have time to think, formulate, edit and refine the answer until it is polished (Chafe and Danielewicz, 1987; Redeker, 1984; Walther, 2007, 2011). They can answer hours or days later (Berger, 2013). The slow pace of conversation

typical of written communications brings to more ideas per word and less irrelevant ideas (Horowitz and Newman, 1964). This is demonstrated in 2013 in a research where Berger and Iyengar added also that self-enhancement, that is one of the possible antecedents of word of mouth, enhances this effect. Indeed, for example, it is demonstrated that when people need to answer to attractive people of the opposite sex, they spend more time editing messages. At the same time, on online dating web sites, people have the time to think, create and refine their profile in order to make them more attractive (Toma and Hancock, 2010). Where the self-enhancement need is greater, people tend to talk about more interesting products and this effect is greater in written conversations because of the extra time people have to refine their messages (Berger and Iyengar, 2013). There are many studies that suggest that asynchrony give people the chance to demonstrate better self-presentation (McKenna and Bargh, 2000; Walther, 2011; Walther and Burgoon, 1992). The 70% of Facebook users edit many times some of their post before publishing them (Das & Kramer, 2013) and even more try to post only the best photos in which they are happy and are having fun (Berger, 2013). Therefore, thanks to asynchrony there is more time and so internet users have time to enhance the level of conversation by talking about more interesting products, brands, services or engage in selective self-presentation (Walther, 2011) or, as well, being more friendly during conversation (Duthler, 2006). For example, your supervisor can cause you anger and stress because is asking you to work on Sunday by email. Online, you would have time to let the anger cool down and therefore you would be able to answer in the smart and right way. Maybe, in the same face-to-face situation would be the first feeling to rise and the answer would not be friendly as well.

Therefore, asynchrony and, at the same time, self-enhancement influence also which topic are object of word of mouth. Berger and Iyengar (2013) demonstrated that people generate WOM talking about more interesting brands, products and services. Not only because they have more time to think about the best products to describe in a specific situation, but also because they need to self-enhance that is one of the most common reason to engage in WOM (Dichter, 1966; Packard and Wooten, 2012; Wojnicki and Godes, 2010). In other words, talking about more interesting topics, brands, products and services makes them look better.

Anonymity and Social Presence

Asynchrony is not the only difference with traditional word of mouth. Indeed, other two differences are the fact that online conversations are characterized by anonymity and less social presence. "O*n the internet, no one knows you're a dog*" cit. Peter Steiner. On internet, people create fake profile on social network for example, or hide their identity by using pseudonyms when they comment or share (Berger, 2013). For instance, there is a tv program called Catfish: Fake Identities. The program shows stories about people who has been cheated by women or men known online. Those people pretend to be someone else on internet and build very deep relationships with the victims. Even love relations. Thus, in online conversation there is

more chance of deception (Mudambi and Schuff, 2010), even to decrease the power of a competitor. In face-to-face conversations is quite impossible to pretend to be someone else or hide our identities (Berger, 2013). Anonymity cause some consequences on the internet users' behaviours, and also on the engagement in word of mouth. When identities are hidden, people feel freer to share, express themselves, because they do not feel the social acceptance pressure (Goffman, 1959; Ratner & Kahn, 2002). Therefore, since that online can be difficult to link the person to his/ her real identity, people are fostered to talk about taboos or express their opinion about controversial topics.

Berger and Iyengar (2013) suggest that this effect is granted also because online there is a reduction of social presence. When a two people talk face-to-face, they can see, ear, smell and even touch themselves and they can notice even every single body language movement, while online is quite impossible use all the senses (Berger, 2013). For example, on the Facebook chat, people can read about each other during their conversations, the same by email or on TripAdvisor. Even on Skype, where people can see and ear each other, social presence is much more reduced. The consequence is a reduced social acceptance pressure.

Broad Reach vs Narrow Reach

Nowadays, people have access to internet almost always and everywhere and, therefore, eWOM volume and reach have reached unprecedented levels (Dellarocas, 2003). Just think that, Elon Musk, few months ago, launched 60 new satellites in space to test them in providing internet. His project, called Starlink, will allow people to connect to internet from literally everywhere on Earth thanks to 12.000 internet satellites. Starlink proves, not only that internet is a priority nowadays and it will be even more influent in the future, but also that billions of people are able to surf the internet with a multitude of devices. The result is a great enlargement of internet communications and traffic. Thus, consumers potentially will engage much more in word of mouth than ever. Indeed, "*the greater the volume of WOM, the more likely a consumer will be able to hear about a product*" (Liu, 2006)

On internet, messages are more likely to be undirected (Berger, 2013). Just think, for example, when people on Facebook share their status, or when on Instagram a friend publishes a photo with its family. The photo in this case, even thought the subject is the family, it is not shared directly with them, but with all the followers on Instagram. At the same time, people are allowed to review a restaurant they like on TripAdvisor. The review is not directed to a single person or to someone special, but to all those people who might be interested in reading about that restaurant before going there. In contrast, face-to-face conversation are usually much more directed. When I ask by the phone for a hotel to an Irish friend of mine in Dublin, he would answer directly to me. Even in front of a crowd the communication has a specific direction.

Online, also because of the undirected nature of the conversations, the audience usually is broader, while offline the conversations are usually directed to a narrower audience (Barash and Berger, 2014). For

example, a work call may involve a one-to-one conversation or even a one-to-few conversation. In this case we are in presence of narrowcasting, that is the diffusion of information *targeted* to a person or a little group of people (Barash and Berger, 2014). In other words, it has a very narrow reach. In contrast, when the environment of a discussion is online, the exchange of information might not be *targeted* to someone in specific. For instance, a Star Wars review on IMDb can be read by everyone who has access to internet. In this case, we are in presence of broadcasting, that is the diffusion of information among a wide and not-targeted group of people (Barash and Berger, 2014). In other words, it has a very broad reach. Potentially, online, the audience is enormous, not only because all the internet conversations are easily accessible by phone, computer or any device provided with an internet connection, but also as a consequence of the permanence of the message, that enlarges the public also with future people who may access the web site (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004) and read the Star Wars review. Obviously, as online conversations can have a broad reach, they can also have narrow reach. For example, on private chats or email. At the same time, offline conversation can have a broad reach, when for example the conversation is taken in front of a great public. But when offline and online communication are compared, it is useful to highlight the difference in reach by stating that offline environment is characterized by narrow reach, whilst the online one by broad reach. Andreassen and Streukens (2009) suggest a distinction to understand the reach of offline and online communication. They explain that offline messages are shared in *private rooms* while online in *public rooms.* In private rooms, the reach of WOM is narrow and the speed at which it is transmitted is slow. Clearly, if I recommend a beautiful museum to visit in London to a friend, before he goes to visit it, comes back and in turn recommends it to another person, it will pass a great time frame. In contrast, if I review online the same museum, my review potentially can, not only be read by a broader audience, but also by a multitude of people at the same time. Indeed, in public rooms, typical of online WOM, the audience is broader and the speed of transmission is faster than in private rooms.

Audience size, not only influence the speed of transmission, but also what is shared and transmitted (Barash & Berger, 2014). Narrowcasting enhances other focus, even though people are brought to focus on themselves by nature. Therefore, when people talk face-to-face tend to decrease their need to self-present and transmit more content that is useful for others and to conduct the conversation (Barash & Berger, 2014). In contrast, broadcasting discourages people to talk about negative event fostering self-presentation. In general, online people tend to positively self-present themselves.

1.2 Word of Mouth antecedents

People often talk about personal or others experiences or personal relations (Dunbar, Marriott & Duncan, 1997) and behavioural, sociological and psychological studies have proved that consumption of products and services nourishes and enhances affect (feelings) which are one of the most influential triggers of human

motivation (Westbrook, 1987). The motivations and the experience are closely related, since that the motivations of a post-purchase reaction, for example, could be a complaint or a repurchase action (Westbrook, 1987). Therefore, the reason why we engage in WOM in a determined time, occasion, with determined people and about determined topics is crucial to deeply understand the word of mouth phenomenon. For example, food is talked about more in restaurants or while people eat and videogames are topic of conversation whilst people are playing (Berger, 2014). In marketing, it is important to nourish an environment where it is full of triggers that activate word of mouth (Sundaram, Mitra, Webster, 1998). In order to provide such environment, there is a strong need to study and understand the motivational factors under word of mouth. For example, Day et al. (1981) understood that product dissatisfaction is a trigger for people in disseminating negative word of mouth and, more in particular, Richins (1983) discovered that some factors, for example a failure in responding to customers' complaints or inefficiencies in the product repair bring people to engage in negative WOM.

At first, traditional WOM antecedents identified in the literature are relevant also for the online WOM so far (Henning-Thurau, 2004). In general, when there is dissonance between prospects' expectations and consumers' experiences there could be dissemination of word of mouth (Anderson, 1998) and, moreover, consumers do not react homogeneously, but they are triggered by several causes (Henning-Thurau, 2004). In other word, if people expectations are disappointed or exceeded there may happen the generation of, respectively, negative and positive word of mouth. Many researchers stated that there are different motives behind positive and negative WOM (Sundaram, Mitra & Webster, 1998).

On the internet, it happens that there are some videos, photos or other types of content that are more *viral* than others. It means they are shared and transmitted through the internet platforms, from a user to another, more rapidly and widely than other content. Cashmore (2009) stated that this is simply ruled by randomness, but others do not have the same viewpoint. For example, there is more likelihood that consumers engage in WOM about product that are accessible and top of mind (Berger and Swhwartz, 2011). For example, if the newscasts talk for several weeks about the enormous environmental damages caused by palm oil extraction, it is likely that people begin to negatively post about palm oil products, making this topic more viral than others in a certain period. Furthermore, interesting contents are more viral than others because nobody wants to share topics which no one is interested in (Sernovitz, 2006).

The gender may influence what is shared. Indeed, usually male WOM is more likely to be about sport, leisure, business, other males. Instead, women talk about men, clothes, other women. When the conversation is between women and men, the topics are similar, except for men that talk more about themselves than about other men. (Dumber, Marriot, Duncan, 1996). Men and women are influenced by who they are talking to. For example, if they are in front of an attractive person, they may need to self-enhance themselves.

1.2.1 The literature behind WOM antecedents

The fundamental importance of word of mouth antecedents is testified by the several researches which compose the literature about this theme. Noteworthy, in 1966, Dichter listed four antecedents that can be cause of word of mouth. The first is the so-called *product-involvement*. It happens when a customer is so involved with the product, in terms of feelings, that there is a strong need to do something for it. This tension is reduced by recommending it to others. For example, is may happen that a woman is so strongly involved with a perfume, that she simply needs to talk about it. The second Dichter's antecedent is called *self-involvement*. In this case the strong need to talk about the product is caused by the emotions elicited by it and not by the product itself. Considering the above example, in this case word of mouth is caused, not by the perfume itself, but because it makes her happy by, for example, making her remembering her ancient memories. By sharing word of mouth about this product, she can live again those emotions. The third listed antecedent is *other-involvement.* In this case the need is to provide something to the receiver. Always considering the perfume example, it may happen if the woman has the need to make others feel the same emotions that the perfume elicits in her. The last motive is *message-involvement*. Word of mouth happens because of advertisements, commercials or public relations.

In 1993, Engel, Blackwell and Miniard proposed another similar scheme about word of mouth antecedents. This time the motives were five. The first considered was involvement, i.e. the chance in engage in word of mouth for people was positively correlated with the level of interest about the topic. Therefore, for example, the more a man is interested about sportive cars, the more is likely he would talk about the last Ferrari model. The second motive proposed in 1993 is *self-enhancement.* The more a person has the need to show his/her status, connoisseurship, to gain attention or to give the impression to be expert about something, the more he or she would engage in word of mouth about. For example, art amateurs love to share their connoisseurship during art exhibitions, because their expertise enhance themselves in front of others. *Concern for others* is another possible antecedent because sometimes people are fostered to share their experience about a product or a service when their words can help others to take the good choice about a product category, or to avoid others to do the same mistakes. When we see a fascinating and involving advertisement on tv, or a guerrilla marketing initiative on the streets, it may greatly elicit our emotions. The more the emotions elicited by the fascinating message are strong, the more people will share the experience and talk about the product involved in the commercials with others. Engel, Blackwell and Miniard called the cause of this phenomenon *message intrigue*. The last motive listed is *dissonance reduction*. In this case, people engage in WOM to reduce their doubts about a purchasing experience.

In the Sundaram, Mitra and Webster (1998) research there are several common features with the motives above-mentioned but with some differences. It is proved that there are eight antecedents that cause word of mouth. Four positively and four negatively. *Altruism* that can bring to positive WOM when the consumer is satisfied about the product and talk about it without asking nothing in return. Alternatively, it can bring to

negative WOM, in order to avoid the same dissatisfaction to others about a consumption experience. *Product-involvement* and *self-enhancement* are in common with the other past researches and are considered positive antecedents of WOM. Between the antecedents, Sundaram, Mitra and Webster, mentioned also the fact that people help the company if they think it deserve it because of its great products or services (*helping the company*). Alternatively, when consumers' dissatisfaction becomes anger, they may generate negative WOM because of a need of vengeance. Furthermore, when people need to ease or reduce anxiety and frustration, they may engage in word of mouth (*anxiety reduction*). Finally, there is another possible reduction that people look for. They may want to reduce their information asymmetry by seeking advice (*advice seeking*).

Maybe the most useful and current study about antecedents is the one by Berger in 2014. In this study, Berger builds a framework composed by five main areas in which the antecedents can be meticulously placed: *Impression Management*; *Emotion Regulation*; *Information Acquisition*; *Social Bonding*; *Persuading Others*. Moreover, Berger adds to this framework the idea that even the act of sharing for others is driven by self-oriented motives. Finally, in the same research he tried to highlight the effects that those antecedents have on word of mouth. We will review them one by one in the next paragraphs. Here below, a scheme to simplify the understanding of the Berger's Framework.

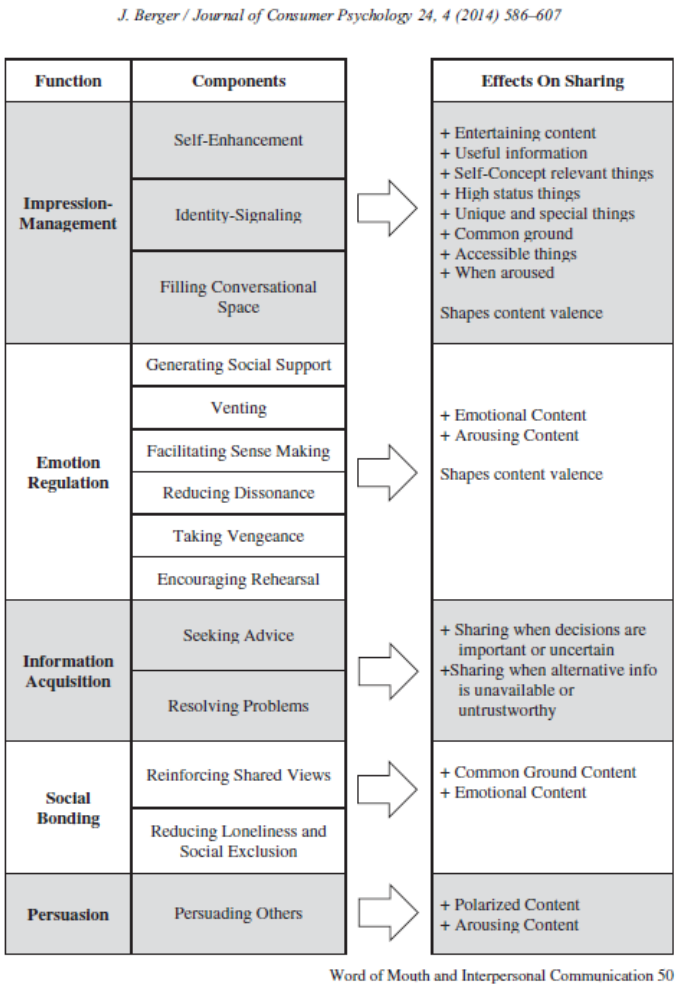


Fig. 1. The five functions of word of mouth (for the transmitter).

Figure 1 (Berger, 2014)

1.2.2 Impression management

Goffman (1959) sustained that, each social interaction is a performance about ourselves. Indeed, one of the main reason people share WOM is to positively change the impression that others have of them or they have of themselves (Berger, 2014). In other words, it is how people would like other see them or would like to be. Therefore, what people share by means of word of mouth represents what they want to be in the eyes of others and to do this, there are three possible ways: *self-enhancement*; *identity signalling*; *filling conversational space* (Berger, 2014).

Those areas bring to a series of consequences in general on the act of sharing and in particular in the engagement in word of mouth. They shape what people talk about and encourage them to share.

People are fostered to have conversations about more interesting, awesome, funny and in general extreme topic because in this way they are recognized to be funny, interesting and awesome as well. In other words, they want to entertain, therefore share *entertaining content*. Interesting products are more viral than everyday product (Berger & Schwartz, 2011; Berger & Iyengar, 2013). For example, it has low likelihood that people talk about toothbrushes or the soap they use to wash their hands, with respect of having a conversation about the NFL Finals. Concerning extreme themes, people are more likely to share stories that have an extreme plot and end, than stories about them that had a normal trip in a boring place (Heath & DeVoe, 2005). Moreover, concerning incredible stories, researchers found that urban legends are shared a lot because, not only people feel that those stories are exciting, but also because they found them to provide useful information (Brunvand, 1981; Allport & Postman, 1947; Rosnow, 1980; Shibutani, 1966). The same it is for useful marketing messages. They are passed on more than others (Chiu, Chiou, Fang Li, & Wu, 2007). Therefore, people are more likely to share *useful information* thanks to the impression management need, because in this way they feel and seem smart and helpful (Berger, 2014). Furthermore, as well there are identity-relevant product like cars, clothes, hairstyles that connote identities to individuals (Belk, 1988; Berger & Heath, 2007; Shavitt, 1990), at the same time there are some topics that are identity-relevant. For example, some individuals care a lot about politics and talk about it a lot because it makes them seem smart and well-informed about social topics (Berger, 2014). Therefore, people talk more about *symbolic products* than utilitarian (Chung & Darke, 2006) because those connote them with specific characteristic they want to be associated with. They talk about topics in order to seem someone they aim to be, and not to signal who they are. This is also proved by Packard & Wooten (2013), who discovered that people are more likely to talk about topic they do not know, instead of topic they know. Indeed, when the gap between actual knowledge and ideal knowledge about a topic for people, therefore those individuals would talk more about it. At the same time, people like to talk about *high-status goods* like a Ferrari or a Daytona or the last Panerai or about *unique goods* like the limited edition of the Pink Floyd's vinyl. Just by showing that they have information about those goods make them be associated with wealth and make them seem wealthy in the case of high-status goods (Lovett et al., 2013) and with uniqueness in the case of the limited-edition vinyl. In

this last case, people may talk in different ways about unique goods. On the one hand, those who have a high need of uniqueness may talk negatively about them because they want to be alone in having them (Cheema & Kaikati, 2010). On the other hand, there are those people who may engage in word of mouth about them, but by sharing also the complexity behind those products they care (Moldovan, Steinhart, & Ofen, 2012). Therefore, people need to be accepted by others and to do it, another possible way is to have conversation about *common grounds*. People feel more familiar and accepted by others when they cover topic like the weather, travels, weekends, restaurants (Clark, 1996; Grice, 1989; Stalnaker, 1978). In addition, we have noticed for unique goods that there are some people who negatively talk about unique products and others who talk positively. This is symptomatic of the fact that impression management affect also the *valence of individuals' messages* (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Tesser & Rosen, 1975; Berger, 2014). People do not want to be associated with negative experiences; therefore, they share word of mouth more about positive ones (Wojnicki & Godes, 2011). They do that for a need of impression management, because individuals prefer having conversation with positive people. Moreover, there are fewer negative reviews than positive (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; East, Hammond, & Wright, 2007). In contrast, there are other researches which demonstrated that it is negative WOM that enhance the likelihood to give positive impressions. For example, those reviewers who leave negative comment about films, art exhibitions or theatrical plays and performances, are assessed as being more expert, smart and competent with respect to others (Amabile,1983). In general, Berger (2014) explained that when people talk about products or services that signal something about them, they try to talk about them in order to make positive impressions. For example, individuals are more likely to share positive WOM about a restaurant in order to be assessed as people who make good choice or, in contrast, they may share negative WOM about a restaurant to show they have discriminating taste. Then, impression management often lead people to have conversations about *accessible topics*, as well as products, because those are known by everyone and it is easier to have a dialogue. For example, people talk about the weather to avoid embarrassment or about their houses because everyone has a home and can tell about his/her behaviour at home. What makes products accessible? For example, the environment. If we are in mountain during winter and it is cold, it is likely we talk about gloves or scarfs, whilst if we are to the beach, we would talk about swimming suits or sunscreens. Therefore, it is important for marketers to make a product top-of-mind by means of advertising, because the more they are accessible, the more will be in people's word of mouth (Onishi & Manchanda, 2012). Thus, advertisement is another variable that makes a product accessible. As well as visibility. There is fewer likelihood individuals talk about underwear in comparison with shoes. The last consequence impression management has on people word of mouth can be called *incidental arousal*, that may happen during moments that influence the rise of strong emotions like anxiety (Koenig, 1985; Heath et al., 2001) that in turn foster the sharing of word of mouth.

Self-enhancement

Self-enhancement is one of the main human motivators for sharing and some researches state that the products and services world is a means of self-expression that serves to fulfil people need to self-enhance (Fiske, 2001; Belk, 1988; Berger and Heath, 2007; Seirgy, 1982). Individuals need to maintain self-esteem, give a positive impression of themselves and reach a positive self-image through what they consume, they use, the car they drive, the restaurant they go to eat, and also by engaging in WOM about topics that make them look good in the eyes of others (Sedikides 1993). Indeed, people prefer to share about positive things and not negative, because they do not want to be remembered for something negative (Chung & Darke, 2006; Henning-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004; Sundaram, Mitra & Webster, 1998). Sometimes because they want to seem expert about something, sometimes because they are expert and want to be acknowledged for that by sharing their connoisseurship (Rimé, 2009). For example, in order to gain status, movie lovers may like to show their knowledge about cinema history with other movie lovers like them. In order to self-enhance, consumers not always share positive WOM about their experience. For example, sometimes judging negatively a film could be symptom of expertise.

In general, WOM engagement can happen in two different stages called "WOM generation", when a consumer engages in WOM about his/her own consumption experience, and "WOM transmission", when a consumer pass on information that he/she have heard about others' consumption experience (De Angelis, Bonezzi, Peluso, Rucker and Costabile, 2012). There are researches that suggest that, on the one hand, the generation of WOM is prevalently positive (Keller Fay Group, 2006; Holmes and Lett, 1977). In the field of entertainment, it has been found that the WOM generation is more positive than negative about tv shows (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004). As well, also in other industries it has been the same results. East, Hammond and Wright (2007) and Keller found support for the majority of positive WOM in the food and dining industry, retailing, automotive, telecommunication and health care. On the other hand, there is more transmission of negative WOM (Donovan, Mowen, and Chakraborty, 1999; Kamins, Folkes, and Perner, 1997; Wirthlin Worldwide, 2004).

Concerning the generation of positive WOM or the transmission of negative WOM in the field of self-enhancement, De Angelis, Bonezzi, Peluso, Rucker and Costabile (2012) predicted and proved that the chance consumers engage in positive or negative WOM depends also on the stage above-mentioned in which the dissemination of word of mouth can take place (WOM generation or WOM transmission). In other words, they stated that, "*consumers with a need to self-enhance generate more positive WOM and transmit more negative WOM than consumers who do not need to self-enhance*". They found support to this hypothesis by means of four experiments and, moreover, they proved also a second hypothesis which proposed that the role of self-esteem is positively correlated both with positive WOM generation and negative WOM transmission. Indeed, when the self-esteem is low, individuals generated more positive WOM and transmitted more negative WOM than people with high level of self-esteem. Furthermore, the

research proved also the role of attachment to the person to whom is transmitted WOM. On the one hand, the more the attachment is high between a sender with a need to self-enhance and the receiver, the more the sender will transmit positive WOM. On the other hand, the more the attachment is low, the more the sender will transmit negative WOM to the receiver.

Identity signalling

In general, people need to look good from the others' point of view and even from their own. In particular, in order to fulfil this, people share word of mouth to communicate their identities (Berger, 2014). For example, if an individual always talks about cars, maybe he is keen on motors and, in order to link this example to self-enhancement, he may also be believed to be an expert on this field. It is proved that people that are expert on a certain topic talk more about it. Opinion leaders or market mavens are more likely to engage in word of mouth about certain topics than people who have just a little interest or not at all (Feick & Price, 1987; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). An opinion leader about the food industry, it is acknowledged to be an expert because he may signal that he has the knowledge and the expertise about this particular topic (Chung & Darke, 2006; Packard & Wooten, 2013).

Filling conversational space

Sometimes, individuals feel difficulty to have a conversation with others. Even more if two people do not know each other. It may happen that the conversation stops too soon or that there is nothing else to say or even that people takes too much time to answer. In this case there could be the fear of being judged not great conversationalists or to have nothing interesting to say. In other words, there is the possibility that others make negative inferences about us, if we do not behave as they expect during a conversation (Clark, 1966; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; Tannen, 2000). Therefore, the act of sharing word of mouth can be also a great means to fill dead conversation through small talks (Berger, 2014).

1.2.3 Emotion regulation

It happens that externalities influence our emotions and so it may rise a need to manage those emotions in some way. For instance, when people order a pizza in the restaurant but the waiter brings it burned, individuals may reduce the anger by texting someone in order to complain about the event. In contrast for example, it may happen that the airplane hostess chooses one of us because there is a free sit in first class. We may be so excited that, as soon as possible, we tell this event to friends in order to enhance the excitement. Word of mouth may have the function of *emotion regulation* (Berger, 2014), i.e. word of mouth is able to manage and take under control people's emotions. Individuals feel the need to regulate the emotions and, therefore, emotion regulation is about people's relationships with them, how and when they

feel them and how and when they interact with them (Gross, 1998, 2008). Rimé (2009) reviews all those researches which state the importance of the social sharing of emotions in order to regulate them. But how does emotion regulation influence what people share? Since that what drives the social sharing are emotions, the subject of the sharing would be the emotions themselves, therefore, the more the *emotional content* of an event, a fact, a product or service, the more it would be shared. People share the 90% of their emotional experiences (Mesquita, 1993; Vergara, 1993; Rimé, Finkenauer, Luminet, Zech, & Philippot, 1992; Walker, Skowronsky, Gibbons, Vogl, & Ritchie, 2009). For example, high emotional movies are more likely to be talked about. On the one hand, there are some emotions like happiness or excitement or even sadness that enhance the likelihood of social sharing, on the other hand, there are others that have the opposite effect. For example, shame and guilty (Finkenauer & Rimé, 1998) decrease word of mouth generation because of the likelihood of making bad impression, or, in case of strong fear, because of a possible status of shock. As well as for impression management, even emotion regulation influences the *valence* of what is shared. Since that emotion regulation has the function to improve people's mood by reducing negative emotion, there is the tendency to believe that there is more likelihood to share negative word of mouth, because people look for social support when they experience negative emotions. In contrast, people may share positive word of mouth in order to live again an extremely positive experience. By sharing it, individuals can feel again the same emotions, and moreover, they can share those emotions with someone they love for example. Finally, word of mouth, in the field of emotion regulation, may have the function of *emotion arousal*. Emotions differ each other for the level of psychological arousal or activation (Heilman, 1997). In other word, the is difference in their power of word of mouth activation. For example, sadness is less effective in activating the need to vent, in comparison with anxiety. Disappointment is less effective than anger in activating the need of revenge. Considering the positive emotions, contentment would have less influence with respect to happiness or excitement and therefore, the need to share word of mouth would be lower because of a lower need for rehearsal. Therefore, in general, the higher the emotion arousal the higher the levels of activation, the higher the likelihood of word of mouth. Dichter (1966) and also Sundaram et al. (1998), suggested that, because of word of mouth people can dispose again of the emotion arousal due to the products they use. Berger (2014) extended the concept of emotion regulation by identifying six functions that the social sharing of emotion may have: *generating social support, venting, sense making, reducing dissonance, taking vengeance, encouraging rehearsal*.

Generating social support

It may happen that after being visited by a doctor, for example a dermatologist, we may feel to have paid a too high price. We are not sure about what we feel, because we do not know if the paid price is the standard one or if the specialist has asked an unfair price. However, we are disappointed and a need rises in us. The need to share the negative experience with others in order to generate social support. It means that, not only we may ask others opinions about the fairness of the price, but also because we would like to be understood

and gain social support. The generation of word of mouth is the means by which we look for it. Rimé (2007; 2009) provides support to the fact that when people live negative experiences, talking to others generate comfort and consolation. In support of this, Buechel and Berger (2012) found that sharing word of mouth with others about negative experiences generates "well-being" because it provides social support.

Venting

Emotion regulation allows people to vent thanks to the generation of word of mouth (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Sundaram et al, 1998; Rimé, 2009). The need to vent is the desire to reach a catharsis about a negative experience. If we have had an extremely negative day, full of negative experiences and unlucky events, talking about them with someone we love can be helpful to vent the stress and reach a catharsis (Wetzer, Zeelenberg, & Pieters, 2007). Concerning this, Zech (1999) found that the 90% of people think that sharing negative experiences can reduce their emotional impacts. In the same way, a disappointed customer would share word of mouth in order to vent about a negative product or service experience (Anderson, 1998).

Facilitate sense making

Considering again the above example about the unfair price and dermatologist (see "Generating social support"), since that we are not sure about the fairness of the price, we would like to look for a sense of that price that we feel to be so unfair. Therefore, we may talk to our friends or parents, or to someone who has experience about it in order to find the reason why we have paid a price so high. Well, interpersonal communications help to find a sense to negative experiences, reducing the frustration and stress generated (Rimé, 2009). Not only, the sharing may help to understand what is happened, but also it may facilitate to understand how and why we feel about that event (Rimé, Mesquita, Philippot, & Boca, 1991; Rosnow, 1980). It happens because we give voice to our emotions. Indeed, in order to explain them, we have to articulate them with words, and before doing that, the emotions should be clear in our mind (Gross & John, 2003). Making sense facilitate people to find a catharsis and, in the long-term, it enhances the well-being (Frattaroli, 1996).

Reducing dissonance

Dichter (1966) found support to the fact that people share their ideas in order to find confirmation to their own judgement. In the same way, when there is great uncertainty about, for example, which product to choose or even after having chosen the product or about an experience they have lived, people tend to engage in interpersonal communication in order to reduce this dissonance.

Taking vengeance

When a consumption experience is terribly negative, we may blame the company itself. For example, when people experience a great flight delay, the anger rises and grows in them, and so individuals may desire revenge against the flight company. The reaction would be engaging in negative word or mouth in order to punish the company and reducing the stress, anger and disappointment caused by the negative event (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Sundaram et al., 1998). To clarify the concept, taking vengeance is different from venting because the respective goals are different. Indeed, on the one hand, when individuals need to take vengeance their purpose is to punish someone, on the other hand, when people need to vent, their goal is to reach a catharsis.

Encouraging rehearsal

By talking about positive experiences people rehearse and live again the positive emotions (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Rimé, 2009). It is interesting the Dichter's views about this phenomenon. Indeed, the author explain this as a sort of "verbal consumption", because people relive the positive experiences by feeling the same emotions.

1.2.4 Information acquisition

Another important function of word of mouth is information acquisition, i.e. the people need to diminish the information asymmetry before taking a purchasing decision. Often, individuals are uncertain about what, where and how to buy something. For example, a person may need a new tv but he does not know which is the best brand, which are the latest technological innovations, in which retailer he can find the best prices, then he may try to actively gather information by talking about the ideal product he is looking for with his friends, parents, relatives or to someone he trusts. When he has gathered enough information, he may decide which tv better suits his desires and needs.

As well emotion regulation and impression management, information acquisition drives what people share when they generate and transmit word of mouth. First, the more the decision is *risky, important, complex or uncertainty-ridden*, the more the likelihood of the engagement in word of mouth in order to lower the chance to take the wrong decision. For example, buying a house could be an example of important decision, full of uncertainty, economically complex and so risky. When people need to buy a new house, they might talk to people who have taken the same decision before, in order to know for example which could be a fair price or a good neighbourhood. In this way, the risk would be lower and the confidence that they are doing the right thing would enhance (Engel et al., 1993; Gatignon & Robertson, 1986; Hennig-Thurau & Walsh, 2004). Furthermore, when there is deficiency or absolute absence of information, people try to rely on others,

therefore they generate word of mouth in order to fill the absence of information. The same may happen if the only information provided come from the company advertising campaign, because they may not be assessed as reliable.
People's sharing of word of mouth should foster the information acquisition in two ways: *seeking advice*, *resolving problems*.

Seeking advice

Word of mouth is a great tool to seek advice for individuals (Dicther, 1966; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Rimé, 2009). People ask for assistance when they are seeking advice because they are uncertain about what to consume. For example, it is Friday night and I would like to go to the cinema, but I do not know which film best suits my taste. The best thing I can do is to ask someone who know my cinema tastes, in order to not waste my time by watching a film I may dislike. Therefore, people ask for suggestions, recommendations, general information or perspective in order to be sure about their purchasing decisions (Fitzsimons & Lehmann, 2004; Tost, Gino, & Larrick, 2012; Zhao & Xie, 2011).

Resolving problems

Sundaram et al. (1998) found that another way in which word of mouth foster information acquisition is by resolving problems. Indeed, usually when we have personal problems, we try to solve them by seeking recommendation from others. On internet, forums like TripAdvisor or communities on Facebook, are a hub of comments and recommendations where people find method to solve their issues and, at the same time, comment in order to solve others'. What happens is that people who have a certain problem, for example about a trip, or about a product he/she has just bought, comment on those communities, blogs, forums, social networks or opinion platforms in order to receive useful feedbacks that solve efficiently their issues (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

1.2.5 Social bonding

Word of mouth has the characteristic to foster the connection between individuals (Rimé, 2009).

"Man is by nature a social animal" cit. Aristotele

People have a deep need for social interactions (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and word of mouth help them in fulfilling this desire. Interpersonal communications, as well word of mouth, has been used as a powerful tool to connect people by creating bonds between them (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Concerning this, the language used by humans allows them to facilitate the reinforcement of social bonds (Dunbar, 1998, 2004). There exists a concept that is slightly similar to social bonding: interpersonal closeness, i.e. the perceived attachment a person feels with respect to another individual (Dibble, Levine, Park, 2012). In close relation

with the concept of interpersonal closeness, there is tie strength, i.e. the strength of a relationship between two individuals. This concept will be reviewed in chapter 2. Here, we just introduce briefly it by considering some research in the field of word of mouth. Indeed, for example, it has been studied that, on the one hand, the more two individuals feel distant one another, the more likely they generate word of mouth with the aim to positively self-enhance themselves (Blaine and Crocker, 1993). On the other hand, the more attached two people are, the more likely they will share negative experiences in comparison with positive (De Angelis, Bonezzi, Peluso, Rucker and Costabile, 2012). Berger (2014) suggested in his review that the social bonding function of word of mouth foster individuals to talk about arguments they may have in common each other (*common ground*) or, as well as for the emotion regulation and impression management function, more *emotional contents*. Considering this last one, in particular, sharing emotional things enhance the likelihood that people feel familiarity. Sharing a laugh thanks two a funny story can create social bonding, for example. The emotional familiarity creates groups strength (Barsade & Gibson, 2007). However, as we said before, people like to talk about common ground and this is because it makes them feel more connected with the rest of the world (Clark & Kashima, 2007). Talking about topics in common between two individuals, makes them feel psychologically closer, by increasing their perceived familiarity. It is worth of note that social bonding might be both an antecedent and consequence of word of mouth. Indeed, there are researches that suggest that sharing emotions help in enhancing the strength of social bonds (Peters & Kashima, 2007), whilst others suggest that they make increase the need of social bonds (Chan & Berger, 2013)
Sharing should foster the creation of connections between people in two ways: *reinforcing shared views, reducing loneliness and social exclusion*.

Reinforce shared views

Consumers may buy and consumer in order to communicate their membership to a certain group because this help them to connect with similar others (Berger & Heath, 2007; DiMaggio, 1987; Douglas & Isherwood, 1978). In the same way, word of mouth encourages the creation and increases the strength of social bond by means of the reinforcement of shared views. People consume, act and talk also in order to reinforce social bonding and when people share similar views there could be an enhancement of the relationship strength. Moreover, for example, two friends may talk about a funny and popular advertisement and, if they share the same views, it may help them to build their relationship.

Reducing loneliness and social exclusion

By fostering social bonding, word of mouth, at the same time, could also reduce loneliness and social exclusion. When people feel alone or excluded, they are fostered to look for connections (Lakin, Chartrand, & Arkin, 2008; Maner, DeWall, Baumeinster, & Schaller, 2007), therefore they may be encouraged in generating also word of mouth.

1.2.6 Persuading others

Often, it happens that we talk about something in order to persuade others to avoid it or not. For example, a girlfriend may talk positively about a country because she desires to visit it during the next travel, or a roommate may negatively talk about an expensive washing machine brand because he prefers to save money. In real life, there are thousands of examples in which we use word of mouth in order to persuade others to buy and consume what we prefer. How, when and why people share word of mouth to persuade others? Sometimes because the others' choices affect their satisfaction, sometimes because the experience is jointly consumed, or even when people have the desire to change others' behaviour with others they prefer. This is the fifth and last function of word of mouth indicated by Berger (2014), i.e. individuals, by means of interpersonal communication about consumption, try to influence others' choices.
There are two ways in which the persuasion power of word of mouth may influence what people share. People may talk about more *emotional polarized contents* and *arousing topics*.

Polarized valence

When people desire to convince others to go to the cinema to watch the film they like, they may share word of mouth about the more emotional part they remember about that film. Therefore, if consumers want to convince someone about the negativity or positivity of a product or service, they may share extremely negative or positive information rather than the most moderate.

Arousing content

In the same way, people may share contents to change others' viewpoints by sharing more emotionally arousing content. It means that, for example, when politicians are talking about the negative actions done by the opponent parties, they may consider to use the worst in order to convince voters that they are the best choice in comparison with others.

CHAPTER 2 – THE ONLINE WORD OF MOUTH IN THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

2.1 The motion picture industry: an overview

The motion picture industry is the one of interest in this study. It is a sector that has always elicited high curiosity for scholars because of the high variance in performance and the high risk faced by its companies. Several researches tried to understand the box office performances by studying the factors which influence them. This industry is characterized by high competition due to the peculiar features of the film product. Indeed, it is an artistic good and its primary aim is to satisfy the need of entertainment. Moreover, behind the film, there are great investments, from its production budget to the marketing and promotional one. Here stands the great importance to investigate the drivers of film box office success in order to exploit them in the future.

Below, this section is divided in three main part: in the first and second ones, I will introduce some relevant aspects of the film product as an artistic, experiential and commercial good.

The third paragraph will treat the possible success drivers of a film by trying to classify them. The aim is to better understand them because of a possible exploitation in this study and to introduce the internet word-of-mouth.

2.1.1 Experience good

Consumers are continually making choices among products. As a consequence, they need information about products prices, characteristics, quality. There is only one way to fulfil this information asymmetry: search (Nelson 1970). Traditional models based on the economics of information search assume that consumers search for information until the marginal cost of search equals its marginal benefit (Moorty, Ratchford and Talikdar 1997). It is exactly on this idea that, in "Information and Consumer Behavior", Nelson (1970) makes a fundamental distinction between qualities of a brand that the consumer can determine by inspection prior to purchase and qualities that are impossible to be determined prior to purchase. The first are "search qualities" the second "experience qualities". Moreover, still in "Information and Consumer Behavior" Nelson explains that consumers dedicate extensive search for search goods, while minimal search for experience goods. Examples of the first could be the style of a car or how much a bottle is capacious. Those features could be easily obtainable by reading a label before purchase or by reading reviews. They are qualities that can be searched and found also prior to purchase. For experience goods, an example is the taste preference for a specific biscuits brand. Before obtaining some of the information to make an assessment, consumers would purchase them, eat them and maybe compare them with other brands. Then, they could

determine from several purchases which brand they prefer. “Experience” is the name of this process. The assessment process using the experience process is different from the one used for search qualities. Indeed, after using a brand, its price and quality can be merged together to give us data for a posterior analysis. It is obvious that prior to consume, all the consumers can easily be aware about the price of products, even if they are completely experiential product. But it gives them too little data to make an assessment about the quality of a product or service. In other words, without more experiential information, consumers wouldn’t be aware if they are consuming a low- or high- quality brand in relation to its price. In this experience case, information can be acquired only by purchasing a different brand and thereby learning which brand is best for a larger set of brands.

Different authors argue that the internet erases differences between search and experience goods. In this regard, they suggest that it happens because of the internet which enables consumers to get information and learn from the experiences of others (Alba et al. 1997; Klein 1998), Thus, the internet is a useful source of information for experience and search goods (Huan, Lurie, Mitra 2009), but a difference still remain: experience goods need greater depth of search (i.e. more time spent per product page online), while search goods involve greater breath of search (more pages visited online). It reflects the fundamental differences in the type of information consumers look for these two kinds of goods. For search goods, they look for as more information as possible about as many products as possible, while for experience goods they try obtaining experience indirectly by the provided experience information on online reviews. Furthermore, (Hoffman and Novak 1996) the internet lowers the cost in terms of money and time of gathering and sharing information offering new ways to learn about products before purchase.

2.1.2 The movie experience

The film is an experience good, thus the consumer does not know what its value is until the moment of consume (Chang & Ki 2005). Like other experience goods, motion pictures are characterized by assessment ambiguity. Indeed, the quality evaluation of these products imposes high levels of difficulty and uncertainty because of their nature (Caves, 2000). Consequently, this difficulty leads to an important information asymmetry, therefore, when people are making movie choices, they need some indicators typical of this industry (K. Hendricks, Sorensen 2009). In the next paragraph, we will overview some success drivers of the motion picture product Thus, a movie is an experiential good and, moreover, it is a product of entertainment, therefore people choose it and “consume” it just for the pleasure itself (Chang & Ki 2005). In this case, the consume has not the aim to get more experience to make better choices in the future, but it has an end in itself. Since that a movie is an experience good, the moviegoer doesn’t know how he will evaluate the product until the moment of consume. Differently from other experience good, every film is always different from another. This is typical of the artistic industry, in which every piece of art must be unique. A person

could know which genre or director or actor he does or doesn't prefer, but until he watches a film, he won't be sure if he likes or dislikes the movie.

2.1.3 Success drivers

The entire film production process, in order to be sustainable, must be profitable. *"I don't make pictures just to make money. I make money to make more pictures"* (Walt Disney). The motion picture industry is characterized by the simultaneous presence of economic and artistic factors (Boschetti 1999). Considering the commercial side of this sector, the studios (i.e. cinematographic producers) produce their products (i.e. movies) with the aim to reach a profit (Bosko 2003). The film industry is characterized by high competition and the reasons behind that have their origin in the product features. As we said before, it is qualified as artistic, thus its aim is to purely entertain consumers (i.e. audiences) and, finally, it has to be unique and original. Consequently, the economic results are difficult to forecast being characterized by high randomness. Furthermore, each film needs an important investment considering not only the production budgets, but also the promotional expenses and the advertising costs. Therefore, being obvious the risk faced in the motion picture industry we can understand the economic interest behind the investigation of the success drivers that influence the box office performances of a film.

There is a great existent literature on box office success and the success drivers are classified in three important groups of factors (Hennig-Thurau, Houston, Walsh 2006): movie characteristics, post-filming studio actions and external factors. In the first group, we can find *personal attractiveness* including stars, directors and producers. Indeed, the participation, for example, of a particular actor in a movie could be a possible reason for a person to watch a film, because that star is the indicator of a certain film standard. Consequently, this presence influences the attractiveness by reducing the consumer's information asymmetry and thus his uncertainty (Imvin, Levim and Heath 1997). For example, if a film is directed by Quentin Tarantino, it will be full of bleeding and violent contents. A person who knows that will use this information as heuristic shortcut, because it is a useful information to reduces his cognitive effort. Another important factor is *movie's cultural familiarity,* i.e. the extent to which a movie draws on widely known themes, for example sequels or remakes or the usage of elements of the popular culture (Sawhney, Liashberg 1996). Indeed, there exist a lot of film based on familiar concept. A good example could be the Marvel's Avengers saga. It is based on years of comics and TV programs that have been entered in the pop culture for years. As the personal attractiveness, the cultural familiarity provides useful heuristic shortcuts to ease the evaluative efforts in consumers' film choices. Factors of this group that may influence box-office success involve the rating given by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), the country of origin and the genre. With regard to the MPAA, this association offers information about a movie's language, graphic violence or sexual content and therefore reflects a film's content by providing people useful information about the product.

As mentioned before, the second important group of factors is composed by the post-filming studio actions, i.e. studios exploit communicative and distributive post-filming activities. The *movie advertising* is the most expensive, but at the same time the most influential actions. It provides information to potential moviegoers about film's content and allows them to experience part of the film, thanks for example to the broadcasting of a trailer (Faber and O'Guinn 1984) Simultaneously, the intensity and the budget of advertising could be an indicator of the studio's belief in the potential revenue of a film (Conchar, Crask, Zinkhan 2005). Another action concerns the movie distribution. Indeed, the *number of screens* on which a movie is shown is not only an important indicator of the distributive efforts behind the movie, but more importantly it strongly influences the potential number of moviegoers to that film (Swami, Eliashberg, Weinberg 1999). The last post-filming action accountable to have a possible strong influence on box-office performance is the *timing of release*. Some release dates are more advantageous for a film's box office success (Krider, Weinberg 1998).

The last group of drivers are the external factors over those studios have little or no influence. The first of those is the *consumers' quality perception* that is the subjective evaluation based on the consumption experience of the film in relation of the subjective standard of quality of each moviegoer (Rust, Oliver 1994). For example, it is easy to understand that a movie lover's quality standard would be different for a movie expert in comparison with an average moviegoer. They follow different assessment methods and they could get to different final quality assessment. A positive ex post assessment could bring consumers in engaging in repeat viewing and word-of-mouth (Faber and O'Guinn 1984). Indeed, another important driver concerns *movie reviews.* They might be online or offline, be made by expert or cinephiles or simple moviegoers, on different platform such as microblogging sites or forums or video platform etc. The common denominator is that reviews provide potential viewers with information about film's content and overall quality (Eliashberg, Shugan 1997). However, there are mixed evidences regards to whether reviews influence consumers' decisions or merely forecast a movie's success. This topic will be considered more in depth in the next section. Finally, *movie's awards* given to films, by acclaimed institution as The Oscars, The Golden Globes, The Cannes Festival, The Venice Film Festival and so on, could denote a product excellence. This information, like the previous, is used as a heuristic shortcut for an ex ante evaluation for consumers' choices and could change a consumers' evaluation who has already watched a film.

Another important possible success driver is the star rating. It reflects consumers' personal judgments about a movie (Zhang and Yang, 2016). With star rating, consumers are asked to evaluate a movie, typically on a range (for instance, from 0.0 to 5.0 stars on MyMovies or from 0.0 to 10.0 on IMDb). In the evaluation process it could be greatly useful, but not always reliable, because potential moviegoers could consider it as a shortcut to decide to watch a film or not. In other words, it is a heuristic method to decide to consume a movie or not. However, in literature star rating has been found to have a negatively significant correlation with box-office sales when it is extremely negative (1-star review), but on the other hand, when it is extremely positive it has no significant effect on revenues (Zhang and Yang, 2016). It is worth of note that

the star rating effect on box-office sales impact mainly in the first week after the film release and its effect gradually vanish from the second week.

2.2 The Social Media: overview

"*Social media are a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content"* (Kaplan, Haenlein 2010). The social media formats can be several. There are social networking sites (SNSs), for example Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn. Then, we can find video-sharing platform such as YouTube or Vimeo, or also collaborative websites like Wikipedia. Also, Twitter is a social media and it is considered a microblogging site (Mangold, Faulds 2009). Moreover, there are the image-sharing social media such as Instagram and Pinterest and also blogging social media like Wordpress or Tumblr. Another possible format could be the audio-sharing such as iTunes or Spotify on which everyone can find podcasts.

2.2.1 Online communities and knowledge collaboration

"Online communities (OCs) are open collectives of dispersed individuals with members who are not necessarily known or identifiable and who share common interests, and these communities attend to both their individual and their collective welfare" (Sproull and Arriaga 2007). Communities are a social source of knowledge and an online community is the Internet-based and virtual form of them. For instance, Facebook is an OC that involves social bonding and interactions, then YouTube is an OC where the creators are the users which, exploiting their creativity, share videos with the community, moreover there is Wikipedia that is a free, open content online encyclopedia created through the collaborative effort of a community of users known as Wikipedians (Wikipedia). The common denominator is that users are active collaborators of knowledge. The knowledge collaboration is the act of sharing, transferring, accumulating, transforming and cocreating the knowledge. It happens on online communities when users mix their knowledge in order to contribute to website (Faraj, Jarvenpaa, Majchrzak 2011). The knowledge collaboration can occur in different situation in relation to the OCs. For example, on Wikipedia, people shape and integrate pages that others have written before. In other cases, the knowledge collaboration occurs only when there are not enough data to help users, whereas in others only when there are or not social relationships between associated. The importance of this theme stands to the fact that it is a critical element of the sustainability of online communities (Jappesen, Fredericksen 2006).

Furthermore, the communication exchanges take place in online communities thanks to social relationships that is formed by an information seeker and the source of information (Money, Gilly and Graham, 1998; Johnson, Wilcox and Harrel, 1997; Bristor, 1990). The tie strength is "*a multidimensional construct that represents the strength of the dyadic interpersonal relationships in the context of social networks*" (Money, Gilly and Graham, 1998). The higher the number, the type and the frequency of exchanges, the stronger the

tie. Finally, the greater the intimacy of the exchanges the stronger the tie (Marsden and Campbell, 1984; Walker, Wasserman and Wellman, 1994). Then, there is a concept that is strictly related to tie strength, namely homophily (Brown and Reingen, 1987). The homophily is the level that assess how much a group is similar in terms of members' characteristics. In other words, considered certain features, the homophily is the extent to which two person are similar (for instance, gender, age, education, lifestyle) (Rogers, 1983). This concept influences the way people interact, seek, pass and give information (McPherson and Smith-Lovin, 1987).
Finally, in online community, the source credibility is an important concept. It considers the source expertise and source bias to assess if or not he/ she is a credible source of information (Buda and Zhang, 200); Birnbaum and Stegner, 1979). The greater the possessed expertise and the less is prone to bias, the more a source is perceived credible (Eagley and Chaken, 1993).

2.2.2 The under-contribution problem and the social comparison theory

Internet has become a popular tool used by people and firms as information and entertainment source, and as an interaction channel. Internet is also the hub of thousands of online communities and, therefore, is a chance to create new social capital (Chen, Harper, Konstan, Li 2007). In online communities, people meet each other to share information, learn, interact, do businesses and entertain themselves. Indeed, for example Wikipedia is an online forum on which users could find any sort of information and at the same time individuals add knowledge to articles, shaping and integrating what others have written (Faraj, Jarvenpaa, Majcharzak 2011). They can read information on Wikipedia to learn about gardening, entertain themselves with curiosities about their favourite cinematographic saga or learn about the Second World War. However, the important fact is that, not only internet users are the beneficiaries, but they can be also the information sources of those forums. Here stands the problem. Even though online communities are importantly popular, many of them fail because of nonparticipation or under-contribution. Knowledge collaboration is the nourishment for the sustainability of online communities (Faraj, Jarvenpaa, Majchrzak 2011). To clarify, under-contribution problem not only characterized the unsuccessful online forums, but also the most active communities on internet. For example, MovieLens is an online community that allows and invites people to share their recommendation about movies. Then, MovieLens can recommend movies using prediction based on users' ratings. Thus, if there aren't enough ratings on a movie, MovieLens is not able to complete its purpose accurately. On this site, under-contribution is common, even though users are awarded with recommendation on movie they have not seen yet. In order to solve the under-contribution issue, economists have tried to apply the incentive mechanism already used for public goods, for people who leave a review. The problem is they cannot directly apply such a method to online communities, since that these forums rely on voluntary participation and not on monetary transfer (Chen, Harper, Konstan, Li 2007).

On the one hand, online reviews cost time and effort to people who decide to share them. On the other hand, they are a benefit for the entire society. The economists call such goods, *public goods.* Stating that, there are theories about public goods applicable also to online reviews. Indeed, when many people share the use of public goods (online reviews), there is more propensity to overuse them (i.e. tragedy of the commons), while when among people there is the obligation to provide public goods (online reviews) they tend to undersupply (Dellarocas, Narayan 2006). Chen, Harper, Konstan and Li in 2007 published the results of a field experiment on MovieLens. The investigation on MovieLens focuses its interest on the application of the *social comparison theory*. The concept behind this theory is that people assess themselves by conducting a comparison with other people. In particular, we tend to compare ourselves to others who are better than us for guidance, and to others who are worse off to enhance our self-esteem (Festinger 1954). There is a wide existence literature that proof the influence of the social comparisons on human behaviour, especially when people need to find the "right behaviour" in ambiguous situations (Buunk, Mussweiler 2001; Suls, Martin, Wheeler 2002). To sum up, they have demonstrated that if social information is available there is an increasing in contributions to the online forum. They did by sending users an email that provides or the median number of ratings or the net benefit score of an average user.

2.2.3 Social Networking Sites Word of Mouth

In 2009 Nielsen in his research have stated that social networking sites (SNSs) have outpaced emails as the most popular online activity. A possible explanation is that SNSs have enabled people to connect, exchange information, ideas and opinions about everything they want, including products, services and brands. In particular, prospects and consumers could talk about products and brands negatively or positively forming in this way online word-of-mouth that is available to a great audience of people and other institutions on Internet (Henng-Thurau et al. 2004).

To sum up, there are three aspects to consider for eWOM on social networking sites: opinion seeking, opinion giving and opinion passing. Online, at the same time, a single individual can impersonate more of those roles, since that, here, the line is more blurred. Prospects and customers provide, search and pass advices about products and/ or brands as voluntaries. This last concept has a great importance. Indeed, an individual could voluntarily give, pass or seek advices actively, by becoming fan or friends of a brand/ firm page. This enable truly interactive eWOM (Shu-Chuan Chu, Yoojung Kim 2011). For example, a Facebook user might need advices about the last films released. He might start following a cinephile page on which the administrator publishes daily news about cinema and people comment and share his online reviews. Well, here we can find a person who seek opinions, the administrator who gives advices and the other people who give their opinions through comments and pass the eWOM by sharing it on Facebook. The passing or forwarding behaviour has a great importance because it enhances the fluidity of information and in online

social context can facilitate multidirectional communication. Therefore, in a blink of an eye and with few clicks of the mouse a message can be spread all over the word (Dellarocas 2003).

Social relationships are the base of the SNSs sustainability. Indeed, the aforementioned behaviours may be stated and maintained because of a need of social relationships. Thus, social relationships characteristics are the motives of eWOM process in social networking sites. The features considered are *tie strength, trust, homophily* and *interpersonal influence* (Shu-Chuan Chu, Yoojung Kim 2011). The first is defined as the potency of the bond between members of a network (Mittal et al 2008). For example, a member of family could be a strong tie and because of high emotions felt, this bond can provide emotional support. On the other hand, a work colleague could be a weak tie and may facilitate a more objective information seeking about a product. It is worth of note to highlight that SNS users' perceived tie strength with their contacts is positively related to their engagement in eWOM behaviours in SNSs. In particular, it is significant on opinion seeking and passing, but marginal on opinion giving (Shu-Chuan Chu, Yoojung Kim 2011).

Moorman in 1993 defined trust as the willingness to lean on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence. Shu-Chuan Chu and Yoojung Kim published a research in 2011 in which they proved that the eWOM behaviour engagement on SNSs benefits from the perceived trust in their contacts. In particular, it is proved that it has important and significant influence on opinion seeking, opinion giving and opinion passing. Their research was based on numerous studies that suggested that trust plays a basilar role in knowledge exchange. This trend has been recognized also in online environment (Jarvenpaa et al. 1998). Furthermore, the online user-generated knowledge is perceived as more reliable in comparison with firm advertising and promotional messages.

Homophily is the level to which people who are willing to interact with others, share congruent or similar attributes with them (Rogers and Bhowmik 1970). Because of this characteristic it could be possible that interpersonal exchanges are more likely also in online communities, but Shu-Chuan Chu and Yoojung Kim proved the opposite.

The last feature is interpersonal influence that can be divided in two distinct kind of influences. On the one hand, the normative influences are those who explain the people tendency to conform to the other people expectations, value, norms and behaviours (Burnkrant, Cousineau 1975). On the other hand, the informational influences involve the trend to lean on the knowledge provided by reliable other people and use this information to choose among firms, brand, products etc. (Bearden et al 1989). The first kind of influences were proved to have a positive influence on the people's engagement in eWOM behaviours in social networking sites, whereas the second only partially. In particular, normative influences affect positively opinion seeking, giving and passing, while informational influence only on opinion seeking and passing.

2.2.4 User-Generated Content and WOM

User-Generated Content (UGC) is all the content that is published, produced, modified, integrated, shared and consumed by individuals or in collaboration between them and it is created outside of professional practice and routine (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). To sum up, it involves all the ways in which individuals make use of social media. A lot of the UGC is brand-related and could have the power to affect people's brand assessment (Smith, Ficher, Yongjian 2012).

User-generated content can be electronic word-of-mouth. In other words, it is related to, but is not identical with eWOM. To clarify, eWOM is *"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 Internet"* (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). Therefore, UGC and eWOM overlap when UGC is brand-related (Smith, Fischer, Yongjian 2012).

The firm advertising and the brand-related marketing actions have different effects on consumers which may depend also on user-generated content created, forwarded, integrated on social media platforms. Both firm advertising and brand-related UGC affect the consumers' brand perception, but the latter has a positive influence on brand loyalty and perceived brand quality too (Schivinski, Dabrowski, 2016).

A great part of UGC is produced in three social media sites: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. They have different architectures, norms and cultures that change over time continuously. Those typical structural features of each channel could influence the social environment, such as the relationships that are formed and the users' behaviours (Roma and Aloini, 2019).

Facebook is a social network founded in 2004. Each Facebook user is the owner of a personal profile with which he/ she can interact with other users. The individual provides its personal information, photos, videos and interests and also on the base of those he/ she interact with the platform and its users. In particular, a user can "like" or comment others' contents and "friend" or "unfriend" others' profiles. The Facebook platform is in an ongoing exchange by means of participation, i.e. all those activities such as writing on friends' walls, commenting and liking posts, following pages and participating to discussions. In this way, people build and maintain social relationships by participating to others' lives and learning about everything they want by rumours and buzz (Smith, Fischer, Yongjian 2012). Recently, Facebook introduced the live video streaming and now, sharing and posting videos, has become very popular on the platform (Roma and Aloini, 2019).

YouTube was created in 2005 and it is a content community. Still in this case users have their own profiles and are allowed to post, view and comment video on the site. They can subscribe to other users' profiles and follow the release of videos. The interesting thing on YouTube is that, on average, the most commented videos are user-generated, whereas the most viewed tend to be professionally produced (Kruibosch and Nack 2008). The usage of YouTube is in large part for brand-related UGC. Indeed, videos are often about product demonstrations, for example how to use the new Stanhome Degreaser, or product unboxing, typical of

influencer such as Clio Make-Up. Moreover, people can find and create advertisements such as amateur film trailers. Other possible contents could be satiric, brand community storytelling or events (Blythe and Cairns, 2009).

Twitter is a microblogging site founded in 2006. The "tweet" is the name of the post published or forwarded by the users on the platform and it cannot exceed 140 characters in length. The posts could forward to other stories, blogs, images, videos by the means of hyperlinks. Regarding the UGC on this platform, it was founded that 19% of posts are brand-related tweets (Jansen et al, 2009). Twitter stated that the firm wants to make it easier for users to express themselves by the means of images and videos other than text posts (Roma and Aloini, 2019).

In 2012, Smith et al. published a research in which they list six UGC dimension on which they formulated some important hypotheses. The first of these dimensions is the *promotional self-presentiation,* which explain that individuals have the behaviour to show a specific image and identity of themselves to others (Zywica and Danowsky, 2008). This behaviour, in relation to brand-related UGC, is proved to be more likely to be observed on YouTube than on Facebook or Twitter. Conversely, recently this has been partially disconfirmed. Indeed, it has been partially supported that the three social media platforms (YouTube, Facebook and Twitter) present a partially equal promotional self-presentation likelihood. In particular, there is more presence of self-presentation content on YouTube than on Twitter, but, on the other hand, there is the same likelihood of the presence of self-presentation on YouTube and Facebook. Probably, it is due to the fact that Facebook has integrated a support to videos and other visual content which stimulates users' self-presentation (Roma and Aloini, 2019).

Brand centrality is another UGC dimension. This dimension explains the likelihood that a brand-related UGC has the brand as main theme of the post or just as a companion (Smith et al. 2012). The fact that Twitter limits the characters of its posts to 140 makes more likely the presence of brand-centric UGC than on Facebook and YouTube. Moreover, the brands have a secondary role on YouTube brand-related contents because there is more likely of self-presentation behaviours in this platform (Smith et al, 2012). Recently, the increase users' self-presentation attitudes on Facebook has helped to mitigate the differences across the three platforms. Indeed, the brand centrality is equally likely across Facebook, Twitter and YouTube (Roma and Aloini, 2019).

A third UGC dimension is *market-directed communication.* It measures the firms' chance to ongoingly and dynamically interact with customers to enhance knowledge about their preferences and to create ideas by means of them. In this respect, the platforms that have allowed this behaviours are Twitter and Facebook, because in there it is simple and quick for customers to talk, exchange and learn from brands. Indeed, they can easily comment on brand pages (Smith et al., 2012). Thus, marketer-directed communication is lowest on YouTube in respect with the other two platform. This is also due to the fact that making videos cost a lot of time and energy to consumers in comparison to Twitter and Facebook posts.

Another dimension is *response to online marketer action.* It measures if a social media user is more or less likely to engage in UGC as a response to marketing actions on a given social media. Also in this case, Twitter and Facebook have the right structures and norms for this dimension (Smith et al., 2012). Furthermore, there is a dimension that involve if a brand-related UGC objectively reports verifiable features about a brand, such as physical characteristics or price information, rather than personal opinions. This dimension measure if a UGC post is *factually informative about the brand.* This characteristic is proved to be equally likely on all three platforms (Roma and Aloini, 2019). Conversely, prior researches, did not confirmed completely this hypothesis (Smith et al., 2012). Probably, this difference is due to enhanced presence of videos and visual contents on social media that have increased the self-presentation dimension and thus it may have obscured the provision of factual information about brands (Roma and Aloini, 2019). The last dimension measures the sentiment (positive, negative or neutral) expressed on social media by means of brand-related UGC. The *brand sentiment* dimension is not equal across Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Indeed, there is a great difference between the latter and the first two platforms, while is equal on Twitter and Facebook (Smith et al., 2012).

2.3 The online WOM in the motion picture industry

The movie industry is characterized by high risk. Indeed, of ten major film produced, just three or four are successful (Vogel, 2001). On the other hand, experts agree that WOM is a fundamental factor in influencing the movie final success (Elberse and Eliashberg, 2003). This is due to the fact that each movie is an experience good and, at the same time, unique makes this industry really affectable by WOM, which can take many forms such as online reviews, discussion forums, blogs, podcasts, SNS, wikis (Duan, Gu, Whinston, 2008). Moreover, the fact that movies are a culture goods, they tend to receive a lot of public interest that becomes interpersonal communication (Chafee, 1982) Every year, there are hundreds of new movies released only in Hollywood and the WOM generated makes them successful or not. For example, it happened with The Blair Witch Project and Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace (Liu, 2006).

2.3.1 eWOM antecedents: movie industry specific

As we have seen in the first chapter, the online word of mouth (eWOM) antecedents can be observed from two perspectives (King, Racherla, Bush 2014): from the senders' point of view, i.e. the people who write online reviews, and from the receiver's viewpoint, i.e. the person who is seeking for information in order to make a pre-purchase assessment about a product. Regarding the first, the extant literature has been trying to answer the question: "why do people talk online?". King, Racherla and Bush in 2014 crossed different studies in order to provide an overview about the receivers' drivers of online word of mouth. To sum up, those eWOM motives are self-enhancement, innovativeness and opinion leadership, ability and self-efficacy,

individuation, neuroticism and altruism. On the other hand, the question to answer is: “why do people listen?” In part, we have already answered previously in this chapter. People do listen online to reduce search and evaluation efforts both in pre- and post- purchase assessments. Moreover, they seek online information to reduce consumption risk. Indeed, how many times, for instance, does it happen we have bought and consumed products that do not reflect our pre-consume expectations? Well, online word of mouth could diminish the risk to experience that. Other receiver’s drivers consist in finding social assurance/ reassurance and enact negativity bias.

Furthermore, another previous research about WOM communication drivers divides the antecedents in four main motivational categories: product involvement, self-involvement, other involvement, message involvement (Dichter 1966). Next, Engel et al. in 1993 found some differences giving to the Dichter’s four categories a finer definition. Three of those categories are traceable also in the research of Sundaram et al. 1998. Indeed, in this study we cannot find message-related category. Finally, the eWOM antecedent-related research arrive at a final classification (Hennig-Thurau et al 2004). The first group regards the product involvement. A consumer feels so strongly, positively or negatively, about a product that a pressure grows up in him until when he vents this positive or negative feeling by talking about it (Dellarocas, Narayan 2006). For example, it could happen to the gym that the showers often do not work appropriately. Even though several complains, no one fix them. A frequent customer might abandon the gym for another and, because of a negative feeling which has grown up in him, he could spread negative word-of-mouth online and offline. The second group is composed by all those drivers who involve the consumer’s positive self-enhancement. In this case, WOM allows person to gain attention by showing that they are connoisseur (Dellarocas, Narayan 2006). For instance, a cinephile may want to give his viewpoint about the last Martin Scorsese’s movie by talking about it online in order to be acknowledged as a movie expert in his favourite community. A third group of antecedents involves all those motives characterized by concern for other consumers or for the company. Consumers feel a genuine need to help others make a better decision or warn them against making a bad one or to reward a company for a good product (Dellarocas, Narayan 2006). For instance, a biker has just bought a new motorcycle safety helmet and it breaks the first time it falls. It does not matter if it happened because of a manufacturing defect, what really matters is that the biker could be disappointed about that product and might start spreading negative WOM in order to warn other bikers of the potential threat. The last two possible groups classified in the Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) study are the social benefits, i.e. the enjoyment from engaging in the social experience of online WOM, and the WOM produced in response to direct economic incentives offered by website for posting online reviews. A summary of those theories about antecedent’s classification groups is described in the figure 1 here below (Dellarocas and Narayan, 2006).

Dichter (1966)	*Engel et al. (1993)*	*Sundaram et al. (1998)*	*Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)*	*Description*
Product involvement	Involvement	Product involvement; vengeance; anxiety reduction	Venting negative feelings	Consumer feels so strongly (positively or negatively) about product that a pressure builds up wanting to talk about it
Self involvement	Self enhancement	Self enhancement	Positive self-enhancement	WOM allows person to gain attention, show connoisseurship
Other involvement	Concern for others	Altruism; helping the company	Concern for other consumers; helping the company	Consumer feels a genuine need to help others make a better decision (or warn them against making a bad decision) or to reward a company for a good product
Message involvement	Message intrigue			Discussion stimulated by advertisements or other marketing messages
			Social benefits	Enjoyment from engaging in the social experience of online WOM
			Economic incentives	Response to direct economic incentives offered by website for posting online reviews (e.g. "WebMiles")

Figure 2 (Dellarocas and Narayan, 2006)

Dellarocas and Narayan (2006) conducted their study regarding movie reviews on Yahoo.com basing their research on the aforementioned literature. Their aim was the understanding of which product-specific attributes could explain the variance in people's willingness to engage in eWOM about a given category (motion pictures). Differently from prior literature on this topic that are based on surveys, this work uses secondary data gathered from internet databases. Dellarocas and Narayan (2006) developed a set of hypotheses. The dependent variable under investigation is the volume of online reviews written for a determined movie *j* during week *t.* In other words, the aim is to understand what factors influence the moviegoers' propensity to engage in online reviews. In order to do that, the research exploits the movie's box office revenues as control variable. The hypotheses development is based on potential WOM triggers that, summing up, are product involvement, concern for others, message involvement, self-involvement and social benefits.

In order to understand the relevance of this study I consider the research data set. It comprehends consumer and expert online reviews posted on Yahoo!Movies for 104 movies released in 2002. They considered also production and box office data for the same 104 films. To sum up, there were gathered 1.392 critic reviews and 63.889 user reviews of which 46.294 are unique users.

In general, the results confirm that the propensity to post online reviews is affected by product involvement, message involvement, self-involvement and social benefits. On the other hand, altruism (i.e. concern for others) is disconfirmed to be one of the primary triggers for engaging in online movie reviews. In particular, the WOM volume is higher for movies that are perceived by moviegoers to be exceptionally good or miserably bad. Indeed, it is highlighted a U-shaped relationship with the average valence of movies' reviews. In other words, moviegoers are more willing to spread their opinion for amazing or unremarkable

movies because those films instigate strong feelings and consumers feel the urge to express themselves. Concerning the effect of studios' marketing efforts, this research found a positive relation with the propensity to post online review. Thus, it is due to the message involvement. Another remarkable outcome concerns the expert disagreement about that movie's quality. Here, the results show a positive relationship with the dependent variable. The explanation is that people who engage in WOM about the object of controversy think that their reviews will be read with more attention by others who are looking for information to reduce their uncertainty and risk. As we aforesaid, even though in this case one of the triggers is the concern for others, it is worth of note that the primary motive is the self-involvement. Furthermore, the perceived availability of a movie in theatres has a negative relationship with the propensity to review a movie online but, on the other hand, it is worth of note signalling that the lesser known a movie, the more engagement in word of mouth. A possible explanation is that discussing about this kind of film show eclecticism and sophistication. Finally, it is interesting to highlight that there is a positive relationship with the volume of previously posted reviews for the same movies. Movies around which people perceive a lot of online buzz are more likely to receive even more online reviews, because it is more likely that people read them and simply because it is fan to do what others are doing. This highlights an important characteristic of online WOM volume. It is indirectly a WOM trigger. But it will be explained more in depth in the next paragraphs. Moreover, this result conflicts with the expectation of this study. Indeed, the researchers expected the propensity to post online reviews about a movie to be negatively related to the number of previously posted reviews about the same movie. This hypothesis was made in accordance to the crowding-out effect, typical of public goods. The crowding-out effect is characteristic of situations in which people' altruistic contribution diminishes because a third-party increases its contribution. Therefore, in the online review case, it was expected the reviews to be diminished because of the volume of previous reviews. Another research about WOM antecedents demonstrated that "*Movie genres, MPAA ratings, star power, and critical reviews are among the potential antecedents of movie WOM. A dynamic carryover effect exists between WOM activities in adjacent weeks"* (Liu, 2006). It is the hypothesis stated in the study. In particular, the results highlight that action and adventure films are more prone to be surrounded by high WOM than average, whereas restricted-rated films lower-than-average. Then, the WOM volume carryover effect is proved. This effect shows that the volume in a previous week significantly influence the WOM volume of the subsequent week, but it happens only in for the opening week. As in the other cases, WOM valence has no carryover effect at all. Regarding the star power, it affects significantly the volume for to-be-released movies and in the major part of the subsequent weeks (Liu, 2006).

Another possible WOM trigger that can be found in literature is the controversy, i.e. a discussion marked by expression of opposing views (Chen and Berger, 2013). Commonly, controversy it is believed to augment the likelihood of WOM generation, but it happens only for low levels of it. Why? Chen and Berger (2013) explain that it is true that controversy enhances interest and in turn likelihood of discussion, but it is also true that it augments discomfort, which in turn diminishes the likelihood of discussion because people feel

discomfort in talking about high-controversial topic. Therefore, the controversy has an inverted U-shaped effectiveness on WOM generation. When it is at low level, the interest is low, thus the likelihood of WOM generation should be low. Then, at moderate levels, the likelihood enhances, but it progressively diminishes when its level augments because of the effect of discomfort. Furthermore, Chen and Berger (2013) discovered the moderating effect of anonymity. When people believe that they are going to have a real conversation the discomfort wins on interest for high level of controversy and the inverted-U-shaped can be observed. It would not happen when people do not believe that they are going to engage a real conversation, because the discomfort would be less important. In the latter case, a more positive relationship it is expected between likelihood of WOM discussion and controversy.

2.3.3 Box-office performance

There exist a lot of studies about eWOM and its effect on movie box office performance. Baek, Oh, Yang and Ahn (2017) in their published research "Electronic Word of Mouth, box office revenue and social media" gathered data about film eWOM using four different social media sources: Twitter posts, online reviews from Yahoo"Movies, trailers from YouTube and blog posting information from Yahoo"Blog search. The investigation involved the influence of these eWOM forms on box-office revenue in different period of a movie release time. They found Yahoo!Movies to be the most influential social media platform on box office performance across all the stages. In particular, this social media has a stronger influence during the late stage, whereas Twitter on the early stage. YouTube and Yahoo!Blog search were founded to have no significant impact on box-office revenue.

In 2006 Sharda and Delen ran a study on a selection of 834 movies released between 1998 and 2002. They founded that the best three influential factors of movie box-office performance were the number of theatres where the movie is showed, if the film has awesome special effects and if there are great and famous stars in the film.

Mestyanet al. (2013) collected information about 312 films on their Wikipedia pages. The results showed that the success of a film in box-office was significantly correlated to the activity level of the film page editors and viewers.

Prior research demonstrated that the eWOM and box-office sales relationship is positively moderated by the entropy of movie reviews (i.e. the distribution of sentiment polarity) (Lee et al. 2017).

Recently, it has been demonstrated by Ya-Han Hu et al. (2018) that are the online reviews written in the first week after a movie release that have the most influence on box-office performance. Considering the action films, which usually have the best box-office revenue, the study found that they have the greatest eWOM volume in comparison with other movie genres. Moreover, the eWOM influence on box-office sales is different in relation to movie genre. Indeed, it is stronger on romance and comedy films, whereas weaker on thriller, action and drama. The same study tried to investigate also the eWOM prediction power on box-

office results. In general, the online reviews enhance the reliability of predictions of the box-office performance. Indeed, the primary factor for the reliability of predictions is the volume of movie reviews written. It is worth of note to state that the study considered only movie online reviews generated in the first week after a movie release. To sum up, the research proved that the eWOM volume strongly affect box-office performance and moreover that negative reviews are stronger than positive.

Another factor that has been found to be a key predictor of box-office revenue is the average revenue per screen in the previous week used by Elberse and Eliashberg (2003) as a proxy of WOM.

A great stream of research on movies' box-office performance considered WOM volume and valence as independent variables (Duan et al. 2008; Chintagunta et al. 2010; Liu, 2006). The eWOM volume measures the total amount of WOM interactions, whereas valence indicates if the WOM interaction has a positive or a negative nature (Liu, 2006). Chitagunta e al. (2010) in their research have investigated the impact of volume, valence and variance of online user reviews focusing on box office performances of designed market areas (DMA-level). Usually, prior researches have analysed the same variables but in a national-level set. Considering also the number of theatres which play the movie, the pre-release advertising efforts and the competition between movies released in a similar period, they found that the WOM valence seems to have much more influence in comparison with WOM volume. This result is in contrast with prior studies (Dellarocas et al. 2004; Duan et al. 2005; Liu, 2006; Duan et al. 2008; Sun, 2008) that have found the volume to be the most influential factor, but only when we consider the single designed market area. Indeed, when they account for aggregated national data, the observed results are the same as in previous studies. In particular, Chitagunta et al. (2010), controlling for advertising, distribution, competition, age, movie and market fixed effects, have discovered that the average user rating (valence) has a significantly positive influence on box office performance, while volume and variance not. However, when the national level box-office performance is considered by aggregating the data of designed market area box-office revenue, the average user rating is no more statistically significant, while the volume has a significant impact. The possible reason behind the WOM volume power in influencing the potential moviegoers could be found in prior consumer behaviour studies. Indeed, those studies have discovered the volume significant correlation with consumer behaviour and market performance (Bowman and Naravandas, 2001; Van den Bulte and Lilien, 2001; Anderson and Salisbury, 2003).

One of the most important WOM insights demonstrated in prior researches is the positive feedback mechanism of WOM in movie industry. In the study of Duan et al. (2008), not only is demonstrated that film box-office performance and WOM valence importantly affect the number of eWOM generated (volume), but also that WOM volume is positively correlated with box-office performance. In other words, WOM volume is and endogenous variable, i.e. it is found to be both a precursor and an outcome in this industry. More in depth, the investigation explains that the users' ratings are not directly correlated with box-office revenue, but they affect it by means of WOM volume. Here below, we can take a look at the Duan et al. (2008) conceptual framework (figure 2):

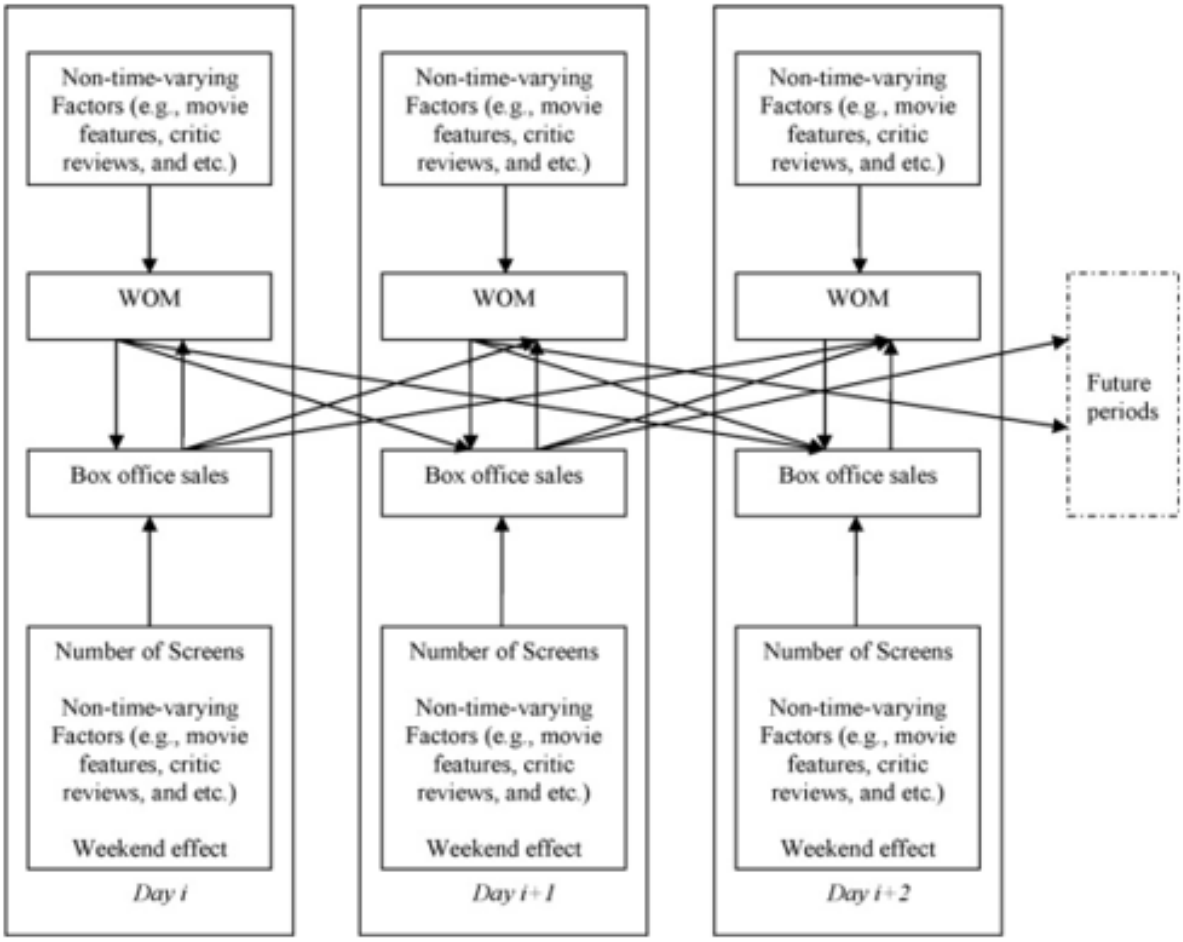


Figure 3 (Duan et al. 2008)

A fundamental prior research of Liu (2006) compared the WOM volume and valence pre and after a movie release. The study hypothesis that the number of WOM engagement would be lower in the pre-release period rather than in the weeks after the movie release. The theoretical argument behind this hypothesis considers the WOM as a substitutive source of information for potential moviegoers, who, in presence of a lot of movie pre-release advertisement, would not look for information by means of WOM. Another possible reason provided is the fact that the price of watching a movie is relatively low for average potential moviegoers, therefore it does not ask for a difficult decision-making process. Third, considering a film an experiential good makes the researchers believe that the people would engage in WOM only after having seen the movie (Anderson, 1998). On the other hand, movies are an experiential good, but they are part of the popular culture, which increases the likelihood that pre-release WOM is very active. Moreover, potential moviegoers could believe more other moviegoers' WOM rather than advertising and could be more prone to accept their reviews in comparison with the expert ones (Faber and O'Guinn, 1984; Holbrook, 1999). The study results show that the major part of movies have the greatest part of WOM engagement in the pre-release of the movie. Then, almost a half of WOM volume takes place during the first week after the release. Finally, the average volume degreases substantially in the second and keep diminishing in the other

subsequent weeks. Thus, in the post-release period the most part of WOM takes place during the first week. This highlights that the WOM is not only a substitutive source of information for people, but it involves a fundamental behaviour in the movie industry. Furthermore, in considering the WOM valence, Liu (2006) hypothesis that in the pre-release period WOM would be positive on average and, moreover, it would be more positive than in the first week after the movie release. This could be supported by the argument of Eliashberg and Shugan (1997) who found the major part of reviews to be positive about a to-be-released movie. Moreover, there are prior researches on the expectation theory which highlight that the consumer satisfaction is affected by the confirmation or disconfirmation of their expectations (Anderson, 1973; Olson and Dover, 1979; Oliver, 1980). In the case of the movie experience, people have high expectation, due to positive advertising and WOM. Therefore, the likelihood of dissatisfaction is higher. As expected, the results of the Liu's research (2006) highlights that WOM is mostly positive for to-be-released films and significantly diminishes in the first week after release. The percentage of negative WOM have the opposite behaviour. It is lower in the pre-release period and higher in the post-release one. Regarding box-office performance, also the Liu's investigation (2006) gives its contribute. Indeed, the study hypothesis that "*WOM has significant explanatory power for box-office revenue in the subsequent period. Whereas the effect of WOM volume should be significantly positive, that of WOM valence may be insignificant".* This hypothesis might be supported by the assumption that WOM volume and WOM valence have different roles. Indeed, the first creates awareness among potential moviegoers due to its informative role. Thus, the likelihood a person becomes a moviegoer enhances the greater the volume of WOM, being aware that awareness brings more sales. Instead, WOM valence (being positive or negative) influence consumers' attitude. Nowadays, the attitude influence on box-office sales is not perfectly understood. Considering the hypothesis above, results show that it is robustly supported. In the first week after release the WOM have a significant power in influencing box-office sales. In particular, as prior studies, the volume has a strong and significant impact, while valence has not. The same is from the second to the fifth week. As soon as consumers' interest degreases, the same happens for the volume effectiveness that gradually diminishes from the sixth week.

As we have noted in the literature above, there are not studies which support the role of valence in influencing box-office performance. Nevertheless, Niraj and Singh (2015) proved that the experience product consumption is positively correlated with the valence of professional reviewers' opinion. Furthermore, another variable moderate this relationship between valence and box-office sales: the entropy level (Lee, Jung and Park, 2017). An online review could have a positive, negative or neutral sentiment. The entropy level measures the level of heterogeneity in review text. When this level is high it means that the general online review sentiment is equally distributed. In other word, it is not extremely positive or negative (Lee, Jung and Park, 2017). However, it is considered natural that people have different opinion about films, thus box-office revenue is not influenced by the entropy itself, but by its moderating effect on WOM volume and valence. Indeed, the results highlight that entropy level is positively correlated with WOM valence

influence on box-office sales. This because people who read too many positive reviews could perceive those to be manipulated. In other words, the higher the entropy level the higher the WOM valence effectiveness on box-office performance (Lee, Jung and Park, 2017).
A similar result is showed for WOM volume. Entropy level positively moderates WOM volume effectiveness on box-office revenue because, in a large number of reviews, there is more likelihood for potential moviegoers to trust information when entropy has high level. Censor negative reviews diminish entropy level, which brings to lower effectiveness of WOM (Lee, Jung and Park, 2017).

2.3.4 Consumer vs expert reviews

Thanks to the online communities and the social media environment, WOM and professional reviews spread quickly and ineluctable. As aforesaid the box-office performance is greatly influenced by consumers' WOM but also by expert reviews. What is in common between these two WOM dimension is that their presence is positively associated with the moviegoers' favourability to watch a film because they enhance the awareness about the movie (S.H. Kim, N. Park and S.H. Park, 2013). In particular, WOM written by both expert and average consumer has been demonstrated to influence box-office sales (Basuroy et al., 2003; Dellarocas et al,. 2007; Liu, 2006). Expert reviews are written opinions of professional critics (S.H. Kim, N. Park and S.H. Park, 2013). They might influence more artistic and niche movie audience, while ordinary consumers could involve audience of blockbuster films (S.H. Kim, N. Park and S.H. Park, 2013). The factor expert review is proved to be determinant for box-office revenue by abundant prior research. (Litman, 1983; Litman and Kohl, 1989; Wallace, Seigerman and Holbrook, 1993 De Silva, 1998; Litman and Ahn, 1998). Researches have demonstrated that the effectiveness of a review may depend on different aspect, one of which is the reviewer's expertise. For instance, some have highlighted that consumers are more reliable on expert reviews than other consumers' reviews because the first are more knowledgeable (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009), but on the other hand the latter are much more persuasive due to the perceived trustworthiness on them (Willemsen et al., 2010). There is another difference between the two kind of review: the used language that can provide more descriptive rather than evaluative info or may be more concrete or more abstract (Schellekens et al., 2010; Schindler and Bickart, 2012). Expert critics may consider the artistic values, whereas the ordinary people may consider the entertainment dimension of movies (S.H. Kim, N. Park and S.H. Park, 2013). Another peculiar expert review aspect is that it can be a favourable factor in predicting late and cumulative box-office sales, but not the early ones (Eliashberg and Shugan, 1997). There are some differences in the description provided by experts and consumers. Indeed, consumers and professionals focus their critics on different dimensions in their film evaluations and there is a low correlation between the average consumers' review content and experts' review content (Holbrook, 1999). Something similar has been discovered by Ginsburg and Weyers (1999): experts and consumers evaluate movies basing their critics on different values and attributes.

First of all, some prior researches about the theme consumers' reviews versus experts' reviews highlighted low correlation in the valence of rating between those two (Holbrook, 1999), but more recent studies proved the opposite, highlighting possible overlaps in some cases (Plucker et al., 2009). Starting from those assumption, it has been found a fundamental difference: on the one hand, while the frequency of online WOM has a positive correlation with box-office revenues, the frequency for expert reviews has not significant impact on the same dependent variable (S.H. Kim, N. Park and S.H. Park, 2013). On the other hand, while the online WOM valence has insignificant correlation with box-office sales, the expert reviews valence has been found to have a significant one on it (S.H. Kim, N. Park and S.H. Park, 2013). There is a meeting point between those two dimensions: the online WOM volume and the expert reviews valence diminish their influences on box-office revenue if their effects are considered in the international market (S.H. Kim, N. Park and S.H. Park, 2013). In consideration of those findings, when people seek information about movies, have different expectations from professional reviews and user WOM (S.H. Kim, N. Park and S.H. Park, 2013).

How does the content differ between movie reviews written by sector experts or by average consumers critics? In the study of Ilona K.E., De Jong, C. Burgers (2013), the authors demonstrated that descriptive contents, such as "*give practical information about the movie*", "*describe the movie*" and "*place the movie in a context in the review*", are the most used by movie industry professional critics rather than evaluative contents, such as "*give criticism*", "*recommend or discommend the reader to watch a movie*", that are more used by average moviegoers critics. Indeed, in the expert reviews, on average, eight out of thirteen paragraphs are used for descriptive content, while three out of thirteen to evaluate the movie. Another difference involves the style in which the evaluative content is written. The consumers' evaluative parts are mostly written in first person, while in third person in the expert reviews. Moreover, when professional recommended a movie, they did not address directly the reader like the consumers did. Finally, the practical information about the movie, like in which theatres the movie is available, are incorporated in the expert reviews, while in the moviegoer critics' reviews they are written in a separate frame, sometimes outside of the review.

2.3.5 Helpfulness

In order to better utilize online WOM contents, it would be important to understand how online consumers perceive the helpfulness of online reviews and the its impact on the product sales. In fact, helpfulness perceived by online review readers might change first of all the consumer evaluation process and second of all the final purchase decision (Mudambi and Schuff, 2010). Online, customers can find hundreds and hundreds of reviews about products and this can cause information overload (Jones et al., 2004). Thus, consumers should be able to identify and select easily the most useful information to fulfil their decision processes (Mudambi and Schuff, 2010). Prior researches have studied review content and rating in order to

understand their role in the perceived helpfulness of online reviews (Yin, Mitra and Zhang, 2016; Yin, 2012). For example, high star ratings are perceived greatly helpful (Pan and Zhang, 2011), or in another study, it is found that star rating and online review are helpful when they are extremely high and positive or when they are extremely low and negative, forming an inverted U-shaped relationship for movies (Yin, Mitra and Zhang, 2016). Moreover, it was found that the perceived helpfulness is a mediator in the relationship between online reviews features and the sale of products (Lee and Choeh, 2016). Which are the determinant factors that might affect the perceived helpfulness online? An, Liu and Ren (2016) address this power to *online reviews' length, positive attitude, extreme emotional tendency* and *timeliness of the review.* Those have a significant and positive influence on the perceived helpfulness. Moreover, negative emotions are less helpful than positive. Then, there is a prior research which highlights important differences between two market (China and US), showing that *online reviews length, review extremity, reviewer centrality* and *reviewer experience* provoke positive effects on perceived helpfulness of movie review (H.An and J.Ren, 2018). Moreover, in more individualistic societies (U.S.) reviews show extreme sensibility and have long sentences, in contrast with what happens in collectivist society (China). In general, were not found difference in the perceived helpfulness between the two markets (H.An and J.Ren, 2018). In 2017 was published a study which classifies all the helpfulness determinants (Hong et al., 2017). Those are categorized in *review related factors that comes from review ratings and contents* and *review related factors that comes from reviewer's background and self-description.* In the first group appertain, *review depth, review readability, linear review rating, quadratic review rating* and *review age*, whereas in the second group there are *reviewer information disclosure, reviewer expertise, reviewer expert label, reviewer friend number* and *reviewer fan number* (Hong et al., 2017). The perceived helpfulness has been discovered to be positively correlated with review depth (i.e. number of words), review age (i.e. number of age), reviewer information disclosure and expert label (Hong et al., 2017). The other hypothesized determinants have no significant effect on perceived helpfulness. Moreover, the research considers also the moderating effect of a platform on which can be found online reviews. It shows that when reviews are read on a platform, review age is stronger in affecting perceived helpfulness, whereas when are read externally is the review depth to be stronger and the review rating has a U-shaped relationship with the perception of helpfulness. In particular, extremely positive or negative reviews are stronger than moderate ones (Hong et al., 2017). Finally, the review depth and valence are strongly moderated by the type of products on which the online review is written for. In particular, the valence and the depth are more effective for experience product such as films in affecting the helpfulness perception (Hong et al., 2017).

2.4 Research question and Hypothesis

Following the literature in the paragraph 2.2.3 *"Social Networking Sites Word Of Mouth"* the research questions of this thesis will focus on social media WOM. Moreover, a great part of brand-related UGC (i.e. online WOM) is produced in three social media sites: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube (Roma and Aloini,

2019). They have different architectures, norms and cultures that change over time continuously. Those typical features of each channel could influence the social environment, such as the relationship that are formed and the users' behaviours (Roma and Aloini, 2019). More in depth, the Facebook platform is in an ongoing exchange by means of participation, i.e. all those activities such as writing on friends' walls, commenting and liking posts, following pages and participating to discussions. In this way, people build and maintain social relationships by participating to others' lives and learning about everything they want by rumours and buzz (Smith, Fischer, Yongjian 2012). Recently, Facebook introduced the live video streaming and now, sharing and posting videos, has become very popular on the platform (Roma and Aloini, 2019). In the light of that it is possible to hypothesis that on Facebook it is more likely to engage in WOM than on YouTube and Twitter. With regard to YouTube, on average, the most commented videos are user-generated, whereas the most viewed tend to be professionally produced (Kruibosch and Nack, 2008). The usage of YouTube is in large part for brand-related UGC.

On Twitter the posts (Tweets) could forward to other stories, blogs, images, videos by the means of hyperlinks. Regarding the WOM on this platform, it was founded that 19% of posts are brand-related tweets (Jansen et al., 2009). Moreover, Twitter stated that the firm wants to make it easier for users to express themselves by the means of images and videos other than text posts (Roma and Aloini, 2019).

On which platform is more likely to engage (give, pass or seek information) in eWOM about movies nowadays in Italy? On which platform people will lean on to engage (give, pass or seek) in eWOM about movies in Italy? Which platform is perceived to be the most helpful to engage (give, pass or seek) in eWOM about movies in Italy? On which platform is more likely that a person engages (give, pass or seek) WOM in Italy?

In 2012, Smith et al. published a research in which they list six UGC dimensions. Here, only two out of six are considered: market-directed communication and response to online marketer action. The first one, measures the firms' chance to continuously and dynamically interact with customers to enhance knowledge about their preferences and to create ideas by means of them. In this respect, the platforms that have allowed these behaviours are Twitter and Facebook, because in there it is simple and quick for customers to talk, exchange and learn from brands. Indeed, they can easily comment on brand pages (Smith et al., 2012). Thus, marketer-directed communication is lowest on YouTube in respect with the other two platform. This is also due to the fact that making videos cost a lot of time and energy to consumers in comparison to Twitter and Facebook posts. The second dimension is response to online marketer action. It measures if a social media user is more or less likely to engage in UGC as a response to marketing actions on a given social media. Also in this case, Twitter and Facebook have the right structures and norms for this dimension (Smith et al., 2012). In addition to those two dimensions, the WOM volume is an endogenous variable, i.e. it is found to be both a precursor and an outcome in the motion picture industry because it generates awareness among public that in turn generates more box-office performances and both together generates more WOM (Duan et al., 2008).

In the light of the above I would like to state different hypothesis:

- H1: People are more willing to engage (give, pass or seek) in eWOM about movies on Facebook, than on Twitter and YouTube in Italy.

The hypothesis H1 could be supported by the fact that Facebook platform is in an ongoing exchange by means of participation, i.e. all those activities such as writing on friends' walls, commenting and liking posts, following pages and participating to discussions. In this way, people build and maintain social relationships by participating to others' lives and learning about everything they want by rumours and buzz (Smith, Fischer, Yongjian 2012). Moreover, recently, Facebook introduced the live video streaming and now, sharing and posting videos has become very popular on the platform (Roma and Aloini, 2019) and since that films advertising is mostly based on videos like teasers, trailers and all those communications made by the film's cast to their supporters, Facebook can be appropriate for movie market-directed communications and in turn the optimal social media where people can engage in WOM about cinema.

- H2: People are more willing to engage (give, pass or seek) in eWOM about movies on Twitter, than on Facebook and YouTube in Italy.

The hypothesis H2 could be supported by the fact that on Twitter the posts (Tweets) could forward to other stories, blogs, images, videos by the means of hyperlinks. Regarding the WOM on this platform, it was founded that 19% of posts are brand-related tweets (Jansen et al., 2009). Moreover, Twitter stated that the firm wants to make it easier for users to express themselves by the means of images and videos other than text posts (Roma and Aloini, 2019). Like for Facebook, since that a great part of movie firms' advertising is based on videos could get us to the assumption that Twitter is appropriate for movie market-directed communication and in turn the perfect social media where people can engage in WOM about cinema.

Furthermore, considering the motion picture industry I would like to investigate three dimensions of online communities that I have introduced in the paragraph 2.2.1 "*Online Communities and Knowledge Collaboration"*: *tie strength*, *homophily* and *source credibility*.
People with strong tie relationships are more prone to exchange information (Brown and Reingen, 1987). Therefore, it is possible to state that people with strong tie relationship are more willing to engage in WOM (Brown, Broderick and Lee, 2007). Moreover, the more the tie strength, the greater the influence on the receiver's behaviour (Bansal and Voyer, 2000). Thus, for example, receivers are more willing to receive information (information seeking) from people with whom they have a strong relationship. In addition, the tie strength it is found to have a positive correlation with decision making (Leonard-Barton, 1985). Finally, Palmer (1996) demonstrated that, "*individuals have an underlying need for an emotional bond with high-*

involvement products that they buy". In the light of those assumptions, I believe that the tie strength has a positive influence on WOM engagement (information giving, passing and seeking) about movies which could be high-involvement products for movie-lovers. Indeed, I predict that the more one individual consider himself a movie-lover, the more the effect of tie strength will enhance on WOM engagement. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that individuals, who share a deep relationship with someone and contextually are highly involved with cinema, have a stronger need to engage in WOM about movies, triggered by many WOM antecedents listed by Berger (2014): self-enhancement, in order to fulfil their desires to be acknowledged as movie experts by someone they love; encouraging rehearsal about a films they love; seeking or giving advice about cinema to help someone they care; reinforcing shared views about movies and therefore reinforcing the social bond with someone they love.

- H3: Tie strength positively influences online WOM engagement (information giving, passing or seeking) about movies in Italy. The fact that the individual is or not a movie-lover has a moderating effect. The more one considers himself a movie-lover, the greater the positive effect of the tie strength.

It is important to state that, tie strength enhances the homophily, since that the stronger the tie between two persons, the greater the homophily (McPherson and Smith-Lovin, 1987). Furthermore, the positive effect of homophily on WOM can be triggered also by some WOM antecedents listed by Berger (2014): self-enhancement and identity-signalling, because in order to be part of a group an individual need to be accepted and appreciated; generating social support, because of the need to help someone it is similar to you; seeking advice by someone who share your interest about movies; reinforcing shared views about movies, reducing loneliness and social exclusion by being part of a group or community and in turn reinforcing social bonds with people who share your interest about cinema. Finally, I predict that the effect of homophily on WOM engagement is enhanced by the status of movie-lover for the same reason listed for tie-strength previously.

- H4: Homophily positively influences online WOM engagement (information giving, passing or seeking) about movies in Italy. The fact that the individual is or not a movie-lover has a moderating effect. The more one considers himself a movie-lover, the greater the positive effect of homophily.

Finally, in online community, the source credibility is an important concept. It considers the source expertise and source bias to assess if or not he/ she is a credible source of information (Buda and Zhang, 200); Birnbaum and Stegner, 1979). The greater the possessed expertise and the less is prone to bias, the more a source is perceived credible (Eagley and Chaken, 1993).

- H5: Source credibility positively influences online WOM engagement (information giving, passing or seeking) about movies in Italy. The fact that the individual is or not a movie-lover has a moderating effect. The more one considers himself a movie-lover, the greater the positive effect of source credibility.

On the receiver's point of view, the first statement of this hypothesis is mostly based on the WOM antecedents "seeking advice" and "resolving problems" (Berger, 2014). Moreover, the more the receiver is a movie-lover, the more those antecedents will be fundamental. Instead, on the sender's point of view, the more the sender believe to be a credible source, the more he will engage in WOM about films, triggered by other Berger's antecedents (2014): self-enhancement, identity-signalling, generating social support, help others by giving advice and resolving problems, persuading others. Furthermore, the more the sender is a movie-lover, the more those antecedents have effect on the source.

CHAPTER 3 – THE WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE IN WORD OF MOUTH IN FILM INDUSTRY IN ITALY

3.1 Introduction to the study

Nowadays, building a solid and dynamic relationship with customers has great importance for every kind of organizations. The strategy is communicating with consumers by the means of an integrated marketing communication that consider the usage of social media (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). As we have seen in the previous chapter, the social media environment is pretty rich, including for example social networking sites (SNSs), like Facebook, creativity works-sharing sites, like YouTube, microblogging sites (Twitter). In general, those platforms allow high presence of consumers' self-disclosure and social presence, since that they can generate and spread brand-related UGC freely, giving the possibility to fulfil all those needs we have seen previously in chapter 1 and 2. On Facebook, Twitter and YouTube is produced a great part of brand-related user-generated content (Roma and Aloini, 2019). In particular on Facebook, in accordance to Pew Internet & American Life Project, more than 70% of online users (in the age range 18-29 years old) use social networking sites and Facebook is in first position, holding the 73% of the considered sample (Lenhart et al., 2010). People can build and maintain social relationships by participating to others' discussions, writing on friends' walls, commenting, liking posts, following those pages they are interested in, in order to keep staying updating about the latest news about football for example. In other words, on this platform there is continuous exchange by mean of participation (Smith, Fischer, Yongjian, 2012). Moreover, Facebook introduced the live video streaming, therefore the social network now is more prone to be used to share videos and since that the movies' advertising is mostly based on videos like teasers, trailers and all those communications made by the cast of the films, as I stated previously in Chapter Two, Facebook can be the optimal candidate to be the perfect platform where people can engage in WOM about cinema, more than Twitter and YouTube. On the other hand, Twitter can be the optimal platform to generate WOM about films. On this microblogging site, users can generate and share Tweets in order to forward other stories, blogs, images, videos by means of hyperlinks. The 19% of the post on Twitter are brand-related (Jansen et al., 2009) and, furthermore, like Facebook, Twitter is allowing, by upgrading the platform, its users to share more videos and images. Here, we can state the same we have said for Facebook. Movies advertising is mostly based on videos, making also this platform a plausible perfect virtual place where generate movies-related WOM.

Thus, the first two hypothesis are similar:

H1: *People are more willing to engage (give, pass or seek) in eWOM about movies on Facebook, than on Twitter and YouTube in Italy*.

H2: *People are more willing to engage (give, pass or seek) in eWOM about movies on Twitter, than Facebook and YouTube in Italy.*

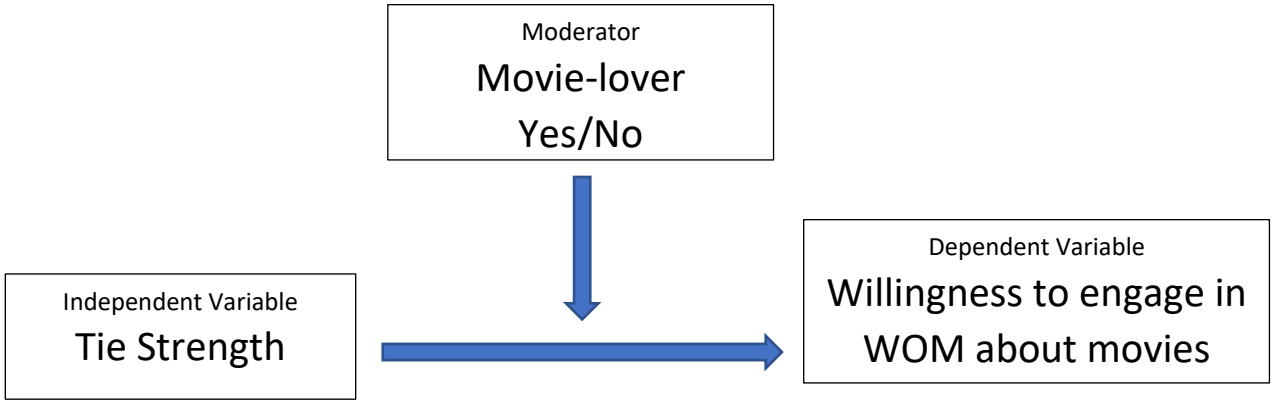
H1:

H2:

However, in my work I will try to investigate the effect of three dimensions: tie strength, homophily and source credibility. Brown, Broderick and Lee (2007) found that people that share a strong-tied relationship are more willing to generate WOM between them. Bansal and Voyer (200) stated that the more the tie strength between two or more individuals, the greater the effectiveness on the receiver's behaviour. In confirmation of this, Leonard-Barton (1985) previously found that there is a positive correlation between the receivers' decision about what to consume and the tie strength. Moreover, I predict that the more one individual consider himself a movie-lover, the more the effect of tie strength will enhance on WOM engagement. This hypothesis is based on the fact that people, who share a deep relationship with someone and at the same time are highly involved with films, have a stronger need to engage in WOM about films triggered by many WOM antecedents listed by Berger (2014): self-enhancement, in order to fulfil their desire to be acknowledged as a movie expert by someone they love and care; encouraging rehearsal about a films they love; seeking or giving advice to help someone they care about cinema; reinforcing shared views about movies and therefore reinforcing the social bond with someone they love.

H3: *Tie strength positively influences online WOM engagement (information giving, passing or seeking) about movies in Italy. The fact that the individual is or not a movie-lover has a moderating effect. The more one considers himself a movie-lover, the greater the positive effect of tie strength.*

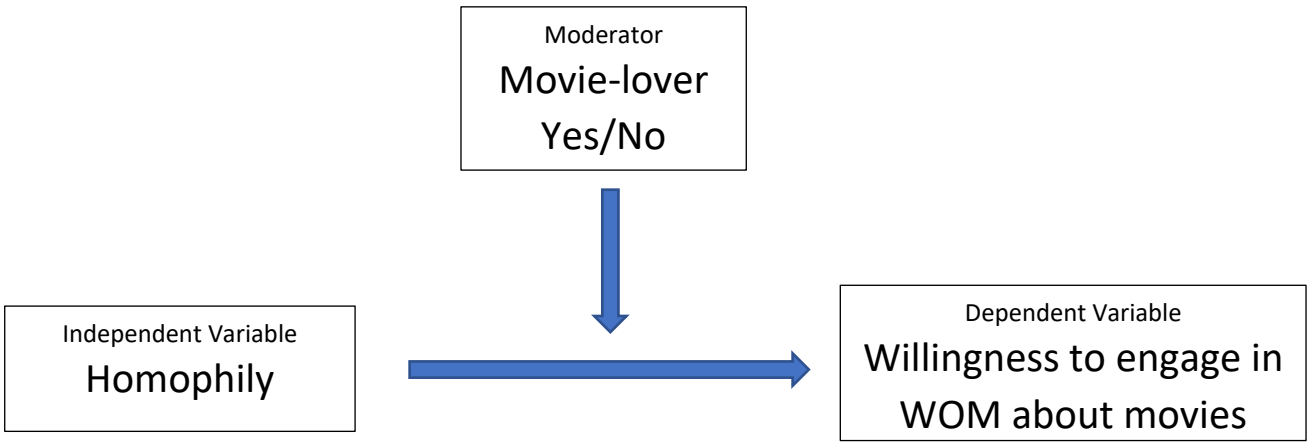
H3:



Like tie strength, homophily positively influence online WOM engagement. First, McPherson and Smith-Lovin (1987) demonstrated that the stronger the relationship between two individuals, the greater the homophily. Moreover, the positive effect of homophily on WOM can be triggered also by some word of mouth antecedents listed by Berger (2014): self-enhancement and identity-signalling, because in order to be part of a group an individual need to be accepted and appreciated; generating social support, because of the need to help someone it is similar to you; seeking advice by someone who share your interest about movies; reinforcing shared views about movies, reducing loneliness and social exclusion by being part of a group or community and in turn reinforcing social bonds with people who share your interest about cinema. Finally, I predict that the effect of homophily on WOM engagement is enhanced by the status of movie-lover for the same reason listed for tie-strength previously.

H4: *Homophily positively influences online WOM engagement (information giving, passing or seeking) about movies in Italy. The fact that the individual is or not a movie-lover has a moderating effect. The more one considers himself a movie-lover, the greater the positive effect of homophily.*

H4:



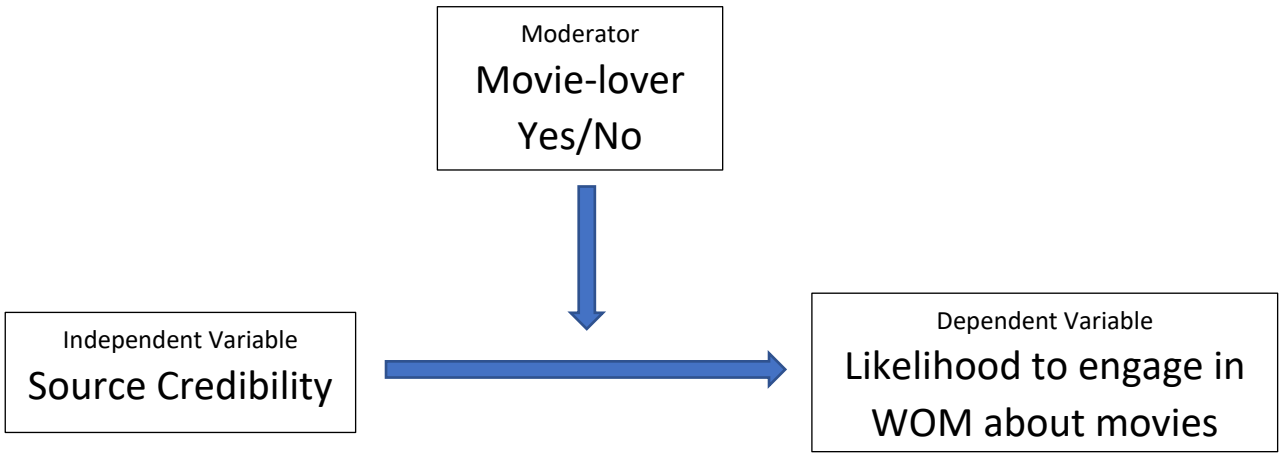
Finally, source credibility is another important influence of WOM, especially in online community. In general, the greater one is acknowledged with expertise on a particular field, the less he/she is considered to be prone to bias, contextually he/she is perceived credible by others (Eagley and Chaken, 1993). I predict that:

H5: *Source credibility positively influences online WOM engagement (information giving, passing or seeking) about movies in Italy. The fact that the individual is or not a movie-lover has a moderating effect. The more a receiver considers himself a movie-lover, the greater the positive effect of source credibility.*

On the receiver's point of view, the first statement of this hypothesis is mostly based on the WOM antecedents seeking advice and resolving problems (Berger, 2014). Moreover, the more the receiver is a movie-lover, the more those antecedents will be fundamental. Instead, on the sender's point of view, the more the sender believe to be a credible source, the more he will engage in WOM about films, triggered by

other Berger's antecedents (2014): self-enhancement, identity-signalling, generating social support, help others by giving advice and resolving problems, persuading others. Furthermore, the more the sender is a movie-lover, the more those antecedents have effect on the source.

H5:



3.2 The study

To capture some general insights about the topic, I reviewed the literature about online word of mouth by looking for many different keywords: *eWOM*; *online word of mouth*; *traditional WOM*; *WOM antecedents*; *WOM triggers*; *online review*; *consumer-opinion platform*; *social-sharing of emotion*. The review of the first chapter provided me different insights in order to focus my attention on several keywords about word of mouth in the motion picture industry. Afterwards, in the second chapter I reviewed the literature behind this topic to get the most fundamental insights in order to develop the research questions and the hypothesis. Furthermore, a questionnaire was created in order to validate or refuse them. The used keywords are: *motion picture industry*; *experience good*; *box office success drivers*; *online communities*; *SNSs WOM*; *brand-related user-generated content*; *WOM in the motion picture industry*; *box-office performance*; *consumer reviews*; *review helpfulness*.

H1: People are more willing to engage (give, pass, seek) in eWOM about movies on Facebook, than on Twitter and YouTube in Italy.

H2: People are more willing to engage (give, pass, seek) in eWOM about movies on Twitter, than on Facebook and YouTube in Italy.

H3: Tie strength positively influences online WOM engagement (information giving, passing or seeking) about movies in Italy. The fact that the individual is or not a movie-lover has a moderating effect. The more one considers himself a movie-lover, the greater the positive effect of the tie strength.

H4: Homophily positively influences online WOM engagement (information giving, passing or seeking) about movies in Italy. The fact that the individual is or not a movie-lover has a moderating effect. The more one considers himself a movie-lover, the greater the positive effect of homophily.
H5: Source credibility positively influences online WOM engagement (information giving, passing or seeking) about movies in Italy. The fact that the individual is or not a movie-lover has a moderating effect. The more one considers himself a movie-lover, the greater the positive effect of source credibility.
The choice of "online WOM engagement" as a dependent variable of all those hypotheses is due to the fact that, in the motion picture industry, WOM is an endogenous variable. Indeed, one of the most important insight demonstrated in prior researches is the positive feedback mechanism of WOM in the movie industry. As stated in chapter 2, Duan et al. (2008), not only demonstrated that film box-office performance importantly affects the number of eWOM generated (eWOM volume), but also that WOM volume is positively correlated with box-office performance. In other words, eWOM volume positively influences movies box-office performances and, contextually, box-office performance positively affects eWOM. Therefore, it is important to understand how is possible to enhance the eWOM generation in order to activate this endogenous effect.

Method, data and empirical setting

I built an experiment on Qualtrics in order to test my hypothesis. Initially, respondents were asked to think about one of the best films they have ever seen. Then, they faced this experimental stimulus so that they could retrieve in their mind a film they love and associate it with the following questions in the experiment. Afterwards, each respondent could face a general and extremely positive review of a film on three different platforms randomly assigned: Facebook, Twitter or YouTube. In this way, I will be able to differentiate their reactions and responses on the base of which platform they had been told to be on. The review is extremely positive because it has been proved that the WOM volume is higher for movies that are perceived by moviegoers to be exceptionally good or miserably bad. Indeed, it is highlighted a U-shaped relationship with the average valence of movies' reviews. Therefore, moviegoers are more willing to spread their opinion for amazing or unremarkable movies because those films instigate strong feelings and consumers feel the urge to express themselves (Dellarocas and Narayan, 2006). The review was composed by three parts that are typical of online reviews about films. The review has been invented by me on the base of the literature about the content of online WOM about film. Indeed, the reviews can be written by consumers or by sector experts. The first difference between those two kinds is the used language that can provide more descriptive rather than evaluative information or may be more concrete or abstract (Schellekens et al., 2010; Schindler and Bickart, 2012). Expert critics have a more artistic value, while the ordinary people may consider the entertainment dimension of movies (Kim, N. Park and S.H. Park, 2013). Moreover, there are some differences in the description provided by experts and consumers. Consumers and professionals focus their

critics on different dimensions in their film assessments (Holbrook, 1999). When people seek information about movies, they have different expectations from professionals' reviews and consumers' ones (Kim, N. Park and S.H. Park, 2013). In particular, descriptive contents (practical information, movie descriptions, placement of the movie in a context in the review) are more used by professional critics, whilst evaluative contents (criticism, recommendations) are more exploited by amatorial critics. Furthermore, usually consumers are more prone to write in first person, while experts in third (Ilona, De Jong, Burgers, 2013). For all those reasons, I choose to write a hybrid in order to include all those characteristics in the experimental stimulus. The review is composed by: a description of actors, film director, photography director, producers, advertising campaign and promotion; a brief contextualization of the film and an objective comment about the plot and the film made in third person; information about the theatres where people can watch the film; a subjective and first-person judgement of the film, its cast, the felt emotions, the film and photography directors and the plot. Finally, I strongly recommend to watch the film.

Sample description and variable creation

Description of the sample. 328 participants took part in the experiment and when we closed the survey on Qualtrics 119 were still in progress. I deleted them to clean the sample. There were not responses with missing data a part from those in progress and, therefore, the final sample was composed by 209 participants. For what concerns the gender, the majority of them are males (111; 53.11%), while 98 are females (46.89%). The average age of the sample is 32.82, in which the youngest participants is 16 years old, while the oldest one is 84 years old. The number of respondents for each scenario are the following: 67 (32.06%) for Facebook, 73 (34.93%) for Twitter and finally, 69 (33.01%) for YouTube.

Creation of variables. In order to validate or not H1 and H2, I created 3 dichotomic variables with the aim of identifying in which scenario respondents were in. One for each platform: Facebook (*FB*=0;1), Twitter (*TW*=0;1) or YouTube (*YT*=0;1). In this way, I will be able to link the responses to a single scenario and isolate the effect that being on Facebook or on Twitter or on YouTube, that is my independent variable, has on the participants' responses and therefore on the willingness to engage in WOM about movies, that is my dependent variable. Consequently, in order to perform my analysis, I created the dichotomic variable called *"social"*. It is equal to 1 when the scenario is FB, 2 is associated with TW and, finally, 3 when the scenario is on YT. Afterwards, I created the variable called "*seek_WOM*". It represents one of the three dimensions of the willingness to engage in word of mouth, that is my main dependent variable. I will use this variable in order to understand the effect that the independent variables (*FB*, *TW* or *YT*) have only on the willingness to seek WOM, that is part of the total engagement in WOM. Then, I created the variable called "*pass_WOM*". This is the second dimension of the willingness to engage in word of mouth. As well as for "*seek_WOM*", I will use this variable in order to understand the effect that the independent variables (*FB*, *TW* or *YT*) have only on the willingness to pass WOM, that is part of the total engagement in WOM. Again, I created the

variable called "*give_WOM*". This is the third and final dimension of the willingness to engage in word of mouth and, even this time, I will use it to study the effect that the independent variables (*FB, TW* or *YT*) have only on the willingness to give WOM, that is part of the total engagement in WOM. Finally, I created the variable "*likelihood*" that is the result of the mean between "*seek_WOM*", "*pass_WOM*", "*give_WOM*".
In order to verify or not the last 3 hypothesis (H3, H4, H5) I created other independent variables, while my dependent variables are the same of the first 2 hypothesis (*seek_WOM; pass_WOM; give_WOM; likelihood*). For this occasion, the variables *"friends", "stranger"* (for H3), *"interested", "non_interested"* (for H4), and finally *"credibility"* (for H5). *"friends"* and *"stranger"* are two dummy variables. *"friends"* is equal to 0 when people are not willing to engage (seek, pass, give) in word of mouth with people with whom they have a strong-tied relationship (strong tie strength: friends, parents), whilst is equal to 1 when they do want to. "*stranger*" is equal to 0 when people want to engage (seek, pass, give) in word of mouth with people with whom they have not a strong-tied relationship (weak tie strength: acquittances, strangers), while it is equal to 1 when people do not want to.
Then, "*interested*" and "*non_interested*" are dummy variables that can be equal to 0 or 1. *"interested"* is equal to 0 if participants do not want to engage (seek, pass, give) in word of mouth with people with whom they share the same interests (when there is homophily), while it is equal to 1 when they do want to. Conversely, *"non_interested"* is equal to 0 if respondents are willing to engage (seek, pass, give) in word of mouth with people who do not share the same interests (when there is not homophily), while it is equal to 1 when people do not want to.
Finally, *"credibility"* is another dummy variable. It is equal to 1 when people are willing to engage in word of mouth (seek, pass, give) with people they assess to be credible and reliable. Contextually, it is equal to 0 if they are not.
Afterwards, I created the moderator and some control variables. The first is "*cinema_lover*". Each respondent had to answer "Yes", "No" or "Neither yes nor no" to the question "Ti consideri un appassionato di cinema?" ("Do you consider yourself a cinema-lover?"). "*cinema_lover*" is a dummy variable that can be equal to 1 if respondents chose "No", to 2 if they chose "Neither yes nor no", and 3 if they chose "Yes". Then, the control variable "*age*" was created. The age of respondents has been classified in 4 different groups: the first group comprehend respondents within the range *"age"<=26* and this group is equal to 1 (113; 54.07%). The second group, equal to 2, comprehends those respondents within the age in the range *26<"age"<=40* (51; 24.4%). The third group was equal to 3 and comprehends the participants within the range *40<"age"<=63* (36; 17.22%). Finally, the last group, equal to 4, identifies those participants within the range *"age">63* (9; 4.31%). The second and last control variable created is *"gender"* that can be equal to 1 if respondents are males or 2 if they are females.

Results and discussion

To analyse my data and perform my analysis I used STATA, one of the most widespread software for data analysis. Regarding methodology, I exploit both ANOVA and Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression methodologies.

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \cdots + \beta_n X_n + \varepsilon_i$$

Linear regression. Now I test the first hypothesis H1. By running the linear regression between *"FB"* and *"likelihood"* (Tab.1), I discovered that people who believe to be on Facebook (*FB*) have a higher willingness to engage in WOM (*likelihood*) about cinema (coef. +0.39), with respect to individuals who are not on this platform. The level of p-value of *"FB"* is equal to 0.049, less than the significance level α=0.05, thus the independent variable can be considered statistically significant in the confidence interval of 95%. Moreover, I run the linear regression model adding also some control variables. The variable "*gender*" is not significant (p=0.86), as well as the age (p=0.69; 0.25; 0.26). Conversely, the variable *"cinema_lover"* is always statistically significative. When respondents answered to be neither keen on cinema nor the opposite (*cinema_lover*=2), the willingness to engage in WOM about cinema (*likelihood*) is enhanced of +0.48 with respect to not be cinema-lover at all. It is statistically significant (p=0.23) in the confidence interval of 95%. Finally, when participants indicated to be strongly interested in cinema (*cinema_lover*=3), the *"likelihood"* increases of +0.96 with respect to not be cinema-lover at all. The p-value is equal to 0.001. That means that this independent variable, when is equal to 3, therefore when people are absolutely keen on cinema, is strongly significant in the confidence level of 99% (α=0.01). Considering the whole linear regression model, even though its R-squared (0.09) is low, it can be assessed to be strongly significant since that F=0.0023 that is absolutely less than α=0.05. It means that the independent variables are correlated (have a good fit) with the dependent variable, although they do not explain much of the variability in the dependent variable.

Linear regression

Number of obs	= 209
F(7, 201)	= 3.32
Prob > F	= 0.0023
R-squared	= 0.0962
Root MSE	= 1.3148

likelihood	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
1.FB	.3924515	.1983246	1.98	0.049	.0013879	.7835151
2.gender	-.0323268	.1838894	-0.18	0.861	-.3949267	.330273
cinema_lover						
2	.479289	.2085232	2.30	0.023	.0681152	.8904627
3	.9617442	.2756198	3.49	0.001	.4182671	1.505221
age						
2	.0925671	.230447	0.40	0.688	-.3618367	.5469709
3	.3293731	.288855	1.14	0.256	-.2402017	.898948
4	.5609095	.5021717	1.12	0.265	-.4292911	1.55111
_cons	2.543969	.2161531	11.77	0.000	2.11775	2.970187

Tab.1

Afterward, I run another linear regression (Tab. 2). This time I took into account *"TW"* as the main independent variable, instead of *"FB"*, in order to capture the effect of being on Twitter instead of not. I discovered that being on Twitter enhances the willingness to engage in WOM about cinema of +0.3, less than on Facebook (coef. +0.39). The p-value is equal to 0.12. It means that *"TW"* is weakly significant in the confidence interval of 90%. Moreover, the control variables "*age*" and "*gender*" are not significant, whilst the "*cinema_lover*" is significant when it is equal to 2 (p=0.025) and strongly significant when it is equal to 3 (p=0.000). From the model, I can state that, when it values 2 (individuals are neither cinema-lovers, nor the opposite), "*likelihood*" increases of +0.47 with respect to not be cinema lover at all, whilst, when it is equal to 3 (individuals are cinema-lovers), the willingness to engage in WOM about cinema augments of +0.98. Considering the entire linear regression model, the F-test might get to the conclusion that the model fits good (F=0.0088), although the R-squared explain just the 8.91% of the variability of the dependent variable.

Linear regression

Number of obs	209
F(7, 201)	2.78
Prob > F	0.0088
R-squared	0.0891
Root MSE	1.3199

likelihood	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
1.TW	.2999747	.191757	1.56	0.119	-.0781387	.6780881
2.gender	-.0395517	.1835028	-0.22	0.830	-.4013892	.3222858
cinema_lover						
2	.4750238	.2099868	2.26	0.025	.060964	.8890835
3	.9836985	.2765225	3.56	0.000	.4384414	1.528956
age						
2	.0488364	.2333705	0.21	0.834	-.4113321	.5090049
3	.2042555	.2954972	0.69	0.490	-.3784166	.7869276
4	.486514	.4912113	0.99	0.323	-.4820744	1.455102
_cons	2.599657	.2221955	11.70	0.000	2.161524	3.03779

Tab.2

Finally, I run another linear regression by considering "*YT*" as independent variable (Tab. 3). As expected, the effect of being on YouTube is the lower than on Facebook and Twitter. Moreover, it is negative (coef. -0.68) and it is strongly significant (p=0.000). Another time, the control variable "*cinema_lover*" is significant and has a positive effect on "*likelihood*" when it is equal to 2 (coef.=0.51; p=0.013) or 3 (coef.=1.01; p=0.000). Even the entire model can be considered significant (F=0.000), although the R-squared keep being low (0.13).

Linear regression

Number of obs = 209
F(7, 201) = 4.86
Prob > F = 0.0000
R-squared = 0.1344
Root MSE = 1.2867

likelihood	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
1.YT	-.6868166	.1877179	-3.66	0.000	-1.056966	-.3166676
2.gender	-.0214459	.1799659	-0.12	0.905	-.3763093	.3334175
cinema_lover						
2	.5138788	.2051725	2.50	0.013	.1093121	.9184455
3	1.015516	.2652764	3.83	0.000	.4924345	1.538598
age						
2	.0311796	.2256456	0.14	0.890	-.4137565	.4761158
3	.2480355	.2809065	0.88	0.378	-.3058662	.8019372
4	.5711259	.4322836	1.32	0.188	-.2812666	1.423518
_cons	2.88716	.2024717	14.26	0.000	2.487919	3.286401

Tab.3

From the results, it is clear that H1 is accepted. Thus, people are more likely to engage in eWOM about movies on Facebook, than on Twitter and YouTube in Italy. Contextually, H2 is partially accepted because, although people are more willing to engage in eWOM about movies on Twitter, than on YouTube, it is not true that the willingness is greater on Twitter than on Facebook. In confirmation of these results, I run a linear regression model considering the variable "*social*" in order to analyse "*FB*", "*TW*" and "*YT*" together (Tab.4 and Tab.5). Firstly, I compare the effect of "*FB*" and "*TW*" on "*likelihood*" (Tab.4). The effect of both, Facebook and Twitter, is positive and is respectively equal to +0.72 and +0.65. Both the independent variables are strongly significant in the confidence interval of 99% (α=0.01); indeed, their p-value are respectively equal to 0.001 and 0.003. The model provides a great fit to the data (F=0.0001), but also here the R-squared is low, even if is better than the previous models. Indeed, it explains the 13.48% of the variability of the independent variable. "*cinema_lover*" continues to be significant for its values (2, 3). Both the positive effects and correlations enhance with the increasing level of passion in cinema of respondents (respectively *cinema_lover* coefficient values are: +0.51; +1.01).

Linear regression

Number of obs = 209
F(8, 200) = 4.25
Prob > F = 0.0001
R-squared = 0.1348
Root MSE = 1.2896

likelihood	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
social						
1	.7235176	.2242867	3.23	0.001	.2812474	1.165788
2	.6528536	.2143969	3.05	0.003	.2300852	1.075622
2.gender	-.0208056	.180321	-0.12	0.908	-.3763799	.3347686
cinema_lover						
2	.5140742	.2055923	2.50	0.013	.1086675	.919481
3	1.013008	.2667134	3.80	0.000	.4870768	1.538939
age						
2	.0358797	.2274259	0.16	0.875	-.4125807	.4843401
3	.2608717	.2840225	0.92	0.359	-.2991912	.8209345
4	.5783786	.4339011	1.33	0.184	-.2772293	1.433986
_cons	2.197092	.2561943	8.58	0.000	1.691904	2.702281

Tab.4

Therefore, this model confirms that people on Facebook are more willing to engage in eWOM about films, than on Twitter. Contextually, Facebook enhances the willingness more than YouTube and it is confirmed by the model described in Tab.5. Considering this, it is interesting to highlight that the effect of Facebook on the independent variable keep staying positive, but it strongly decreases (+0.07) when the variable "*YT*" is considered in the same model. Conversely, the effect of YouTube is negative (-0.65) as usual. The F-test of overall significance indicates that the linear regression model provides a better fit to the data then a model that contains no independents variables (p=0.0001).

Linear regression

Number of obs	209
F(8, 200)	4.25
Prob > F	0.0001
R-squared	0.1348
Root MSE	1.2896

likelihood	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
social						
1	.070664	.2249159	0.31	0.754	-.3728468	.5141748
3	-.6528536	.2143969	-3.05	0.003	-1.075622	-.2300852
2.gender	-.0208056	.180321	-0.12	0.908	-.3763799	.3347686
cinema_lover						
2	.5140742	.2055923	2.50	0.013	.1086675	.919481
3	1.013008	.2667134	3.80	0.000	.4870768	1.538939
age						
2	.0358797	.2274259	0.16	0.875	-.4125807	.4843401
3	.2608717	.2840225	0.92	0.359	-.2991912	.8209345
4	.5783786	.4339011	1.33	0.184	-.2772293	1.433986
_cons	2.849946	.2231244	12.77	0.000	2.409968	3.289924

Tab.5

It might be interesting to understand which of the three dimensions of the total willingness to engage in eWOM about film is the most affected by Facebook. The three variables are: seeking eWOM (*seek_WOM*), passing eWOM (*pass_WOM*), giving eWOM (*give_WOM*). Taking into account the regression model that analyses the correlation between "*FB*" and *"seek_WOM"* (Tab.6), I discovered that there is a positive correlation (+0.68) between them and it is also strongly significant (p=0.001) in the confidence interval of 99%. Moreover, the model fits good the data since that the p-value of the model is equal to 0.04.

Linear regression

Number of obs	209
F(7, 201)	2.15
Prob > F	0.0398
R-squared	0.0622
Root MSE	1.3461

seek_WOM	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
1.FB	.684238	.2006511	3.41	0.001	.2885869	1.079889
2.gender	.0486952	.1877756	0.26	0.796	-.3215677	.4189581
cinema_lover						
2	.2918627	.2551401	1.14	0.254	-.2112318	.7949572
3	.3338	.3116292	1.07	0.285	-.2806817	.9482818
age						
2	-.0126629	.2399168	-0.05	0.958	-.4857396	.4604137
3	.1304725	.2690779	0.48	0.628	-.400105	.6610501
4	.2310943	.5268524	0.44	0.661	-.8077725	1.269961
_cons	3.132756	.2632719	11.90	0.000	2.613627	3.651885

Tab.6

By analysing the correlation between "*FB*" and *"pass_WOM"* (Tab.7), the results show that there is a weak positive correlation between them (+0.06), but the independent variable is absolutely not significant (p=0.73), therefore it is not reliable. The p-value of the overall model is equal to 0.0049. It is lower than α=0.05. The model is statistically significant in the confidence interval of 95%.

Linear regression

					Number of obs =	209
					F(7, 201) =	3.01
					Prob > F =	0.0049
					R-squared =	0.0908
					Root MSE =	1.6436

pass_WOM	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
1.FB	.0584734	.2461885	0.24	0.812	-.4269699	.5439168
2.gender	.1117817	.2309276	0.48	0.629	-.3435699	.5671332
cinema_lover						
2	.6600698	.2630633	2.51	0.013	.141352	1.178787
3	1.234191	.3296251	3.74	0.000	.5842238	1.884157
age						
2	.2904095	.2854235	1.02	0.310	-.2723988	.8532179
3	.4433643	.3578676	1.24	0.217	-.2622921	1.149021
4	.8643621	.5760289	1.50	0.135	-.2714728	2.000197
_cons	2.066831	.2723134	7.59	0.000	1.529873	2.603788

Tab.7

Finally, in Tab.8 it is possible to describe the correlation between "*FB*" and "*give_WOM*". The model fits good the data and is absolutely reliable, since that it has a p-value equal to 0.0001. The effect of FB is positively correlated (+0.43) with the willingness to engage in eWOM by giving recommendation about films on Facebook. Furthermore, it is statistically significant (p=0.072) for a confidence interval of 90%. In conclusion, individuals are more willing to engage in eWOM about films on Facebook, then on Twitter and YouTube. Moreover, the major effect is given by the "seeking" and "giving" dimensions of the total willingness to engage. In other words, people use Facebook more to seek for word of mouth or give recommendations by means of WOM, then to pass it.

Linear regression

					Number of obs =	209
					F(7, 201) =	4.45
					Prob > F =	0.0001
					R-squared =	0.1297
					Root MSE =	1.5529

give_WOM	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
1.FB	.4346439	.2402746	1.81	0.072	-.0391383	.9084262
2.gender	-.2574572	.2196276	-1.17	0.242	-.6905269	.1756126
cinema_lover						
2	.4859347	.247578	1.96	0.051	-.0022486	.974118
3	1.317242	.3109357	4.24	0.000	.704128	1.930357
age						
2	-.0000453	.2656435	-0.00	1.000	-.5238508	.5237603
3	.4142831	.3480273	1.19	0.235	-.2719698	1.100536
4	.5872711	.5304751	1.11	0.270	-.458739	1.633281
_cons	2.432319	.2569897	9.46	0.000	1.925577	2.939061

Tab.8

Going forward, in order to accept or refuse H3, H4 and H5 I need again to run other linear regression models. In Tab.9, when "*stranger*" is equal to 1, it means that an individual is not willing to engage in eWOM with strangers, then "*likelihood*" increases of +0.47. In other words, when "*stranger*" is equal to 1, their willingness to engage in eWOM with strangers diminishes, therefore, their willingness to engage in eWOM with people they know might should enhance. Moreover, the independent variable "*stranger*" is significant (p=0.06). Therefore, the first statement of H3 seems to be accepted, but I control this result using the variable "*friends*". The variable "*friends*" is not significant at all having a p-value equal to 0.49 (Tab.9a). However, it confirms that the willingness to engage in WOM about films enhances (coef. +0.23) when people need to interact with individuals with whom they have a solid relationship. Concerning this, I can conclude that the first statement of H3, that is "*Tie strength positively influences online WOM engagement about movies in Italy*", is weakly accepted. For what concern the second part of H3, "*cinema_lover*" is confirmed to be significant when it is equal to 2 or 3 in both Tab.9 and Tab.9a. Moreover, when people are strongly keen on cinema ("*cinema_lover*"=3), their willingness to engage in eWOM about films enhances of +0.94 in Tab.9 and +0.95 in Tab.9a, that is more than the enhancement given by those people who answered to be neither keen on cinema nor the opposite. Indeed, when "*cinema_lover*" is equal to 2, the dependent variable gains +0.51 in Tab.9 and +0.46 in Tab.9a. The more an individual considers himself a movie-lover, the higher the coefficient of "*cinema_lover".* It does not confirm the moderating effect of being or not a movie-lover, but only that the more individuals are keen on cinema, the higher their willingness to engage in WOM. Therefore, I run a regression by adding the interaction between "*stranger*" and "*cinema_lover*" in order to analyse if there is the moderating effect. The interaction is not significant at all. Therefore, it is not accepted the second part of H3, that is: "*the fact that the individual is or not a movie-lover has a moderating effect. The more one considers himself a movie-lover, the greater the positive effect of the tie strength*". By coming back on Tab.9 and Tab.9a, in consideration of the entire linear regression models, I can confirm them to be strongly significant thanks to the p-value that is equal to 0.0086 (Tab.9) and to 0.0160 (Tab.9a) that are less than α=0.05, although the model explains only the 10% (Tab.9) and only the 8% (Tab.9a) of the variability of the dependent variable.

Linear regression

Number of obs	=	209			
F(7, 201)	=	2.79			
Prob > F	=	0.0086			
R-squared	=	0.1009			
Root MSE	=	1.3114			

likelihood	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
1.stranger	.4742446	.2499881	1.90	0.059	-.0186911	.9671803
cinema_lover						
2	.5114715	.2138818	2.39	0.018	.0897315	.9332115
3	.9430178	.276943	3.41	0.001	.3969315	1.489104
2.gender	-.0466646	.1832582	-0.25	0.799	-.4080199	.3146906
age						
2	.0193549	.2210646	0.09	0.930	-.4165483	.455258
3	.1663234	.287011	0.58	0.563	-.3996154	.7322621
4	.3414956	.5728137	0.60	0.552	-.7879995	1.470991
_cons	2.589499	.2136461	12.12	0.000	2.168224	3.010775

Tab.9

Linear regression

Number of obs	=	209			
F(7, 201)	=	2.54			
Prob > F	=	0.0160			
R-squared	=	0.0804			
Root MSE	=	1.3262			

likelihood	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
1.friends	.1943153	.2842872	0.68	0.495	-.3662525	.7548831
cinema_lover						
2	.4602726	.2123656	2.17	0.031	.0415224	.8790227
3	.9538897	.2793255	3.41	0.001	.4031054	1.504674
2.gender	-.0508874	.1856256	-0.27	0.784	-.4169107	.3151359
age						
2	.0660899	.2328249	0.28	0.777	-.3930026	.5251825
3	.2846539	.2951937	0.96	0.336	-.2974199	.8667277
4	.5650918	.5307936	1.06	0.288	-.4815464	1.61173
_cons	2.535061	.3177797	7.98	0.000	1.908452	3.161671

Tab.9a

Concerning H4, I run other two linear regression models (Tab.10). The model is strongly significant, having a p-value of 0.0061 that is less than α=0.01. Interestingly, form the regression model described in Tab.10 it is observable that the effect of "*interested*" on "*likelihood*", not only is positive (+0.44), but it is also significant having a p-value equal to 0.02 that is less than α=0.05. It means that when people share the same interest with individuals with whom they need to interact (i.e. there is homophily between them), the willingness to engage in eWOM enhances of +0.44. In conclusion, homophily positively influences online eWOM engagement about movies in Italy. Furthermore, "*cinema_lover*" is again strongly significant both when it is equal to 2 and 3. Indeed, when it is equal to 3, the p-value is 0.000 that is less than α=0.01. Newly, I run two other linear regressions by adding the interactions between "*interested*"–"*cinema_lover*" and "*non_interested*"–"*cinema_lover*". This time too, the interactions are not significant at all, therefore, the second part of H4 is not accepted. However, "*likelihood*" enhances of +1.00 when people state to be strongly interested in cinema ("*cinema_lover*"=3), that is more than when they answer to be neither keen on cinema nor the opposite. Indeed, when "*cinema_lover*" is equal to 2, "*likelihood*" enhances only of +0.46 (Tab.10). To conclude, the fact that the individual is or not a movie-lover has not a moderating effect on the willingness to engage in eWOM about cinema in Italy, but "cinema_lover" has a direct positive effect on the willingness to engage in eWOM. Moreover, all the dimensions of the total willingness of engage in eWOM are significant, but the most significant one is the "seeking" dimension ("*seek_WOM*" coef.) (Tab.10a), which has a p-value equal to 0.000 that is much lower than α=0.01. The other two dimensions, still have a positive effect, but are weakly significant.

Linear regression — Number of obs = 209; F(7, 201) = 2.93; Prob > F = 0.0061; R-squared = 0.1038; Root MSE = 1.3092

likelihood	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
1.interested	.4454806	.1882247	2.37	0.019	.0743324	.8166289
2.gender	-.1133738	.1821552	-0.62	0.534	-.472554	.2458064
cinema_lover						
2	.4659784	.2132109	2.19	0.030	.0455613	.8863955
3	1.001523	.2797211	3.58	0.000	.4499592	1.553088
age						
2	.126927	.2345305	0.54	0.589	-.3355289	.5893828
3	.2961165	.2883987	1.03	0.306	-.2725587	.8647917
4	.6311745	.5027773	1.26	0.211	-.3602201	1.622569
_cons	2.475692	.2308416	10.72	0.000	2.02051	2.930874

Tab.10

Linear regression — Number of obs = 209; F(7, 201) = 2.42; Prob > F = 0.0213; R-squared = 0.0679; Root MSE = 1.3421

seek_WOM	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
1.interested	.6828702	.1880688	3.63	0.000	.3120294	1.053711
2.gender	-.0774405	.1865994	-0.42	0.679	-.445384	.290503
cinema_lover						
2	.2683858	.2597271	1.03	0.303	-.2437535	.7805251
3	.394534	.3125915	1.26	0.208	-.2218453	1.010913
age						
2	.0373227	.2491609	0.15	0.881	-.4539818	.5286272
3	.0652808	.2586835	0.25	0.801	-.4448007	.5753624
4	.3262923	.5064677	0.64	0.520	-.6723793	1.324964
_cons	3.06074	.276722	11.06	0.000	2.515089	3.60639

Tab.10a

For what concern H5, Tab.11 is able to explain the correlation between the "*credibility*" and "*likelihood*" and then the direct effect of "*cinema_lover*" on the dependent variable. Again, the entire regression model is strongly significant having a p-value equal to 0.0014 that is much lower than α=0.01. The variable "*credibility*" has a positive correlation with the dependent variable; indeed, "*likelihood*" enhances of +0.34 when people answer to be willing to engage in eWOM about film with credible people. The variable is significant having p=0.063 in the confidence interval of 90% (α=0.1). Furthermore, again, when

"*cinema_lover*" is equal to 2, "*likelihood*" increases of +0.45 and it is significant being p=0.032 lower than α=0.05. Then, when "*cinema_lover*" is equal to 3, "*likelihood*" augments of +0.91 that is more than the enhancement gained with "*cinema_lover*" equal to 2. Here, "*cinema_lover*" equal to 3 is strongly significant in a confidence interval of 0.99 (α=0.01) having a p-value equal to 0.001. In conclusion, the first part of H5, (i.e. "*Source credibility positively influences online WOM engagement (information giving, passing or seeking) about movies in Italy*") seems to be fully and strongly accepted. Indeed, it seems that the source credibility positively influences online WOM engagement about movies in Italy. Furthermore, it seems that being or not keen on cinema has also a direct positive effect on the willingness to engage in eWOM, therefore, the more one considers himself a movie-lover, the greater the willingness to engage in eWOM. Conversely, by adding the interaction between "crebility" and "cinema_lover", there is not a significant effect, therefore the second part of H5 has to be refused.

Linear regression

Number of obs	209
F(7, 201)	2.59
Prob > F	0.0140
R-squared	0.0933
Root MSE	1.3169

likelihood	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
1.credibility	.3445568	.1842549	1.87	0.063	-.0187637	.7078773
2.gender	-.1039526	.1862753	-0.56	0.577	-.471257	.2633518
cinema_lover						
2	.4535121	.2104582	2.15	0.032	.0385229	.8685012
3	.9128328	.2727314	3.35	0.001	.3750511	1.450614
age						
2	.1170673	.2310223	0.51	0.613	-.3384708	.5726055
3	.2896473	.2927297	0.99	0.324	-.2875679	.8668625
4	.6487305	.5098783	1.27	0.205	-.3566662	1.654127
_cons	2.559281	.2229972	11.48	0.000	2.119567	2.998995

Tab.11

ANOVA. By running one-way ANOVA between all those variables that resulted to have a significant effect on "*likelihood*", I intend to confirm again the strength of my results.

In Tab.12, it is possible to observe that there is a difference between the means of the groups. The p-value indicates that the model is significant. Indeed, *p* is equal to 0.0059 that is lower than α=0.01 (in a confidence interval of 99%). It confirms that the means between the groups are different. Indeed, looking to the means (1, 2, 3) those differ. Considering the means, those which correspond to Facebook (1) and Twitter (2) differ much more with respect to the one that correspond to YouTube (3), in confirmation of the lower effect of YouTube of the willingness to engage in eWOM in comparison to the effects of Facebook and Twitter. Furthermore, to confirm the validity of the model, I consider the Bartlett's test. The chi-squared is equal to 0.578. It means that there is a variability between the variances.

social	Summary of likelihood Mean	Std. Dev.	Freq.
1	3.5053895	1.4101921	67
2	3.4653728	1.3425829	73
3	2.8498391	1.2410202	69
Total	3.2749867	1.3595034	209

Source	Analysis of Variance SS	df	MS	F	Prob > F
Between groups	18.6745286	2	9.3372643	5.26	0.0059
Within groups	365.761345	206	1.77554051		
Total	384.435874	208	1.84824939		

Bartlett's test for equal variances: chi2(2) = 1.0980 Prob>chi2 = 0.578

Tab.12

Considering Tab.13, it is observable the ANOVA model between "*cinema_lover*" and "*likelihood*" is strongly significant p-value=0.0006 that is in the confidence interval of 99% (α=0.01). Effectively, the means between the groups differ. It is interesting to highlight that the means of *"cinema_lover*" when it is equal to 2 or 3, are really higher in comparison with the independent variable when it is equal to 1. They confirm that the more one considers himself a movie-lover, the greater is the willingness to engage in eWOM about movies.

cinema_lover	Summary of likelihood Mean	Std. Dev.	Freq.
1	2.7556818	1.0997738	44
2	3.2126984	1.2356539	105
3	3.7648147	1.5782783	60
Total	3.2749867	1.3595034	209

Source	Analysis of Variance SS	df	MS	F	Prob > F
Between groups	26.669085	2	13.3345425	7.68	0.0006
Within groups	357.766789	206	1.73673198		
Total	384.435874	208	1.84824939		

Tab.13

3.3 General Discussion

Managerial implication

The film industry is characterized by high competition and, consequently, the economic results are difficult to forecast being a sector characterized by high randomness. Movie advertising provides information to potential moviegoers about the film's content, about how many and in which cinemas the movie is shown, the release date, the casts. In other words, it gives all the information that are the success-drivers of a films (Faber and O'Guinn, 1984; Conchard, Crask, Zinkhan, 2005). The consumers' quality perception is shaped

firstly by those information. For these reasons, every movie needs a consistent investment in promotion and advertising costs. It is fundamental not to waste it by using wrong channels.
Facebook is in first position among the SNSs users (Lenhart et al., 2010). As Smith, Fischer, Yongjian stated in 2012, it is a platform in continuous exchange by means of participation. In confirmation of the potential of this platform, I discovered that Facebook users are more willing to engage in WOM about movies, in comparison with Twitter and YouTube, therefore, investments efforts should be focused on this platform. Moreover, Facebook has introduced the live video streaming; thus, the social network tends more to be used to share videos and, since that the movies advertising is mostly based on videos like teasers, trailers and all those communications made by the caste of the films, and sometimes by film supporters, Facebook is the perfect platform where film company might invest in advertising. In order to exploit the potential of Facebook, film companies should foster the creation of communities populated by cinema lovers and cinema experts. Furthermore, the communities should be regulated by community managers in charge to lead contents and engage individuals. Those communities should be populated by people with the same interests (homophily), by cinema experts (credibility) and by cinema lovers (cinema love). Indeed, there are evidence that people who share the same interests are more prone to share information each other. In addition, the word of mouth that comes from those people who are believed to be credible about cinema is assessed to be more reliable. Finally, cinema lovers are those who are easier to engage and would be the lifeblood of the communities.

Limits and possible opportunities for research

Despite the robustness of our results, this research has limitations that offer fruitful opportunities for further research. This study contributes to the movie-marketing and word-of-mouth literature through the use of a survey about movie WOM on Facebook, Twitter or YouTube. The results highlight that Facebook is potentially the best platform on which WOM about movies can spread in comparison with Twitter and YouTube. People use Facebook specially to look for information, maybe in order to seek advice, or maybe to regulate their emotions because the film they have watched wasn’t good as they expected, or maybe in order to have something to talk about with friends and colleagues. Then, Facebook users give advices by the means of online word-of-mouth. The main reasons that push them might be several. For example, they aim to signal their movie-lover identities, or to prove themselves they are expert about cinema. Moreover, they try to be supportive for their Facebook friends, or they want to understand if people share their views. Then, people may need to look for revenge because they have watched a film on which they had high expectations. Finally, they aim to persuade people. This is a limit of my research, but at the same way a potential opportunity in order to investigate which are the main reasons behind the engagement in WOM about movies on Facebook in order to create cinema communities, where potential moviegoers, cinema lovers and cinema experts can exchange contents which are perfectly targeted for them.

In addition, this study introduces a potential moderator, “cinema love”, that is analysed in relation with all the independent variables and the dependent variable “willingness to engage in WOM” and all its dimensions: “seeking WOM”, “passing WOM”, “giving WOM”. I believe these variables might be potentially the most fruitful in future in order to individuate the trendsetters in the environment of movie WOM. “Cinema love” always has a positive effect on willingness to engage in WOM and on all its dimensions (seek WOM, pass WOM, give WOM), independently on which platform (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) people are. A possible challenge in the future should be better analyse this variable thanks to the creation of a validated multi-item scale. This would continue to refine the measures and perfect the results. Finally, another limit is the fact that the sample is too little to be fully representative, thus this experiment should be repeated on a wider sample and with validated questions. Moreover, an Italian sample is used in this study which might make it difficult to generalize the results to other countries.

References:

- Allsop, Bassett, Hoskins (2007), "Word-of-Mouth Research: Principles and Applications", *Journal of Advertising Research,* 398-411.
- Anderson (1998), "Consumer Satisfaction and Word of Mouth", *Journal of Service Research,* 1, 1, 5-17.
- Anindita Chakravarty, Yong Liu, Tridib Mazumdar (2010), "The differential effects of online Word-of-Mouth and critics' reviews on pre-release movie evaluation" *Journal of Interactive Marketing,* 24, 185-197.
- Barash & Berger (2014), "Broadcasting and Narrowcasting – How audience size affects what people share", *Journal of Marketing Research,* 51, 286-299.
- Barbara B. Stern (1994), "A Revised Communication Model for advertising - multiple dimensions of the source, the message, and the recipient", *Journal of Advertising,* 23, 2, 5-15.
- Berger (2013), "Beyond Viral: Interpersonal Communication in the Internet Age", *Psychological Inquiry,* 24, 4, 293-296.
- Berger (2014), "Word of mouth and interpersonal communication: A review and directions for future research", 24, 4, 586-607.
- Berger & Iyengar (2013), "Communication channels and Word of Mouth – how the medium shapes the message", *Journal of Consumer Research,* 40, 567-579.
- Brown, Broderick and Lee (2007), Word of Mouth Communication Within Online Communities: Conceptualizing The Online Social Network", *Journal of Interactive Marketing,* 21, 3, 2-20.
- Butler (2001), "Membership Size, Communication Activity, and Sustainability: A Resource Baed Model of Online Social Structures", *Information System Research,* 12, 4, 346-362.
- Chen Y., Harper F.M., Konstan J., Xin Li S. (2010), "Social comparisons and contributions to online communities: a field experiment on MovieLens", *The American Economic Review,* 100, 4.
- Cheung, Christy M.K. and Matthew K.O. Lee (2012), "What Drives Consumers to Spread Electronic Word of Mouth in Online Consumer-Opinion Platforms", *Decision Support System,* 53, 1, 218-25.

- Ching-Chiang Yeh (2015), “Online word-of-mouth as a predictor of television rating”, *Online Information Review,* 39, 6, 831-847.
- De Angelis Matteo, Bonezzi Andrea, Peluso Alessandro, Rucker D.D., Costabile Michele (2011), “On Braggarts and Gossips: A Self-Enhancement Account of Word-of-Mouth Generation and Transmission”, *Journal of Marketing Research,* 49, 4, 1-13.
- Dellarocas C., Narayan R. (2006), “What motivates consumers to review a product online? A study of the product-specific antecedents of online movie reviews”, *University of Maryland.*
- Dibble, Levine, & Park (2011), “The undimensional relationship closeness scale (URCS): Reliability and validity evidence for a new measure of relationship closeness”, *Psychological Assessment,* 1-8.
- Duan W., Gu B., Whinston A.B. (2008), “The dynamics of online word-of-mouth and product sales – an empirical investigation of the movie industry”, *Journal of Retailing,* 84, 233-242.
- Dunbar, Marriott, Duncan (1996), “Human Conversational Behavior”, *Human Nature,* 8, 3, 231-246.
- Dye (2000), “The Buzz on Buzz”, *Harvard Business Review,* 139-146.
- Feixiang Zhang, Yang Yang (2016), “The effect of Internet Word-of-mouth on experience product sales – An empirical study based on film online reviews” *International Journal of Business Administration,* 7, 2, 72-78.
- Han An, Jifan Ren (2018), “Do market differences influence online consumer’s behaviour? An investigation of online movie review usefulness across markets”, *International Conference on Management Science and Engineering.*
- Henning-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, Gremler (2004), “Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: what motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the internet?”, *Journal of Interactive Marketing,* 18, 1, 38-51.
- Hong Hong, Di Xu, G. Alan Wang, Weigo Fan (2017), “Understanding the determinants of online review helpfulness: A meta-analytic investigation”, *Decision Support System,* 102, 1-11.
- Huang & Leung (2009), “Instant Messaging Addiction among Teenagers in China: Shyness, Alienation, and Academic Performance Decrement”, *Cyber Psychology & Behavior,* 12, 6, 675-679.

- Hyunmi Baek, Sehwan Oh, Hee-Dong Yang, JoongHo Ahn (2017), "Electronic Word of Mouth, box office revenue and social media" *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications,* 22, 13-23.
- Ilona K.E., De Jong, Christian Burgers (2013), "Do consumer critics write differently from professional critics? A genre analysis of online film reviews", *Discourse, Context and Media,* 2, 75-83.
- Jong Hyup Lee, Sun Ho Jung, Jae Hong Park (2017), "The role of entropy of review text sentiments on online WOM and movie box office sales" *Electronic Commerce Research and Application*, 22, 42-52.
- Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media", *Business Horizons,* 53, 59-68.
- King & Racherla & Bush (2014), "What we know and don't know about online Word-of-Mouth: A review and Synthesis of the Literature", *Journal of Interactive Marketing,* 28, 167-183.
- Lakin, Chartrand, and Arkin (2008), "I Am Too Just Like You – Nonconscious Mimicry as an Automatic Behavioral Response to Social Exclusion", *Association for Psychological Science,* 19, 8, 816-822.
- Liu (2006), "Word of Mouth for Movies: Its Dynamics and Impact on Box Office", *Journal of Marketing,* 70, 3, 74-89.
- Michela Addis, Morris B. Helbrook (2018), "Is movie success a judgement device? When more is not better", *Psychol Mark.,* 35, 881-890.
- Peng Huang, Nicholas H. Lurie, Sabyasachi Mitra (2009), "Searching for experience on the web: an empirical examination of consumer behaviour for search and experience goods", *Journal of Marketing,* 73, 55-69.
- Phillip Nelson (1974), "Advertising as information", *Journal of Political Economy,* 82, 4, 729-754.
- Phillip Nelson (1970), "Information and Consumer Behavior", *Journal of Political Economy,* 78, 2, 311-329.
- Pitta & Fowler (2005), "Internet community forums: an untapped resource for consumer marketers", *Journal of Consumer Marketing,* 22, 5, 265-274.

- Pradeep K. Chintagunta, Shyam Gopinath, Sriram Venkataraman (2010), “The effects of online user reviews on movie box office performance: accounting for sequential rollout and aggregation across local markets” *Marketing Science*, 29, 5, 944-957.
- Rakesh Niraj, Jagdip Singh (2015), “Impact of user-generated and professional critics reviews on Bollywood movie success”, *Australasian Marketing Journal,* 23, 179-187.
- Rimé (2009), “Emotion Elicits the Social Sharing of Emotion: Theory and Empirical Review”, *Emotion Review,* 1, 1, 60-85.
- R. Ullah, A. Zeb, W. Kim (2015), “The impact of emotions on the helpfulness of movie reviews”, *Journal of Applied Research and Technology,* 13, 359-363.
- Sang Ho Kim, Namkee Park, Seung Hyun Park (2013), “Exploring the effects of online word of mouth and expert reviews on theatrical movies’ box office success”, *Journal of Media Economics,* 26, 98-114.
- Shu-Chuan Chu, Yoojung Kim (2011), “Determinants of consumer engagement in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in Social Networking Sites”, *International Journal of Advertising,* 30, 1, 47-75.
- Sundaram, Mitra, Webster (1998), ”Word-of-Mouth Communications: a Motivational Analysis”, *Association of Consumer Research,* 25, 527-531.
- T. Henning-Thurau, Caroline Wiertz, Fabian Feldhaus (2015), “Does Twitter matter? The impact of microblogging word of mouth on consumers’ adoption of new movies”, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* 43, 375-394.
- Thorsern Hennig-Thurau, Mark B. Houston, Gianfranco Walsh (2006), “The differing roles of success drivers across sequential channels: An application to the motion picture industry” *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* 34, 4, 559-575.
- Ya-Han Hu, Wen-Ming Shiau, Sheng-Pao Shih, Cho-Ju Chen (2018), “Considering online consumer reviews to predict movie box-office performance between the years 2009 and 2014 in the US” *The Electronic Library,* 36, 6, 1010-1026.
- Zoey Chen, Jonah Berger (2013), “When, Why, and How Controversy Causes Conversation”, *Journal of Consumer Research,* 40, 580-593.

Summary:

Word of Mouth (WOM) is a term used to describe the flow of communication about services and products among consumers. It is a kind of interpersonal communications through which people share their personal experience about a brand, products, films, services etc. (Richins, 1984). This social exchange influences several consumption decisions. Moreover, to better understand the importance, about 3.4 billion conversations about brands take place every day (Keller Fay Group, 2006) among friends, family members, colleagues, acquaintances, neighbours, strangers. WOM is significant in marketing field. Indeed, two-third of the industries are lead primary by WOM (Dye, 200) and the 70% of all buying decisions are discovered to be influenced by the Word of Mouth (Balter, 2008). Word of Mouth might even provide awareness or produce normative pressure (Van den Bulte and Wuyts, 2009), sales (Berger, Reghuram and Iyengar, 2013) and help to boost the spread of information (Goldenberg, Libai, and Muller, 2001).

The reason behind its success is the fact that it is found to be more credible in comparison with marketing advertising paid by firms because, by definition, the message is generated and transmitted by "people like me", who are seen as unbiased source of information (Allsop, Bassett and Hoskins, 2007). Moreover, next to personal experience, Word of Mouth has the best influential power. Its importance is due also to its multiplier effect. Indeed, in the marketplace there are plenty of sources of information about everything that is consumable. Word of Mouth fosters the effect of those sources. WOM happens in real like, while advertising in the virtual one. Even though advertising simulates WOM, the message used is created, thus it is not natural as in a typical real-life conversation. There is not a predetermined structure, like in poems or novels, but there is just the need to conduct the business of life (Martin, 1986). It just happens between individuals who want to share information about brands, products, services without economic purpose. On the other hand, advertising happens in virtual life and imitates the real conversations, with fake dialogues between two or more individuals who play a role (Auerbach, 1953). In WOM there are senders and receivers only, while in advertising there is also a sponsor, who is the person or entity who pays for the advertising (Elliott, 1982).

Arndt in 1967, defined WOM as "oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, concerning a brand, a product, or a service". Thus, there are three fundamental characteristics: (1) it is a person-to-person exchange of information; (2) it concerns brands, products, services, firms; (3) it is transmitted orally, even though this feature has been lost with the advent of internet.

There are three key point which differentiate online WOM from traditional WOM (Berger, 2013; Berger and Iyengar, 2013; Huang and Leung, 2009). (1) Online WOM is more likely to be written. Therefore, (2) it is not perishable, therefore it is permanent on the internet (it is extendable through the time and it has a multi-directional nature) and so (3) the potential reach is greatly enhanced, because online customers and prospect are enabled to get information from other people (or share) more easily than ever (Henning – Thurau et al.,

2004). The online WOM is defined: “Any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or a company which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet” (Henning – Thurau et al., 2004).

The first fundamental consequences of the written nature of online WOM (Berger, 2013) is the asynchrony of communication (Clark & Brennan; Morris & Ogan, 1996). On the one hand, when a face-to-face conversation is held, two people exchange information in synchrony, with little or no breaks and characterized by quick thinking. On the other hand, online written communications are characterized by asynchrony. One person writes something, another reads the information and answers in a not pre-arranged moment. Those modalities create delays during conversation, also with instant messaging and social networking chats that seem to be more rapid. The conversations are slow and people have time to think, formulate, edit and refine the answer until it is polished (Chafe and Danielewicz, 1987; Redeker, 1984; Walther, 2007, 2011). They can answer hours or days later (Berger, 2013). The slow pace of conversation typical of written communications brings to more ideas per word and less irrelevant ideas (Horowitz and Newman, 1964) and gives people the chance to demonstrate better self-presentation (McKenna and Bargh, 2000; Walther, 2011; Walther and Burgoon, 1992).

“On the internet, no one knows you’re a dog” (cit. Peter Steiner). It means that online conversations are characterized by anonymity and less social presence. There is more chance of deception (Mudambi and Schuff, 2010). In face-to-face conversations is quite impossible to pretend to be someone else or hide our identities (Berger, 2013). Anonymity causes some consequences. When identities are hidden, people feel freer to share, express themselves, because they do not feel the social acceptance pressure (Goffman, 1959; Ratner & Kahn, 2002). Moreover, Berger and Iyengar (2013) suggest that this effect is granted also because online there is a reduction of social presence.

Nowadays, people have access to internet almost always and everywhere and, therefore, eWOM volume and reach have reached unprecedented levels (Dellarocs, 2003). The result of a multitude of devices is an enlargement of internet communications and traffic. On internet messages are more likely to be undirected (Berger, 2013). At the same time, people are allowed to review a restaurant they like on TripAdvisor. The review is not directed to a single person, but to all those people who might be interest in reading about the restaurant before going there. Face-to-face conversation are usually much more directed. Because of the undirected nature of the conversations, online the audience usually is broader, while offline the conversations are usually directed to a narrower audience (Barash and Berger, 2014). Here stands the difference between narrowcasting, that is the diffusion of information targeted to a person or a little group of people, and broadcasting, that is the diffusion of information among a wide and not-targeted group of people (Barash and Berger, 2014). Potentially, online, the audience is enormous because the multitude of devices and because of the permanence of the messages (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004). This have some effects. The audience size not only influences the speed of transmission, but also what is shared and transmitted (Barash and Berger, 2014). Narrowcasting enhances other focus, therefore when people talk face-to-face tend to

decrease their need to self-present and transmit more content that is useful for others and to conduct the conversation (Barash and Berger, 2014). In contrast, broadcasting discourages people to talk about negative event fostering self-presentation. In general, online people tend to positively self-present themselves.
The motivations and the experience are closely related, since that the motivations of a post-purchase reaction, for example, could be a complaint or a repurchase action (Westbrook, 1987). Therefore, the reason why we engage in WOM in a determined time, occasion, with determined people and about determined topics is crucial to deeply understand the word of mouth phenomenon.
At first, traditional WOM antecedents identified in the literature are relevant also for the online WOM so far (Henning-Thurau, 2004). In general, when there is dissonance between prospects' expectations and consumers' experiences there could be dissemination of word of mouth (Anderson, 1998) and, moreover, consumers do not react homogeneously, but they are triggered by several causes (Henning-Thurau, 2004).
Noteworthy, in 1966, Dichter listed four antecedents that can be cause of word of mouth. The first is the so-called product-involvement. It happens when a customer is so involved with the product, in terms of feelings, that there is a strong need to do something for it. The second Dichter's antecedent is called self-involvement. In this case the strong need to talk about the product is caused by the emotions elicited by it and not by the product itself. The third listed antecedent is other-involvement. In this case the need is to provide something to the receiver. The last motive is message-involvement. Word of mouth happens because of advertisements, commercials or public relations.
In 1993, Engel, Blackwell and Miniard proposed another similar scheme about word of mouth antecedents. This time the motives were five.
Then, in Sundaram, Mitra and Webster (1998) research it is proved that there are eight antecedents that cause word of mouth. Four positively and four negatively. Altruism that can bring to positive WOM when the consumer is satisfied about the product and talk about it without asking nothing in return. Alternatively, it can bring to negative WOM, in order to avoid the same dissatisfaction to others about a consumption experience. Product-involvement and self-enhancement are in common with the other past researches. Between the antecedents they mentioned also the fact that people help the company if they think it deserves it because of its great products or services (helping the company). Alternatively, when consumers' dissatisfaction becomes anger, they may generate negative WOM because of a need of vengeance. Furthermore, when people need to ease or reduce anxiety and frustration, they may engage in word of mouth (anxiety reduction). Finally, there is another possible reduction that people look for. They may want to reduce their information asymmetry by seeking advice (advice seeking).
Maybe the most useful and current study about antecedents is the one by Berger in 2014. In this study, Berger builds a framework composed by five main areas in which the antecedents can be meticulously placed: Impression Management; Emotion Regulation; Information Acquisition; Social Bonding; Persuading Others.

Impression management. Goffman (1959) sustained that, each social interaction is a performance about ourselves. Indeed, one of the main reason people share WOM is to positively change the impression that others have of them or they have of themselves (Berger, 2014). Therefore, what people share by means of word of mouth represents what they want to be in the eyes of others and to do this, there are three possible ways: self-enhancement; identity signalling; filling conversational space (Berger, 2014). People are fostered to have conversations about more interesting, awesome, funny and in general extreme topic because in this way they are recognized to be funny, interesting and awesome as well (Berger & Schwartz, 2011; Berger & Iyengar, 2013). At the same time there are some topics that are identity-relevant. For example, some individuals care a lot about politics and talk about it a lot because it makes them seem smart and well-informed about social topics (Berger, 2014). Therefore, people talk more about symbolic products than utilitarian (Chung & Darke, 2006).

Then, impression management often lead people to have conversations about accessible topics, as well as products, because those are known by everyone and it is easier to have a dialogue. The last consequence impression management has on people word of mouth can be called incidental arousal, that may happen during moments that influence the rise of strong emotions like anxiety (Koenig, 1985; Heath et al., 2001).

Self-enhancement is one of the main human motivators for sharing and some researches state that the products and services world is a means of self-expression that serves to fulfil people need to self-enhance (Fiske, 2001; Belk, 1988; Berger and Heath, 2007; Seirgy, 1982). For example, in order to gain status, movie lovers may like to show their knowledge about cinema history with other movie lovers like them.

Concerning the generation of positive WOM or the transmission of negative WOM in the field of self-enhancement, De Angelis, Bonezzi, Peluso, Rucker and Costabile (2012) predicted and proved that the chance consumers engage in positive or negative WOM depends also on the stage above-mentioned in which the dissemination of word of mouth can take place (WOM generation or WOM transmission). In other words, they stated that, "consumers with a need to self-enhance generate more positive WOM and transmit more negative WOM than consumers who do not need to self-enhance".

In order to explain identity signalling phenomenon we can state that people need to look good from the others' point of view and even from their own. In particular, in order to fulfil this, people share word of mouth to communicate their identities (Berger, 2014) For example, if an individual always talks about cars, maybe he is keen on motors and, in order to link this example to self-enhancement, he may also be believed to be an expert on this field.

About filling conversational spaces, sometimes, individuals feel difficulty to have a conversation with others. Even in this case there could be the fear of being judged not great conversationalists or to have nothing interesting to say. Therefore, the act of sharing word of mouth can be also a great means to fill dead conversation through small talks (Berger, 2014).

Emotion regulation. It happens that externalities influence our emotions and so it may rise a need to manage those emotions in some way. Word of mouth may have the function of emotion regulation (Berger, 2014),

i.e. word of mouth is able to manage and take under control people's emotions. People share the 90% of their emotional experiences (Mesquita, 1993; Vergara, 1993; Rimé, Finkenauer, Luminet, Zech, & Philippot, 1992; Walker, Skowronsky, Gibbons, Vogl, & Ritchie, 2009). There are some emotions like happiness or excitement or even sadness that enhance the likelihood of social sharing, on the other hand, there are others that have the opposite effect. For example, shame and guilty (Finkenauer & Rimé, 1998) decrease word of mouth generation because of the likelihood of making bad impression. Finally, word of mouth, in the field of emotion regulation, may have the function of emotion arousal. In other word, there is difference in their power of word of mouth activation. Therefore, in general, the higher the emotion arousal the higher the levels of activation, the higher the likelihood of word of mouth. WOM regulates emotions in different ways. Now I will briefly explain them.

Rimé (2007; 2009) provides support to the fact that when people live negative experiences, talking to others generate social support, i.e. comfort and consolation.

Emotion regulation allows people to vent thanks to the generation of word of mouth (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Sundaram et al, 1998; Rimé, 2009). The need to vent is the desire to reach a catharsis about a negative experience.

Not only, the sharing may help to understand what is happened, but also it may facilitate to understand how and why we feel about that event (Rimé, Mesquita, Philippot, & Boca, 1991; Rosnow, 1980).

Dichter (1966) found support to the fact that people share their ideas in order to find confirmation to their own judgement.

When a consumption experience is terribly negative, we may blame the company itself. The reaction would be engaging in negative word or mouth in order to punish the company and reducing the stress (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Sundaram et al., 1998).

Finally, by talking about positive experiences people rehearse and live again the positive emotions (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Rimé, 2009). "verbal consumption"

Information acquisition. Another important function of word of mouth is information acquisition, i.e. the people need to diminish the information asymmetry before taking a purchasing decision. First, the more the decision is risky, important, complex or uncertainty-ridden, the more the likelihood of the engagement in word of mouth in order to lower the chance to take the wrong decision. WOM provides information in five possible ways.

First, word of mouth is a great tool to seek advice for individuals (Dicther, 1966; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Rimé, 2009).

Second, Sundaram et al. (1998) found that another way in which word of mouth foster information acquisition is by resolving problems. Indeed, usually when we have personal problems, we try to solve them by seeking recommendation from others.

Thirds, word of mouth has the characteristic to foster the connection between individuals (Rimé, 2009).

Forth, consumers may buy and consume in order to communicate their membership to a certain group because this help them to connect with similar others (Berger & Heath, 2007; DiMaggio, 1987; Douglas & Isherwood, 1978).
Fifth, by fostering social bonding, word of mouth, at the same time, could also reduce loneliness and social exclusion.

Persuading others. Often, it happens that we talk about something in order to persuade others to avoid it or not. This is the fifth and last function of word of mouth indicated by Berger (2014). People may talk about more emotional polarized contents and arousing topics.
When people desire to convince others to go to the cinema to watch the film they like, they may share word of mouth about the more emotional part they remember about that film. Therefore, if consumers want to convince someone about the negativity or positivity of a product or service, they may share extremely negative or positive information rather than the most moderate.
In the same way, people may share contents to change others' viewpoints by sharing more emotionally arousing content. It means that, for example, when politicians are talking about the negative actions done by the opponent parties, they may consider to use the worst in order to convince voters that they are the best choice in comparison with others.
In the second chapter, I start by taking an overview of the motion picture industry. It is a sector that has always elicited high curiosity for scholars because of the high variance in performance and the high risk faced by its companies. Several researches tried to understand the box office performances by studying the factors which influence them. Moreover, behind the film, there are great investments, from its production budget to the marketing and promotional one. Therefore, analyse eWOM in this industry is fundamental to understand which are the success factors. To do this, I start by analysing the motion picture product. The movie is an experience good about which the consumer does not know what its value is until the moment of consume (Chang & Ki 2005). For experience goods, before obtaining some of the information to make an assessment, consumers would purchase them, consume them and maybe compare them with other brands. "Experience" is the name of this process. Experience goods need greater depth of search (i.e. more time spent per product page online), while search goods involve greater breath of search (more pages visited online).
Indeed, the quality evaluation of films imposes high levels of difficulty and uncertainty because of their nature (Caves, 2000). Consequently, this difficulty leads to an important information asymmetry, therefore, when people are making movie choices, they need some indicators typical of this industry (K. Hendricks, Sorensen 2009). Movie is an experiential good and, moreover, it is a product of entertainment, therefore people choose it and "consume" it just for the pleasure itself (Chang & Ki 2005). Moreover, differently from other experience good, every film is always different from another.

The entire film production process, in order to be sustainable, must be profitable. The economic results are difficult to forecast being characterized by high randomness. Furthermore, each film needs an important investment considering not only the production budgets, but also the promotional expenses and the advertising costs. Therefore, being obvious the risk faced in the motion picture industry we can understand the economic interest behind the investigation of the success drivers that influence the box office performances of a film. There is a great existent literature on box office success and the success drivers are classified in three important groups of factors (Hennig-Thurau, Houston, Walsh 2006): movie characteristics, post-filming studio actions and external factors. In the first group, we can find personal attractiveness including stars, directors and producers. Factors of this group that may influence box-office success involve the rating given by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), the country of origin and the genre.

The second important group of factors is composed by the post-filming studio actions, i.e. studios exploit communicative and distributive post-filming activities. The movie advertising is the most expensive, but at the same time the most influential actions. It provides information to potential moviegoers about film's content and allows them to experience part of the film (Faber and O'Guinn 1984). Indeed, the number of screens on which a movie is shown is not only an important indicator of the distributive efforts behind the movie. It strongly influences the potential number of moviegoers to that film (Swami, Eliashberg, Weinberg 1999).

The last group of drivers are the external factors over those studios have little or no influence. The first of those is the consumers' quality perception that is the subjective evaluation based on the consumption experience of the film in relation of the subjective standard of quality of each moviegoer (Rust, Oliver 1994). Another important driver concerns movie reviews. The common denominator is that reviews provide potential viewers with information about film's content and overall quality (Eliashberg, Shugan 1997). Finally, movie's awards given to films, by acclaimed institution as The Oscars, The Golden Globes, The Cannes Festival, The Venice Film Festival and so on, could denote a product excellence. This information, is commonly used as a heuristic shortcut for an ex ante evaluation for consumers' choices and could change a consumers' evaluation who has already watched a film. Another important possible success driver is the star rating. It reflects consumers' personal judgments about a movie (Zhang and Yang, 2016).

Experts agree that WOM is a fundamental factor in influencing the movie final success (Elberse and Eliashberg, 2003). This is due to the fact that each movie is an experience good and, at the same time, unique makes this industry really affectable by WOM, which can take many forms such as online reviews, discussion forums, blogs, podcasts, SNS, wikis (Duan, Gu, Whinston, 2008). Moreover, the fact that movies are a culture goods, they tend to receive a lot of public interest that becomes interpersonal communication (Chafee, 1982).

My study is mostly based on the relationship between film industry and social networking sites word of mouth. For this reason, I tried to find literature about social networks and the power behind them. In 2009

Nielsen in his research have stated that social networking sites (SNSs) have outpaced emails as the most popular online activity. A possible explanation is that SNSs have enabled people to connect, exchange information, ideas and opinions about everything they want, including products, services and brands.
To sum up, there are three aspects to consider for eWOM on social networking sites: opinion seeking, opinion giving and opinion passing (Shu-Chuan Chu, Yoojung Kim 2011). The passing or forwarding behaviour has a great importance because it enhances the fluidity of information and in online social context can facilitate multidirectional communication. Therefore, in a blink of an eye and with few clicks of the mouse a message can be spread all over the word (Dellarocas 2003).
Social relationships are the base of the SNSs sustainability. Indeed, the aforementioned behaviours may be stated and maintained because of a need of social relationships. Thus, social relationships characteristics are the motives of eWOM process in social networking sites. The features considered are tie strength, trust, homophily and interpersonal influence (Shu-Chuan Chu, Yoojung Kim 2011). The first is defined as the potency of the bond between members of a network (Mittal et al 2008). It is worth of note to highlight that SNS users' perceived tie strength with their contacts is positively related to their engagement in eWOM behaviours in SNSs.
Moorman in 1993 defined trust as the willingness to lean on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence. Shu-Chuan Chu and Yoojung Kim published a research in 2011 in which they proved that the eWOM behaviour engagement on SNSs benefits from the perceived trust in their contacts. In particular, it is proved that it has important and significant influence on opinion seeking, opinion giving and opinion passing.
Homophily is the level to which people who are willing to interact with others, share congruent or similar attributes with them (Rogers and Bhowmik 1970). Because of this characteristic it could be possible that interpersonal exchanges are more likely also in online communities, but Shu-Chuan Chu and Yoojung Kim proved the opposite.
The movie industry is particular and it is due to the experiential and artistic nature of its product. Since that its particular nature, I believed that giving importance to movie-specific eWOM antecedents was a fundamental step of my research. To sum up, movie-specific eWOM motives are self-enhancement, innovativeness and opinion leadership, ability and self-efficacy, individuation, neuroticism and altruism. People do listen online to reduce search and evaluation efforts both in pre- and post- purchase assessments. In general, the results confirm that the propensity to post online reviews is affected by product involvement, message involvement, self-involvement and social benefits. On the other hand, altruism (i.e. concern for others) is disconfirmed to be one of the primary triggers for engaging in online movie reviews. The WOM volume is higher for movies that are perceived by moviegoers to be exceptionally good or miserably bad. Indeed, it is highlighted a U-shaped relationship with the average valence of movies' reviews. Concerning the effect of studios' marketing efforts, this research found a positive relation with the propensity to post online review. Moreover, "Movie genres, MPAA ratings, star power, and critical reviews are among the

potential antecedents of movie WOM. A dynamic carryover effect exists between WOM activities in adjacent weeks" (Liu, 2006). In particular, action and adventure films are more prone to be surrounded by high WOM than average, whereas restricted-rated films lower-than-average. Then, the WOM volume carryover effect is proved. This effect shows that the volume in a previous week significantly influence the WOM volume of the subsequent week, but it happens only in for the opening week. As in the other cases, WOM valence has no carryover effect at all. Regarding the star power, it affects significantly the volume for to-be-released movies and in the major part of the subsequent weeks (Liu, 2006).

Furthermore, Chen and Berger (2013) discovered the moderating effect of anonymity. When people believe that they are going to have a real conversation the discomfort wins on interest for high level of controversy and the inverted-U-shaped can be observed. It would not happen when people do not believe that they are going to engage a real conversation.

The most important characteristic of the movie WOM is that it is an endogenous variable. Indeed, movies around which people perceive a lot of online buzz are more likely to receive even more online reviews, because it is more likely that people read them and simply because it is fan to do what others are doing. This highlights an important characteristic of online WOM volume. It is both an antecedent and a consequence.

The literature review provided me the knowledge to define the research questions and the hypothesis of this thesis, that will focus on social media WOM. A great part of brand-related UGC (i.e. online WOM) is produced on three social media sites: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube (Roma and Aloini, 2019). They have different architectures, norms and cultures that change over time continuously. Those typical features of each channel could influence the social environment, such as the relationship that are formed and the users' behaviours (Roma and Aloini, 2019).

Recently, Facebook introduced the live video streaming and now, sharing and posting videos, has become very popular on the platform (Roma and Aloini, 2019).

With regard to YouTube, on average, the most commented videos are user-generated, whereas the most viewed tend to be professionally produced (Kruibosch and Nack, 2008). The usage of YouTube is in large part for brand-related UGC.

On Twitter the posts (Tweets) could forward to other stories, blogs, images, videos by the means of hyperlinks. Regarding the WOM on this platform, it was founded that 19% of posts are brand-related tweets (Jansen et al., 2009). Moreover, Twitter stated that the firm wants to make it easier for users to express themselves by the means of images and videos other than text posts (Roma and Aloini, 2019).

On these assumptions I develop some research questions: *on which platform is more likely to engage (give, pass or seek information) in eWOM about movies nowadays in Italy? On which platform people will lean on to engage (give, pass or seek) in eWOM about movies in Italy? Which platform is perceived to be the most helpful to engage (give, pass or seek) in eWOM about movies in Italy? On which platform is more likely that a person engages (give, pass or seek) WOM in Italy?*

In turn, I developed five hypothesis:

H1: People are more willing to engage (give, pass or seek) in eWOM about movies on Facebook,

than on Twitter and YouTube in Italy.

The hypothesis H1 could be supported by the fact that Facebook platform is in an ongoing exchange by means of participation, i.e. all those activities such as writing on friends' walls, commenting and liking posts, following pages and participating to discussions. In this way, people build and maintain social relationships by participating to others' lives and learning about everything they want by rumours and buzz (Smith, Fischer, Yongjian 2012). Moreover, recently, Facebook introduced the live video streaming and now, sharing and posting videos has become very popular on the platform (Roma and Aloini, 2019) and since that films advertising is mostly based on videos like teasers, trailers and all those communications made by the film's cast to their supporters, Facebook can be appropriate for movie market-directed communications and in turn the optimal social media where people can engage in WOM about cinema.

H2: People are more willing to engage (give, pass or seek) in eWOM about movies on Twitter, than on Facebook and YouTube in Italy.

The hypothesis H2 could be supported by the fact that on Twitter the posts (Tweets) could forward to other stories, blogs, images, videos by the means of hyperlinks. Regarding the WOM on this platform, it was founded that 19% of posts are brand-related tweets (Jansen et al., 2009). Moreover, Twitter stated that the firm wants to make it easier for users to express themselves by the means of images and videos other than text posts (Roma and Aloini, 2019). Like for Facebook, since that a great part of movie firms' advertising is based on videos could get us to the assumption that Twitter is appropriate for movie market-directed communication and in turn the perfect social media where people can engage in WOM about cinema.

Furthermore, considering the motion picture industry I would like to investigate three dimensions of online communities that I have introduced in the paragraph 2.2.1 "Online Communities and Knowledge Collaboration": tie strength, homophily and source credibility.

Therefore, it is possible to state that people with strong tie relationship are more willing to engage in WOM (Brown, Broderick and Lee, 2007). Tie strength it is found to have a positive correlation with decision making (Leonard-Barton, 1985). Finally, Palmer (1996) demonstrated that, "individuals have an underlying need for an emotional bond with high-involvement products that they buy". In the light of those assumptions, I believe that the tie strength has a positive influence on WOM engagement (information giving, passing and seeking) about movies which could be high-involvement products for movie-lovers. Indeed, I predict:

H3: Tie strength positively influences online WOM engagement (information giving, passing or seeking) about movies in Italy. The fact that the individual is or not a movie-lover has a moderating effect. The more one considers himself a movie-lover, the greater the positive effect of the tie strength.

This hypothesis is based on the assumption that individuals, who share a deep relationship with someone and contextually are highly involved with cinema, have a stronger need to engage in WOM about movies, triggered by many WOM antecedents listed by Berger (2014): self-enhancement, in order to fulfil their desires to be acknowledged as movie experts by someone they love; encouraging rehearsal about a films they love; seeking or giving advice about cinema to help someone they care; reinforcing shared views about movies and therefore reinforcing the social bond with someone they love.

It is important to state that, tie strength enhances the homophily, since that the stronger the tie between two individuals, the greater the homophily (McPherson and Smith-Lovin, 1987). Furthermore, the positive effect of homophily on WOM can be triggered also by some WOM antecedents listed by Berger (2014). For this reason, I predict:

H4: Homophily positively influences online WOM engagement (information giving, passing or seeking) about movies in Italy. The fact that the individual is or not a movie-lover has a moderating effect. The more one considers himself a movie-lover, the greater the positive effect of homophily.

Finally, in online community, the source credibility is an important concept. It considers the source expertise and source bias to assess if or not he/ she is a credible source of information (Buda and Zhang, 200).

H5: Source credibility positively influences online WOM engagement (information giving, passing or seeking) about movies in Italy. The fact that the individual is or not a movie-lover has a moderating effect. The more one considers himself a movie-lover, the greater the positive effect of source credibility.

On the receiver's point of view, the first statement of this hypothesis is mostly based on the WOM antecedents "seeking advice" and "resolving problems" (Berger, 2014). Moreover, the more the receiver is a movie-lover, the more those antecedents will be fundamental. Instead, on the sender's point of view, the more the sender believe to be a credible source, the more he will engage in WOM about films, triggered by other Berger's antecedents (2014): self-enhancement, identity-signalling, generating social support, help others by giving advice and resolving problems, persuading others. Furthermore, the more the sender is a movie-lover, the more those antecedents have effect on the source.

Chapter 3 is mostly focused on the verification of the hypothesis, but it comprehends also the method used to gather useful primary and secondary data.

To capture some general insights about the topic, I reviewed the literature about online word of mouth by looking for many different keywords*: eWOM; online word of mouth; traditional WOM; WOM antecedents; WOM triggers; online review; consumer-opinion platform; social-sharing of emotion.* The review of the first chapter provided me different insights in order to focus my attention on several keywords about word of mouth in the motion picture industry. Afterwards, in the second chapter I reviewed the literature behind this topic to get the most fundamental insights in order to develop the research questions and the hypothesis. Furthermore, a questionnaire was created in order to validate or refuse them. The used keywords are: *motion picture industry; experience good; box office success drivers; online communities; SNSs WOM; brand-related user-generated content; WOM in the motion picture industry; box-office performance; consumer reviews; review helpfulness.*

The choice of "online WOM engagement" as a dependent variable of all those hypotheses is due to the fact that, in the motion picture industry, WOM is an endogenous variable. Indeed, one of the most important insight demonstrated in prior researches is the positive feedback mechanism of WOM in the movie industry. As stated in chapter 2, Duan et al. (2008), not only demonstrated that film box-office performance importantly affects the number of eWOM generated (eWOM volume), but also that WOM volume is positively correlated with box-office performance. In other words, eWOM volume positively influences movies box-office performances and,

contextually, box-office performance positively affects eWOM. Therefore, it is important to understand how is possible to enhance the eWOM generation in order to activate this endogenous effect.
In order to gather primary data that would be useful to test my hypothesis, I built an experiment on Qualtrics. Initially, respondents were asked to think about one of the best films they have ever seen.
Afterwards, each respondent could face a general and extremely positive review of a film on three different platforms randomly assigned: Facebook, Twitter or YouTube.
The review is extremely positive because it has been proved that the WOM volume is higher for movies that are perceived by moviegoers to be exceptionally good or miserably bad.
The review is composed by: a description of actors, film director, photography director, producers, advertising campaign and promotion; a brief contextualization of the film and an objective comment about the plot and the film made in third person; information about the theatres where people can watch the film; a subjective and first-person judgement of the film, its cast, the felt emotions, the film and photography directors and the plot. Finally, I strongly recommend to watch the film. The final sample was composed by 209 participants. For what concerns the gender, the majority of them are males (111; 53.11%), while 98 are females (46.89%). The average age of the sample is 32.82, in which the youngest participants is 16 years old, while the oldest one is 84 years old.
To analyse my data and perform my analysis I used STATA, one of the most widespread software for data analysis. Considering methodology, I exploit both ANOVA and Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression methodologies.
After running the first linear regression model, I discovered that people who believe to be on Facebook have higher willingness to engage in WOM about cinema with respect to individuals who are not on this platform. The same for Twitter. Indeed, I discovered that being on Twitter enhances the willingness to engage in WOM about cinema, but less than on Facebook. Finally, the effect of being on YouTube is negative on the willingness to engage in WOM. Therefore, in general, H1 seems to be strongly accepted, while H2 not. Moreover, the willingness to engage in WOM is composed by three dimensions in my experiment: eWOM seeking, eWOM passing, eWOM giving. I run other linear regressions in order to understand analyse the single effects of Facebook on these three dimensions. I discovered that the major effect of Facebook is on the respondents' seeking habits as well as on the giving habits. We can't state that Facebook has a positive effect on the respondents' passing habits.
In order to accept or refuse H3, H4 and H5 I need again to run other linear regression models. Considering H3, I found that the willingness to engage in WOM about films enhances when people need to interact with individuals with whom they have a solid relationship. From the results, I concluded that the first statement of H3, that is *"tie strength positively influences online WOM engagement about movies in Italy",* it is weakly accepted. Moreover, I demonstrated that the more an individual considers himself a movie-lover, the higher the willingness to engage in WOM. Unfortunately, the moderating effect of movie-lover is not proved, because it is not significant at all.
For what concerns H4, it is proved that when people share the same interest with individuals with whom they need to interact (i.e. there is homophily between them), the willingness to engage in eWOM enhances. In conclusion, homophily positively influences eWOM engagement about movies in Italy. Furthermore, also this

time, the willingness to engage in eWOM about movies enhances the more individuals consider themselves movie-lovers. Unfortunately, the moderating effect of movie-lover on the willingness to engage in eWOM about cinema in Italy is not proved again.

Finally, concerning H5, it is verified that source credibility positively influences online WOM engagement about movies in Italy. Moreover, again, there is not a moderating effect of movie-lover on the willingness to engage in eWOM about movies in Italy, but it is found that the more one considers himself a movie-lover, the greater the willingness.

In conclusion, there are some important managerial implications to highlight. Facebook is in first position among the SNSs users (Lenhart et al., 2010). As Smith, Fischer, Yongjian stated in 2012, it is a platform in continuous exchange by means of participation. In confirmation of the potential of this platform, I discovered that Facebook users are more willing to engage in WOM about movies, in comparison with Twitter and YouTube, therefore, investments efforts should be focused on this platform. Moreover, Facebook has introduced the live video streaming; thus, the social network tends more to be used to share videos and, since that the movies advertising is mostly based on videos like teasers, trailers and all those communications made by the caste of the films, and sometimes by film supporters, Facebook is the perfect platform where film company might invest in advertising. In order to exploit the potential of Facebook, film companies should foster the creation of communities populated by cinema lovers and cinema experts. Furthermore, the communities should be regulated by community managers in charge to lead contents and engage individuals. Those communities should be populated by people with the same interests (homophily), by cinema experts (credibility) and by cinema lovers (cinema love). Indeed, there are evidence that people who share the same interests are more prone to share information each other. In addition, the word of mouth that comes from those people who are believed to be credible about cinema is assessed to be more reliable. Finally, cinema lovers are those who are easier to engage and would be the lifeblood of the communities.

My thesis can be the starting point of possible future research. The results highlight that Facebook is potentially the best platform on which WOM about movies can spread in comparison with Twitter and YouTube. People use Facebook specially to look for information, maybe in order to seek advice, or maybe to regulate their emotions because the film they have watched wasn't good as they expected, or maybe in order to have something to talk about with friends and colleagues. Then, Facebook users give advices by the means of online word-of-mouth. The main reasons that push them might be several. For example, they aim to signal their movie-lover identities, or to prove themselves they are expert about cinema. Moreover, they try to be supportive for their Facebook friends, or they want to understand if people share their views. Then, people may need to look for revenge because they have watched a film on which they had high expectations. Finally, they aim to persuade people. This is a limit of my research, but at the same way a potential opportunity in order to investigate which are the main reasons behind the engagement in WOM about movies on Facebook in order to create cinema communities, where potential moviegoers, cinema lovers and cinema experts can exchange contents which are perfectly targeted for them. In addition, this study introduces a potential moderator, "cinema love", that is analysed in relation with all the independent variables and the dependent variable "willingness to engage in WOM" and all its

dimensions: “seeking WOM”, “passing WOM”, “giving WOM”. I believe these variables might be potentially the most fruitful in future in order to individuate the trendsetters in the environment of movie WOM. “Cinema love” always has a positive effect on willingness to engage in WOM and on all its dimensions (seek WOM, pass WOM, give WOM), independently on which platform (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) people are. A possible challenge in the future should be better analyse this variable thanks to the creation of a validated multi-item scale. This would continue to refine the measures and perfect the results.