Impact of Online Word of Mouth on moviegoers: Students at the University of Gävle

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Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to investigate online WOM in terms of its practice and the effect it can have on movie consumers. What are the motives moviegoers have in generating eWOM? Where can eWOM on movies be found online, and how does it impact its readers?

Design/methodology/approach

In order to develop our aim and research questions, the main concepts about WOM in general and WOM in the film industry were reviewed. Furthermore, the method of research was quantitative and was conducted on Business students at the University of Gävle, Sweden. An online survey was put at their disposal by mail as well as social media.

Findings

With the help of the results of our study, we discovered that our respondents had a positive attitude towards generating online WOM if given the opportunity. We identified the main motives movie consumers have, when it comes to generating eWOM, positive as well as negative. The effect of eWOM on moviegoers was also analyzed and we could conclude that positive eWOM can influence moviegoers to consider a specific movie and negative eWOM can either have no impact on filmgoers or make them disregard the specific movie. Finally, our findings also suggest that social media and review websites are the most used platforms for eWOM on movies.

Theoretical & Practical implications

This research offers a base for further research as it specifically focuses on consumer behavior towards eWOM, specifically in the film industry. The behavior of the consumers was examined from both the negative and the positive aspects of eWOM to deeper understand the effect it has in the film industry. Furthermore, the willingness to generate eWOM, motives, platforms of generation and effect were also key aspects of our research.

Originality/value

This research is unique in its kind due to its consideration of differentiating on both negative and positive aspects of eWOM. Previous research tends to focus only on the general phenomena of WOM, which did not give the possibility to understand the different ways it affects the consumers.

Keywords

Word of Mouth, eWOM, Film industry, Movie, Motives, Generation, moviegoer’s behavior

Abbreviations

WOM: Word of mouth; eWOM: electronic word of mouth
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1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the identification of the aim and research questions for this research. It develops the background of WOM and further narrows down a gap in the literature in relation to electronic WOM in the film industry.

1.1 Background

In present times communication and information have become important assets, argues Moul (2007). Furthermore when the information is incomplete, having customers sharing information can results in obtaining the perfect information ideal and better economic returns for organizations. Therefore, the investigation of word of mouth becomes an important topic for both researchers and companies (Moul, 2007).

Word of mouth (WOM) has, through the passing of time, impacted every industry as being the channel of information that offers high credibility and thus, it potentially has more impact than any other communicational channel (Buttle, 1998; Godes & Mayzlin, 2004).

With the development of the Internet and social networks, WOM reaches an unprecedented level, and it is no longer confined to small circles as a consequence of the rise of social networks used worldwide (Buttle, 1998; Duan, Gu & Whinston, 2008). Websites such as youtube.com, imdb.com or amazon.com become fountains of information for users that need product information and, further offer excellent opportunities for consumers to generate WOM (Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels 2009; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner & Walsh, 2004).

The nature of WOM makes it so that in most cases it is independently generated (Sheth, 1971; Phelps et al., 2004; Trusov et al., 2009). However, what is the main motivator that encourages filmgoers to generate WOM? Four motivators are identified in the literature: product involvement (Dichter, 1966; Sundaram, Mitra & Webster, 1998; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), self enhancement or self-involvement (Dichter, 1966; Sundaram et al., 1998; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), concern for others (Dichter, 1966; Sundaram et al., 1998; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004) and social benefits (Yap, Soetarto & Sweeney, 2013; Berger, 2014; Dellarocas & Narayan, 2006).
From the perspective of those exposed to WOM, due to its objective nature it can influence expectations and perceptions during the information search phase of the buying process and even influence attitudes during the pre-choice evaluation of alternative products (Buttle, 1998).

As consumers are interested in generating content about the products and experiences they consume, they can also be influenced by content other users might generate (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004) and its credibility is reinforced by the unbiased nature of this information channel (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004).

1.2 Choice of industry – The film industry

It can be observed that WOM is a serious concern for both users and creators of products, and it does have an important foothold in the buying decision process, however when it comes to entertaining, more specifically films, how does WOM manifest and does it have any impact? Actually, Movies are one of the most popular topics when generating online WOM (Yeap, Ignatius & Ramayah, 2014)

The global movie industry is valued to multiple hundreds of billions of dollars yearly (Eliashberg, Jonker, Sawhney & Wierenga, 2000). For example, each year Hollywood releases hundreds of movies (Liu, 2006), however only a small number of those become blockbusters. One of the contributors to the success or the flop of a cinematic production is agreed to be word of mouth (Liu, 2006; Eliashberg & Shugan, 1997).

Studies show that WOM is known to start impacting sales even before a film is actually released and moreover, continues to have impact while the film is present at the box office (Liu, 2006; Eliashberg & Shugan, 1999; Mckenzie, 2009). However, it is really difficult to predict how much impact WOM will have on the actual success of a film. Nevertheless, early reviews tend to predict the success or failure of the production of a film (Liu, 2006; Moon, Bergey & Iacobucci, 2010). Within the WOM literature, it is agreed that the generation of positive word of mouth can enhance the advertising performance for the promotion of the movie (Basuroy, Chatterjee & Ravid, 2003; Moon et al., 2010; Moul, 2007; Prag & Casavant, 1994). Other authors agree that WOM can be seen as a measuring tool for predicting the future success of the movie (Basuroy et al., 2003; Gemser, Van Oostrum & Leenders, 2007).
In the film industry, it is important to understand the effects of both positive and negative WOM are not necessarily the opposites of each other. Negative WOM is most likely to negatively affect box office performance than positive WOM can improve it (Basuroy et al., 2003). Furthermore, various people tend to react differently to WOM, for example: the impact towards infrequent moviegoers is considered to be stronger than towards frequent (Basuroy et al., 2003). Frequent moviegoers are considered to be more influenced by professional WOM in the form of reviews. (Basuroy et al., 2003).

Considering that, WOM is a phenomenon that has been receiving a lot of attention from managers in different sectors (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004), certainly after the development of the Internet. In this research we focus on the online aspect of WOM in the film industry. Our choice of industry is based on the fact that WOM can predict and even influence the success of a motion picture (Basuroy et al., 2003; Gemser et al., 2007). Moreover, we are considering the online environment because many different online platforms generate and spread online WOM about movies (Dellarocas & Narayan, 2006; Yap et al., 2013). For example websites such as: imdb.com, youtube.com, facebook.com, etc., who allow WOM to reach people around the world in a matter of seconds, making eWOM a highly effective tool of communication (Buttle, 1998; Duan et al., 2008).

1.2 Problem discussion and research questions

For this research we are interested to observe the attitudes of moviegoers in order to gather relevant information that can help movie producing companies to better adapt their marketing campaigns to the demands of the market.

1.2.1 Aim and problem identification

Reasoning from the information provided in the background and WOM in the film industry sections, in Table 1, we develop an overview over thirteen scientific articles related to WOM and the film industry to better understand the research that has been carried out in this area, and to observe if there are areas that could be further explored.
WOMs impact in the film industry

Can WOM impact the success of a movie?

Motivation for generation of WOM

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Table 1: Literature overview on WOM in the film industry. Source: own.

It can be observed in Table 1 that extensive research has been done on the impact WOM has in the film industry and a relation cannot be denied. Mostly WOM is analyzed after it has been generated and focus is on the impact it has had at the end of the process, and few studies focus on motivators for generating eWOM about movies.

Considering all of the above, the aim of this research is: to observe if filmgoers are interested in generating eWOM and what is the impact eWOM can have on moviegoers.

We believe this is of importance as by understanding the manifestation and the impact of eWOM, film producers or cinema companies can take a step forward in understanding how to better manage a viral phenomenon such as eWOM.

1.1.2 Research questions

In order for us to reach our aim we have developed two research questions. The used method to gather data for answering our research questions was a quantitative one, based on an online questionnaire and was conducted on Business students at the University of Gävle, Sweden, autumn semester 2015.

The research questions are as follows:

1. Are filmgoers interested in generating eWOM and what motivates them to do so?

As the previous studies suggest eWOM is a factor that impacts the film industry. In addition the Internet has transformed it into a viral phenomenon. Therefore, we firstly turn our attention towards the movie consumers to understand if they are interested in generating online word of mouth, and if so, what are the elements that motivate them to do so?
2. *How does online word of mouth impact filmgoers?*

Secondly, we are interested in how filmgoers are affected by online word of mouth. The previous studies give us a starting point, however we wish to investigate this matter further. Thus, it is important to turn towards the consumers and understand how much eWOM influences their decision of whether or not to watch a movie. Are consumers highly affected by online WOM and which factors are important influencers? Factors such as the eWOM valence (positive-negative) will be taken in account to observe if negative eWOM has a stronger or a weaker impact than positive eWOM.

This study focuses on business students at the University of Gävle, and only considers the perspective of the moviegoers and not the perspective of the movie producing companies as well, which can limit the information obtained.

In order for us to achieve the goals of this study we have divided this work into six chapters: Introduction, Theoretical framework, Methodology, Empirical Findings, Analysis and Conclusions. This should make it easier for the reader to understand our process of thought in developing the results of this study.
2. Theoretical framework

The main focus of this chapter is to review the theory regarding WOM and eWOM in order to identify the motives for generating eWOM and what is the impact eWOM can have on its receivers within the film industry. Furthermore a research model will be developed with the help of the literature to guide us in our empirical research.

2.1 What is online WOM?

Word of mouth (WOM) is a phenomenon that occurs when consumers discuss a specific product, service or brand with the intention of sharing information (Richins, 1983). Moreover WOM can be positive as well as negative (Nguyen & Romaniuk, 2014). The motives consumers have to share WOM information about a product, service or experience, can vary, which we will discuss later in this chapter. Nevertheless, WOM has been recognized as a communication channel that offers the highest credibility and potentially stronger impact compared to other channels of communication that companies use (Buttle, 1998; Godes & Mayzlin, 2004; Nguyen & Romaniuk, 2014).

Recently, with rise of the Internet, online word of mouth (eWOM) has reached a new peak and has received considerable attention in marketing research (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). There are even cases when companies are posing as customers online to create eWOM about specific products (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004). In addition, another well-known practice is to target opinion leaders in order to prompt the WOM diffusion process, trials of new products, allow them to participate in the innovation process, etc. (Sheth, 1971; Steyer, Garcia-Bardidia & Quester, 2006). eWOM is known to differentiate itself due to several characteristics compared to the traditional WOM and takes places in different ways, on different platforms (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

A first difference is that eWOM communication offers a much higher speed of diffusion and scalability (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Traditional WOM only involves small groups of individuals and the communication form is private. Therefore, the shared information tends to remain in a small group, meaning that individuals outside of this social group will not be able to access this content (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). This differs from eWOM, where everyone can access the information and does not have to be present at the exact moment of the information diffusion (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). For example, readers have access to comments, reviews, etc. on different online platforms even years after they have been
generated. eWOM is also much more accessible than traditional WOM and moreover, available for an indefinite period of time and it has a higher measurability than regular WOM (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). In addition the Internet preserves all information and is easily retrievable, which becomes an advantage for measuring and analyzing eWOM through time (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). The last difference is rather negative towards eWOM compared to the traditional form. Traditional WOM information evolves among individuals that most likely know each other and thus, it offers a way to assess the credibility of the message. With eWOM, on contrary, individuals only have an online communication exchange, and might not have the same level of trust in the communication partners as with face-to-face communication. However, the level of trust can still be higher than for the information directly received from the company (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; King, Racherla & Bush, 2014).

2.2 eWOM Platforms

eWOM occurs in different ways and is to be found about everywhere on the Internet (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Yeap et al., 2014). Online platforms that serve as a feedback mechanism, make it possible for consumers to share eWOM information about seemingly every product or service (Dellarocas, 2003). Individuals that have the same interests come together on the same platform and share information about their experiences with products and services, not being motivated by any financial reward (King, Racherla & Bush, 2014).

Now the question is, which are these platforms where consumers share their experiences and more important, how do they differ from one another? According to Yeap et al. (2014) and Cheung & Thadani (2012), the main eWOM communication platforms are personal blogs, review sites, social networks and instant messaging sites.

*Personal blogs*

Platforms as personal blogs refer to frequently updated online journals or diaries. Often, it is an individual author that manages the blog. The posts themselves are highly related to the personality of the blog author. Further, these posts travel across the Internet and are shared in different places for the world to see, for example on social media. (Yeap et al., 2014).
Review sites

These websites are especially made for developing reviews with a content varying among products, services, people etc., including movies. The reviews are based on ratings and evaluations as well as professional critics. Within the movie area most known websites are: imdb.com and rottentomatoes.com. (Yeap et al., 2014).

Social networks

Nowadays almost everyone is connected to social networks. It gives the possibility to the users to share personal information, pictures, videos, comments, etc. Here, individuals publish their thoughts and these are made visible to the user’s online social. Most known social network are: facebook.com, twitter.com and instagram.com. (Yeap et al., 2014).

Instant messaging sites

Instant messaging sites allow the participants to communicate freely and instantly. This way opinions can be expressed in a more interactive form. Further, the communication can also occur through webcam or the use of a microphone and files can also be shared instantly with one another. For example: Whatsapp, Skype, etc. (Yeap et al., 2014).

Yeap et al. (2014) and Cheung & Thadani (2012), investigates these platforms in terms of which is the most preferred and most influential towards the users for the movie industry and reaches some interesting findings. A first finding is that review sites are the most popular and influential eWOM channels among moviegoers. On the second place are the social networks followed by personal blogs and the least popular, the instant messaging websites (Yeap et al., 2014). Other findings of both Yeap et al. (2014) and Cheung & Thadani (2012), imply that the credibility and trustworthiness of the source are more important than information quality and expertise.

2.3 WOM in the film industry

The film industry all around the world is massive and accounts for billions of dollars each year (Eliashberg et al., 2000). As for everything, some of these released movies become blockbusters while others become a total flop. The industry itself has unique characteristics, requiring large investments with low guarantees of success or good return on investment (Eliashberg et al., 2000; Goettler & Leslie, 2005). Watching a movie is considered an intangible experience rather than a product, and thus based on the emotions that users
experience by watching it. It is therefore, it becomes really difficult to predict what results a movie will achieve (Eliashberg et al., 2000).

Multiple studies suggest that WOM plays an important role in the film industry when it comes to the success of a movie (Liu, 2006; Eliashberg & Shugan, 1997; Mckenzie, 2009). It is known to influence a movie even before the release date by at least suggesting the impact the movie will have after the premiere (Liu, 2006). Movies in general have a very short product life cycle making early communication highly important (McKenzie, 2009).

According to Liu (2006), WOM has its influence on movie-sales from two different angles: volume and valence. The volume of WOM refers to the amount of available WOM information and is known to increase awareness about a movie. Valence on the other hand, means the type of WOM, which can be positive or negative. A simple explanation would be that valence impacts the consumer’s attitude towards a movie depending on the positivity or negativity of the WOM message (Liu, 2006; Richins, 1983). According to more than a few authors (Basuroy et al., 2003; Moon et al., 2010; Moul, 2007; Prag & Casavant, 1994), positive WOM is also most likely to help increase the advertising efforts from the moviemakers.

The manifestations of WOM for a new movie are the early reviews (Eliashberg & Shugan, 1997; Basuroy et al., 2003; Moon et al., 2010). These are mostly created by professional reviewers and are known to have the ability to predict the overall success or failure of a movie (Eliashberg & Shugan, 1997; Basuroy et al., 2003; Moon et al., 2010). These early critics influence the time a movie tends to stay at the box office, for example, positive reviews can help the movie remain at the box office a longer time, and negative reviews can result in the removal of the movie from the theaters (McKenzie, 2009; Prag & Casavant 1994). The impact critics have, starts to dissipate when other sources of WOM information becomes available, however WOM remains a main key communication factor (Eliashberg & Shugan, 1997; Moon et al., 2010).

### 2.4 Main motivations for eWOM generation

It has been observed that WOM does have an impact on the success of a product, be that as it may which are the elements that motivate the eWOM creators to discuss about a product, or in this case about a movie?
Following, in Table 2, a comparison of studies on both WOM and eWOM has been done to understand what motivators are strongest when it comes to creating eWOM.

One of the first studies done on WOM motivators was done by Dichter (1966) and helped in developing this branch of research by being used as a starting point by the studies that have followed after (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

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*Table 2: WOM generation motivators in the literature. Source: Own.*

Positive self enhancement / Self involvement is a motivator that incites the filmgoers to generate WOM / eWOM in order to share their experiences and augment their image as intelligent shoppers or even show expertise as connoisseurs (Dichter, 1966; Sundaram et al., 1998; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Yap et al., 2013; Berger, 2014; Dellarocas & Narayan, 2006).

Another important motivator for generating WOM / eWOM is: concern for others, which expresses a genuine concern so that others make a good choice when choosing to buy a product (Dichter, 1966; Sundaram et al., 1998; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Yap et al., 2013; Dellarocas & Narayan, 2006).
A third motivator that stands out when referring to negative WOM / eWOM is venting negative feelings. Customers diminish their anger or even feel like they took revenge on the product / company by sharing their negative feelings about the specific product (Sundaram, Mitra, & Webster, 1998; Yeap et al., 2013; Berger, 2014).

As WOM / eWOM is at its base a form of communication, a strong motivator is also social benefits, where customers can use conversation about a product as social identification and integration purposes, as well as an ice-breaker for a conversation (Yap et al., 2013; Berger, 2014; Dellarocas & Narayan, 2006).

As consumers generate WOM / eWOM, due to the impact a product has on them, another motivator is also product involvement, where customers can get so excited or disappointed by a product that they feel the need to share their experience with others (Dichter, 1966; Sundaram et al., 1998; Dellarocas & Narayan, 2006).

This compilation of reasons for generating eWOM, presented in Table 2, has helped in the development of hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2, in order to test the strength of each individual motivator.

2.5 Types of moviegoers

To understand the impact WOM has on moviegoers, it is important to first relate to the different types of moviegoers. As is mentioned by Chakravarty et al. (2010), moviegoers are considered heterogeneous in their movie-going frequency whereas a distinction can be made among frequent and infrequent moviegoers. WOM in movies is known to have quite some differences in impact based on the type of moviegoer (Chakravarty et al., 2010).

The distinction between frequent and infrequent moviegoers is also theoretically relevant because the movie going frequency may potentially moderate the effects of WOM in important ways (Chakravarty et al., 2010). Literal support shows us that frequent moviegoers are less sensitive towards eWOM messages than infrequent goers. Which means that eWOM’s effect is stronger for infrequent goers. They dispose of less knowledge, which makes them easier to influence (Chakravarty et al., 2010). Frequent and infrequent moviegoers may also differ in their assessment of the relative usefulness of sources of information. Furthermore, frequent moviegoers are known to be more affected by professional reviews whereas infrequent users mostly by user comments (Chakravarty et al., 2010; Park & Kim, 2009). Having reviewed the differences in movie going frequency and its
effect, we are able to better develop this investigation, by taking the different types of moviegoers in account.

2.6 The impact of eWOM on its receivers

According to Liu (2006) eWOM can influence filmgoers in two ways, first it can increase the awareness for a film and secondly the valence of eWOM can influence the ultimate purchase decision. The valence of eWOM can affect filmgoers as follows: positive eWOM enhances the attitude towards a movie and negative eWOM diminishes it (Liu, 2006).

Mahajan, Muller & Kerin (1984) find that WOM has the potential to impact the final purchasing decision in three ways: consider the recommended product, reject the recommended product and continue to be undecided about the product. Their research presents three impacts WOM can have considering its valence. Receiving only pure negative WOM about a movie leads to almost a total disregard for the specific movie, diminishes the effect of the paid advertising done by the company, and influences the time a movie is present in the Box Office (Mahajan et al., 1984). Combined positive and negative WOM is found to still diminish the attitude towards a movie and that the presence of positive WOM does not completely diminish the negative effects (Mahajan et al., 1984). Pure positive WOM can increase the awareness for a movie and companies are encouraged to enhance positive WOM with advertising (Mahajan et al., 1984).

The potential impact identified by Mahajan et al. (1984) contributes to the development of hypothesis 3, in order to test the mindset moviegoers are left in after being exposed to either positive or negative eWOM.

2.7 Synthesis and research model

This research has a two-fold nature. It firstly investigates which are the strongest motives that encourage moviegoers to generate eWOM and secondly it explores the effects positive or negative eWOM can have on moviegoers.

By developing an overview of the body of literature related to WOM, eWOM and the film industry, this research develops a model that includes the motivators and the effect eWOM can have on moviegoers when exposed to it.

The model takes into consideration firstly the valence of eWOM, and the motivators that might determine moviegoers to generate eWOM. The motivators are similar for both positive
and negative eWOM, with the difference that from the comparison in Table 2, it can be observed that for negative eWOM, emotions regulator / venting negative feeling was stronger than product involvement, and can even include it.

In respect to the impact eWOM might have on eWOM receivers, readers can be found in three behavioral stages after being exposed to eWOM: to consider watching the movie, to continue to be undecided about watching the movie or not be affected, or to reject watching the movie. Mahajan et al. (1984) suggest that these three outcomes are possible regardless of the valence eWOM can take.

The proposed model can be observed in Figure 1.

![Figure 1: WOM motivators and its impact on receivers. Source: Own](image-url)
In order for us to verify our model, hypotheses have been developed. The focus is on testing the strength of the motivators for both positive and negative eWOM, as well as testing what is the impact eWOM can have. Therefore the following three hypotheses are considered to be tested by this research:

**H1:** Positive spreaders of online word of mouth are motivated to generate eWOM content because of one of the four factors: positive self enhancement, social benefits, concern for others or product involvement.

**H2:** Negative spreaders of online word of mouth are motivated to generate eWOM content because of one of the four factors: venting negative feelings / emotions regulator, social benefits, concern for others or product involvement.

**H3:** eWOM can impact the eWOM receivers in three ways: they can consider watching the movie, they can be undecided or they can reject watching the movie.
3. Methodology

The goal of this chapter is to present the research methods used and the rationale behind employing those specific methods. Furthermore, the processes in which the obtained data will be analyzed and interpreted will be detailed. In order to achieve that goal, the chapter will be divided into sections highlighting: design, approach, instruments, data collection and analysis, reliability and validity.

3.1 Research design and method

In order to conduct this research the most appropriate method has to be identified. According to Malhotra (2007:80), differences exist between exploratory and conclusive research designs. Both have differences in objectives, characteristics, results and methods (Malhotra, 2007:80). We provide a comparison of both to show reasoning in our decision with the help of Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Exploratory</th>
<th>Conclusive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>• Provide insight and understanding in the subject</td>
<td>• Measure and test hypotheses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>• Flexible and unstructured</td>
<td>• Information requirement is defined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Small sample</td>
<td>• Structured process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Qualitative or Quantitative research</td>
<td>• Large sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Undefined information requirement</td>
<td>• Quantitative research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>• Used for conclusive research</td>
<td>• Used for exploratory research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>• Qualitative interviews</td>
<td>• Surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Secondary data</td>
<td>• Structured observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Unstructured observations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Exploratory vs Conclusive research. Source: Malhotra (2007:80)

According to Table 3, a conclusive research design is best suited for this research based on all the presented aspects: objectives, characteristics, results and methods. Within our theoretical framework, hypotheses have been developed in order to test them in our empirical study. This first difference already reveals that the research tends to be conclusive. Moreover, our research design will follow a structured process and have a large sample of respondents. The data will be collected from the respondents with structured online surveys. We can
therefore conclude that our research has a conclusive design and further proceed with the next methodological steps.

As the previous paragraph describes how our research design and method was of conclusive character, theory already defines that a quantitative method was required (Malhotra, 2007:144). However for deeper clarifications in our decision, we justify this with theoretical characteristics of both qualitative and quantitative research.

Qualitative research offers an insight about a specific subject of research. Nevertheless, it is important to know that we cannot generalize and interpret the results of a qualitative research as conclusive. Quantitative research on the other hand, has as purpose to develop hypotheses or theories. According to that, large samples of respondents are required in order to avoid research errors. Quantitative research can be generalized in contrary to qualitative research (Malhotra, 2007:144).

Further, qualitative and quantitative research, are related to one another and both are necessary in research. Qualitative research is beneficial for developing deeper understanding in a quantitative research whereas quantitative research develops theories, which are required as a base for qualitative research (Malhotra, 2007:144).

### 3.2 Approach

In order to conduct research, different approaches exist that develop the relationship between theory and empirical findings. We separate them in two approaches that can be seen as each other's opposite: the inductive and deductive approach (Bryman & Bell, 2007:11). An inductive approach refers to a way of research that observes a phenomenon in reality in order to further develop hypotheses with the purpose of creating theories (Bryman & Bell, 2007:11).

The deductive approach goes the other way around starting by deducing hypotheses from the theory in order to conduct the research. As in our research the development and testing of hypotheses was a key aspect, we used a deductive approach. In the theoretical framework, three hypotheses were developed and were tested by the help of our online survey. The process of a deductive research is described in the following framework (Figure 2) developed by Bryman & Bell (2007:11)
3.3 Instrument and measurement

As a tool for collecting our primary data we used online surveys. According to Malhotra (2007:274), online surveys offer several advantages based on speed, cost, quality of data and responses. The survey itself will be developed with Google Form, a free online tool created by Google.com which offers a useful way to develop online surveys. For creating an online form, a Google email address is required granting you immediate access in creating a form. With Google Forms the answers are collected and ordered in a proper way giving an overview of the total results. Furthermore, Google Forms develops graphs for each answered question making it easy for us to analyze the responses. For more information on how to use Google Forms: https://apps.google.com/products/forms/.

The hypotheses, developed in the theoretical framework, provide a base for developing the appropriate questions. Each hypothesis will be linked to specific questions. Therefore, it becomes easy to proceed with the analysis and test each hypothesis individually.

The survey was structured and results were gathered based on different types of questions (Appendix 1). A combination of text, multiple choice and questions based on the Likert scale was used. The Likert scale is a widely used rating scale. Respondents were hereby asked to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement based on certain statements. It comprises five response categories from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (Malhotra, 2007:348). Our choice for the Likert scale was related to the fact that it is easy to understand and its development and administration are easy in use for the researchers. As our respondents did not enter a face-to-face communication with us for guiding them through the survey, it was important for them to be able to respond without hinders. This makes the Likert scale a suitable tool for online surveys (Malhotra, 2007:349).

The first section of the survey disposed general questions (Table 4) about the general characteristics of the respondent. This section gives us a chance to group different types of respondents by age, gender and movie going frequency (descriptive statistics). Afterwards,
we analyzed whether or not these differences have an impact on their behavior towards online WOM.

The next section was specifically related to the generation and impact of online WOM on our respondents. The answers retrieved from this section gave us all the necessary information for answering our research questions. In addition, we thought it could be interesting to review which eWOM platforms are used by our respondents. As in our theoretical framework a large part clarifies the different eWOM platforms, we developed two open text questions. Here the respondents could freely write which online platforms they used for both seeking and sharing eWOM. A better understanding in the development and purpose of our questionnaire can be observed in table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General information</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Descriptive information about the sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Descriptive information about the sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Movie going frequency</td>
<td>Descriptive information about the sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Willingness to generate eWOM</td>
<td>Descriptive information about the sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivators</td>
<td>Express positive opinion about a movie online</td>
<td>Hypothesis 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Express negative opinion about a movie online</td>
<td>Hypothesis 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of eWOM on movie goers</td>
<td>Exposed to positive eWOM</td>
<td>Hypothesis 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exposed to negative eWOM</td>
<td>Hypothesis 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Platforms used to generate eWOM</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Platforms used to search for eWOM</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Purpose of the questionnaire questions and sections. Source: Own

### 3.4 Data collection

In order to collect the necessary data to answer our research questions, we administered an online questionnaire to a target audience of students at the University of Gävle, Sweden. In order to attract students to fill in our survey, we made use of social platforms that are populated by students, some of the questionnaires were administered in person, and some of the respondents were contacted by use of their student emails. In total our research reached approximately 1000 students, and we had a response rate of about 13%, thus obtaining 135 valid responses.
We decided to make use of the online environment and especially online social platforms as our goal with this research is to investigate WOM in the online environment and by selecting users of social platforms we can make sure that the subjects are already familiar with online socializing.

The main advantages with using a web survey are: the flexibility in design, the ease of access for the subjects, the ease of processing the obtained data, as it is already in digital form (Bryman & Bell, 2007:676). Other advantages of web based research methods are: economical in terms of time and money, can reach a large number of people in a short time and distance is not a problem (Bryman & Bell, 2007:665). We believe that for the scope of this research and the limited time, a web-based survey helps to make best use of the time and information available to us.

Main disadvantages when using online surveys are: request for participation can be regarded as a nuisance, loss of personal touch and concerns about confidentiality (Bryman & Bell, 2007:676). In terms of disadvantages, we believe that any research method has some drawbacks and that the negative effects can be minimized with care in preparing an easy to understand survey.

We turn our attention to students for analyzing the online social environment in terms of WOM, as they tend to be very familiar with the online platforms. In addition, by advertising the survey as one related to online WOM and film, we believe that mostly subjects interested in movies will participate, thus allowing us to obtain relevant responses.

As this will be a self-administered questionnaire special care has to be exercised in not making the survey long or with complicated explanations, as subjects can easily lose interest in completing the questionnaire (Bryman & Bell, 2007:240). In addition, this method does offer convenience for the respondents and eliminates the effects of the interviewer (Bryman & Bell, 2007:242).

3.5 Data analysis

The first step after we gathered the data for our research was to check if all the questionnaires are appropriate for use and that all the questions have been answered in a correct manner.

The data was entered into special software: Statistical Package for the social Science (SPSS), version 20.0 and further analyzed.
Firstly we reviewed the questionnaire questions that describe our respondents, observed their demographic characteristics, the frequency they go to the cinema and whether or not they would make online comments about movies (i.e. spread online WOM).

After we developed a broader understanding the respondents’ characteristics we proceeded to analyzing the developed questions in order to test our hypotheses. A first point of interest was to observe the specific percentages for each question and observe the general opinion for the topics of interest.

As we were using questions that use the Likert scale in our questionnaire, for our analysis we employed analysis measures that are appropriate for this type of questions. For the purpose of this research we were interested in central tendencies and associations therefore we made use of: the mean, frequency tables and cross-tabulation in order to be able to determine the results of our survey.

3.5.1 Mean

The Mean was used to measure the central tendency in order to observe what the average respondent might think (Bryman & Bell, 2007:360; Malhotra & Birks, 2000:453). The data was coded from 1 to 5 for the Likert scale responses, where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree, therefore a value of the mean under 3 suggests that our sample agrees to the specific statement, and a value close to 4 suggests the opposite.

3.5.2 Univariate analysis

In order to observe if our hypotheses were confirmed we firstly used frequency tables to observe what percentage of the respondents agreed or disagreed with the statements for the Likert scale but also to observe the percentages for the nominal questions (Bryman & Bell, 2007:356; Malhotra & Birks, 2000:442).

We also used a contingency table in order to asses if there is any impact of gender, age, frequency and willingness to generate eWOM on the motivators to generate eWOM and the impact eWOM has on its receivers, as frequency tables allow two variables to be analyzed simultaneously (Bryman & Bell, 2007:360; Malhotra & Birks, 2000:463).
3.6 Reliability and validity

In order to assure the quality of a study it is important for the research method to be both reliable and valid in order to obtain results that can be considered relevant and generalizable (Bryman & Bell, 2007:168; Malhotra & Birks, 2000:308).

3.6.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to the accuracy in which the measures that are used by a research is consistent and repeatable if used at another point in time. Reliability includes the following main factors: stability and internal reliability (Bryman & Bell, 2007:162; Malhotra & Birks, 2000:305).

Stability refers to the consistency in time of the answers obtained and makes use of a test-retest method, which implies to administer a questionnaire at two different points of time on the same sample. The test-retest method does have some noteworthy disadvantages as the subjects might remember the previously provided answers and it is a measure that involves a large span of time and resources (Bryman & Bell, 2007:162; Malhotra & Birks, 2000:305).

Internal reliability refers to the coherence of the used scales, in this case ordinal scales, and if all the scales measure similar aspects, thus they are coherent. The answers to each question are aggregated to develop a score for the entire scale. In order to insure overall coherence the Cronbach alpha coefficient is used. The values of this coefficient range from 0 to 1, where a value of over 0.6 signals good internal reliability (Bryman & Bell, 2007:163; Malhotra & Birks, 2000:307).

For the scope of this research as the time is limited, administering the questionnaire at two different moments it is difficult in the online environment, the test-retest measure of reliability is not practical, therefore internal reliability is preferred and so the Cronbach alpha coefficient was used. It can be observed in Table 5 that for this research the value of the coefficient is 0.773 which signals good internal reliability.
### Reliability Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.773</td>
<td>.777</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Cronbach's Alpha result. Source: Own

#### 3.6.2 Validity

Validity refers to whether or not a measure is able to address the concepts of interest. For this there are two types of validity: internal and external validity (Bryman & Bell, 2007:41; Malhotra & Birks, 2000:307).

Internal validity is concerned with whether or not the statements in the questionnaire are relevant for the research objective and the information obtained from the data analysis is useful to answer the research questions of the study (Bryman & Bell, 2007:41; Malhotra & Birks, 2000:307). It is therefore, we based our questionnaire questions on a theoretical framework developed from the empirical results obtained by other researchers and published in peer-reviewed journals. Furthermore a pilot survey was administered to a sample of 10 business students at the University of Gävle, in order to observe the main misunderstandings when filling in the survey and to consider what changes we need to make to our questions, to make them easier to answer and understand.

In order to insure construct validity the hypotheses were developed from theory that is relevant to the concept and the empirical results have been related back to relevant theory for our subject (Bryman & Bell, 2007:165; Malhotra & Birks, 2000:307).

External validity refers to the degree in which the obtained data can be “generalized” to a larger group (Bryman & Bell, 2007:41; Malhotra & Birks, 2000:309). We believe that the data obtained in this study can be generalized for at least the younger group of moviegoers, especially since the study targeted students and thus the average age was under 35 years.
4. Empirical findings

In this chapter an overview of the empirical findings of this research is presented. Firstly the descriptive statistics for our sample will be given. Following the results for the motivators that drive respondents to generate eWOM will be detailed. Lastly the impact eWOM has on its receivers will be elaborated.

4.1 Descriptive statistics

AGE

The data collected from the online survey divides our respondents in certain age categories (Figure 3). Our respondents are students from the University of Gävle, Sweden. This factor has led to our respondents being mostly grouped in the same age categories. The total age range of our respondents goes from 18 to 54 years old. Although, the densest age categories ranges from 18-24 with the highest amount, followed by 25-34. This is a logical result as the data was collected from University students.

![Figure 3: Age of the respondents. Source: Own](image)

**GENDER**

The gender of our respondents was not questioned as a main point of interest in our study, although we thought it would be interesting to see whether or not some differences exist among men and women in their eWOM behavior regarding movies (Figure 4). This clarifies how the unequal representation of men and women (37% - 63%) doesn’t affect our findings.
REVIEWING THE NUMBER OF TIMES OUR RESPONDENTS VISIT THE CINEMA HELPED US DEVELOP THE MOVIE GOING FREQUENCY CATEGORIES FOR OUR RESEARCH. WE HAVE DIVIDED FREQUENT AND INFREQUENT MOVIEGOERS ACCORDING TO 4 CATEGORIES (FIGURE 5):

It is important to know that this factor is a pure estimation as putting an exact rate on frequency was not possible. No previous studies indicate till which degree a moviegoer is considered frequent or infrequent. This will also be mentioned further as a limitation.

Our respondents in general dispose of a quite infrequent behavior in movie going, as over 80% of them are infrequent (Figure 6).
Figure 6: Movie-going frequency of the respondents. Source: Own

eWOM GENERATION

We have questioned our respondents whether or not they would generate WOM online if given the chance. The majority of our respondents replied “MAYBE” with almost 50% of the replies. Over 30% of the respondents agreed they would generate eWOM if given the chance. Further, the remaining 20% would not generate WOM online (Figure 7).

Figure 7: WOM generation of the respondents. Source: Own

eWOM PLATFORMS

Separately from our research questions and hypotheses, we gave consideration to which are the platforms that are mainly used for movie consumers to share their opinions. The respondents were questioned about which platforms they are more likely to use when it comes to eWOM. We have made a difference between sharing & seeking eWOM as we thought results would be different. Therefore, our respondents had the opportunity to fill in, into open text questions, which platforms they mostly use for sharing their opinion but also which are used for seeking eWOM information. Here below, an overview of our findings is
presented. The results were sorted according to the amount of times each word was mentioned, by using content analysis (Table 6):

( ) = amount of times the word was mentioned by all the respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platforms for sharing opinion</th>
<th>Platforms for opinion seeking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. facebook (84)</td>
<td>1. imdb (79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. imdb (66)</td>
<td>2. facebook (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. instagram (20)</td>
<td>3. google (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. twitter (15)</td>
<td>4. blogs (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. youtube (5)</td>
<td>5. youtube (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. blogs (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: eWOM platforms. Source: Own

The most used website/application according to our respondents, for sharing their opinions, is the most known social media platform: Facebook.com. In the second place, is the website imdb.com, which can be considered as the most known movie review platform.

Further, other social media platforms were mentioned quite often, such as: Instagram and Twitter. Youtube.com and blogs which are often related to one another (bloggers sharing their videos on youtube.com) are only mentioned a few times.

On the other hand when it comes to seeking eWOM information, results tend to be quite different. The most used platform in this case is the movie review website: imdb.com, followed by facebook.com in the second place. These are the same websites as mentioned above, although they are reversed in order and with a higher difference in amount between both.

Google.com was also mentioned quite a few times as it is easy to find useful opinions with keywords, bringing the information seeker to different areas online. Moreover, blogs and youtube.com have also been mentioned (a few times more than for opinion sharing).
Platforms considering the movie going frequency

As the amount of frequent and infrequent moviegoers in our study is unequal, we had to bring the amount of times each platform was mentioned to a common scale for both frequent and infrequent moviegoers.

In general we notice that frequent moviegoers favor review websites over social media. Many of the frequent respondent also mention other specific review sites that are less known such as popcorntime.com and rottentomatoes.com. Contrary to frequent moviegoers, infrequent goers favor social media more than review sites as an eWOM platform. They also mention different types of social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram, not only facebook.com.

4.2 Motivators for generating electronic word of mouth

In order to test which motivators were the ones that drive the respondents to generate eWOM we used Likert scale questions for each of the four motivators observed in the literature, for both negative and positive eWOM.

4.2.1. Mean

For positive eWOM, four motivators were tested: Self-enhancement, Social benefits, Care for others, Product Involvement. It can be observed in Figure 8, that the value of the means suggest the fact that the average respondent tends to agree to each of the four tested motivators.

Regarding negative eWOM, we tested four motivators: Emotions regulator / Venting negative feelings, Social benefits, Care for others and Product Involvement. According to the value of the means (Figure 9) it can be observed that only two of the motivators have support from the respondents when it comes to generating negative eWOM: Social benefits and Care for others. Respondents tend to be neutral about the other two motivators: Emotions regulator / Venting negative feelings and Product involvement.
4.2.2 Findings for H1: Motivators for generating positive eWOM

In order to understand whether or not our first hypothesis is supported by the results of our survey we used the cross-tabulation function of the SPSS software and frequency tables, the results can be observed in Figure 10. As it was mentioned before the average respondent’s answer (the value of the mean) shows support for all the four analyzed motivators for generating eWOM. In addition if we are to consider the percentage of the sample that strongly agrees and agrees, it can be observed that more than 60% of the sample supports all the four motivators.
In terms of differentiating the sample on gender, both male and female have similar percentages in terms of self-enhancement and social benefits. Some differences can be observed in the other two categories, with male gravitating more towards care for others and female gravitating more towards product involvement (Appendix 2).

Figure 10: Percentage of respondents who Strongly agree and Agree with the eWOM Positive motivators. Source: Own

Regarding the willingness to generate WOM it can be observed that the group that is willing to generate WOM is also the one that supports mostly all the four motivations for eWOM. The group that is unwilling to generate WOM is also the one that has less support for the four motivators (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Positive eWOM motivators and willingness to generate eWOM. Source: Own
Similarly for frequent and infrequent moviegoers, with frequent moviegoers supporting self-enhancement and care for others and the infrequent moviegoers showing slightly more support for product involvement (Figure 12).

![% Sample SA and A](image)

Figure 12: eWOM motivators and frequency. Source: Own.

4.2.3 Findings for H2: Motivators for generating negative eWOM

Similarly to the analysis made for H1, cross-tabulation and frequency tables were used to see which of the motivators are supported by the results of the survey for negative eWOM. The average respondent’s answer (the value of the mean) shows support for two of the motivators: Social benefits and Care for others and is neutral about the other two motivators: Emotions regulator / Venting negative feelings and Product involvement (Figure 13).

By observing the percentage of respondents that strongly agree and agree with generating negative eWOM due to the specific motivators, it can be observed that for Social benefits and Care for others the support is of 57% respectively 49.6%. In addition for Emotions regulator / Venting negative feelings 53.4% of the respondents disagree or strongly disagree with this motivator. The fourth motivator, product involvement is regarded as neutral by 39.3% of the sample.
In terms of gender, the answers tend to gravitate towards the same pole, with small differences when it comes to Emotions regulator / Venting negative feelings, where 62% of male disagree or strongly disagree and only 43.7% of female share in the same opinion (Appendix 3). Regarding the willingness to generate eWOM, the responses do gravitate towards the same poles, with some differences in the percentages, namely 70% of respondents who are not willing to generate eWOM disagree or strongly disagree, while only 50% of respondents who are willing to generate eWOM share in the same opinion. A similar response can be observed also in terms of social benefits, with 68.2% of respondents that are willing to generate eWOM agreeing and strongly agreeing and only 44.4% of the respondents that are not willing to generate eWOM having the same response (Appendix 4).

In terms of frequency the responses are also similar for both frequent and infrequent goers with some differences in social benefits and product involvement (Figure 14). Frequent moviegoers seem to be interested in using movies for social benefits and in product involvement.
4.3 The impact positive or negative eWOM has on its receivers

This research aims at identifying what is the reaction of the respondents when being exposed to positive or negative eWOM. It can be observed in Figure 15 and Figure 16 that exposure to positive eWOM leads to 89.6% of respondents to consider watching the movie, and exposure to negative eWOM leads to 43% of the respondents considering not watching the movie. In addition an interesting finding is that 38.5% report not to get affected by the negative eWOM and 18.5% even consider watching the movie despite the negative review.

In conclusion for H3 we can conclude that the effect of positive eWOM is to encourage moviegoers to see a specific movie. In turn the effect for negative eWOM is to either still be undecided about the movie or disregard it.

Figure 15: Impact of positive eWOM. Source: Own
4.3.1 Impact of positive eWOM

In order to observe if there are any major differences in terms of gender, willingness to generate eWOM and frequency, we have used cross-tabulation, and the detailed results can be observed in Appendix 6 and Appendix 7.

In respect to gender, positive eWOM does not report major differences in the responses, other than female seem to be slightly more inclined towards watching a movie after being exposed to a positive review, and less affected than male by a positive review (Figure 17).

Figure 16: Impact of Negative eWOM. Source: Own

Figure 17: Impact of positive eWOM and gender. Source: Own
In terms of separating the sample by their willingness to generate eWOM the respondents have similar attitudes when exposed to positive eWOM (Appendix 6) with over 88% of each the yes, no or maybe groups considering watching a movie after exposure to positive eWOM.

An interesting observation can be made about the frequent moviegoers when exposed to positive eWOM: 100% of the respondents consider watching the movie after a positive review, while 87.6% of infrequent moviegoers would also consider watching the movie (Figure 18).

![Impact of positive eWOM and frequency](image)

**Figure 18:** Impact of positive eWOM and frequency. Source: Own

### 4.3.2 Impact of negative eWOM

Responses related to exposure to negative eWOM can be observed in Figure 16, and it becomes clear that for 43% of the sample, negative eWOM does have as an impact the discouragement of seeing the movie.

Gender-wise it can be observed, in Figure 19, that more male (28% of male respondents compared to 12.9% of female respondents) tend to still be willing to watch a movie despite the negative review. On the other side more female than male (49.4% of female respondents compared to 32% of male respondents) seem to have more trust in the reviews and tend not to want to watch the movie after a bad review.
In terms of willingness to generate eWOM and the impact negative eWOM has on the respondents the answers between the yes, no and maybe groups have very small differences in their attitudes when exposed to negative eWOM (Appendix 7).

In Figure 20 it can be observed that frequent moviegoers tend to ignore negative eWOM and still want to see the negatively reviewed movie, with 91% of frequent movie-goers compared to 20.4% of infrequent moviegoers. Furthermore a higher percentage of frequent moviegoers (59.1% compared to infrequent 34.5%) report not to be affected by negative movie reviews (Figure 20).
5. Analysis

Following we discuss what are the implications of the result for our hypotheses. Furthermore we are interested to see if our theoretical model will keep its original shape or if the results suggest changes.

5.1 Frequent vs. Infrequent moviegoers

From the answers provided by the frequent movie-going respondents we can observe that they use review sites for gathering eWOM information compared to infrequent goers, who are more likely to use social media platforms. This confirms Chakravarty et al. (2010) & Park & Kim (2009) who mention that professional reviews have more impact towards frequent users.

Frequent moviegoers in our study also use different review websites compared to the infrequent goers. The infrequent users tend to generally use and remain on the most common one: imdb.com, while frequent goers are also likely to use other less popular sources. Frequency develops user knowledge (Chakravarty et al., 2010). In this study also the frequent respondents certainly showed more knowledge and variation, mentioning a wider variety platforms for seeking WOM information. Further, existing theory uses the term “user comments” which we can strongly relate to social media platforms. User comments are preferred for infrequent users as an eWOM channel (Chakravarty et al. 2010; Park & Kim, 2009). Therefore, we can confirm and link our findings to existing theory.

5.2 Platforms for generating eWOM and their importance for the film industry

Yeap et al. (2014) and Cheung & Thadani (2012) investigated the most used platforms for eWOM, and came to a conclusion that review sites are the most popular for users regarding eWOM, followed by social media platforms. We can also conclude this from our research. These two types of eWOM platforms were the most mentioned by our respondents. Moreover, we can specify which ones as, as imdb.com and facebook.com were dominating by far in amount of replies and can therefore be considered the most used eWOM information websites for movies.

However, the present research shows a difference between seeking and sharing eWOM. We have found that for seeking information, users tend to go to review websites, especially
imdb.com whereas for sharing eWOM, social media is dominating. Nevertheless, this is one of the few researches that study eWOM from both angles of seeking and sharing, therefore it can show the potential difference among both but further investigation is required.

5.3 Discussion H1: Motivators for generating positive eWOM

Our first hypothesis assumes that moviegoers are encouraged to generate positive eWOM by four motivators: positive self-enhancement, social benefits, concern for others or product involvement. These motivators were determined from compiling relevant literature and tested by this survey by using 5-point Likert scale type questions.

The strongest motivator for generating positive eWOM is found to be Social benefits. This motivator was reported as a strong motivator for positive eWOM by other authors like Yap et al. (2013) and Dellarocas & Narayan’s (2006). As movies are entertainment experiences, they generate optimal opportunities for conversations, for easily establishing a connection with others or social bonding (Berger, 2014). This aspect can be also connected to the fact that respondents prefer social media platforms when generating eWOM, which inherently are socializing environments.

Next strongest motivator is Care for others, which motivates moviegoers to generate eWOM to advise other potential moviegoers about a movie worth seeing. Similarly Sundaram et al. (1998) found this motivator to be the second strongest motivator for generating positive WOM. On the other side Dellarocas & Narayan’s (2006) results reject the hypothesis that care for others is a strong motivator for generating eWOM about movies and find strong support for the self enhancement and social benefits motivators. One explanation can be the fact that their research is done on respondents that regularly generate eWOM on movies. A great proportion of the respondents that are willing to generate eWOM about a movie also find self-enhancement (90.6%) and social benefits (88.6%) strong motivators for generating positive eWOM about movies (Figure 10).

The other two motivators, self-enhancement and product involvement, also had percentages of over 60% for the strongly agree and agree responses, which leads us to argue that these two motivators also appealed to our respondents. Correspondingly, Dellarocas & Narayan’s (2006) and Sundaram et al. (1998) also find these two motivators to be strong in motivating respondents to generate eWOM.
From the results of this survey we can conclude that our first hypothesis is supported and no major contradictions have been found with the relevant literature.

For the movie industry such findings can have a major impact in the way information about their movies is made available to the viewers and the way they can capitalize on the movies after they premier. By recognizing the need for socializing around movies, film studios can build platforms or make use of the existing ones to increase awareness.

5.4 Discussion H2: Motivators for generating negative eWOM

Our second hypothesis assumes that moviegoers are encouraged to generate negative eWOM by four motivators: venting negative feelings / emotions regulator, social benefits, concern for others or product involvement. These were also determined from compiling relevant literature and tested in this survey by using 5-point Likert scale type questions.

From the results (Figure 9 and Figure 13) it can be observed that the strongest motivators for generating eWOM are social benefits and care for others, interestingly the same as for positive eWOM, which confirms the fact that movies are often used for social purposes: discussion generator, even going to the movies as a social interaction. In addition the second strongest motivator, care for others, is also closely related to social benefits as it also allows respondents to create interaction. For example if a moviegoer decides to write a negative recommendation for a movie with the reason of advising others not to waste their time, it can be used as a discussion generator.

In respect to the other two motivators, respondents tend to be neutral about product involvement and disagree with venting negative feelings / emotions regulator. It is therefore we conclude that H2 cannot be confirmed for all four motivators, but only for social benefits and care for others.

Sundaram et al. (1998) and Yap et al. (2013) found the venting negative feelings motivator to be a strong one in generating eWOM. It is interesting to observe that in this research, respondents tend to reject the idea of seeking revenge for a bad movie experience. We believe this has to do with the environment in which our respondents decide to generate eWOM, social platforms, where anonymity can be a concern. On the other side if after a bad movie experience a negative comment is generated motivated by care for others, the frustration with the movie is expressed in that way.
It is important for the movie industry to understand why negative comments about movies arise when wanting to manage the impact eWOM has on the movie. Firstly it can help movie producers to understand how to better direct their marketing efforts and secondly it can help cinema companies to know when to extend the showing time for a movie or to shorten it (Sundaram et al., 1998; Yap et al. 2013). Furthermore the presence of negative reviews can have a strong impact even when combined with positive reviews (Mahajan et al., 1984)

5.5 Discussion H3: The impact eWOM has on moviegoers

For our third hypothesis we wanted to observe whether or not negative or positive eWOM has an impact on moviegoers. Our respondents were asked about their reaction to a positive or a negative comment about a movie and they could select one of the three answers: I consider watching the movie, It does not affect me, I will not consider watching the movie.

By analyzing the answers (Figure 15) we could observe that positive eWOM does encourage respondents to watch the movie in a high proportion (89.6%). On the other side the answers for negative eWOM exposure (Figure 16) are divided between respondents that consider it does not affect them (38.5%) and respondents that consider rejecting watching the movie (43%).

We therefore conclude that positive eWOM has a positive impact on moviegoers and does encourage them to watch the reviewed movie. This finding is also supported by Bergers (2014) findings, who argues that positive recommendations are good tools for TV stations and film producers to use and direct towards the mainstream media and less towards specialized websites in order to increase awareness about a specific film or TV show.

This result is a great tool to be used by cinema companies also, as we found that when wanting to seek reviews about a movie, our respondents tend to look on platforms like IMDB or Facebook. By observing the reviews, cinema companies can decide if a movie should be shown for a longer or shorter period of time. Similarly, film companies can decide which group to target with their advertising budget for the specific movie in order to achieve the best results.

The results of this research show that the effects of negative eWOM are to either reject seeing the movie or choose not to be affected by the negative review. Berger (2014) argues that film companies or TV studios should not be focused on preventing the spread of negative eWOM and should instead be worried if their products are not generating any conversation at all.
Furthermore, Berger (2014) states, that the presence of negative eWOM is unlikely to damage the image of the product, and the companies should not focus their efforts on counteracting negative eWOM, but allow for the variation of opinions.

This research brings forward the impact of both positive and negative eWOM. The impact positive eWOM can have, as shown by our results is to influence the moviegoers to consider watching the respective film. At the other pole, the impact negative eWOM can have is to either not impact the moviegoers, who continue to be undecided about a specific film, or to convince them not to watch the movie in question.

We believe that by understanding the impact eWOM can have on its receivers, companies can better manage and use eWOM. It is important to be able to understand how marketing resources are best to be allocated and which groups are best to be targeted when marketing a movie especially since various authors agree that eWOM can impact the duration a movie is present at the Box Office and that it continues to be a key communication factor throughout the life span of the film (McKenzie, 2009; Prag & Casavant, 1994; Eliashberg & Shugan, 1997; Moon et al., 2010).

5.6 eWOM model

As this research was based on the review of relevant literature and a model for eWOM was developed, we want to observe if the initial model needs to be updated to fit the results of the survey. The new eWOM model can be observed in Figure 21.

We can notice that in terms of positive eWOM all four motivators are accepted by our respondents, however for negative eWOM only two of the motivators were kept in the updated model.

As for the impact eWOM has on receivers we can notice that it is differentiated according to whether or not the exposure was to positive or negative eWOM. Therefore, in the updated model we consider that the impact of positive eWOM is to consider watching the respective movie and for negative eWOM it is to either be undecided / unaffected or reject watching the respective movie.

Furthermore, this research has paid attention to the different platforms used for eWOM. Our findings show the importance of social media as well as review websites when it comes to eWOM in the movie industry. We judge these findings as potentially interesting for both future research and managers, and therefore, we decided to add the used eWOM platforms to
our final framework. In Figure 21 it can be observed that for generating eWOM the most popular platforms evolve around Social Media. Whereas, seeking eWOM information on movies is most likely to happen on review websites.

Figure 21: Model for eWOM motivators, impact and platforms. Source: Own
6. Conclusion

This final chapter presents the results of this research and the answers to our research questions are presented. Furthermore the theoretical, managerial and social implications, as well as its limitations are outlined.

6.1 Findings and comments

Research questions

Our first research question was related to whether or not moviegoers are interested in generating eWOM and what would be the motivation for them to do so. Our findings showed that 33% of our sample would express their opinion about a movie online and 48% would maybe consider doing so (Appendix 5). It is therefore we concluded that moviegoers could be motivated to generate eWOM about films.

In respect to the motivators we found that the strongest motivators for both negative and positive eWOM are: social benefits and concern for others. However, for positive eWOM the other analyzed motivators: positive self-enhancement and product involvement were also important to our respondents.

The motivators for generating online content about films, help us understand that movie going functions as a social process and also continues after the experience is consumed, with the generation of eWOM about the specific movie.

Our second research question referred to the impact eWOM can have on filmgoers. Our findings showed that positive eWOM encourages the receivers to go and watch the film. Furthermore negative eWOM can have two consequences: the receivers can decide to ignore the review or to consider not watching the film.

Separately from our research questions, the used platforms for eWOM on movies were identified and evolve around two main types of platforms: social media and review websites. More specifically, social media seems to be the most used when it comes to generating eWOM while seeking eWOM is more likely to happen on review websites.
6.2 Implications

Theoretical

It is a fact that WOM has received attention among different authors. Different industries have been researched concerning how they are affected by WOM (Sheth, 1971; Phleps, et al., 2004). More specifically, the movie industry particularly has received attention due to the huge impact WOM has on it (Liu, 2006; Eliashberg & Shugan, 1997).

Our study focuses on the consumer behavior towards eWOM and is unique in its kind due to the fact that it focuses on eWOM from both the positive and the negative perspectives and not on eWOM in general. Some light was shed in what types of motives encourage moviegoers to generate eWOM, how they are impacted by it and as well as what platforms are mostly used for sharing and seeking movie opinions. According to that, our findings could offer a base to more specific research that opts to investigate the motives separately as well as the eWOM platforms in terms of sharing and seeking WOM information.

The model we were able to develop for eWOM motivators and impact can function as a foundation for deeper research in the moviegoers’ behavior. We were able to observe the motivators that were the strongest in motivating moviegoers to generate positive or negative eWOM about movies, which is most important contribution to the literature. Furthermore, we were able to add to the body of literature by shedding light in what the effect positive or negative eWOM can have on filmgoers.

Managerial

The findings of this study offer the film industry a greater understanding in how their consumers deal with eWOM. We have focused on how movie consumers are affected by eWOM but also what their sharing motives are, and further, which online platforms are used. Going back to the WOM literature, it is stated that this form of communication has received managerial attention over the past years, and more with the rise of the Internet (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Moreover, it is perceived as a communication channel with high credibility, and potentially the highest impact compared to other communication forms (Buttle, 1998; Godes & Mayzlin, 2004). Marketers have attempted to control WOM but it has always been difficult due to its viral nature, thus better understanding its behavior can prove to be a useful tool (Sheth, 1971; Phelps et al., 2004).
Our findings could help the movie industry in particular to better understand the eWOM behavior of their consumers and therefore be able to better distribute the marketing resources allocated for WOM. For example the results show that negative eWOM does not have a definite effect of motivating filmgoers not to consider watching the movie, as a considerable percentage of the respondents replied that a negative review does not affect them. Negative eWOM, in certain quantities, might even be a generator of polemics and thus increase the awareness for a certain movie. However care has to be exercised as too much negative eWOM does counteract the benefits of the existing positive eWOM.

We have identified which platforms are the most used for sharing (social media; facebook.com) and seeking (review site; imdb.com) eWOM on movies. In the hands of movie marketers, this information can give them the possibility to pay attention to these platforms and also understand their customers better as from social media platforms much information can be gathered about the users.

Social

In this study we discover what motivates moviegoers to share eWOM online. The literature has helped us to develop a base on what motives people tend to have when it comes to share positive as well as negative eWOM. On a social, level we offer understanding in why moviegoers share eWOM and as it could be observed in from our results social interaction was the main reason for which respondents were motivated to generate eWOM.

The online environment has changed communication and social interactions dramatically, and WOM is a part of the communication process when it comes to consumption and products. It becomes therefore important to understand how it manifests and what its impacts are in order to perceive how communication can change in the society and what is the value for its members.

6.5 Reflection and suggestions for further research

As mentioned in the methodology we used the Cronbach alpha coefficient as a method of testing reliability. The value of this coefficient computed at a value of 0.773, which according to Bryman and Bell (2007:163) and Malhotra & Birks (2000:307), signals good internal reliability. In addition, the sample was randomly selected from the business students at Gävle University in order to increase the validity of the research. A pilot study was also used, where the original questionnaire was administered to a sample of 10 people in order to insure that the questions were easy to understand and the respondents could easily answer them. This
allowed us to make changes to the final questionnaire, which also helped increase the validity of this study.

However due to the limited number of respondents (N=135), the results of this research are not generalizable without further research. It is therefore our first recommendation for further research is to make use of these results as a starting point and develop a survey for a larger population. Furthermore the results of such research would be enriched if the respondents were allowed to input their own motivators for generating eWOM and their own opinions about the impact eWOM might have. Alternatively an in-depth qualitative research can also be developed to probe deeper in the attitudes moviegoers have towards eWOM. Moreover, our research makes a difference in terms of the frequency with which moviegoers go to the cinema however we make an estimation on defining the frequency, as theory did not give us an exact information on how to differentiate both frequent and infrequent moviegoers.
Appendix 1: The questionnaire

Movie research

* Required

Email for reward purposes
Please fill in your email so we can contact you if you win one of the three prizes we offer:

General Information

How old are you? *
- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 or over

Gender *
- Female
- Male

How frequently do you usually visit the cinema? *
- Once a week
- Once or twice a month
- A few times a year
- Less than once a year

Given the chance would you express your opinion about a movie online? *
- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Why would you express your opinion about a movie online?

I would express my positive opinion on a movie online because: *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel good when I can tell others about a good movie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movies are a good</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I want to encourage others to go and watch a movie

I want to show my excitement about a movie

I would express my negative opinion on a movie online because:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like to get anger off my chest</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movies are a good discussion topic</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to advise others not to see the movie</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need to show my disappointment with a movie</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please write below which websites or applications you would use to express your opinion about a movie:

(for example; facebook.com, imdb.com, blogs, others,...)

If I am exposed to a positive opinion about a movie online:

- ○ I consider watching the movie
- ○ It does not affect me
- ○ I will not consider watching the movie

If I am exposed to a negative opinion about a movie online:

- ○ I consider watching the movie
- ○ It does not affect me
- ○ I will not consider watching the movie

Please write below which websites or applications you would use to search for movie opinions online:

(for example; facebook.com, imdb.com, blogs, others,...)
Appendix 2: Positive eWOM motivators and gender, % of respondents who SA, A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive eWOM</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product Involvement</td>
<td>67.10%</td>
<td>56.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care for others</td>
<td>63.60%</td>
<td>72.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social benefits</td>
<td>68.30%</td>
<td>70.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self enhancement</td>
<td>65.90%</td>
<td>66.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 3: Negative eWOM motivators and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative eWOM</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product Involvement</td>
<td>56.50% D, SD</td>
<td>60.00% D, SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care for others</td>
<td>47.10% SA, A</td>
<td>54.00% SA, A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social benefits</td>
<td>56.40% SA, A</td>
<td>58.00% SA, A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions regulator</td>
<td>43.70% D, SD</td>
<td>62.00% D, SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4: Negative eWOM motivators and willingness to generate eWOM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative eWOM Category</th>
<th>Maybe</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative eWOM Product Involvement</td>
<td>39.30%</td>
<td>48.10%</td>
<td>43.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative eWOM Care for others</td>
<td>51.60% SA,A</td>
<td>40.70% SA,A</td>
<td>52.30% SA,A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative eWOM Social benefits</td>
<td>54.70% SA,A</td>
<td>44.40% SA,A</td>
<td>68.20% SA,A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative eWOM Emotions regulator</td>
<td>46.80% D,SD</td>
<td>70.30% D,SD</td>
<td>50.00% D,SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 5: Willingness to generate eWOM, % of Sample

- 48.10% Yes
- 32.60% Maybe
- 19.30% No
Appendix 6: Crosstabulation results for the impact positive eWOM has and gender, age, frequency and willingness to generate eWOM

**Pos_op_exp * Age Crosstabulation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pos_op_exp</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>% within Age</th>
<th>18-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I consider watching the movie</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>91.9%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>87.3%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It does not affect me</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pos_op_exp * Frequency Crosstabulation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pos_op_exp</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>% within Frequency</th>
<th>Frequent</th>
<th>Infrequent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I consider watching the movie</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>87.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It does not affect me</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 7: Crosstabulation results for the impact negative eWOM has and gender, age, frequency and willingness to generate eWOM

#### Pos_op_exp * Wom_generation Crosstabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pos_op_exp</th>
<th>Wom_generation</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Maybe</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I consider watching the movie</td>
<td>% within Wom_generation</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It does not affect me</td>
<td>% within Wom_generation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>% within Wom_generation</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Neg_op_exp * Age Crosstabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neg_op_exp</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>18-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I consider watching the movie</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Age</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
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<td>18.5%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Count</td>
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<tr>
<td>% within Age</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
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<td>25.0%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>I will not consider watching the movie</td>
<td>Count</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>135</td>
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<tr>
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#### Neg_op_exp * Gender Crosstabulation

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<th>Neg_op_exp</th>
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<td>52</td>
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<td>38.5%</td>
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<td>Count</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>58</td>
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<td>43.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Count</td>
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<td>85</td>
<td>135</td>
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<td>% within Gender</td>
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### Neg_op_exp * Frequency Crosstabulation

<table>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th>I will not consider watching the movie</th>
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<th>Frequent</th>
<th>Infrequent</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
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### Neg_op_exp * Wom_generation Crosstabulation

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<th>Maybe</th>
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<td>Count</td>
<td>% within Wom_generation</td>
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<td></td>
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<table>
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<th>Count</th>
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<th>Total</th>
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<th>Maybe</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
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References


