


Netnographic Review of Customers' e-WOM Motivations Towards Discount Retailing in Türkiye

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the motivations that lead consumers to engage in e-WOM communication through an online social community in discount retail industry. A qualitative methodological approach was adopted to fulfill this need in this paper. A netnographic review was performed to observe the consumer responses to discount retailers' marketing efforts including upcoming products and to better understand customer complaints about unfavorable interactions on Facebook pages. Based on the previous literature findings, e-WOM motivations specific to discount retailing were exemplified and interpreted in line with the members' posts and views. In addition to the existing typology, this study proposes a new e-WOM motivation referring to expressing cynical emotions. The results of the study revealed that discount retailing customers particularly share out their unfavorable experiences. In addition, it has been understood that the dissatisfaction of consumers sometimes evolves into a deeper attitudinal and behavioral dimension and expands toward a cynical belief. In the conclusion section, the contributions of the findings to the literature and the limitations of the study were discussed.

Keywords: Discount Retailers, e-WOM, Netnography.

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İndirim Perakendeciliği Müşterilerinin e-WOM Motivasyonlarının Netnografik İncelemesi

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Özet

Bu çalışma, indirim perakendeciliği müşterilerinin tüketici merkezli çevrimiçi bir sosyal topluluk aracılığıyla e-WOM iletişimine katılma motivasyonlarını keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu nedenle çalışmada nitel bir metodolojik yaklaşım benimsenmiştir. Satışa çıkması duyurulan ürünler de dahil olmak üzere indirimli perakendecilerin pazarlama çabalarına yönelik tüketici tepkilerini gözlemek ve olumsuz deneyimlerden kaynaklanan ve Facebook sayfalarına yansıyan müşteri şikayetlerini daha detaylı olarak anlamak için netnografik katılım esasına dayanan bir inceleme yapılmıştır. Daha önceki literatür bulgularından hareketle, indirimli perakendeciliğe özgü e-WOM motivasyonları örneklendirilerek üyelerin gönderileri ve görüşleri doğrultusunda yorumlanmıştır. Ayrıca mevcut tipolojiye ek olarak, bu çalışmaya özgü bir motivasyon detaylı olarak açıklanmaya çalışılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçları, indirimli perakendeciliği müşterilerinin özellikle olumsuz deneyimlerini paylaştıklarını ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca tüketicilerin memnuniyetsizliğinin bazen daha derin bir tutumsal ve davranışsal boyuta evrildiği ve sinik bir inanca doğru genişlediği anlaşılmıştır. Bununla birlikte, kişisel imaj kaygısının da çevrimiçi toplulukta önemli bir motivasyon olarak öne çıktığı görülmüştür. Sonuç bölümünde, bulguların literatüre katkıları ve çalışmanın sınırlılıkları ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İndirim Perakendeciliği, e-WOM, Netnografik Gözlem

Introduction

Discount retailing is an industry with fierce competition in Türkiye. The digital marketing phenomenon encourages brand managers to organize relations with their consumers and promotional activities on an interaction-based approach (Loureiro, Serra, & Guerreiro, 2019). Even though brands have own websites through which they can interact with their customers, consumers often share purchasing experiences and their beliefs on social media and online communities. The discount retailing industry also witnesses consumer groups getting together and sharing posts through different social platforms. Experiences shared on online platforms emerge as information that will help customers save time and money, and benefit from a high perception of trust (Chung & Kim, 2015; Loureiro et al., 2019). Online sharing platforms and social community websites have turned into significant consumer knowledge producers by which consumers can make their purchasing decisions effectively (Reyes-Menendez, Correia, & Matos, 2020, p. 11). Therefore, archiving consumption experiences and brand beliefs in internet media depends on a significant level of eWOM motivation and enables the dissemination of brand-related information among individuals.

Communicating individual experiences about the use of products or services among consumers is considered a reference point in terms of brand attitude and purchase intentions (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Park & Jeon, 2018). Conceptualized as word-of-mouth (WOM) in communication, marketing, and advertising literature, this form of individual and collective communication practices has significant effects on consumer decision-making processes. With the increasing use of internet technologies and online social networking platforms, word-of-mouth communication has been implemented through electronic channels and the impact parameters have changed favoring the reputation of the concept.

In today's markets where the internet is the leading source of information, eWOM takes place on online platforms or briefly on social media and consumers feel free to post their reviews, emotions, and experiences about brands (Chu & Kim, 2011). Therefore, eWOM communication enables consumers to become aware of the brand experiences of others meaning that digital platforms offer a renewed environment letting peers reach experiential customer knowledge. E-WOM communication circulates rapidly to large audiences due to the traits offered by a digital environment which are missing in traditional word-of-mouth information (Jeong & Jang, 2011). On account of that, e-WOM communication could influence the attitudes and behavioral intentions of other consumers when individuals share their experiences about products or services anonymously or publicly on a social platform (Chung & Kim, 2015). Moreover, the managers of specific products and brands should trust eWOM communication “as one of their promotional tools to attract consumers” (Jaini, Quoquab, Mohammad, & Hussin, 2020, p. 104). That refers to a robust influence of the possible e-WOM communication on consumer behavioral intentions when compared to the effects of person-to-person WOM communications.

For marketing and brand communication specialists, exploring insights into consumer e-WOM communications can facilitate critical marketing decisions (Jeong & Jang, 2011). A customer testimony might be a key side of the consumer's

brand satisfaction and influence buying decisions depending on the user experiences. Therefore, one could argue that experience-based interactions improve the commercial merit of brands and increase marketing performance (Chung & Kim, 2015). Consumers might consider the brand's advertising communications as deceptive and manipulative, whereas social media posts from customers and other content creators are sources of information that individuals tend to trust (Ngarmwongnoi, Oliveira, AbedRabbo, & Mousavi, 2020). The fact that consumers convey their actual thoughts derived from their experiences about the use of a product or a brand in an impartial manner allows e-WOM to be perceived as clear and honest (Doh & Hwang, 2009).

The present study intended to discover the motivations for consumers sharing posts about discount stores through social networks and to understand which reasons lead customers to interact with each other through e-WOM communication. In this process, fundamental typologies that provide the most comprehensive models of e-WOM motivations and delineate the antecedents of sharing experience and opinions on the internet have been utilized. By adopting Balasubramanian and Mahajan (2001) and Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)'s frameworks of e-WOM motivations, this study aimed to identify the drives that lead customers to engage in e-WOM in the discount retailing sector in Turkey. Also, in consideration of the foregoing, this paper focuses on contributing to the existing literature by exploring the incentives to involve in e-WOM practices and whether sharing consumer experiences about discount stores influence purchasing decisions of others and if so, classifying these incentives. In other words, this study tries to understand the aim of disseminating and searching e-WOM information about discount stores, consumers' tendency to trust this information, and to what extent these shares reflect a common opinion. It is expected that the results of the study would become a reference for brand communication professionals to understand how discount retailers' customers are narrating their experiences and what they expect from these acts in the digital environment.

1. Consumers and eWOM: The Motivations for Active Engagement

With the pace of internet technologies, consumers have replaced interpersonal word-of-mouth communication with eWOM practices, and they started to share experiences online (Hussain, Ahmed, Jafar, Rabnawaz, & Jianzhou, 2017). Therefore, eWOM activities have enhanced information-seeking behaviors and increased their efficacy due to online availability (Ngarmwongnoi et al., 2020). SNSs (social networking sites) are among the ideal tools where consumers voluntarily share information about their brand experiences with digital social groups (Chu & Kim, 2011). So, what are the impulses that push consumers to share their brand experiences so actively and engage in the process of influencing decisions? Research have covered many issues within consumers' eWOM motivations, from searching and reaching guidance to sharing their experiences and beliefs to guide others. Among one of the most fundamental studies, Balasubramanian and Mahajan (2001) suggested a typology to explain economic and social engagement based on the integration of virtual communities. Contributions from each member of the virtual community are potentially available to other participants, and interaction is built through this potential

accessibility. Individuals, on the other hand, seek to reach several benefits by integrating into the virtual community (Balasubramanian & Mahajan, 2001). These interests are listed as focus-related utility, consumption utility, and approval utility. *The focus-related utility* includes the user's desire to contribute assistance to the online community through individual feeds (Magalhaes & Musallam, 2014) For example; a member of the community aiming to reach consumer awareness might share posts involving information about harmful products of an enterprise that pollutes the environment so motivates the rest of the group in reacting collectively. *Consumption utility* “derives from the constituent’s direct consumption of the contributions of other community constituents” (Balasubramanian & Mahajan, 2001, p. 125). For example, in a social platform where experiences related to discount stores are shared, consumers can contribute to this platform based on the brand experiences shared by others, and their posts might trigger others to engage actively and reveal a consumption-oriented attitude. In an online opinion platform, commenting or seeking advice might enable members to reach definite and practical responses than merely viewing the posts (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). *Approval utility* is related to the gratification that emerges “when other constituents consume and approve of the constituent's contributions” (Balasubramanian & Mahajan, 2001, p. 126). For example, user reviews are formally and informally rewarded by other members or platform editors in terms of the efficacy of the posts and might strongly shape consumption preferences.

In addition to Balasubramanian and Mahajan's (2001) triple classification for the integration into the virtual environment, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) contributed to the model by developing two novel utility types, namely *moderator-related utility* and *homeostasis utility*. They conceptualized *moderator-related utility* as “facilitating the complaint act by a third party for the community member”. Also, they built the *homeostasis utility* on “the source of unbalance that comes from either a strong positive or adverse consumption experience. Balance can be restored by writing a comment on an opinion platform” (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, p. 43-44). Based on these general benefits, they arrived at eleven eWOM motivations. These motivations were classified under those five main utilities that came from the general WOM literature. The utilities and motivations were listed in Table 1.

Table 1: The eWOM Motivations Typology

Utility Type	e-WOM Motivations	Definitions
Focus-Related Utility	Concern for other consumers	An authentic readiness or eagerness in guiding others, users, consumers, or social groups, to a superior information process.
	Helping the company	Following a satisfactory product experience, consumers are immediately involved in the e-WOM practice to disseminate their pleasure to others and they want to take part in the sales of the brand.
	Social benefits	Online community members and consumers may integrate into e-WOM for an existential purpose

		or to add semantic value to their participation and may want to transform the group members into a social benefit.
	Exerting power	Since consumers are aware of sharing an unsatisfactory product experience would draw the attention of brand managers, they want to put pressure on companies by making public their views. e-WOM effectively presents an opportunity to exert power on companies.
Consumption Utility	Postpurchase advice-seeking	Online communities are environments where consumers seek user experiences and make buying decisions. The group member shares these recommendations for others following his/her own experience as well.
Approval Utility	Self-enhancement	Sharing brand experience and beliefs or technical information about the product might become a desire to gain the appreciation of other members and reveal a self-image-oriented sharing behavior.
	Economic rewards	Virtual communities sometimes promise to reward their members for their review posts. This bid is a sign for participants to be approved and appreciated by the group management
Moderator-Related Utility	Convenience	Online platforms play an important role in consumer complaints becoming efficacious. Consumers often wish to engage in eWOM as the most convenient way to make a complaint rather than reaching out to the company
	Problem-solving support	The hope and belief toward the posts of consumer complaints, requests, and suggestions will be transmitted to the company quickly and effectively by the online platform enabling users to see e-WOM as a support mechanism for problem-solving.
Homeostasis Utility	Expressing positive emotions	After having a satisfactory brand experience, consumers feel the need to share their feelings with the community they are a member of, and this emotional stimulus leads them to e-WOM communication. As a result, they experience a process of emotional balancing.
	Venting adverse feelings	Consumers believe that they will alleviate the state of disillusion derived from the level of the frustrating brand experience by sharing their feelings with other people through e-WOM communication.

2. Discount Retailing and e-WOM

Online communication and digital platforms have provided consumer groups with significant opportunities in sharing their brand experiences and product/service reflections with community members to develop a common way of thinking. The retail industry is one of the several sectors where consumer groups evaluate their experiences collectively in online communities. Retailers can also contribute to the formation of a useful online community by better analyzing the experiences, wants and needs of consumers through this channel (Alagarsamy, Mehroliya, & Singh, 2021, p. 253). During the past few decades, the discount retailing industry in Türkiye has experienced a significant acceleration (KPMG, 2020, p. 8). With the rapid increase in the number of stores and the penetration of new players into the industry, the competitive market environment has been intensified. Previous studies have found that word-of-mouth communication is an important source of information for retail consumers in the decision-making process (Carpenter, 2008; Dahka, Hajiheydari, & Rouhani, 2020). Further, to increase their competitive strength "consumers ask for referrals and testimonials from the happy customers (especially those who are heavy social media users) and spread them in the social networks" (Anastasiu & Dospinescu, 2019, p. 12). As Chatterjee (2001, p. 131) mentioned, while a satisfied consumer spreads this fulfillment to a limited number of users, a dissatisfied customer has the motivation to extend his annoyance to more people. Seemingly, retail marketers have deep knowledge about the consumers' strong motivation to seek advice, and favorable opinions become an agent of eradicating doubts in decision-making processes.

The research papers explored that consumers' gratification and discontentedness following a purchasing experience develop the inclination to engage in favorable word-of-mouth communication (Brown et al., 2005, p. 125). Discount retailers seek to maintain a competitive position by focusing on a higher level of utilitarian purchasing value reflecting a financially rewarding decision (Carpenter & Moore, 2009, p. 68). Following this, consumers aiming to obtain an economic value with relatively higher user performance tend towards discount stores. Gruen, Osmonbekov, and Czaplewski (2006, p. 450) highlight the several dimensions of electronic word-of-mouth communication and states that e-WOM can generate utilitarian value through customer-to-customer know-how exchange. C2C know-how communication could be considered as a basic mechanism that increases the level of awareness and seeks user-centered information such as product use, performance, post-purchase satisfaction among consumers. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004, p. 43) summarized C2C information exchange under the motivation of *consumption utility* and *post-purchase advice-seeking*, as the "acquisition of necessary skills to better understand, use, operate, modify and repair a product". Accordingly, consumers can engage in customer-to-customer know-how interaction as a means of obtaining utilitarian value (Gruen et al., 2006, p. 451). However, some participants may have a *self-enhancement* motivation with the desire to gain the appreciation of other members, while others may be inspired by *social benefits* motivation to add a semantic value to his/her community membership in this interaction process. As an important retail marketing phenomenon, C2C creates significant competitive pressure for many retailers (Yrjölä, Rintamäki, Saarijärvi, & Joensuu, 2017, p. 301). On account of that,

customer-to-customer eWOM communications might lead to deliver a powerful purchasing decision by moderating customer beliefs (Tien, Rivas, & Liao, 2019, p. 241). Similarly, the emergence of private label brands and the consumer experience obtained from them might trigger e-WOM communication in online communities, especially in discount retailing. Colla (2003, p. 58) argued that the ability to cut marketing, advertising, and production costs and overheads enables discount retailers to concentrate on private label products. e-WOM interaction could support purchasing information and lower actively the perceived risks of buying the product through eliminating the possibility of being exposed to deceiving knowledge (Arif, 2019, p. 346). Thus, offering an economic-utilitarian value to their customers, discount retailers naturally activates an e-WOM motivation making users share the product experience in online communities to promote private-labeled products.

To summarize, eWOM is a robust consumption motive that needs to be managed as it positively promotes behavioral intentions, increases to product and brand awareness, and modifies consumers' risk perceptions. Hong, Yang, Wooldridge, & Bhappu (2021, p. 268) states that customers can be involved in other's purchasing experiences, as they count each other peer exemplars, leading them recall and assess brand information more profoundly. Accordingly, eWOM has been analyzed by several scholars as an interaction that influence consumers' decision-making mechanisms (Filieri, Lin, Pino, Alguezaui, & Inversini, 2021; López & Sicilia, 2014; Wang, Wang, & Wang, 2018). Alternatively, current study aims to investigate the eWOM interactions in discount retailing that takes place on social platforms, by taking into account the well-known eWOM motivations in the literature (see Balasubramanian & Mahajan, 2001; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first scientific paper to examine eWOM interaction in the discount retailing industry by utilizing a netnographic methodology. The primary aim is to clarify the information-sharing practice with others in online communities from the standpoint of mentioned motivations specific to the discount retailing industry.

2.1. Method

Netnographic studies need to follow a particular systematic procedure. The procedures that Kozinets (Kozinets, 2010) suggested and applied by many researchers in the field of social sciences were detailed below.

2.1.1. Netnographic Observation

The demand for discount retailers in Türkiye has been raising continuously over time. Such that, FMCG retailing represents 37% of the registered retailers market in Türkiye and the share of organized retailing has reached the level of 50 percent (Arslan & Yavuzylmaz, 2017, p. 573). The fastest-growing channel within the organized FMCG market is discount retailing, and BİM, A-101, ŞOK, and DiaSA stores are the fastest-growing retailer chains (Kazak et al., 2021). Many scholars have conducted empirical studies on consumers' e-WOM drivers and generated an extensive classification. The incentives associated with e-WOM communication can be accessible according to the relevant literature, yet there is a gap concerning detailed information on how and why consumers manifest and

post their experiences on a sectoral basis, e.g. the discount retailing industry. A qualitative methodological approach was adopted to fulfill this need in this study. A netnographic review was performed to follow the consumer responses to discount retailers' announcements related to upcoming products and to better understand consumer experiences or complaints about troubles on Facebook pages. In the netnography technique, which is the online version of ethnography, the effects of online information sharing of social groups about consumer behaviors and decision-making processes are examined inductively within the participant-observation process (Kozinets, 2002, 2010). Principally, Kozinets (2002, p. 63) suggests five procedures “helping to shape researchers’ participant observation as (1) making cultural *entrée*, (2) data gathering and analysis, (3) ensuring trustworthy interpretation, (4) running ethical research, and (5) providing opportunities for culture member feedback”. Suggested procedural approach has been adopted in this paper and the researcher has monitored the interactions of discount retailers' customers on the Facebook pages.

2.1.2. Research Environment

In the *entrée* phase, as recommended while conducting the netnographic study (Kozinets, 2002, p. 63), consumer posts to be analyzed through participant observation were identified among the pages established by discount retailing customers on Facebook. The researcher has benefited from common search engines to identify relevant online communities. The social platform which was founded by discount retailers' customers was the context for this study. The posts subjected to e-WOM communication were gathered from members of this online network. The platform was a Facebook page for customers of the discount retailing chains where members share their product experiences via social messaging procedures. The social platform was created and is being operated anonymously and independently from the discount retailing companies and is a place where membership is obligatory but non-dues-paying which means non-members are not authorized to view or share the posts. Over ten thousand, registered users share experiences and information on this Facebook page. As a degree of consumer involvement, groups on social platforms indicate that customers of discount retailers spend significant time online to raise awareness of upcoming products and share post-purchasing experiences. During the membership period of the online group, a join request is sent by making some commitments (such as being polite, avoiding promotion or spam, etc.), and the shares could be viewed following an approval to access the platform. Therefore, it was clear that the identified online community met the following criteria; (1) a focused and relevant social community; (2) high share traffic; (3) sizeable individual participants; (4) thorough and abundant posts; and (5) between-subjects interactivity.

2.2. Obtaining Data and Analysis

Data gathering consisted of information copied from online community members' posts and interactions. Although the community seems to have been started a few years earlier, the messages of the last twelve months have been integrated into the netnographic research. The author anonymously observed the customers' Facebook pages before the analysis to get familiarity with the

community context. To limit the data, a total of 324 posts that are considered to be comprehensive and explanatory enough were copied to a word document after a quick review. In exploring the messages derived from interactions and community administration within the retailing customers' Facebook page, the netnographic data were coded and categorized along with nick-names and posting dates under the e-WOM motivations typology identified by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004, p. 44). Apart from these headings, coding and categories have been revised as different comments and posts appeared.

The *trustworthy netnographic interpretation* needs to indicate the constraints of the online channel and the method (Kozinets, 2002, p. 65). It was aimed to increase the trustworthiness of the research results through triangulation, in which a large number of users who shared comments were used as data in the analysis. Also, field triangulation was performed with the participation of customers from three different retailers (BİM, A101, ŞOK) which reduce the impacts on the investigation of certain domestic components connected to a particular retailer (Peeroo, Samy, & Jones, 2016, p. 150). Although the four-point *ethical policy* offered by Kozinets (2002, p. 65) was followed in this research, no consent was obtained from the members of the relevant Facebook community. Although the membership process requires a procedure, the postings were considered to be publicly available, and ethical violations were eliminated by paying attention to anonymity and keeping the name of the community confidential. For this reason, it was not necessary to secure a consent statement for the use of the relevant shares as data in the research (Peeroo et al., 2016, p. 149).

3. Findings

Defining discount retailer customers' e-WOM behaviors, messages and other shares in one of the most popular social community Facebook pages was the primary aim of the current paper. The author filtered the data from community members of over three hundred online posts about purchasing experiences and post-purchase feelings and categorized them according to the typology suggested by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004, p. 43-45). Thus, e-WOM motivations to share individual product/brand/point-of-purchase experiences were clarified.

3.1. Complaints / Venting Adverse Feelings

Discount retail customers overwhelmingly shared their views to vent their annoyance and discontentedness and to seek support in their experiential troubles. Such that the motivation was based on unfavorable experiences, where e-WOM interactions turn into intense conversations and multiple members voice their similar feelings. Expressing those complaints and frustrations were mainly caused by a series of experiences. Diverse and high prices, deceptive advertising, low-quality products, products that cannot be found in a specific store, etc. are exemplified by the following quotes:

*"I bought cloves from ***, the label that says 4.50 was 7.50 on payment. I asked, they said that the prices have changed, they said that they could not find the availability to change it. What is this, where are we going, whoops?"*

"What unnecessary stuff is on sale. Give discounts on fat, meat, cheese, let the poor eat to their fullest."

"Prices are dissimilar on the shelf and in the checkout. I experienced yesterday, I reported it to the authorities."

*"We won't buy from *** and *** retailers, no more... as if we need them, isn't there no other market or grocery store... suddenly they became the first opportunistic sellers... they still don't care, they continue to do the best of opportunism... they lost us... 🤪 I also buy from the groceries next to me, everything is even more affordable, we do not buy from the stores. Unnecessary expenses..."*

Even, these adverse feelings rarely amounted to insulting statements, swearing, offending, and mocking attitudes.

"If the discount products that come to this store won't be available in every member of the chain, what's the point of having stores everywhere? Nonsense..."

"How cheap is that, ?!!!"

"Are these prices real, for whom? Why do you always deceptively advertise? When we go to the store, they say not to believe them, market employees..."

"[RETAILER'S MOTTO], huh, liar liar. no one believes you..."

Moreover, some customers narrated the whole extent of the visit to the discount store and reflected his/her reviews about every single experience of the products, and ambiance in a more thorough manner.

*" *** labels in their hands... we always have a word, no one listens, no one complains... no one controls... no one... Happy for them!!!, stores sell what they want for a price they want, they are all liars... they say that the dollar has fallen, but believe me, it is of no use to us... Today I went to ***, in the morning I looked at cheese was 31 TL now it is 70 TL, chicken wings 45 TL, 1 kilo of beef was 19-20 TL, now it is 24 TL, for God's sake, this is not that much... not that much. .. shame on you..."*

*"You can't find anything you are looking for in the brochure, ***, where are the onions, curly, frozen chicken products, your business is to deceive people!"*

Retailing customers' eWOM interactions in independent online communities are mostly grounded on unsatisfied needs and unfavorable product experiences. Therefore, individual Facebook groups established to share information on discount retailing in Türkiye are not an exception. This finding is consistent with prior research papers (Kim, Bae, & Kang, 2008; Stevens, Spaid, Breazeale, & Jones, 2018). Although there might be some rough posts, such individual online groups can provide important insights for companies. Kim, Bae, and Kang (2008, p. 358) stated that these communities provide awareness about retailing solutions for consumer needs, new product developments, and future enlargement opportunities. Current netnographic observation revealed that customers expressed their relationships with the retailing companies by sharing their ideas that voiced dissatisfaction and complaints against discount retailers on various issues. The issues subject to complaints and dissatisfaction could be listed as

follows: Price inconsistency, higher prices, product attributes, violating promises, deceptive advertising, insufficient information sharing.

3.2. Seeking Self-Enhancement

Seeking self-enhancement refers to sharing product experiences and brand beliefs or technical information about the product in an online community which might become a desire to gain the appreciation of other members and reveal a self image-oriented sharing behavior. Several online sharings of the community members described the use of technological products such as mobile phones and other tools that eventuated positive emotions. Expression of positive experiences and feelings is followed by advising other members and the expectation of receiving praise in return. This group of posts displays favorable results in experiencing a product, and they usually pursue an expectation to get feedback from other community members:

*“There is [MOBILE PHONE BRAND] on sale on ***’s website, I bought the pink color, I am very pleased, it is very strong, but look at other sites, you can buy it from the cheaper ones, but this is good, if anyone needs help, you can contact me...”*

*“... well done, while I remember, very nice pots and pans are coming to *** this week, if you need them at affordable prices, don't miss them...”*

*“By the way, ladies, if you have *** around, kitchen utensils are very suitable, I'm leaving the official video for you to benefit...”*

“[BRAND NAME] is a strong Hoover, it's very nice, I've been using it for 5 years, it vacuums very well, it was a gift to me, it's very nice, the decision is yours...”

Self-enhancement motivation is based on the need for approval which indicates that the individual's contributions to the group and the usefulness of the shared information are recognized as beneficial (Chung & Kim, 2015; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Chung and Kim (2015, p. 466) associated this utility with social benefit and emotional solidarity, defined as the emotional bonds that arise when individuals interact with each other. Therefore, trying to control the views of others by sharing a certain motive of approval and concern for personal appreciation or self-image has become one of the main e-WOM motivations. In this respect, the individual's desire to share his/her skilled attributes or a conscious consumer identity with others through positive-unfavorable brand experiences indicates that e-WOM can be associated with the online position the community members try to achieve and inclination to satisfy emotional bonds.

3.3. Rising Cynicism Against Retailer Chains

The need to gain approval and self-enhancement encourage group members to share their views to fulfill emotional bonds in the online community. Therefore, the individual who assures a social benefit reinforces the belief that he/she is in emotional solidarity with other users and proves himself/herself to the group that he/she provides beneficial information. As a result, it contributes to the spirit of togetherness. Cynicism attitudes might be considered to have significant associations with emotional solidarity. The idea that humane and conscientious

principles such as justice, truthfulness, sincerity, and honesty succumb to personal interests shapes the core of cynicism attitudes. Helm (2006, p. 4) explains consumer cynicism as a permanent and learned attitude shaped by the perception that the opportunistic policies of the brands in the market environment foster unfavorable situations. Chylinski and Chu (2010, p. 816) emphasize that experiential relations become the main predictor of this interaction, stating that consumers react to marketing efforts that are perceived as violating their goals and values. Consumers who exhibit cynical behaviors have an active sense of responsibility toward shaping the consumption environment. Behavioral reactions targeting to mould the marketing environment emerge in various types (Helm et al., 2015, p. 517). These forms of behavior can be enlisted as a contribution to improving consumer awareness, adverse WOM communication, boycott call and participation, and the development of complaint mechanisms. Boycotts are the reactions of consumers who reject to buy but investigate and question, which become an indicator of resistance to brands' marketing efforts (Kozinets & Handelman, 1998, p. 376). An individual experience or belief lies at the core of boycott behavior that fosters collective awareness toward consumption and suggests avoiding marketing endeavors (Garrett, 1987, p. 48). According to netnographic observation findings, customers of discount retailers voice their call for a boycott in the online community in terms of unfavorable e-WOM interactions. These posts were brought to the agenda by some group members via liking the post or giving support by commenting as the following quotes:

*"Boycott them, we do not buy products from *** stores."*

"Go on boycotting these chains."

"Together boycott, don't buy anything, not even knock on their doors."

However, some users expressed frustration feelings in several ways that their calls for boycotting and emotional solidarity have not been supported.

"We've always said, and we're saying it again. Boycott, boycott, boycott... No one hears!"

"There is no choice but to boycott, bro... Nobody should go to the store, look how the prices are falling... I have cut out shopping for a month now, instead started buying from the local grocery. But nobody cares..."

"Then you won't cry because the prices are high. Everyone says boycott, you are enjoying yourself (continue shopping from them). You will both say let's act together, and you will complain because the prices are high..."

It is readily apparent that the call for an individual or collective boycott emerges as a reaction derived from the dissatisfaction of the consumers. In this context, boycotts can be defined as one of the possible reflections of consumer cynicism within the scope of withdrawal from the marketing environment. In the discount retail market, dissatisfaction arising from various reasons turns into a negative eWOM interaction at the lowest level and can evolve into consumer boycotts, which are a form of collective and organized reactions. As Klein, Smith, and John stated (2004, p. 96) "boycott participation is prompted by the belief that a firm has engaged in conduct that is strikingly wrong and that has adverse and possibly harmful consequences for various parties". However, it was reflected in

the eWOM communication that discount retailing customers had a significant disagreement about the harmful behaviors or efforts of the brands. While some supported the boycott call, a significant part of them persistently ignored such aggressive rhetoric and stayed away from emotional solidarity. Even so, the risk of a boycott for retailers would pose significant problems. In this respect, marketers must understand all aspects of boycotting, which is the biggest threat that discount retailer chains might encounter.

3.4. The Motive of Exerting Pressure

Because customers of discount retailers are conscious of posting an undesirable user experience would be an appeal to companies' managers, they are keen to put pressure on discount retailers by making public their views. eWOM communication on online consumer-opinion platforms might be considered to cause a robust influence in terms of presenting a clear operation with a basic capability (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, p. 40). Therefore, the fact that disgruntled customers can readily express their complaints in consumer-opinion communities stems from the desire to exert collective pressure on the company. Customers' online complaint-sharing behavior is often accompanied by implying that having reported their discomfort to an authorized person, and this turns into the most obvious indicator of the desire for collective opinion. Because an individual statement for applying an authorized person will have an encouraging effect on other users, a collective opinion and expectation that similar discontentedness will be followed altogether might become visible in the community. Examples of the views of community members trying to augment a collective awareness through the online platform are as follows:

"[RETAILER BRANDS] they all have the same prices, only different names, they have all agreed, neither more nor less. If you don't believe it, go and compare the prices, you will be surprised. All of these are opportunistic, let's report them to the ministry. Let everyone do this and learn their lessons..."

*"You're going shopping, they say we have not this product on the store, I went to *** to buy sth., it is not available... what is it... they are deceiving people... Let's complain to the consumer rights board. If some experience such complaints, we will unite and make our voices heard to the authorities..."*

"We bought a flash drive, it's broken, they didn't renew it. I sent an e-mail to the central administration, I will also complain to the state."

Seemingly, customers of discount retailers, who think that they have been victimized in some way, wish for disseminating an impression they cooperate with the authorized units to put pressure on the company and sharing with other members that their voices are eloquent for all community. Although the desire to exert power and pressure on the company was evident in the complaints of the customers, it is readily apparent that these calls were mostly ignored by other members who think they were open to debate. Yet, periodically there were statements that official applications have been exerted to the authorities.

Conclusion

This paper explored the eWOM interactions of discount retailers' customers in online consumer-opinion communities on Facebook. Findings reveal that members of the online community are prone to share their unfavorable experiences through social networks. There were two main goals for customers to share their views. Firstly, to reach a collective opinion to exert pressure on the retailer chains, secondly, disseminating cynicism ideas among members thus assuring an individual self-enhancement. The primary contribution of the current netnographic observation was to clarify the insights of the members of an online community established exclusively for discount retail customers. The study explored that the e-WOM drivers of customers can be classified based on the typology in the literature, but novel concepts could also be considered specifically to discount retailing industry (e.g. a possible cynicism attitudes leading to boycotting response). Accordingly, it is seen that community members' motivations to share their unfavorable experiences with the brand rather than their positive evaluations play a dominant role in electronic word-of-mouth interaction.

Considering such a competitive market environment that provides added value on turnover and employment, it could be concluded that social media encourages negative interactions to a large extent on the customers side. This might be inconsistent with the fact that discount retailers make a significant profit in Türkiye. However, the efforts of dissatisfied customers to make their voices heard effectively on social media caused this study to reach only adverse eWOM motivations. One of the plainest reasons for sharing unfavorable reviews is the homogeneous perception of the customers in terms of product experiences and general consumer characteristics. It is understood that groups that are similar to each other in terms of characteristics such as income status, education, social status as well as attitudes and beliefs attempt to build a collective position, but are engaged in developing it in the focus of unfavorable product experience. Homophily explains interaction among members of the online community with the focus on commonly shared attributes. As the counterpart members trigger the interaction, effective communication tends to become apparent. Thus, homophily could lead in-group interactivity to become more salient. As a result, discount retailers' customers "with a higher level of perceived homophily may be more likely to engage in eWOM with each other" (Chu & Kim, 2011, p. 54) when sharing their unfavorable product experiences.

The proneness of disseminating unfavorable experiences is due to the nature of consumer-based eWOM motivation. Gruen et al. (2006, p. 449) argued that eWOM can have higher reliability, empathy, and relevance for customers. Empathetic reactions mostly emerge towards and around adverse emotions (Andreychik & Migliaccio, 2015; Morrison et al., 2016). Consumers, on the other hand, are more likely to share their unfavorable experiences, attitudes, and beliefs (Gruen et al., 2006; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Jeong & Jang, 2011) and might attempt to convey this situation as an injustice. Also, they might incline to convince themselves and others that they have to struggle against the services and policies they suffer. This might be the reason why unfavorable eWOM motivations towards discount retailers are more prominent. In other words,

self-enhancement, which is an eWOM motivation based on positive product or brand experiences, lies behind empathy, exerting power driver, and cynical thoughts, which are activated through negative experiences in reinforcing the spirit of togetherness and emotional solidarity.

The findings of the netnographic review should be assessed within the scope of several boundaries that need to be considered. First of all, discount retailers and eWOM posts towards them are limited to Türkiye only. No cultural comparison is likely available in evaluating the results and it is recommended to read the paper only in line with the experiences of Turkish customers. Albeit the key purpose of this investigation was to reveal the eWOM motivations of online community members towards the discount retailing industry, the generalizability of the findings might be limited due to a specific sample of the research context. It should also be appended to this customization that the data-gathering period coincides with the pandemic conditions. The adverse impacts of the pandemic on prices, the shift in the parities of product supply and demand, along the economic problems Turkey struggle with, might have caused consumers to share unfavorable reviews. While this ethnographic observation contributes to the existing literature related to eWOM motivations towards discount retailers and suggests managerial inference, the validity of the findings might be arguable due to such limitations. Moreover, the methodological limitations could also threaten the validity and reliability of the study. For instance, instead of groping or manually interpreting the collected data, future studies should enrich their interpretations using content analysis software and seek ways to make qualitative data more meaningful with word clouds, digital visualizations, graphs, or tables.

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