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THE ROLE OF PERSONAL MOTIVES IN CONSUMERS' EWOM INTENTION: INSIGHTS ACROSS AGE AND GENDER

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Abstract

This study examines how personal motives influence consumers' intention to generate electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on social networking sites. Drawing on prosocial and moral motivation theory, it considers altruism, egoism, principalism, and collectivism as key predictors, and also examines differences by age and gender. Data were collected from 469 respondents using a structured questionnaire and analysed with ANOVA, t-tests, correlation, and multiple regression. The results show that altruism, principalism, and collectivism significantly predict eWOM intention, with principalism being the strongest predictor. Egoism is positively related to eWOM intention but is not significant in the regression model. Age differences are found for egoism and principalism, while gender differences appear only for collectivism. Although actual behaviour was not measured, the study provides useful insight into how personal motives influence eWOM intention and offers implications for digital engagement strategies.

Keywords: age differences, eWOM intention, gender differences, personal motives, social media

1. INTRODUCTION

In the modern digital environment, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has become a key factor in shaping consumer behavior and decision-making. eWOM refers to the sharing of information, experiences, and recommendations through online channels, including social networks, forums, and review platforms. Given its influence, understanding individuals' motivations for engaging in eWOM represents an important scientific and practical challenge (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Bronner & de Hoog, 2011).

Previous research suggests that personal motives, such as altruism, egoism, principalism, and collectivism, can significantly influence individuals' willingness to generate eWOM. Altruism is associated with prosocial desires to help others, while egoism reflects self-presentational and status motives. Principalism denotes moral obligation and a sense of duty, and collectivism represents a sense of belonging and identification with a group (Ismagilova, Rana, Slade, & Dwivedi, 2020; Cheung & Lee, 2012). Nevertheless, the relative importance of these motives and their association with demographic variables, such as age and gender, still requires systematic examination.

Previous research on eWOM has focused more on altruism and egoism motives (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Leong, Chao & Wu, 2025), while collectivism and especially principlism have been studied much less frequently (Badrul Hisham, Bogal, Royali, Aida Harun & Tamrin 2020). Furthermore, the effects of sociodemographic variables, such as age and gender, remain under-examined, with only a limited number of studies explicitly considering their effects (Haj Khalifa, 2025). Such fragmentation points to the lack of an integrated approach that would simultaneously encompass multiple personal motives and demographic differences.

The primary objective of this study was to examine the role of personal motives in shaping the intention to generate eWOM, with an emphasis on age and gender differences. Special focus was placed on assessing the strength of individual motives in predicting intention, using multiple linear regression, as well as on exploring statistically significant differences across age and gender. The results of the study provide insight into the psychological determinants of participation in online information sharing and contribute to the understanding of the mechanisms that drive user engagement in digital communities. Although the manuscript is based on the dissertation dataset, this paper additionally empirically examines the role of personal motives in predicting eWOM intention through correlations and multiple regression, and the role of gender in eWOM intention. A new EFA was conducted, the reliability of the instruments was confirmed, and the paper was expanded and supplemented with current literature, which clearly highlights its independent contribution to the dissertation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The rise of eWOM is a consequence of the spread of social media that enable effective two-way communication among consumers (Palmeira, Spassova & Quoidbach, 2020; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Although numerous studies have focused on economic or external incentives for generating eWOM, less research has focused on understanding non-economic motives. Within the framework of non-economic factors, personal motives, such as altruism, egoism and principalism, are considered crucial for predicting the intention to generate eWOM (Sohaib, Hui, Akram, Akram & Bilal 2018; Cheung & Lee, 2012), because they can shape the active sharing of information and recommendations on social networks in the long term (Haro-Sosa, Moliner-Velázquez, Gil-Saura & Fuentes-Blasco, 2024b; Ismagilova et al., 2020; Cheung & Lee, 2012).

Despite the large number of social media users who are mostly passive, age and gender can modulate the pattern of participation in eWOM. Women are often more motivated to share experiences due to the expression of emotions and social needs, while men emphasize practical benefits and rational evaluation of products (Haro-Sosa, Moliner-Velázquez, Gil-Saura & Fuentes-Blasco, 2024a; 2024b; Ismagilova et al., 2020). Similarly, younger users are more likely to use eWOM to actively share experiences, while older users participate more passively, as consumers of information (Vera Liao & Wai-Tat, 2014). Understanding personal motives and age and gender differences therefore allows for more accurate prediction of consumer behavior and the development of effective strategies to encourage content generation. In this context, TPB has been widely applied in various fields because it defines intention as the immediate and strongest predictor of actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991), or as an individual's subjective assessment of the likelihood of engaging in a particular behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In the context of eWOM generation, intention denotes a consumer's conscious and planned willingness to create and share online information, recommendations, or experiences. The stronger the intention, the greater the likelihood that the behavior will actually be realized, provided that the individual has an appropriate level of control over its execution (Ajzen, 2010; Ajzen, 1991).

Empirical research confirms the high predictive power of TPB in consumer and online behavior, which justifies the use of the intention variable as a key outcome in eWOM research (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Ajzen, 1991). In this study, the TPB is used primarily as a reference framework for interpreting consumers' intention to share information and recommendations online, without making the TPB the main theoretical foundation of the study. Intention is viewed as an indicator of users' willingness to engage in eWOM, which allows for a focused examination of the role of personal motives (altruism, egoism, principalism, and collectivism) and differences across age groups and gender.

Within this journal, there are several recent studies that highlight the importance of various factors in shaping consumer behavior in the online environment. For example, research on relationship marketing emphasizes the role of relationship dimensions such as trust, communication, and competence, while at the same time the authors suggest the need to examine reciprocity in future research (Perišić Prodan, Cerović & Ivančić, 2022). The need is particularly relevant to this study, because egoistic motives can include elements of reciprocity, thus providing a broader focus from satisfaction and loyalty to eWOM intention. Furthermore, previous research indicates that demographic characteristics and individual motives play an important role in shaping consumer online behavior (Pandža Bajs & Tomas, 2023), which provides support for the examination of personal motives and demographic characteristics that are the focus of this research. In addition, the results of research on behavioral intentions in the digital context confirm the importance of examining the determinants of intentions as a key variable of behavioral outcomes (Podrug & Grubišić, 2023), which is in line with the examination of eWOM intentions. Also, a study analyzing consumer decision-making highlights the importance of online information and digital engagement in shaping consumer preferences (Krupka, Zelenika & Vlašić, 2025). In this sense, eWOM can be viewed as a specific form of digital content generated by consumers, while this study also contributes by examining the underlying personal motives that drive the generation of such content.

2.1. Personal motives

Personal motives are internal drivers of behavior that direct an individual towards the achievement of certain goals. Motivation is defined as a force that urges a person to a certain activity (Neumann, 2015 according to Ismagilova, Dwivedi, Slade & Williams, 2017), and it results from a state of imbalance that the individual tries to reduce through action (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004 according to Ismagilova et al., 2017). In the context of consumer behavior, motives can significantly influence the decision to share experiences and information about products and services (Luarn, Yang & Chiu, 2015; Palka, Pousttchi & Wiedemann, 2009).

Although much of the literature focuses on the consequences of eWOM, a smaller number of studies analyze its antecedents, that is, the motives that encourage consumers to generate content (Sundaram et al., 1998 according to Hubijar, 2011). Previous research has identified various motives, including altruism, egoism, the release of negative emotions, social benefit, economic incentives, and the need for recognition (Ismagilova et al., 2020; Shen, Huang & Li, 2016; Fu, Ju & Hsu, 2015; Yen & Tang, 2015).

Drawing on the theory of the public good, Cheung and Lee (2012) propose an integrative classification of personal motives into four categories: altruism, egoism, collectivism, and principalism. Information sharing in an online

environment is viewed as a public good – a resource available to all members of the community regardless of their contribution (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2002 in Cheung & Lee, 2012). Despite the possibility of "free use", research shows that individuals voluntarily participate in the creation and maintenance of such a good (Wasko & Faraj, 2005), with social benefit being an important antecedent of the intention to share eWOM (Haro-Sosa et al., 2024a; 2024b; Luo & Zhong, 2015; Cheung & Lee, 2012; Daugherty, Eastin & Bright, 2008).

Accordingly, in this study, personal motives are operationalized through four categories: altruism, egoism, collectivism, and principalism, which will be discussed in more detail below.

2.1.1. Altruism

Altruism refers to selfless behavior directed at the benefit of others, without expectation of reward (Cui, Wang, Feng & Teng, 2014), and in the context of eWOM it implies sharing positive experiences or warning others about negative experiences for the benefit of the community (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Hubijar, 2011). The motivation for altruism can also be directed towards the company, for example through satisfaction with the product or the desire for fair exchange according to equity theory (Ismagilova et al., 2017; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Research suggests that altruism strongly influences engagement in eWOM (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Bronner & de Hoog, 2011; Ho & Dempsey, 2010), although contextual factors such as age group may modify the intensity of motivation (Haro-Sosa et al., 2024a; 2024b).

2.1.2. Egoism

Egoism, or self-enhancement, is defined as an individual's motivation to act for their own benefit, such as through positive self-presentation or gaining recognition and status in social networks (Berger, 2014; Cheung & Lee, 2012). In the context of eWOM, egoistic motives include sharing information that enhances one's reputation, expressing expertise, or participating in reward programs (Pavlou & Wang, 2015; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). In addition to personal gain, egoistic individuals may also provide useful information to others, which indicates the dual nature of this motive (Cui et al., 2014). Platforms today use feedback systems, status labels, and other mechanisms to ensure that the satisfaction of egoistic motives is directed towards reputation and expertise, rather than solely towards financial rewards (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Hsu & Lin, 2008). Previous research suggests that egoistic motives may differ across ages. For example, younger generations are more likely to seek recognition and status through online activities, while older users may seek to validate their expertise or experience (Twomey & O'Reilly, 2017; Berger, 2014).

2.1.3. Collectivism

Collectivism refers to a sense of belonging to a community and an individual's identification with the group to which they belong (Ismagilova et al., 2020; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Individuals with collectivist motives share knowledge and experiences for the benefit of the group, rather than personal gain (Cheung & Lee, 2012). This motivation is often associated with social identity theory, according to which social identity shapes group affiliation (Tajfel & Turner, 1986 according to Cheung & Lee, 2012).

In the context of eWOM, collectivism encourages users to actively participate in online communities, share positive and negative experiences, and maintain the quality of the community (Ismagilova et al., 2017; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2003). A sense of belonging increases trust among community members and strengthens the motivation to provide useful information (Pezzuti & Leonhardt, 2020; Nugraha, 2019; Horng, 2016). Also, some research suggests the possibility of gender differences in patterns of participation in online communities, with women more often expressing a greater orientation towards social interaction, support and exchange of experiences in the digital environment (Muscanell & Guadagno, 2012). Such differences may also be reflected in the intensity and manner of participation in eWOM activities.

Some previous research suggests that collectivist motives may vary with age. Younger users often actively seek virtual communities and interaction with peers, while older users may place greater importance on long-term contribution to the community and maintaining trust (Ismagilova et al., 2017; Cheung & Lee, 2012). Such age differences in collectivism may affect the intensity of participation in eWOM and the way in which different age groups share information.

2.1.4. Principalism

Principalism is a motivation driven by a strong sense of moral obligation to others or to the community, based on principle, duty, and honesty (Gheorghe, Purcărea & Gheorghe, 2018). In the context of eWOM, principalism encourages consumers to share information to promote the welfare of others, avoid harm, or ensure justice among consumers (Dholakia, Bagozzi & Pearo, 2004).

Moral obligation acts as a strong intrinsic motivator, increasing the likelihood of engaging in eWOM activities, especially among users who feel a strong sense of duty to the community or moral norms (Chu & Chen, 2019; Gorsuch & Orberg, 1983). Principalism is also associated with subjective norms within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), as it influences perceptions of what is morally right and expected behavior in society (Chen, 2016; Armitage & Conner, 2001).

Although research emphasizes the relative stability of moral beliefs in adulthood (Castilla-Estévez & Blázquez-Rincón, 2021; Kohlberg, 1984), younger age groups are more likely to shape their attitudes and behaviors under the influence of peer norms and social comparison (Berger, 2014; Festinger, 1954;), which may influence the manner and intensity of their participation in eWOM.

Based on the presented theoretical framework and previous empirical findings, it is clear that personal motives play a key role in shaping consumers' intention to generate eWOM, while age and gender differences can modulate the intensity and manner of this motivation. This study poses the following hypotheses:

H1: Personal motives (altruism, egoism, principalism, and collectivism) have a positive effect on the intention to generate eWOM.

H2: There are statistically significant differences in personal motives across age groups of respondents.

H3: There are statistically significant differences in personal motives between men and women.

3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The analyzed data represent a subset of the database collected as part of a doctoral dissertation (Pleša Puljić, 2025). However, in this paper, the data were re-analyzed with a focus on specific personal motives (altruism, egoism, principalism, and collectivism) and their role in the intention to generate eWOM. Descriptive and inferential statistics (t-test, ANOVA, Bonferroni post hoc test, and Pearson correlation analysis) were used to illustrate age and gender differences and examine the associations between variables, while a new factor analysis (EFA) was conducted only on selected variables relevant to this article.

Furthermore, multiple linear regression was performed to examine the direct and relative contribution of individual personal motives to the intention to generate eWOM, which represents the original contribution of this paper. Unlike the previous model based on structural modeling (SEM) in the dissertation (Pleša Puljić, 2025), which included a broader set of constructs and more complex relationships, this paper applied a partially reduced and theoretically focused model focused exclusively on personal motives. Such an approach allows for a more precise assessment of their individual predictive power, reduces the possibility of suppression and mediation effects, and increases the interpretability and practical applicability of the results. Additionally, the application of regression analysis in this context allows for a direct comparison of effect sizes (β-coefficients) and a clearer ranking of motives according to their relative importance, which was not the focus of the previous structural model.

This does not replicate previous research, but rather operationalizes the theoretical construct in a simplified, but analytically more transparent framework adapted to the journal's readership. Hypothesis testing was conducted in the statistical program JASP (Version 0.95.4).

3.1. Research instrument

Data were collected using a highly structured questionnaire based on previous research, with questions organized thematically and sociodemographic and sensitive questions placed at the end. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, anonymity, and duration, and the implementation was in accordance with ethical standards and informed consent. Personal motives were measured using scales for altruism (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; 4 items), egoism (Sohaib et al., 2018; Tong, Wang, Tan & Teo, 2013; 6 items), and principalism and collectivism (Cheung & Lee, 2012; 3 and 5 items), while the intention to generate eWOM was measured using a scale developed by them adapted from Sohaib et al. (2018; 6 items). The scales were adapted to the research context, and all questions used five-point Likert scales (1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree), adapted to the habits of the respondents (Mejovšek, 2003).

3.2. Research process

The research was conducted in two phases: a pilot study (n = 60) to improve the questionnaire, and the main study (N = 469) collected using the snowball method. At the beginning of the questionnaire, a filtering question was used for active social media users, and the sample structure was continuously monitored and adjusted by gender and age for more even representation, taking into account the limitations of quota sampling in online surveys (Im & Chee, 2011).

4. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

4.1. Sample

The sample was balanced by gender, with 58.8% women and 41.2% men. The age structure is based on the World Health Organization categorization and Kaliterna Lipovčan (2004). The most numerous age groups were youth and young adults (18–44 years), which made up 79.6% of the sample, while middle-aged and older adults (45+) made up 20.4%. One respondent younger than 18 years was excluded from the final analysis, leaving the total number of respondents N = 469. Table 1 presents data for 469 respondents.

Table 1 Sample Characteristics

Variable	*n*	*%*
Gender		
Female	276	58.8
Male	193	41.2
Age group		
18–29 years	232	49.4
30–44 years	142	30.2
45–59 years	70	14.9
60+ years	26	5.5

Note: n - number of participants per category; % - percentage. Percentages may not sum to exactly 100 due to rounding;

Source: Authors' calculations.

4.2. Measurment Instrument

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed on a wider set of constructs in previous studies (Pleša Puljić, 2025). For the sake of methodological rigor and verification of the factor structure for the variables used in this research, EFA was again performed on the newly formed set of variables for the purposes of this work. Table 2 shows the results relevant to the analyzed constructs. The analysis was performed using the Principal Components method (Hair, Black & Babin, 2010) with Direct Oblimin rotation due to possible correlation between factors (Field, 2005). The results confirmed the expected factor structure, with factor loadings mostly greater than 0.60 and satisfactory indicators of sample adequacy (KMO = 0.902; Bartlett's test of sphericity, $p < .001$).

Table 2 Measurement Scales, Factor Loadings, and Reliability

Construct	*Item Code*	*Item*	*Factor Loading*
Altruism (AL)		If I share product information via social media:	
	AL1	I want to warn others about bad products.	0.721
	AL2	I want to save others from the same negative experiences I had.	0.849
	AL3	I want to help others with my own positive experiences.	0.681
	AL4	I want to give others the opportunity to buy the right product.	0.671
		Cronbach's alpha coefficient: 0.815 Arithmetic mean of the scale: 3.972 Variance: 0.516	
Egoism (EG)		If I share product information via social media:	
	EG1	I gain respect from others.	0.652
	EG2	I improve my personal status on social media.	0.868
	EG3	I can improve my reputation among other users.	0.913
	EG4	I can gain more respect compared to those who do not share information.	0.860
	EG5	I can get more recognition from other users.	0.893
	EG6	I can improve my image among other users.	0.913
		Cronbach's alpha coefficient: 0.942 Arithmetic mean of the scale: 2.658 Variance: 0.985	
Principalism (PRIN)	PRIN1	My conscience encourages me to contribute on social media by sharing product information.	0.779
	PRIN2	It is my moral conviction to share product information on social media.	0.949
	PRIN3	I feel morally obligated to share product information on social media.	0.801
		Cronbach's alpha coefficient: 0.886 Arithmetic mean of the scale: 2.703 Variance: 0.949	
Collectivism (CO)	CO1	I am very attached to a social network group where product information is shared.	0.666
	CO2	The other members in the group and I share the same goals.	0.808
	CO3	The friendships I have with the members of the group mean a lot to me.	0.705
	CO4	When I talk about that group, I say "we", not "they". I see myself as part of that group.	0.757
	CO5		0.876
		Cronbach's alpha coefficient: 0.873 Arithmetic mean of the scale: 2.239 Variance: 1.183	
Intention to Generate eWOM		My positive or negative shopping experience:	
	INT1	I intend to share on social media.	0.790
	INT2	I will try to share on social media.	0.887
	INT3	I plan to share and post on social media.	0.917
	INT4	I would like to share on social media.	0.966
	INT5	I will probably share on social media.	0.864
	INT6	I am ready to share on social media.	0.824
		Cronbach's alpha coefficient: 0.949 Arithmetic mean of the scale: 2.878 Variance: 0.853	

Note: Factor loadings are based on EFA. Cronbach's alpha indicates internal consistency. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree);

Source: Authors' calculations.

The reliability of the constructs was confirmed by Cronbach α values above 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978), and factor loadings of all items ≥0.40 (Hair et al., 2010), which confirms the validity of the measurement instrument.

4.3. Assessment of Statistical Assumptions

Prerequisites for applying parametric tests include normality of data distribution within groups, homogeneity of variances, absence of serious multicollinearity, and linear and homoscedastic behavior of residuals.

The normality of the distribution of the variables altruism, egoism, principalism, collectivism and intention to generate eWOM was assessed descriptively using skewness and kurtosis. The obtained values are not extreme (skewness: -0.656 to 0.082; kurtosis: -0.673 to 0.766), which indicates the approximate normality of the distributions. Additionally, since the sample is relatively large (N = 471), the parametric tests used in the analysis (t-test, ANOVA, Pearson's correlation, and multiple linear regression) are considered robust to moderate deviations from normality (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; Field, 2005).

Homogeneity of variances between age groups for the variables egoism and principalism was checked using Levene's test, which showed that the variances were not significantly different ($p > .05$), thus satisfying the assumption of homogeneity. Multicollinearity of predictors in multiple regression was assessed using Collinearity Diagnostics. The highest Condition Index was 17.50, and the contributions of the variables did not indicate serious multicollinearity.

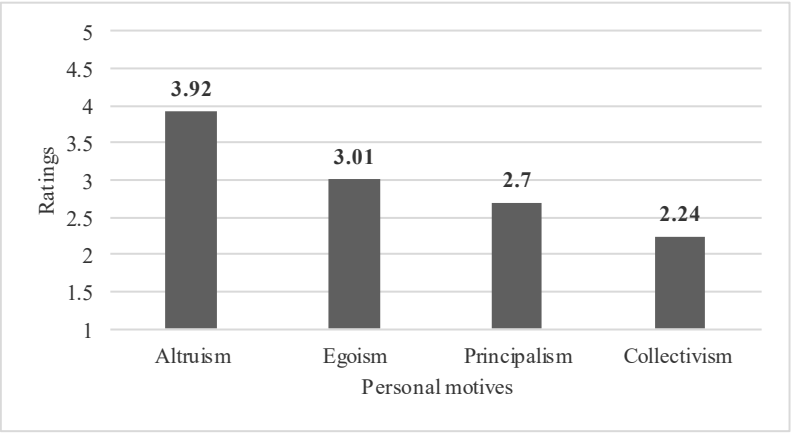
The predictors (altruism, egoism, principalism, and collectivism) are therefore suitable for inclusion in the regression model. Linear and homoscedastic behavior of residuals was assessed using the Residuals vs. Fitted plot, which showed uniform dispersion of residuals, while the Normal Q-Q plot confirmed the approximate normality of residuals. This satisfied the prerequisites for the application of multiple linear regression.

4.4. Statistical Analysis

4.4.1. Descriptive values of personal motives

The aim of this analysis was to determine, according to average values, which personal motives the respondents were most driven by. The descriptive results (Graph 1) show that altruistic motives received the highest average scores, which is in line with previous research (Badrul Hisham et al., 2020; Cheung & Lee, 2012). Egoistic motives were also rated relatively high, while motives related to principlism and collectivism were rated lower.

Graph 1 Descriptive values of personal motives



Source: Authors' calculations.

These are the average ratings of respondents, not the actual intention to participate in eWOM activities. The influence of personal motives on the intention to generate eWOM was investigated using multiple linear regression analysis.

4.4.2. Age differences in personal motives

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to investigate whether there were differences in personal motives across age groups. The results show that there is no statistically significant difference for altruism ($p = .703$) and collectivism ($p = .731$), while egoism and principalism showed statistical significance, therefore their results are presented in Table 3.

The F-ratio values shown indicate significant differences between age groups for egoism ($F = 7.322$; $p < .001$) and principalism ($F = 2.737$; $p = .043$). Descriptive values show that the highest scores for egoism were given by respondents aged 18 to 29, as well as those over 60. For principalism, the highest average score was given by the population over 60, while the level of motivation gradually decreases towards the younger groups.

Table 3 Results of One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Personal Motives Across Age Groups

	Age group	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*SE*	*95% CI*
Egoism	18–29 years	232	3.1737	0.75956	0.04987	3.0755 - 3.2720
	30–44 years	141	2.8326	0.80910	0.06814	2.6979 - 2.9673
	45–59 years	70	2.8286	0.73861	0.08828	2.6525 - 3.0047
	60+ years	26	2.9077	0.83087	0.16295	2.5721 - 3.2433
Principalism	18–29 years	232	2.6624	1.02517	0.06731	2.5297 - 2.7950
	30–44 years	141	2.6099	0.94446	0.07954	2.4527 - 2.7672
	45–59 years	70	2.8476	0.88226	0.10545	2.6373 - 3.0580
	60+ years	26	3.1282	0.85934	0.16853	2.7811 - 3.4753
		SS	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**
Egoism	Between groups	13.218	3	4.406	7.322	< .001
	Within groups	279.821	465			
	Total	293.039	468	0.602		
Principalism	Between groups	7.765	3	2.588	2.737	0.043
	Within groups	439.822	465			
	Total	447.588	468	0.946		

Note: N - number of participants; M - mean; SD - standard deviation; SE - standard error; CI - confidence interval; SS - sum of squares; df - degrees of freedom; MS - mean square; F - statistic from one-way ANOVA; p - significance level;

Source: Authors' calculations

To further investigate which age groups differed, a Bonferroni post hoc test was conducted (Table 4), which showed significant differences within groups for egoism, while no statistically significant differences were observed for principalism. This relative stability of principalism across age groups is consistent with the findings of previous research (Castilla-Estévez & Blázquez-Rincón, 2021), which indicate the consistency of moral and principled motivation across the lifespan.

Table 4 Bonferroni Post Hoc Comparisons for Egoism Across Age Groups

Age group (I)	*Age group (J)*	*Mean Difference (I–J)*	*SE*	*p*
18 - 29 years	30 - 44 years	0.34108*	0.08284	< .001
	45 - 59 years	0.34514*	0.10578	0.006
	60 + years	0.26601	0.16043	0.347
30 - 44 years	18 - 29 years	-0.34108*	0.08284	< .001
	45 - 59 years	0.00405	0.11342	1.000
	60 + years	-0.07507	0.16557	0.969
45 - 59 years	18 - 29 years	-0.34514*	0.10578	0.006
	30 - 44 years	-0.00405	0.11342	1.000
	60 + years	-0.07912	0.17816	0.971
60 + years	18 - 29 years	-0.26601	0.16043	0.347
	30 - 44 years	0.07507	0.16557	0.969
	45 - 59 years	0.07912	0.17816	0.971

Note: SE - standard error; p - Bonferroni-adjusted significance level.*Mean difference is significant at $p < .05$.

Source: Authors' calculations.

The results indicate that the age group 18 to 29 years is statistically significantly different from the groups 30 – 44 and 45 – 59 years in terms of egoistic motives. Descriptive values (Table 3) confirm that the average level of egoistic motives is higher in the youngest group compared to middle-aged respondents. The greater expression of egoism in younger generations can be partly explained by the need for self-presentation on social networks, i.e. the individual's effort to present himself in a positive light in order to gain recognition or social status (Nesi & Prinstein, 2015). Such a tendency can result in an idealized portrayal of oneself that does not necessarily reflect one's real personality or life outside the online environment (Twomey & O'Reilly, 2017). Social media additionally encourages social comparison, i.e. the evaluation of one's own abilities in relation to others (Festinger, 1954), which may be associated with more pronounced egoistic motives in younger respondents.

4.4.3. Gender differences in personal motives

The aim of this analysis was to examine whether there are statistically significant differences in personal motives between men and women. An Independent Samples t-test was conducted for each of the four dimensions of personal motives. Homogeneity of variance was checked using Levene's test, and the table shows the p-values of Levene's test for clarity. According to the results for the motive of collectivism and principalism, Welch's t-test was applied due to unequal variances. Table 5 shows descriptive statistics by gender, Levene's test p-values with the corresponding degrees of freedom and p-values.

Table 5 Independent Samples t-Test and Group Descriptives by Gender

Motive	*Gender*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*Levene p*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Altruism	Female	276	3.971	0.727	0.893	-0.004	469	0.997
	Male	193	3.972	0.711	-	-	-	-
Egoism	Female	276	2.581	0.949	0.202	-1.870	469	0.062
	Male	193	2.754	1.039	-	-	-	-
Principalism	Female	276	2.651	0.910	0.007	-1.360	370.5	0.175
	Male	193	2.779	1.063	-	-	-	-
Collectivism	Female	276	2.320	0.965	< .001	1.989	345.5	0.047
	Male	193	2.109	1.238	-	-	-	-

Note. N = number of participants; M = mean; SD = standard deviation; Levene p = p-value of Levene's test for equality of variances; t = t-value; df = degrees of freedom; p = two-tailed significance. Welch's t-test was used for principalism and collectivism due to violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variances.

Source: Authors' calculations.

The results show that gender does not have a statistically significant effect on altruism (p = .997), egoism (p = .062) and principalism (p = .175). A statistically significant difference between the sexes was found for collectivism (p = .047), with women on average rating collectivist motives higher than men. Levene's test indicated unequal variances for principalism (p = .007) and

collectivism ($p < .001$), which justified the use of Welch's t-test. Descriptive values confirm that the largest difference occurs for collectivism, while the other motives are relatively similar between the sexes.

4.4.4. Correlation analysis of personal motives and eWOM generation intention

To preliminarily assess the relationships between personal motives and eWOM generation intention, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. Four motives – altruism, egoism, principalism and collectivism – were analyzed in relation to self-reported WOM generation intention. Table 6 shows the correlation coefficients (r) between all observed variables, the statistical significance levels (p) and the 95% confidence intervals.

Table 6 Pearson Correlation Matrix for Personal Motives and eWOM Intention

Variable	*Intention*	*Altruism*	*Egosim*	*Principalism*	*Collectivism*
Intention	—	0.363***	0.309***	0.462***	0.265***
Altruism	0.363***	—	0.211***	0.343***	0.112*
Egosim	0.309***	0.211***	—	0.510***	0.380***
Principalism	0.462***	0.343***	0.510***	—	0.368***
Collectivism	0.265***	0.112*	0.380***	0.368***	—

Note: *Pearson's r = Pearson correlation coefficient; p = significance level; CI = 95% confidence interval; *p < .05, **p < .01, **p < .001.

Source: Authors' calculations.

The results of the correlation analysis show positive and statistically significant associations between all personal motives and the intention to generate eWOM. The strongest association was observed between principalism and intention ($r = 0.462$, $p < .001$), while the smallest association was recorded for collectivism and intention ($r = 0.265$, $p < .001$). Altruism and egoism were also positively correlated with intention, with moderate coefficient values ($r = 0.363$ and $r = 0.309$, both $p < .001$).

The mutual correlations between motives showed that egoism and principalism have a moderate association ($r = 0.510$, $p < .001$), which indicates a partial shared variance of these motives among the respondents. Altruism is weakly associated with collectivism ($r = 0.112$, $p = .015$), suggesting that respondents who exhibit altruistic motives do not necessarily also exhibit collectivist motives.

These results provide preliminary insight into the strength of the relationships between individual psychological motives and eWOM generation intentions, and confirm that all motives, but to varying degrees, are positively associated with participation intentions. Based on these preliminary associations, multiple linear regression analysis was applied in the remainder of the study to

assess the direct effect of each motive on eWOM generation intentions, controlling for the influence of other motives.

4.4.5. The influence of personal motives on the intention to generate eWOM

To examine the influence of personal motives on consumers' intention to generate eWOM, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The model included four predictors representing personal motives: altruism, egoism, principalism, and collectivism.

Table 7 Multiple Linear Regression Results for Predicting eWOM Intention

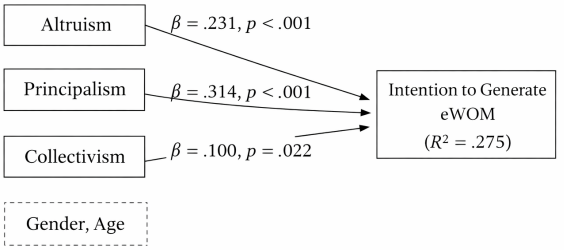
Predictor	*B (Unstandardized)*	*SE*	*β (Standardized)*	*t*	*p*	*Tolerance*	*VIF*
Intercept	0.549	0.241	-	2.563	0.011		
AL	0.297	0.054	0.231	5.515	< .001	0.880	1.136
EG	0.058	0.044	0.063	1.333	0.183	0.696	1.437
PRIN	0.297	0.046	0.314	6.425	< .001	0.649	1.540
CO	0.085	0.037	0.100	2.295	0.022	0.814	1.229

Note: $R^2 = 0.275$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.269$, $F(4, 469) = 44.41$, $p < .001$. B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized regression coefficient; t = t-statistic; p = significance level; Tolerance = 1 /VIF; VIF = variance inflation factor.

Source: Authors' calculations.

Multiple linear regression showed that personal motives significantly predicted intention to generate eWOM, $R^2 = 0.275$, $F(4, 469) = 44.41$, $p < .001$. Coefficient analysis showed that altruism ($\beta = 0.231$, $p < .001$), principalism ($\beta = 0.314$, $p < .001$), and collectivism ($\beta = 0.100$, $p = .022$) had a significant positive impact on intention to generate eWOM. Egoism was not a statistically significant predictor ($\beta = 0.063$, $p = .183$), indicating that in this sample egoistic motives do not contribute to the prediction of intention. The strongest predictor was principalism, suggesting that moral commitment and a sense of duty to others most strongly encourage the generation of eWOM among respondents. The model explains a moderate proportion of the variance in intention to generate eWOM ($R^2 = 0.275$), indicating that personal motives explain 27.5% of the variance in respondents' intention. All relevant relationships between motives and intention are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Influence of personal motives on intention to generate eWOM



Source: Authors' calculations.

The acceptable coefficient of determination (R^2) in social sciences can vary depending on the research context and the nature of the data. Although higher R^2 values indicate better model fit, in human behavior and intention research, moderate values are often achieved due to the complexity and unpredictability of human action (Armitage & Conner, 2001; 2010; Sutton, 1998). Specifically, in the context of intention to generate eWOM, many factors influence respondents' decisions, which explains why the R^2 in this model is 0.275, i.e. 27.5% of the explained variance. Previous research has shown a range of R^2 values from about 20% to 69% depending on the predictors and the model included (Cheung & Lee, 2012;). Thus, although the model explains a moderate part of the variance, the R^2 value is satisfactory because all predictors show statistical significance and the model provides insight into the key determinants of intention to generate eWOM.

5. DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to examine the role of personal motives (altruism, egoism, principalism and collectivism) in shaping the intention to generate eWOM, with an analysis of age and gender differences. The results provide partial, but theoretically and empirically relevant support for the hypotheses set.

Hypothesis H1 assumed that personal motives positively influence the intention to generate eWOM. The results of multiple linear regression showed that altruism, principalism and collectivism have a statistically significant and positive effect on intention, while egoism was not a significant predictor. Therefore, *H1 can be considered partially confirmed.*

The most significant predictor turned out to be principalism ($\beta = 0.314$), which indicates that moral obligation and a sense of duty towards others represent the strongest driver of the intention to generate eWOM. This finding is consistent with theoretical assumptions about moral motivation (Dholakia et al., 2004;

Gorsuch & Orberg, 1983) and with research that emphasizes the role of moral obligation in predicting consumer intentions (Chu & Chen, 2019). It also confirms the classification of Cheung and Lee (2012), according to which principalism is an important motive within the theory of public good.

Altruism also proved to be a significant predictor of intention (β = 0.231), which confirms the findings of Bronner and de Hoog (2011), Ho and Dempsey (2010) and Cheung and Lee (2012), who point out that the desire to help others encourages participation in eWOM. These results further support the argument that non-economic, pro-social motives are key to understanding long-term and sustainable content generation on social networks (Haro-Sosa et al., 2024b; Ismagilova et al., 2020).

Collectivism showed a weaker, but statistically significant effect (β = 0.100), suggesting that a sense of community and identification with a group also contribute to the intention to share information. This finding is consistent with social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986 according to Cheung & Lee, 2012) and research that emphasizes the importance of shared goals and trust within online communities (Pezzuti & Leonhardt, 2020; Ismagilova et al., 2017). Contrary to expectations and some literature (Berger, 2014; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), egoism did not have a significant direct effect on the intention to generate eWOM. This result suggests that egoistic motives can potentially be measured as a multidimensional variable, for example, through self-presentation on social networks or through the expectation of reciprocity, when generating eWOM is rewarded. Therefore, future research could examine egoism across different dimensions or with different approaches to more precisely observe its effects.

Although the correlation analysis showed a positive association with intention, in the regression model – controlling for other motives – its effect was not statistically significant. This finding suggests that self-presentational and status motives may be secondary to moral and prosocial motives when considering their relative predictive power. This further confirms the value of the partially reduced regression model compared to the broader SEM approach from the dissertation (Pleša Puljić, 2025), as it allows for a clearer ranking of motives according to their individual importance.

The model explained 27.5% of the variance in intention, which is a moderate but theoretically justified result in research on behavior and intentions (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Sutton, 1998) and confirms the relevance of personal motives as important determinants within the TPB framework. This moderate power of the model suggests that there are other relevant factors that influence eWOM intention, which further emphasizes the need for further research that includes a broader spectrum of personal as well as other motives.

Hypothesis H2 assumed the existence of statistically significant differences in personal motives between age groups. The results of ANOVA showed that significant differences exist for egoism and principalism, while no

differences were found for altruism and collectivism. Therefore, *H2 can be considered partially confirmed.*

The youngest age group (18–29 years) showed higher levels of egoistic motives compared to middle-aged respondents, which is consistent with claims that younger generations more often use social networks for self-presentation and gaining social recognition (Twomey & O'Reilly, 2017; Berger, 2014). These results further support the argument about the importance of social comparison in the online environment (Festinger, 1954).

Statistical significance was determined in the ANOVA for principlism, but the post hoc test did not show clear differences between groups, indicating the relative stability of moral motivation throughout the life cycle. Such a finding is in line with research that emphasizes the consistency of moral beliefs across age (Castilla-Estévez & Blázquez-Rincón, 2021).

Hypothesis H3 assumed the existence of gender differences in personal motives. The results showed a statistically significant difference only for collectivism, with women reporting a higher level of collectivist motives compared to men. No significant differences were found for altruism, egoism, and principalism. Therefore, *H3 can also be considered partially confirmed.* The above indicates the relative universality of prosocial and moral motives across genders, but at the same time emphasizes that cultural and connectional factors not included in the model may further differentiate between groups, which represents a potential limitation in the interpretation of the results.

Higher levels of collectivism in women may be associated with a greater orientation towards social relationships and community, which is consistent with the findings of Ismagilov et al. (2020) and Haro-Sosa et al. (2024a; 2024b), which indicate a more pronounced social component of women's participation in eWOM. At the same time, the absence of differences in altruism and principalism suggests that prosocial and moral motives are relatively universal across genders.

5.1. Scientific and practical contribution

Focusing the model exclusively on personal motives contributes to a more precise understanding of their relative importance, which builds on the previous, broader model (Pleša Puljić, 2025) and enables a clearer ranking of motives according to their predictive power.

The scientific contribution of this study is reflected in the discovery of new findings related to demographic characteristics in the framework of eWOM behaviors, which were previously identified as lacking in previous research. Furthermore, the contribution is reflected in the evaluation of the measuring instrument for the operationalization of personal motives and intentions for generating eWOM. The instrument was evaluated through EFA, and further validation using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is recommended for future

research. In addition, key research directions related to the relationship between intention and behavior and the need to expand the model were identified.

The practical contribution stems from the fact that the results suggest that companies could consider placing less emphasis on encouraging egoistic or status motives, and instead focus on strategies that activate moral responsibility, a sense of fairness, and a desire to help others. Principlism and altruism appear to be particularly relevant factors in encouraging the intention to generate eWOM, which may provide useful implications for shaping sustainable consumer engagement strategies on social networks. Examples of more specific actions that can stimulate the intention to generate eWOM can be: campaigns based on social influence (sharing videos or stories about projects that the company supports in the community and encouraging users to share their experiences of helping others); encouraging information sharing (organizing online challenges in which consumers share tips or reviews that help the community, while the best contributions are highlighted on social networks); a program to recognize altruistic consumers (awarding digital labels, badges or titles to those users who generate content that helps others); transparent communication about ethics and brand principles (regularly informing consumers about how the product/service contributes to the well-being of the community, including clear examples and highlighting successes, which motivates users to share their positive eWOM. However, these implications should be interpreted with caution, as the study examines intention rather than actual behavior.

All of the above examples of these strategies can contribute to increasing the intention of long-term consumer involvement and have the potential to stimulate the intention to generate eWOM, and encourage those passive users to become active.

5.2. Limitations and recommendations

Despite the relevant findings, this research has several limitations. First, the research was conducted on a convenience sample, which limits the possibility of generalizing the results to a wider population of social media users. Future research should include more diverse and representative samples to increase the external validity of the findings.

Second, the measurement instrument operationalizes the intention to generate eWOM, not the actual behavior. Although such an approach is theoretically grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior, according to which intention is a direct predictor of behavior, the question remains to what extent intention is actually translated into concrete online action. Future research should therefore compare intention and actual behavior, for example by including objective indicators of online activity, in order to examine the possible difference between declared readiness and actual eWOM generation.

Third, the model includes only personal motives as predictors of intention. Although such an approach allowed for a clearer determination of their relative importance, the level of explained variance suggests the existence of additional factors that influence the intention to generate eWOM. Future research should therefore expand the model by including other relevant variables to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of intention. Finally, given that altruism and principlism were identified as the strongest predictors of intention, their more detailed conceptual elaboration in future research is recommended. For example, altruism could be differentiated according to the orientation of the help (towards other consumers or towards the company), while principlism could be further broken down with respect to different dimensions of moral obligation. Such an approach would allow for a more precise understanding of the structure and intensity of these motives in the context of eWOM generation.

6. CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that personal motives significantly contribute to the formation of the intention to generate eWOM, with altruism, principalism and collectivism standing out as key predictors. Principalism had the strongest effect, which emphasizes the importance of moral obligation and a sense of duty in encouraging individuals to share information. Altruism also had a significant impact, confirming that prosocial motives encourage eWOM activities, while collectivism showed a weaker but statistically significant effect. Contrary to expectations, egoism was not a significant predictor in the multiple regression model, suggesting that self-presentational motives may be secondary to moral and prosocial motivations.

The analysis of age differences showed that the younger age group (18–29 years) displays more pronounced egoistic motives, which can be associated with the need for self-presentation and gaining social recognition on social networks. Principalism proved to be relatively stable across age groups, confirming the consistency of moral motives across the life cycle. Regarding gender differences, women on average showed higher levels of collectivist motives, while altruism and principalism were similar across genders, suggesting the universality of prosocial and moral motives.

The scientific contribution of the research is reflected in a more precise understanding of the relative importance of personal motives and in the development of a validated measurement instrument for their operationalization. Practical implications highlight the importance of designing user engagement strategies on social networks that activate moral responsibility and the desire to help others, rather than focusing on egoistic or status motives.

Limitations of the study include convenience sampling, measuring intention instead of actual behavior, and focusing on personal motives. Therefore,

future research should use more representative samples, compare intention and actual behavior, and further analyze and investigate altruism and principalism due to their key role in generating eWOM.

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ULOGA OSOBNIH MOTIVA U NAMJERI POTROŠAČA ZA GENERIRANJE EWOM-A: UVIDI PREMA DOBI I SPOLU

Sažetak

Ova studija empirijski ispituje ulogu osobnih motiva u oblikovanju namjere potrošača da sudjeluju u elektroničkoj usmenoj predaji (eWOM) na društvenim mrežama. Oslanjajući se na teoriju prosocijalne i moralne motivacije, analizira altruizam, egoizam, principijelnost i kolektivizam kao ključne odrednice eWOM namjere te ispituje dobne i spolne razlike. Podaci su prikupljeni na uzorku od 469 ispitanika pomoću strukturiranog upitnika, a analizirani ANOVA-om, t-testovima, korelacijom i višestrukom regresijom. Rezultati pokazuju da altruizam, principijelnost i kolektivizam značajno predviđaju eWOM namjeru, pri čemu se principijelnost ističe kao najsnažniji prediktor. Egoizam je pozitivno povezan s namjerom, ali nije značajan u regresijskom modelu. Dobne razlike utvrđene su za egoizam i principijelnost, a spolne za kolektivizam. Iako ne mjeri stvarno ponašanje, studija pruža vrijedan uvid u ulogu motiva te nudi implikacije za digitalne strategije angažmana.

Ključne riječi: dobne razlike, eWOM namjera, osobni motivi, spolne razlike, društvene mreže.

JEL klasifikacija: D12, D91, M31.