eWOM quantity, eWOM quality, eWOM content, and consumer engagement in virtual brand community, the moderating role of perceived organizational justice: The case of MTN Cameroon

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ABSTRACT: The objective of this research is to understand the role of perceived organizational justice on the credibility of electronic word of mouth in brand communities. Based on a theoretical model built from the literature on the concepts of electronic word of mouth, organizational justice, and engagement in branded virtual communities, this research mobilizes a hypothetico-deductive empirical approach and structural equation methodology to evaluate the role of electronic word of mouth on consumer engagement, under the moderating influence of organizational justice. The results indicate positive effects of electronic word of mouth content and quality, and no effect of quantitative word of mouth. Furthermore, the moderating effect of perceived organizational justice on the influence of word of mouth is established. Therefore, it is recommended that managers of branded virtual communities take into consideration the credibility of the brand in its social engagements in order to benefit from a positive electronic word of mouth that can foster consumers' online engagement.

KEYWORDS: Electronic word of mouth, virtual brand community, consumer engagement, organizational justice, structural equations.

1 INTRODUCTION

The prodigious development of the internet and social networks over the past two decades now offers companies new opportunities to enrich interactions between customers and brands, and to build privileged relationships with consumers (Kucukemiroglu & Kara, 2015). The rise of electronic communications has significantly modified the relationship between consumers and brands, and has had a strong impact on the commercial activities of companies. As a result, the consumer, in his search for information on different commercial offers, is increasingly mobilising social networks (Elsen et al., 2001).

In this logic, the rise of ewom is concomitant with the emergence of virtual brand communities, which represent a new framework for consumer-to-consumer and brand-related discussion and information exchange (Brodie et al., 2014; Mishra & M S, 2016; Ismagilova et al., 2017). Online communities offer new opportunities for brands to build close relationships with consumers (Tho *et al.*, 2016; Wu and Wang, 2011). Consumers find opportunities to express their evaluation of the experience they had with the brand, and also to influence the opinions and behaviours of other consumers through 'likes', comments, texts, sounds and videos, etc.

As ewom is a communication from consumers rather than from companies, it has a higher credibility than traditional media such as television, radio, press, billboards, cinema, and internet (Nielsen, 2012). Like online communication channels such as blogs, email, online discussion groups, social networks, ewom is now recognised as an effective communication tool for developing brand awareness and attachment, as well as influencing consumer behaviour (Steffes & Burgee, 2009; Shen, 2021).

The rise of the internet has created online forums, social media, and communities, which have increased the scope and implications of eWoM for customers and firms (Dwyer, 2007; Kozinets et al., 2010; Malthouse et al., 2013). Researchers have examined a diverse set of consequences of eWoM, e.g. a tendency to recommend (Liu, 2006), involvement (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001), feedback on products and services (Grégoire et al., 2010; Hennig-Thurau, 2004). Similarly, several studies have examined

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the antecedents of eWoM, e.g. affective characteristics of the message (Berger and Milkman, 2012), relational factors (Chu and Kim, 2011), and individual traits (Mowen et al., 2007). A number of works on the antecedents of ewom in branded virtual communities reflect its effectiveness in terms of valence, volume, expertise and source credibility (Duan et al., 2008; Liu, 2006; Cheung et al., 2008; Cheung et al., 2009).

However, the contrasting results of this work show the need to take into account other variables that could reinforce the effectiveness of the ewom source. Taking into account the moderating effect of organisational justice is part of this logic. The perception of good organisational justice by a consumer with experience with the brand is likely to generate positive eWom, and is intended to bolster the effects of the brand's advertising campaigns on the various social network platforms (Zhang et al., 2018). On the other hand, issues related to the antecedents of consumer engagement in branded virtual communities still have many unresolved facets, mainly due to the low control that brands have over ewom in social networks, and the low perceived credibility of ewom by some consumers (Ryu & Feick, 2007; Schmitt, Skiera, & Van den Bulte, 2011). Teo & Lim (2001) for example established the influence of perceived organisational justice on consumer trust in online commerce, with trust being decisive for consumer satisfaction with the eWom.

Moreover, there is little work on ewom in developing countries in general and in the context of Africa south of the Sahara (Chan and Ngai, 2011). Our approach aims to fill some of these gaps. It seeks to demonstrate that consumers' opinions in online brand communities are not simply a reflection of their experience with the brand, but also reflect these actors' perceptions of the company's social practices. The content of the eWom is mainly edited and published by consumers who reflect their experience with the brand, both in functional and hedonic aspects (Mikalef et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2018).

Therefore, the objective of this research is to assess the effect of eWom on consumer engagement in the virtual brand community, and the moderating role of perceived organisational justice.

The results provide a set of lessons learned and relevant theoretical and managerial recommendations. The research shows that ewom positively influences consumer engagement in the brand's virtual community. This influence is best explained by the effect of content, followed by the quality of the ewom. The influence of quantitative ewom was not significant. This result is consistent with previous research, including Zhang et al. (2010) and Jeon et al. (2016).

This research is structured in three main parts. The first part presents a review of the theories related to the antecedents and effects of eWoM in networks, it ends with the development of the hypotheses and the theoretical model of the research. Then the methodology of the research is presented, as well as the elements of validity and reliability of the theoretical constructs. Finally, the discussion of the research results and the limitations and future development paths are specified.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

Cognitive dissonance was first defined as a psychologically uncomfortable state that leads to efforts to reduce dissonance (Elliott & Devin, 1994; Festinger, 1957). In the sales cycle, cognitive dissonance is more likely to occur when customers are concerned about undesirable product performance (Oliver, 1997), or when they feel anxiety, uncertainty, or doubt about the product (Montgomery & Barnes, 1993; Mowen, 1993). In reality, arousal dissonance as one of the two psychological discomforts is argued to have to exist first by engaging in internal attribution (Cooper & Fazio, 1984). As a result, the inconsistency of a purchase behavior with the attitude toward the purchase initiates a certain post-purchase behavior to reduce the other psychological discomfort. Involvement in the pre-purchase process actually produces tension and a possible cognitive dissonance that cannot be eased by only consuming the product (Dichter, 1966). Customers tend to apply various strategies to alleviate that tension and reduce cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957).

Giving WOM shortly after making the purchase is considered a means of eliminating all the dissonance in the post-purchase stage (Richins & Bloch, 1986). Similarly, engaging in eWOM is a strategy to reduce dissonance during the purchase process. Researchers of eWOM have identified motives for engaging in eWOM as either focus-related utility or consumption utility (Balasubramanian & Mahajan, 2001; Sundaram, Mitra & Webster, 1998). Focus-related utility includes three aspects: concern for others, helping the company that makes the product, and social benefits (Balasubaramanian & Mahajan, 2001; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004). Regarding concern for others, the motive is to help other potential customers to make wise purchase decisions. Sharing the positive purchase experience online (eWOM) is a desirable and equitable exchange between customers. It is also considered a form of altruism (Paul, Miller & Paul, 1993).

With regard to helping the marketer that is selling the product, the motivation is the customers' satisfaction with its offerings (Sundaram et al., 1998). According to equity theory, when customers perceive more product benefits than what they expected,

they write eWOM to the company marketing it as a fair exchange. Last, social benefit indicates that customers want to be part of the virtual community and be valuable to that community (Oliver, 1999). When customers contribute to others-marketers or the society-all three aspects of focus-related utility ensure customers that they can make a difference in their virtual community. The resulting feeling of importance the eWOM creates reduces the dissonance.

Consumption utility emphasises the value of the eWOM through direct consumption of eWOM contributed by someone else (Balasubramanian & Mahajan, 2001). When customers seek problem-solving information online before they make purchase decisions, a great number of eWOM about the product or company will support the purchase. In that sense, eWOM becomes the primary source of information in the whole purchase process that could have an impact on cognitive dissonance. However, this theory makes no predictions about how dissonance will be reduced.

ùWhile Festinger identified changing attitudes or behaviours as a solution, his theory provides no details on what direction these changes take place or in what form. Even if there is no dissonance, what factors cause a person to decide to change one behavior over another. This theory provides little to no data on how the unique individuals choose what cognitive dissonances are worthy of being addressed and which do not experience alteration. Due to the limitations of this theory, we will examine the social support to theory to complement the short comings of the cognitive dissonance theory.

2.2 THE SOCIAL SUPPORT THEORY

The social support theory focuses on the social support individuals rely on and give in a social network to cope with negative events (Cohen and Wills, 1985). According to this theory, social support is an important interpersonal resource that aids an individual in coping with stress. An individual's perception of the availability of social support is more important in determining coping effectiveness than the actual social support he or she receives. Perceived social support serves as a protective layer for individuals during stressful events and helps them maintain their well-being (Cutrona and Russell, 1987). The extant literature suggests that individuals obtain social support through three characteristics of the social network: the structure of the social network, such as size; beliefs about the members regarding their support in positive as well as negative events; and the behavioural actions that members provide for social support. These factors determine the likelihood of an individual to rely on a social network for social support. Based on the premises of the social support theory, we contend that the perceived social support individuals receive from the social connections in their network may determine their intentions to transmit NWOM communications using SNS. As negative service experiences are stressful events, individuals may share their negative messages on SNS to obtain emotional and information support from the network members (Chung and Buhalis, 2008). While previous studies have shown that social support on SNS influence an individual's well-being, life satisfaction, and social commerce adoption (Liang et al., 2011), this study extends this to understand the role of perceived justice on Electronic word of mouth and customer engagement on the virtual community of MTN Cameroon.

2.3 USES AND GRATIFICATION THEORY

UGT is an approach to understanding why and how individuals actively seek out and use specific media to satisfy specific needs (Katz & Foulkes, 1962). Herzog (1944) used the term gratifications to describe specific types or dimensions of satisfaction reported by audience members of daytime radio programs. Subsequently, researchers became interested in why audiences engaged with various forms of media, such as listening to the radio and reading the newspaper (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994). UGT addresses how individuals choose media that satisfies their needs, allowing one to realise gratifications such as knowledge enhancement, entertainment and relaxation, social interaction and reward or remuneration (Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005). UGT was one of the first approaches to consider the active role of the audience in media choice, suggesting that individuals actively search for, identify with and employ media to fulfil specific gratification needs (Ku, Chu, & Tseng, 2013). This perspective recognises that consumers are active, rather than passive, recipients of media. While a UGT perspective has been applied in the context of television and electronic bulletins (Leung & Wei, 2000), the rapid growth of the Internet and social media platforms has created mediums in which a higher level of interactivity from users is required (Ko et al., 2005; Ruggiero, 2000). The well-established theoretical perspective of UGT provides valuable insights into this new medium. As the underlying assumption of UGT is that users are actively involved in media usage, the theory has become increasingly relevant in studies of media channels that allow for consumer choice and interaction, such as social media (Ruggiero, 2000). Swanson (1987) advocated the need to understand the role of message content within UGT research. Early research in this area indicated audience members seek and find different gratifications within media content, affecting and consumption of the content. For example, entertainment and information gratifications, derived through the content of television programs contribute to substantial increases in television viewing levels (Rubin, 1983). Similarly, a UGT perspective has more recently been used to predict specific behaviours as a result of consumers' motivations for using social media sites (Smock, Ellison, Lampe, & Wohn, 2011). In social media, a brand's overt goal is to attract an audience by providing value, or gratification, through its content (Malthouse, Haenlein, Skiera, Wege, & Zhang, 2013). Content must therefore be designed in a way which creates value for individual consumers to build a stronger level of engagement and facilitate value outcomes (Malthouse et al., 2013). Constructs based on the theoretical underpinnings of UGT, such as the need for social interaction, the need for entertainment, information seeking and sharing needs, and the desire for reward or remuneration have all been explored in recent literature that has investigated consumer choices of online and social media;

2.4 EQUITY THEORY

Equity theory as proposed by Adams (1965) states that the motivation level of employees is proportional to the inputs and outputs using comparison relative to other people. Equity theory focuses on determining whether the distribution of resources is fair to both relational partners. Equity is measured by comparing the ratio of contributions (or costs) and benefits (or rewards) for each person. Considered one of the justice theories, equity theory was first developed in the 1960s by J. Stacy Adams, a workplace and behavioral psychologist, who asserted that employees seek to maintain equity between the inputs that they bring to a job and the outcomes that they receive from it against the perceived inputs and outcomes of others (Adams, 1963). According to Equity Theory, in order to maximize individuals' rewards, we tend to create systems where resources can be fairly divided amongst members of a group. Inequalities in relationships will cause those within it to be unhappy to a degree proportional to the amount of inequality. The belief is that people value fair treatment which causes them to be motivated to keep the fairness maintained within the relationships of their co-workers and the organization. The structure of equity in the workplace is based on the ratio of inputs to outcomes. Inputs are the contributions made by the employee for the organization.

Under relationships of social exchange, the feeling of being treated equally arises from people's realization of equal economic input and output. Social comparison will produce three results: cognition, affect, and behaviour (McColl-Kennedy and Sparks 2003); thus, equity is one of the results from social comparison. Equity theory was first used by Huppertz, Arenson, and Evans (1978: 250) in the marketing realms. They believe that customers will compare the money spent and the value acquired from consumption, and only produce the feeling of equity when the two inputs are equal, being that the perceived value generated and the price of the goods are equal, and hence are satisfied. But once the comparison is disproportionate, then inequity arises.

Researchers have acknowledged this concept, and attempts to analyse service recovery attributes through equity theory, which means when the service failure occurs, perceived justice should be considered as a measure of satisfaction for customers when attempting service recovery (Goodwin and Ross, 1992; Tax and Brown, 1998; Tax et al., 1998). Although Kumar et al (1995) identified distributive justice and procedural justice between resellers and suppliers, Tax and Brown (1998) examined service recovery between resellers and customers from the perspectives of distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice. Subsequently, these three types of justice have been widely used in various studies (Tax and Brown, 1998; Tax et al., 1998; Maxham and Netemeyer, 2002; Sabharwal et al., 2010; Colquit et al., 2001). Therefore, this study adopts distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice as the three justice constructs, and examines their effects eWom and customer engagement;

3 THE RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The research hypotheses are mainly derived from the links between the core variables of the research.

3.1 ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH

The rise and popularization of social media changed the relationship between company and customer. Prior to the popularization of social media, these relationships existed through one-way channels such as TV, radio, and the print media with little opportunity for interaction between companies and their customers. Social media opened a dialogue between companies and consumers, and permitted the customers to exchange information among themselves.

Two phenomena in this process are of particular interest: the convenience provided by social media, and in particular by social networks, in developing brand communities, usually sponsored by the companies, and facilitating the existence of word-of-mouth communication by consumers of the brand or product. Through brand communities, companies aim to strengthen the relationship with their customers and thus acquire trust, and ultimately, the loyalty of their customers.

Word of mouth is the main factor behind 20 to 50 percent of buying decisions (Bughin et al., 2010). This type of communication finds its own ground in social media, and is the modality known as eWOM (electronic word-of-mouth). If, on the one hand, eWOM has a much broader coverage than traditional word-of-mouth, on the other, it requires that companies pay special attention to the features of social media to make effective use of it.

3.1.1 EWOM CONTENT

The content of information determines how much the receiver of this information learns from and adopts the received information. If the received information is perceived as credible, the receiver will have more confidence to use it for the purchase decision (Sussman and Siegal, 2003). Taking into consideration that online information exchanges occur between people who may have no prior relationship, it is essential to consider how perceived credibility of information influences consumer engagement (Koo 2016; Teng et al. 2017; Wang et al. 2015b; Xie et al. 2011).

3.1.2 EWOM QUALITY

Brand is a perception and also promises, therefore it varies in the amount of power and value they command in the marketplace, and with e-word-of-mouth that is conceived as volitional post-purchase communications between customers online, information on the quality of a brand can be easily communicated to prospects in larger scale. Moreover, word-of-mouth is believed to follow from an evaluation of how the acquired service or product performs. Extending these assumptions however, it is argued that customers who find their supplier to deliver satisfactory levels of value will make verbal and online recommendations of their experiences and the perceived quality of the product is comprehensible to make an informed purchase decision (Dick &Basu, 1994).

3.1.3 EWOM QUANTITY

When consumers search for eWOM, the number of eWOM messages makes information more observable (Cheung and Thadani 2010). The volume of eWOM indicates the popularity of the product or service. It was found by previous studies that the number of eWOM communications have a positive effect on purchase intention (Flanagin et al. 2014; He and Bond 2015; Hu et al. 2012; Liu and Zhou 2012). For example, by using an experimental survey with 192 respondents, He and Bond (2015) found that volume of eWOM positively influences purchase intention in the context of movies. This will not be tested;

H1: quantitative electronic word of mouth has a positive influence on consumers engagement in the virtual brand community.

H2: qualitative electronic word of mouth has a positive influence on consumers engagement in the virtual brand community.

H3: electronic world of mouth content has a positive influence on consumers engagement in the virtual brand community.

3.2 ORGANISATIONAL JUSTICE

Since service recovery research has focused on the concept of justice from the social exchange perspective, justice theory has primarily been applied to the research of service recovery as a theoretical framework (Schoefer, 2008: 261; Wirtz and Mattila, 2004). Consumers generally expect gains equivalent to their costs-an outcome they consider to be justice (McColl-Kennedy and Sparks, 2003: 251). If consumers perceive that they have paid more in costs than they gained for the product or service, they feel that they are being treated unfairly (Kuo and Wu, 2012: 127), which is referred to as a service failure. Thus, justice is a significant concept used to explain a service failure and recovery; it consequently affects consumer satisfaction. Consumers generally evaluate justice related to service recovery in three dimensions-distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice-all of which are based on the service recovery consumers receive from a company and how they receive it (Chebat and Slusarczyk, 2005: 664).

Distributive justice refers to the service recovery consumers receive from the company, and procedural justice relates to how they receive it-particularly the recovery process (Kuo and Wu, 2012: 128; McColl-Kennedy and Sparks, 2003). Through the procedural components, consumers tend to evaluate the flexibility, efficiency, and transparency of the recovery process (Wirtz and Mattila, 2004). Interactional justice is defined as fairness during the process of interaction and communication between the consumer and the company in solving the problems resulting from the service failure (Chebat and Slusarczyk, 2005: 665; McColl-Kennedy and Sparks, 2003: 252).

According to the existing service-related literature, consumers' perception of justice significantly influences their post-purchase behaviour. Ha and Jang (2009) found that perception of justice positively influences consumers' purchase intentions. Maxham and Netemeyer (2003) suggested that the perception of procedural justice motivates positive WOM intentions and higher interactional justice induces consumers to engage in repurchase. In addition, interactional justice is a determinant of consumer trust for the service provider and consumer satisfaction (Tax et al., 1998). In particular, most researchers support the

significant effect of perceived justice on post-recovery satisfaction (Chang and Chang, 2010; Ha and Jang, 2009; Kau and Loh, 2006; Maxham, 2001; Maxham and Netemeyer, 2002; Schoefer, 2008; Smith et al., 1999; Tax et al.)

However, regarding the relative effect of each dimension of justice, no consensus has been reached (Levesque and McDougall, 2000). Some studies indicate that distributive justice is the most decisive predictor of satisfaction (Homburg and Fürst, 2005; Patterson et al., 2006; Smith et al., 1999) while others suggest that interactional or procedural justice are the most significant factors in consumer satisfaction (Maxham and Netemeyer, 2002; Tax et al., 1998; Voorhees and Brady, 2005).

The three dimensions of justice definitely represent important determinants for consumer post-purchase behaviour and thus we need to add more empirical evidence to bridge the gaps in prior studies and enhance its understanding. McCollough et al (2000) asserted that consumers assign more importance to both interactional and distributive justice due to the inherent difficulty in comparison to procedural justice. Thus, this study used typical examples of interactional and distributive justice, such as apologies and compensation, as stimuli.

3.2.1 INTERACTIONAL JUSTICE

Bies and Moag (1986) assert that traditional researchers on organizational justice have neglected the importance of relational interactions between people, and focused only on distributive justice and procedural justice. They separate the interpersonal aspect of procedural justice and propose interactional justice. Interactional justice is the perceived fairness of treatment on a personal level that an individual receives during the process of purchase decision-making (Martínez-tur et al., 2006). It often refers to the customer's perceived fairness when interacting with service providers who attempt to salvage with service recovery (Maxham and Netemeyer, 2002). Greenberg (1993) points out that there are interpersonal and intrapersonal determinants of reactions to inequity reactions. Colquit et al [2001] use confirmatory factor analysis and meta-analysis to verify the existence of two different dimensions: informational justice and interpersonal justice. Informational justice reflects the explanations provided to people that convey information about why procedures are used in a certain way or why outcomes are distributed in a certain fashion. Interpersonal justice refers to the degree to which people are treated with politeness, dignity, and respect by authorities or third parties who are involved in executing procedures or determining outcomes. Chen and Chou (2012) regard interactional justice as interpersonal justice and define it as consumers' perceptions of the interaction with the online vendor during their transactions. Wu (2013) argues that interactional justice simply reflects the perceived fairness of communications between the system interface and online consumers. Regarding the limitations of the justice theory we are going to use the cognitive theory to examine customer's perception of justice and how it influences their electronic word of mouth.

3.2.2 PROCEDURAL JUSTICE

Procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of a process and method by which the equity of proportion in input to output is accomplished. [Goodwin & Ross, 1992; Smith et al., 1999]. Under procedural justice, the service exchange process must have consistent and equitable policies, rules, processes, and standards (Martínez-tur et al., 2006; Voorhees and Brady, 2005; Chen and Chou, 2012) Cropanzano et al. (2002) suggest that a company or organization should provide customer service in a way that every customer in the program can feel fairly treated. Procedural justice can be divided into five aspects: (1) wait time for the service; (2) efficiency of service; (3) service error rate; (4) service transparency; and (5) quick response to a special request (Bowen et al., 2000). This study centers on procedural justice causing customer dissatisfaction and dysfunctional behaviour in the use of MTN Cameroon's products and services e.g., issues of handling transactions and services to the customers.

3.2.3 DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

Distributive justice is the earliest assessment dimension in the justice theory. It is based on Adams' (1965) equity theory. It can be referred to as the perceived fairness of obtainable outcome of a decision, dispute, or negotiation involving two or more parties (Blodgett et al., 1997).

Individuals often compare the costs and gains received to evaluate the fairness of an exchange (Greenberg 1987, 1990). When a customer feels that the ratio of input to output is fair, the service is considered as having distributive justice (Maxham and Netemeyer, 2002).

Some scholars have pointed out three principles of distributive justice: cost, quantity of service, and excellence, all of which the customer considers as distributive justice toward services (Bowen et al., 2000; Martínez-tur et al., 2006). As a result, in the study of social sciences, particularly at the economic level, during the exchange process, people generally focus on an equitable result (Yilmaz et al., 2004). In this vein, this study focuses on distributive justice that causes customer service dissatisfaction and dysfunctional customer behaviour in the context of MTNC. For example, when a post on the MTNC page does not match the

service it offers or the services has a disfunction, distributive injustice arises and dissatisfaction is bound to occur, leading to the manifestation of disfunctional customer behaviour. When distributive justice is violated, Adams (1963) reveals that most individuals will attempt to achieve equity by adjusting their own inputs and outcomes, or attempting to change the inputs or outcomes of the referents. Individuals can use behavioral processes or cognitive processes in order to attempt to restore equity. The means of reducing inequity will vary depending on the situation, and will not all be equally satisfying to an individual.

3.3 CUSTOMER BRAND ENGAGEMENT (CBE)

CBE is initially defined as the behavioural manifestation toward a brand or firm, beyond the purchase and resulted from motivational drivers. However, Mollen and Wilson defined CBE by highlighting the concept of cognitive and affective, which is "the cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand as personified by website or other computer-mediated entities designed to communicate brand value". Still, there are many studies that are measuring the CBE from the aspect of customers' behaviour. Because the definition of CBE is vague and solely stressed on certain aspects in customer engagement, Brodie et al. has extended the CBE definition by combining cognitive and emotional dimensions with the behavioural dimension. Thus, this extension of the definition gains supports from the following researchers. For instance, Hollebeek has illustrated the definition of CBE as "the level of customer's cognitive, emotional and behavioural investment in specific brand interactions".

3.3.1 COGNITIVE PROCESSING

Cognition refers the way of information is processed and learned by people. It includes the element of judgment and awareness. Consumers are able to understand and obtain knowledge when they are in the process of learning about the company's story, brand and product in a mediated space. The customer engagement defined by Brodie et al. is more complex and comprehensive and includes the psychological aspects of customers.

3.3.2 AFFECTION FACTOR

Affective in online consumer engagement can be defined as a consumer being affectively present by emotional bonding and connecting with a company that leads to overall consumer satisfaction. In a participative perspective, Gummerus et al. have depicted the engagement of customers into two forms, which are community engagement behaviour (CEB) and transaction engagement behaviour (TEB). CEB includes the actions of liking content, commenting, reading messages, and posting review, while TEB consists of the actions like gaming and spending money. Our study will concerntrate on the customer engagement behaviour (CEB), we propose the following hypothesis based on the above information.

3.3.3 ACTIVATION FACTOR

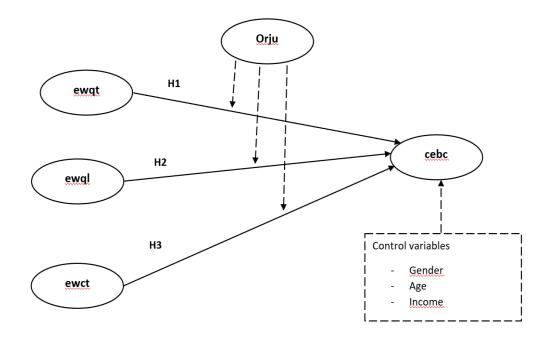
Acttivation is a behavioral manifestation of consumer engagement toward the brand and at the same time a distinct and necessary variable that precedes consumer engagement (Vivek et al., 2012) in eWOM - that is, participation in eWOM is a prerequisite condition for cognitive, emotional and social engagement to be manifested. It prepares the ground for them when it is motivated by organizational offerings and/or activities such as brand launching events. Based on the afore mentioned analysis it is expected that the intensity of individuals' participation in a provider-initiated event affects the intensity of consumer engagement as a whole. At the same time, as prior studies (Thelwall et al., 2010) have shown, extensive activation in eWOM is expected to be observed on the day of the event.

Hence, the following hypothesis are advanced

H4: consumer's perceived organizational justice mediate the influence of quantitative electronic word of mouth on consumers engagement in the virtual brand community.

H5: consumer's perceived organizational justice mediate the influence of qualitative electronic word of mouth on consumers engagement in the virtual brand community.

H6: consumer's perceived organizational justice mediate the influence of electronic world of mouth content on consumers engagement in the virtual brand community.



ewqt :ewom quantity, ewql :ewom quality, ewct :ewom content, cebc: consumer engagement in brand community, orju : perceived organizational justice

Fig. 1. The theorical model of research

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 THE STUDY POPULATION AND DATA COLLECTION

The sample consisted of "MTN Cameroon" customers who are members of the brand's virtual community. The participants were interviewed in the main cities of Cameroon by a team of interviewers who had been previously sensitized to the main themes of the questionnaire, taking care to take into account socio-demographic characteristics. The clients of a single company were selected for the survey in order to avoid problems related to organisational differences from one company to another. In addition, MTN Cameroon is the leading mobile phone company in Cameroon with an estimated market share of nearly 55%. Subsequently, 350 individuals were interviewed on the basis of a non-probability sample. Questionnaires that were not fully completed, and those with little variability in their responses, were eliminated at the end of the data mining phase. In the end, 299 complete and valid questionnaires were retained.

4.2 THE DATA COLLECTION TOOL

The questionnaire was constructed on the basis of scales used in the literature and which have been used in similar studies. All the questions were based on 5-point lickert scales ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "strongly agree".

Consumer engagement in the MTN brand community has been assessed as a second-order construct of cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions (Brodie et al., 2011, 2013; Dwivedi, 2015; Hollebeek et al., 2014). The scale chosen is that of Hollebeek et al. (2014). Organisational justice was assessed as a second-order reflexive construct comprising the following dimensions: procedural justice, interpersonal justice, distributive justice. These constructs are measured using Colquitt's (2011) abbreviated scale. Quantitative ewom, qualitative ewom, and ewom content are measured using the Shu-Chuan and Yoojung (2011) scale

4.3 METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

The hypothetico-deductive approach was chosen in this research, given the theoretical nature of the research constructs and the relationships between these constructs, and the empirical analysis whose objective is to assess these constructs and relationships in a reliable and reproducible way. SPSS 26 and AMOS 22 software will be used in the exploratory and confirmatory phases of the analysis respectively. Thus, the first phase of the analysis of the data, known as exploratory, will make it possible to

produce the elementary structure of the data through an analysis in principal components of each construct of the research, the factors retained are those which present an eigenvalue higher than the unit. The reliability of each factor is then verified when the cronbach's alpha is greater than 0.6 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The second phase of the confirmatory data analysis will aim to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs, but also to test the hypotheses and the relevance of the overall research model using the analysis of variance-based structural equations (VB-SEM) method.

5 RESULTS

5.1 THE STATISTICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

The descriptive statistics of the sample indicate that more than half of the respondents are under 25 years of age, and more than 44% have at least a master's degree. Almost 27% of respondents are middle managers and 17% are top managers. More than half of the respondents have an income of more than 150,000 CFA francs.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

Items	Description Respondents		Percentage	
Gender	Male	143	47.60	
Gender	Female	157	52.33	
	15-19 years	54	05.40	
	20-24 year	103	34.34	
1.00	25-44 year	81	27.00	
Age	45-54 year	51	17.00	
	55-65 year	11	03.67	
	More than 65 years	0	0	
	Primary	21	06.67	
	secondary	40	13.34	
Level of education	baccalaureate	59	19.67	
	Bachelor	134	15.34	
	Master and above	46	44.67	
	Simple worker	32	10.65	
	Middle managers	80	26.65	
	Top management	50	16.65	
Profession	Student	35	11.67	
	liberal profession	25	08.33	
	self-employed	58	19.34	
	unemployed	20	10.70	
	0 - 50 000	47	15.70	
	51 000 - 100 000	34	11.34	
	101 000 - 150 000	56	18.67	
Income	151 0000 - 200 000	49	16.34	
	201 000 -250 000	53	17.63	
	251 000 -500 000	39	13.00	
	More than 500 000	22	07.34	

5.2 THE MEASUREMENT MODEL

A covariance-based SEM was conducted to evaluate first the measurement model and then the structural model of the research (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988). SPSS 26 and AMOS 22 are used in this step. The results in Table No. indicate that the factor *loadings* relating each latent variable to its measures are all greater than 0.5 and significant, this condition is also verified by the composite reliability (C.R) and AVE values (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 2. Reliability and validity of the contructs

variables Item factor loading				VME	CR	α
	0.783	0.875	0.661			
eWom_qual_1	<	eWom_qual	0.722			
eWom_qual_2	<	eWom_qual	1.023			
	ewom Content					0.639
eWom_cont_5	<	eWom_content_2	0.591			
eWom_cont_6	<	eWom_content_2	0.663			
eWom_cont_7	<	eWom_content_2	0.839			
	0.518	0.762	0.755			
CEB_affect_1	<	CBE_Affect	0.712			
CEB_affect_2	<	CBE_Affect	0.784			
CEB_affect_4	<	CBE_Affect	0.659			
	CEB cognition					0.854
CEB_cognit_3	<	CBE_Cognitive	0.857			
CEB_cognit_1	<	CBE_Cognitive	0.756			
CEB_cognit_2	<	CBE_Cognitive	0.828			
	0.546	0.701	0.694			
CEB_act_3	<	CBE_act	0.616			
CEB_act_2	<	CBE_act	0.845			
	0.660	0.852	0.539			
eWom_quant_1	<	eWom_quant	0.692			
eWom_quant_2	<	eWom_quant	0.906			
eWom_quant_3	<	eWom_quant	0.826			

The results in Table 2 show that the reliability of the research constructs is satisfactory, since the cronbach's alpha values range from 0.532 to 0.854 and are all above the threshold of 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). In addition, the values of VME are all above 0.5, which indicates a good internal consistency of the research constructs (Fornell and larcker, 1981).

5.3 THE STRUCTURAL MODEL

The convergent validity of the research constructs is satisfactory, since all the factor loadings are also greater than 0.5 and significant (p<0.05), and the composite reliability (CR) values are all greater than the 0.7 threshold (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010). As for discriminant validity, it is considered satisfactory when the square roots of the MEVs are greater than the interconstruct correlations (Hair et al., 2010), and this condition is indeed verified by the results contained in Table 4.

Table 3. Mean, standard deviations, and discriminant validity of constructs

	mean	σ	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.ewqt	3.138	1.148	0.812					
2.ewql	3.233	1.357	0.814**	0.876				
3.ewct	3.382	1.164	0.797**	0.669**	0.710			
4.cebc_act	4.430	1.717	0.582**	0.563**	0.556**	0.738		
5.cebc_cognit	4.027	1.910	0.661**	0.638**	0.616**	0.884**	0.735	
6.cebc_affect	4.097	2.180	0.627**	0.582**	0.575**	0.862**	0.966**	0.719

Square roots of EMVs are bolded on the diagonal, ** p<0.01

5.4 Hypothesis Testing

We will first present the results of the tests of the direct hypotheses (H1 to H3), then those of the control variables, and finally we will present the results related to the moderation effects.

Table 4. Direct research hypotheses

	Results		
H1: CEBC	<	eWom_quant	not validated
H2: CEBC	<	eWom_qual	validated
H3: CEBC	<	eWom_content_2	validated

According to the results of the hypothesis tests, the quantitative ewom does not influence the CEBC (λ =0.036; p>0.05). On the other hand, the qualitative ewom has a positive influence on the CEBC (λ =0.109, p<0.05), even if this influence is weak. The ewom content also positively influences the CEBC (λ =0.530, p<0.001) with a high level of influence.

As for the control variables, the level of education is the only variable to positively influence the CEBC (λ =0.152, p<0.01). The influence of age was not significant (λ =-0.015, p>0.05), nor was that of gender (λ =-0.031, p>0.05).

The moderation hypotheses are related to the influence of organizational justice (OrJu) on the direct links between the dimensions of ewom and the CEBC. To assess the moderating effects, we will use model 1 of Haye's *macro process* associated with SPSS 26 software (Haye, 2013). The results show the moderating effect of organisational justice on the relationship between quantitative ewom and cebc is significant and positive (β =0.195, SE=0.640, p=0.002, 95% CI= [0.068, 0.322]. Thus hypothesis H41 is validated. Then the moderating effect of organizational justice on the relationship between qualitative ewom and cebc is significant (β =0.133, SE=0.049, p=0.007, 95% CI= [0.036, 0.229]. It can be concluded that hypothesis H42 is validated. Finally, the moderating effect of organisational justice on the relationship between ewom content and cebc is also significant (β =0.212, SE=0.485, p=0.000, 95% CI= [0.117, 0.308]. The hypothesis H43 is validated. It can be generally concluded that there is a moderating influence of organisational justice on the relationship between ewom and consumer engagement in the brand's virtual community. Furthermore, the model explains 32% of the variance in consumer engagement in the virtual brand community.

6 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS AND CONCLUSION OF THE RESEARCH

The objective of this research is to evaluate the impact of ewom on consumer engagement in the brand's virtual community, under the moderating effect of perceived organisational justice. The results provide a set of lessons learned and relevant theoretical and managerial recommendations.

Research shows that ewom positively influences consumer engagement in the virtual brand community. This influence is explained more by the contribution of the content of the ewom, followed by the quality of the ewom. The influence of quantitative ewom was not significant. This result is consistent with some previous research, including Zhang et al. (2010) and Jeon et al. (2016).

Theoretically, the role of each dimension of eWom on consumer engagement in the virtual brand community is clarified, but also the influence of the perception of the company's social practices. This research demonstrates the importance of consistency between the messages conveyed in online communities and the social practices of companies. The content generated by consumers who have experience with the brand reflects their perception of the messages emanating from the brand community, but also an evaluation of the company's credibility on the social level, and in its relations with the various *stakeholders*. The company's managerial choices in terms of organisational justice also influence direct brand messages in the media, and those emanating from consumers in virtual communities. Brand managers should ensure consistency between the company's social practices and the quality and content of advertising messages in order to build strong virtual brand communities.

Consumers' perceptions of corporate social practices are likely to enhance or diminish the credibility of sources and the effects of ewom on engagement in consumer communities. For example, the perception of injustice is interpreted as a lack of credibility of the brand (towards its stakeholders in general, and towards its customers in particular), it is likely to generate negative ewom limiting consumers' engagement in the brand's virtual community. On the other hand, a consumer's perception of good organisational justice is likely to generate positive eWom and to reinforce the effects of the brand community members' messages on the various social network platforms. The research results reflect the influence of perceived organisational justice on the effectiveness of eWom in engaging consumers in the brand's virtual community.

From a managerial point of view, brand managers should focus on consumers' perception of the company's social values. Research results have indeed shown the impact of social practices on consumer engagement in the virtual brand community.

However, the ability of companies to define and direct the content of the ewom is still limited, so managers should adopt consumer-friendly social practices to improve consumer satisfaction in line with marketing strategies.

In reality, the content and quality of the ewom are aligned with the responses to customer expectations (López & Sicilia, 2013). The importance of customer satisfaction remains important on the functional and social dimensions of the ewom for the credibility of the messages emitted by consumers, and for the engagement of the latter in the virtual brand community.

It is therefore crucial for brand managers to focus on customer satisfaction, even following a service failure. Service recovery systems aim precisely at correcting failures and changing the perception of dissatisfied customers (Jana et al., 2015). Organisational justice also contributes to the credibility of the service recovery process by limiting the diffusion of negative ewom within virtual brand communities.

7 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PATHS

The effects of ewom on the virtual brand community do not take into account certain characteristics of the source. The credibility of the contents is however associated with the personality of the source of the message and the duration of his experience with the company. These elements could be integrated into the model as control variables and significantly enrich the analysis.

The effect of perceived organisational justice on the relationship between ewom and consumer engagement in the virtual brand community reflects the influence of the company's social choices. Other variables can be taken into account, in particular those related to ethics, or those related to environmental preservation. These dimensions represent relevant issues that can translate the adherence or not of consumers to the contents and quality of the ewom, but also to relevant societal issues.

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