

# The cultural value effects on social media eWOM in the hospitality industry

-A cross cultural study of comparison among China, Korea, and the USA-

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<Abstract>

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in social media has been recognized as one of the most influential marketing tools across various businesses. Understanding eWOM in social media is critical to reach potential global consumers easily and quickly in the hospitality industry. However, few empirical studies in hospitality attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of eWOM in social media from a global perspective. Given the competitive climate of the hospitality market, it is meaningful for hospitality marketers to evaluate the effectiveness of eWOM in social media and the influence of cultural factors to promote customers and increase profitability globally. The main purpose of this study was to examine the influence of cultural values on social media eWOM in the hospitality industry in China, Korea, and the USA. The result of this study indicates Chinese and American people engage more than Korean people when they try to purchase hospitality product and service. This study particularly provided a cross-cultural study of comparison among these countries and the findings of this study are expected to provide important practical assistance for global marketing strategies in social media.

Key Words: eWOM, social media, cross-cultural, hospitality industry, cultural dimensions

## I. Introduction

Hospitality industry has changed along with the progress of information and communication technologies (ICTs) over the years. ICTs have played an instrumental role as a competitive advantage in the hospitality industry (Leung, Law, Hoof, & Buhalis, 2013). By adapting ICTs, hospitality businesses have been able to improve service quality, reduce costs, enhance operational efficiency, and expand their market globally (Law, Leung, & Buhalis, 2009).

With the rapid growth of the Internet and E-commerce, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has emerged. eWOM has no limit of time, amount of information, and geographical constraints compared to traditional WOM (Han, 2008). eWOM activities can be generated in diverse ways such as emails, websites, blogs, virtual communities, chatrooms, product review sites, and social networking sites (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008). Thus, travelers today actively can share travel information using the Internet (Sparks & Browning, 2011).

With the distinctively increasing popularity, social media is regarded as an important tool in the hospitality industry to engage potential customers and retain existing customers (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004). Many businesses and marketing researchers have examined the impact of eWOM in social media on consumers' purchase decision and recognized eWOM in social media as a new marketing tool (Litvin et al., 2008).

Culture is a crucial factor for understanding consumers' behavior (Kralisch & Berendt, 2004).

The lack of empirical research examining the influence of social media eWOM from a global perspective is the underlying motivation for this research.

The purpose of this research is to examine whether there is a cultural value effect on social media eWOM in the hospitality industry in China, Korea, and the USA. The key research question is whether the cultural value influence on social media eWOM will differ among countries. This study focuses on five cultural dimensions: Power distance (PDI), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), Individualism (IDV), Masculinity (MAS), Long-term Orientation (LTO) that are most widely used and accepted in cross-cultural research (Jobs, & Gilfoil, 2012).

Previous cross-cultural studies on social media eWOM in the hospitality industry focused on limited countries and cultural factors. This study specifically provides a cross-cultural study of comparison between the USA, which shows the highest Internet penetration rate, and Asia, which shows the biggest Internet user population in the world (Internet World Stats, 2014).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. The Impact and Importance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Hospitality

Information and Communication Technology

(ICT) is defined as ‘the convergence of computers and digital communication to enable access to information and other resources and to facilitate communication and collaboration (Penny, 2010). ICTs have transformed not only how businesses are conducted but also how consumers communicate within the hospitality and tourism industries (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Ip, Leung, & Law, 2011).

Through the development of ICTs, more consumers can use search engines that transmit capacity and speed of information networks for planning and experiencing travels. Consumers who utilize search engines tend to find relevant information to their requirements and needs, thus, they have the ability to choose customized hospitality and tourism products based on the information (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Therefore, well-informed consumers can mitigate the perceived risks as well as being provided with the enhanced quality of travels (Fodness & Murray, 1997). Moreover, consumers can reduce their travel costs comparing products on different travel websites. They can choose particular travel products that meet their tastes and needs (Buhalis & Law, 2008).

## 2. The Importance of Social Media in Hospitality

Social media generally refers to ‘a second generation of Web development and design that people are able to communicate with each other, share and interchange secures information, and collaborate on the World Wide

Web’ (Paris, Lee, & Seery, 2010). In short, it is considered as an Internet-based application that delivers consumer-generated content (Blackshaw, 2006). Consumer-generated content is defined as ‘a mixture of fact and opinion, impression and sentiment, founded and unfounded tidbits, experiences, and even rumor’ (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2004).

Social media includes diverse online information-sharing formats as the following: social networking sites (SNSs) (e.g. Facebook, MySpace, Cyworld, and Friendster), user-generated content sharing sites (e.g. YouTube, Flickr), blogs, collaborative websites (e.g. Wikipedia) and microblogging sites (e.g. Twitter) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social media sites are ideal tools for consumers who desire to communicate and share their common interests and activities to form online communities (Bolotaeva & Cata, 2010). Companies are able to build strong relationships with consumers and new business models through online communities (Bolotaeva & Cata, 2010). Moreover, companies can obtain competitive advantage by understanding customers’ needs more in depth by monitoring customer-generated contents (Kang, 2011). Ultimately, companies expect to produce well-customized products/services and effectively advertise them to targeted customers (Chu & Kim, 2011). This increase is symptomatic of a long-term trend toward the use of social media among companies becoming the norm (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013).

Kang (2011) found that hotel brands perceive social media as an innovative tool because it

enables them to be proactive in terms of managing brand relationships with their consumers. Hotels can categorize attributes of their brands in order of importance by analyzing consumer-generated contents on their websites(Kang, 2011). Xiang and Gretzel(2010) found that social media plays a significant role in information search behavior for travelers as well. Volo(2010) suggested that social media impacts the decision-making process of prospective tourists representing comments and recommendations from blogs are influential factors for future intentions to travel.

### 3. Electronic Word-Of-Mouth (eWOM)

The invention of the Internet allows consumers to communicate with each other more quickly and efficiently and lead to a new form of Word-of-mouth(WOM) known as electronic word-of-mouth(eWOM)(Chu, 2009).

eWOM is defined as ‘any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet’(Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). eWOM can be considered as the extension of traditional interpersonal communication into Web 2.0(Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn. 2008). However, eWOM has different characteristics that make it more distinctive from traditional WOM: no limit of time,

amount of information, and geographical constraints(Han, 2008). Besides, it can be anonymously generated. Thus, consumers can avoid social pressure or restrictions that can exist in face-to-face communication(Gelb & Sundaram, 2002). Therefore, eWOM is widely perceived to have higher credibility, more relevance, and greater ability to stimulate a consumer’s interest. eWOM became a more persuasive information source to customers than the marketer-generated information on the Web(Bickart & Schindler, 2001).

Social media helps creation of new customers and it has been a driving force for eWOM marketing strategies(Trusov, Buckliin, & Pauwels, 2009). eWOM branding via social networking sites(SNSs) is seen as an essential element in the promotional mix(Chu & Kim, 2011) due to its great influence on customers’ purchasing decision(Yoon, 2008). Consequently, business marketers have been making efforts to make better use of WOM marketing strategies through social media(Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010).

It is important to adopt the constantly changing technologies for hospitality businesses and eWOM plays a crucial role in fast-transferring businesses’ both positive and negative information. Therefore, managers should be proactive to encourage positive reviews, and be responsive to negative reviews to counteract its impact on potential customers(Litvin & Hoffman, 2012).

## 4. Cultural Influence

### 4.1 Cultural Influences

Hofstede(1980, p. 25) defined culture as ‘the collective programming of the mind, which distinguishes the members of one human group from another’. The definition suggests that consumers’ culture arises from their society or group of affiliation(Lam et al., 2009).

Consumers’ patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting are learned from their life within their social environment by country(Yoon, 2007). Also, culture impacts on communication style tremendously(Koester & Lustig, 2012).

Cultural models have been developed from several key researchers. However, Hofstede’s framework is most widely accepted and used among the different cultural models(Lam et al., 2009). Hofstede’s dimensions were developed to distinguish national characteristics rather than individual characteristics and focus human values instead of general practices or beliefs (Hofstede, 1983).

### 4.2 Hofstede's five cultural dimensions

Hofstede revealed five dimensions of differences between national value systems: (1) power distance(large vs. small), (2) individualism vs. collectivism, (3) masculinity vs. femininity, (4) uncertainty avoidance (strong vs. weak), and (5) long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation (Jobs & Gilfoil, 2012).

Hofstede’s(1980a) work has been criticized for: limiting the sample to a single multi-

national corporation; failing to capture the variability of culture in a long-term perspective; limiting culture to a too simplistic five dimension conceptualization; and disregarding within-country cultural heterogeneity (Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006). In spite of all the criticism, many researchers have favored Hofstede’s framework due to its clarity, parsimony, and resonance with managers(Kirkman et al., 2006) and it has been accepted and tested in cross-cultural research most widely(Zakour, 2003). Earlier studies revealed that a national culture perspective is useful to all areas of IT-research(Gaspay, Dardan, & Legorreta, 2008). For example, Yoo and Torrey(2002) studied national culture and knowledge management using the Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. Hermeking(2005) examined influences of culture on the global consumption of the Internet and its World Wide Web based on the Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. Nevertheless, only few empirical studies have focused on the impact of culture on the network of communicating WOM(Lam, Lee, & Mizerski, 2009).

## III. RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS

### 1. Research Hypothesis

Despite the globalization, electronic communication does not change users’ value

systems and capacity to absorb the information while it increases the amount of accessible information(Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). People from different cultures have different perceptions and attitude toward the Internet(Chau, Patrick, Col, Massey, Montoya-Weiss, & O'Keefe, 2002). Culture is a crucial factor for understanding consumers' behavior and it is one of the most important aspects of a consumers' personal context (Kralisch & Berendt, 2004). Consequently, it is expected that cultural values influence social media eWOM, which leads to following hypothesis:

H1: The cultural values will differ among countries.

H1a: Power distance effect on social media eWOM will differ among countries.

H1b: Individualism effect on social media eWOM will differ among countries.

H1c: Masculinity effect on social media

eWOM will differ among countries.

H1d: Uncertainty effect avoidance on social media eWOM will differ among countries.

H1e: Long-term orientation effect on social media eWOM will differ among countries.

## 2. Sample and Data Collection

This study developed and utilized an online survey questionnaire for data collection. The original questionnaire was developed in English and translated in each country's language. The questionnaire consisted of three parts based on previous studies: cultural dimension, eWOM in social media, and demographics.

The sections of cultural dimension and eWOM in social media were measured by a 7-point Likert scale ranging from one(strongly disagree or very unimportant) to seven (strongly agree or very important).

Table 1  
Sample Profile

Variables	N	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	100	31.7
Female	214	67.9
<b>Age</b>		
18-20 years	32	10.2
21-25 years	114	36.2
26-30 years	62	19.7
31-35 years	46	14.6
36-40 years	18	5.7
Above 40 years	43	13.7
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	70	22.4
Single	241	77.0
Separated	2	0.6
<b>Nationality</b>		
China	66	21.0
Korea	129	41.0
USA	80	25.4
Others	40	12.7
<b>Education</b>		
High school or less	42	13.3
Bachelor's degree	137	43.5
Graduate degree	115	36.5
Other degree	21	6.7
<b>Annual Family Income</b>		
Under \$15,000	49	15.6
\$15,000 to \$24,999	51	16.2
\$25,000 to \$34,999	41	13.0
\$35,000 to \$49,000	41	13.0
\$50,000 to \$74,000	59	18.7
\$75,000 to \$99,999	27	8.6
\$100,000 and over	43	13.7

This study used the convenience sampling method to collect data. The online survey questionnaires were distributed to students at Florida International University(FIU) using the FIU's listserv. Additionally, the researcher distributed the online survey link to other university faculty members with personal connections in each country.

Finally, the online survey link was posted on the researcher's personal Facebook account. The data was collected from October 1, 2014 to December 18, 2014. Table 1 describes the profile of the sample data. Overall, the final data included a total of 315 respondents

### 3. Data Measurement

#### 3.1 Dependent Variables

This study used eWOM engagement measures as the dependent variable in order to test the hypotheses. The questionnaire for eWOM section was adopted from previous studies of Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold (2011) and Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) as following:

##### *eWOM engagement*

(1) I often read other consumers' online product/service reviews to know what products/services make good impressions on others

(2) To make sure I make the right decision, I often read other consumers' online product/service reviews

(3) I often consult other consumers' online product/service reviews to help choose the right decision

(4) I frequently gather information from online consumers' product/service reviews before I make a certain decision

(5) If I don't read consumers' online reviews when I buy a product/service, I worry about my decision

(6) When I buy a product/service, consumers' online reviews make me confident in purchasing the product/service

#### 3.2 Independent Variables

This study used Hofstede's five national cultural dimensions and nationality as the independent variables. The questionnaire for four dimensions of PDI, UAI, IDV, and MAS was adopted from previous studies of Dorfman and Howell (1988) and Lam, Lee, and Mizerski (2009) as following:

##### *Power Distance:*

(1) Inequalities among people are both expected and desired.

(2) Less powerful people should be dependent on the more powerful.

(3) Inequalities among people should be minimized.

(4) There should be, and there is to be some extent, interdependencies between less and more powerful people.

##### *Individualism vs. Collectivism:*

(1) Everyone grows up to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family only.

(2) People are identified independently of the group they belong to.

(3) An extended family member should be protected by other member in exchange for loyalty.

(4) People are identified by their position in the social networks to which they belong.

*Masculinity vs. Femininity:*

(1) Money and material things are important.

(2) Men are supposed to be assertive, ambitious and tough.

(3) Dominant values in society are caring for others and preservation.

(4) Both men and woman are allowed to be tender and to be concerned with relationships.

*Uncertainty Avoidance:*

(1) Uncertainty is a normal feature of life and each day is accepted as it comes.

(2) Emotions should not be shown.

(3) High stress and subjective feelings of anxiety are frequent among people.

(4) Fear of ambiguous situations and of unfamiliar risks is normal.

The questionnaire for the dimension of LTO was adopted from Yoon (2007)'s study. Yoon adopted four questions from Hofstede's original Value Survey Module (VSM). Short-term orientation stands for (1) Personal steadiness and stability and (2) Respect for Tradition. Long-term orientation stands for (3) Thrift and (4) Persistence (perseverance).

*Long vs. Short Term Orientation:*

(1) Personal steadiness and stability.

(2) Tradition.

(3) Thrift.

(4) Persistence (perseverance)

#### 4. Data Analysis

The questionnaire of this study was adopted

from previous studies of Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold(2011), Jalilvand and Samiei(2012), Dorfman and Howell(1988), Lam, Lee, and Mizerski(2009), and Yoon(2007). The data was entered into SPSS 20.0 for data analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to find out the respondents' demographic and general characteristics. Instead of a series of one-at-a-time univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA), multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test the relationships among variables and to test hypotheses that one or more independent variables have an influence on a set of two or more dependent variables. None of the individual ANOVAs may produce a significant main effect on the DV but it can be meaningful in combination. MANOVA is assumed to be a comparatively robust test but assumptions include normal distribution, linear relationship among homogeneity of the covariance matrices, independence of observation, and all sets of dependent variables. These assumptions were checked and missing data was removed. Finally, univariate main effects were examined only on the significant variables and Post-hoc comparisons with Tukey test was performed to know the specific differences among the DVs.

## IV. RESULT

### 1. Testing of Hypotheses

First, one-way multivariate analysis of variance(MANOVA) was performed to check if



there are cultural differences among the countries, and then, two-way MANOVA was performed five times to check each of the cultural dimensions (PDI, IDV, MAS, UAI, and LTO). One way MANOVA was performed using cultural dimensions as the dependent variables and nationality as the independent variable and it revealed a statistically significant main effect for nationality on cultural dimensions, Wilks'  $\lambda = .603$ ,  $F(15, 847.893) = 15.000$ ,  $p < .001$ , with partial  $\eta^2 = .155$ , indicating a strong association between cultural dimensions and the nationality. Checking out the Box's  $M$ -test, there are significant differences among the countries in the covariance matrices. However, it wouldn't be a problem since the power to detect the main effect is 1.000 and the confidence level was set at 0.001 to decrease the possibility of type 1 error. Thus hypothesis 1 was confirmed.

Given the significance of the overall test, the univariate main effects were examined using cultural dimensions as the dependent variables and nationality as the independent variables to find out whether each cultural dimension variable is influenced by nationality. Significant univariate main effects for nationality were obtained for as following: IDV,  $F(3, 311) = 19.130$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .156$ ; UAI,  $F(3, 311) = 3.245$ ,  $p < .022$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .030$ ; MAS,  $F(3, 311) = 26.489$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .204$ ; PDI,  $F(3, 311) = 3.774$ ,  $p < .011$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .035$ ; LTO,  $F(3, 311) = 3.357$ ,  $p < .019$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .031$ .

The Levene's statistics for the dependent variables, which had significant univariate

ANOVAs were all non-significant, meaning that the group variances were equal. Thus, the Tukey tests were employed for the post hoc tests to observe pairwise difference. Significant national pairwise differences in the dimension of IDV was obtained between (1) Korea ( $M = 3.512$ ) and China ( $M = 4.682$ ) and (2) Korea ( $M = 3.512$ ) and the USA ( $M = 4.900$ ); the dimension of UAI was obtained between China ( $M = 5.621$ ) and the USA ( $M = 6.175$ ); the dimension of MAS was obtained between (1) Korea ( $M = 3.930$ ) and the USA ( $M = 2.625$ ) and (2) China ( $M = 3.985$ ) and the USA ( $M = 2.625$ ); the dimension of LTO was obtained China ( $M = 5.273$ ) and the USA ( $M = 5.725$ ).

Next, the first two-way MANOVA was performed using eWOM engagement as the dependent variables and PDI and nationality as the independent variables and it didn't reveal a statistically significant main effect for PDI dimension on eWOM engagement, Wilks'  $\lambda = .863$ ,  $F(36, 1245.501) = 1.183$ ,  $p < .214$ , with partial  $\eta^2 = .024$ . Thus hypothesis 1b was not supported. Table 7 shows the summary of the multivariate main effect for PDI dimension.

The second two-way MANOVA was performed using eWOM engagement as the dependent variables and IDV and nationality as the independent variables and it didn't reveal a statistically significant main effect for IDV dimension on eWOM engagement, Wilks'  $\lambda = .902$ ,  $F(36, 1232.327) = .814$ ,  $p < .775$ , with partial  $\eta^2 = .017$ . Thus hypothesis 1b was not supported.

The third two-way MANOVA was performed using eWOM engagement as the

dependent variables and MAS and nationality as the independent variables and it didn't reveal a statistically significant main effect for MAS dimension on eWOM engagement, Wilks'  $\lambda=0.853$ ,  $F(36, 1236.718)=1.263$ ,  $p>.138$ , with partial  $\eta^2=.026$ . Thus hypothesis 1c was not supported. Table 8 shows the summary of the multivariate main effect for MAS dimension.

The fourth two-way MANOVA was

performed using eWOM engagement as the dependent variables and UAI and nationality as the independent variables and it revealed a statistically significant main effect for UAI dimension on eWOM engagement, Wilks'  $\lambda =.752$ ,  $F(36, 1245.501)=2.317$ ,  $p<.001$ , with partial  $\eta^2=.046$ . Thus hypothesis 1d was confirmed. Table 2 shows the summary of the multivariate main effect for UAI.

Table 2

Summary of the multivariate main effect for UAI dimension

Independent Variables	Wilks' $\lambda$	F	Sig.	$\eta^2$
Nationality	0.855	2.527	0.001	0.051
UAI	0.752	2.317	0.001	0.046

Table 3

Summary of the univariate main effects for UAI dimension

Dependent Variables	F	Sig.	$\eta^2$
eWOM engagement (eWOM1). I often read other consumers' online product/service reviews to know what products/services make good impressions on others.	5.731	0.000	0.107
(eWOM2). To make sure I make the right decision, I often read other consumers' online product/service reviews	6.392	0.000	0.118
(eWOM3). I often consult other consumers' online product/service reviews to help choose the right decision	0.718	0.636	0.015
(eWOM4). I frequently gather information from online consumers' product/service reviews before I make a certain decision	3.499	0.002	0.068
(eWOM5). If I don't read consumers' online reviews when I buy a product/service, I worry about my decision	0.770	0.594	0.016
(eWOM6). When I buy a product/service, consumers' online reviews make me confident in purchasing the product/service	3.968	0.001	0.076

Given the significance of the overall test, the univariate main effects were examined using eWOM engagement as the dependent variables and UAI cultural dimension and nationality as the independent variables to find out whether each eWOM engagement variable

is influenced by UAI cultural dimension. Significant univariate main effects for UAI dimension were obtained for as following: eWOM1,  $F(6, 288)=5.731$ ,  $p<.001$ , partial  $\eta^2=.107$ ; eWOM2,  $F(6, 288) = 6.392$ ,  $p<.001$ , partial  $\eta^2=.118$ ; eWOM4,  $F(6, 288)=3.499$ ,

$p < .002$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .068$ ; eWOM6,  $F(6, 288) = 3.968$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .076$ . The table 3 shows the summary of the univariate main effects for UAI dimension.

The Levene's statistics for the dependent variables, which had significant univariate ANOVAs were all non-significant, meaning that the group variances were equal. Thus, the Tukey tests were employed for the post hoc tests to observe pairwise difference. Significant national pairwise differences in the dimension of eWOM1 was obtained between (1) Korea ( $M = 4.9690$ ) and China ( $M = 5.4923$ ) and (2) Korea ( $M = 4.9690$ ) and the USA ( $M = 5.7089$ ); the dimension of eWOM2 was obtained between Korea ( $M = 5.0000$ ) and the USA ( $M = 5.7722$ ); the dimension of eWOM4 was obtained between Korea ( $M = 5.0388$ ) and the USA ( $M = 5.5696$ ); the dimension of eWOM6 was obtained between (1) Korea ( $M = 4.5349$ ) and China ( $M = 5.1077$ ) and (2) Korea ( $M = 4.5349$ ) and the USA ( $M = 5.4937$ ). Thus, this result indicates that people from China and the USA are more likely tend to engage in social media eWOM than people from Korea in the aspect of uncertainty avoidance dimension.

The fifth two-way MANOVA was performed using eWOM engagement as the dependent variables and LTO and nationality as the independent variables and it didn't reveal a statistically significant main effect for LTO dimension on eWOM engagement, Wilks'  $\lambda = .866$ ,  $F(30, 1146.000) = 1.398$ ,  $p < .076$ , with partial  $\eta^2 = .028$ . Thus hypothesis 1d was not confirmed.

## V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### 1. Discussion of Results

The objective of this study was concerned with determining whether there is a cultural value effect on electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) engagement in social media in the hospitality industry. The study hypotheses were partially supported and indicated that there is a significant influence of cultural value on eWOM engagement. The cultural values on social media eWOM that showed a significant difference among countries was uncertainty avoidance (UAI) dimensions. On the other hand, power distance (PDI), individualism (IDV), masculinity (MAS) and long-term orientation (LTO) dimensions indicated no significant influence on social media eWOM.

Cultural difference on social media eWOM can be inferred from uncertainty avoidance. Hofstede (1980) argued that differences in uncertainty avoidance are potentially the most significant cultural dimension in comparison among different countries due to its relationship to tolerances for risk which is a major concern for international travelers. The result of this study indicates that people from the USA and China read other consumers' online product/service reviews more often than Korean to know what products/services make good impression on others and to make sure they make the right decision regarding the hospitality products.

In conclusion, the main study hypothesis

was supported in this study. Thus, cultural values do play a role in determining the level of eWOM engagement in social media. Despite the globalization, cultural differences still exist when consumers using social media eWOM in the hospitality industry.

This study contributes to the theoretical foundation by attempting to provide a framework for analyzing cultural differences in social media eWOM in the hospitality industry. This study argued for the need to take account of national culture in social media eWOM and called for developing culture-oriented eWOM tactics. Moreover, this study discovered that the Hofstede's dimensions of uncertainty avoidance can be applied to determining cultural differences in social media eWOM. Since there are so many cultural dimensions measuring cultural differences, there have not been preceding studies in academia that suggest proper cultural dimensions determining cultural differences in social media eWOM engagement in the hospitality and tourism industry. It is expected that this attempt will contribute to the hospitality and tourism literature review.

Also, this study results add practical contribution by alerting hospitality marketers to revisit their global eWOM marketing strategies in social media. This study suggested that hospitality marketers engaging in social media should use culturally customized eWOM strategies to better engage with customers' needs and attract global customers in the way they intend.

## 2. Implications for management

Due to the rapidly increasing usage of the Internet and social media, it is essential for hospitality marketers to better understand the cultural value effect on social media eWOM in the global hospitality and tourism industry. The findings of this study are expected to provide important practical assistance for global marketing strategies in social media. The results from this study revealed cultural influences on social media eWOM and UAI cultural dimension is more influential than other dimensions on consumers' eWOM engagement when they are considering a purchase of hospitality products and service. It is possible that consumers' eWOM engagement could be changed depending on the types of products and service being discussed.

Taken together, the findings of this study reaffirm the effectiveness of cultural values on social media eWOM in the global hospitality industry. With the increasing usage of social media and level of reliance on eWOM among hospitality consumers, hospitality businesses should consider cultural differences to better engage in eWOM strategies. The researchers of this study suggest that international marketers should customize eWOM platform services. For example, marketers in high uncertainty avoidance cultures should make sure customers can view overall reputation of product or service quality and easily compare details of different products or service so that they can be more motivated by the risk

reduction. Comprehending the trait of social media interaction and the meaning of cultural norms and distinction should be done to know how the eWOM process shapes and develop eWOM marketing tactics in the global hospitality market.

### 3. Limitations and Recommendations

As with any empirical research, the present study has a few limitations that should be addressed toward direction for future studies. First of all, findings from this study cannot be generalized since the data was obtained mainly from college students. Although college students represent the largest portion of social media users, young generations show dynamic cultural characteristics. Therefore, future studies should collect a more representative and divers samples covering other age groups.

Second, cultural dimensions in this study were limited to Hofstede's work. Even though this study confirmed the Hofstede's UAI dimension, future research should also test diverse other researcher's cultural dimensions. Third, this study used only limited six eWOM variables which characterize general eWOM behaviors were adapted from previous studies. As many different platforms of social media are emerging, revolutionized eWOM variables measuring accurate level of engagement should be used in future research. Finally, this study only revealed cultural differences on a particular setting which can be applied to limited area. Future studies should focus on more comprehensive and diverse setting and compare the cultural differences among different products or services in many diverse settings.

## APPENDIX A

## Questionnaire Components

Construct/ Indicators	
Power distance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Those in charge should make most decisions without consulting those who are not.</li> <li>2. Those in charge should not delegate important tasks to those who are not.</li> <li>3. Those not in charge should not disagree with the decisions of those in charge.</li> <li>4. My life is chiefly controlled by powerful others.</li> <li>5. I feel like what happens in my life is determined by powerful people.</li> </ol>
Individualism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Group welfare is more important than individual rewards.</li> <li>2. Group success is more important than individual success.</li> </ol>
Masculinity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meetings are usually run more effectively when they are chaired by a man.</li> <li>2. Solving difficult problems usually requires an active forcible approach which is typical of men.</li> <li>3. It is more important for men to have a professional career than it is for women.</li> <li>4. It is preferable to have a man in a high level position than a woman.</li> <li>5. Men solve problems with logical analysis, women solve problems with intuition.</li> </ol>
Uncertainty Avoidance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rules and regulations are important because they inform those who are working what the organization expects of them.</li> <li>2. Standard operating procedures are helpful to those on the job.</li> <li>3. Instructions for operations are important for those on the job.</li> <li>4. Team managers expect their members to closely follow instructions and procedures.</li> </ol>
Long/short term orientation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Personal steadiness and stability</li> <li>2. Tradition</li> <li>3. Thrift</li> <li>4. Persistence (perseverance)</li> </ol>
eWOM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I often read other consumers' online product/service reviews to know what products/services make good impressions on others</li> <li>2. To make sure I make the right decision, I often read other consumers' online product/service reviews</li> <li>3. I often consult other consumers' online product/service reviews to help choose the right decision</li> <li>4. I frequently gather information from online consumers' product/service reviews before I make a certain decision</li> <li>5. If I don't read consumers' online reviews when I buy a product/service, I worry about my decision</li> <li>6. When I buy a product/service, consumers' online reviews make me confident in purchasing the product/service</li> </ol>

Note: \*Measured with a 7-points Likert-type scale from strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

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## 초 록

### 환대산업에서 문화적 가치의 Social Media를 통한 Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)에 대한 영향<sup>†</sup>

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Social Media 상의 Electronic word-of-mouth(eWOM)는 다양한 사업 경영에 있어서 핵심적인 마케팅 도구로 인식되고 있다. 환대산업에서는 이 Social Media eWOM를 이해하는 것은 잠재적 고객들에게 국제적으로 쉽고 빠르게 다가가는 핵심요인이라 볼 수 있다. 그러나 환대산업분야에서의 Social Media eWOM의 효율성을 국제적 관점에서 평가하는 실증 연구는 아주 부족한 실정이다. 환대산업시장의 경쟁적인 특성을 고려하면, 마케팅 종사자들은 Social Media eWOM의 효율성의 평가는 물론, 외국인 고객을 촉진하고 수익성을 증대하기 위한 문화적 요소에 의한 효과의 평가하여야 한다. 본 연구의 핵심 목적은 환대산업에서 Social Media eWOM가 문화적 가치에 영향력을 검증하는 것이다. 본 연구는 중국, 한국, 미국의 세 나라를 비교 하여 나라마다 Social Media eWOM에 관여하는 정도의 차이의 존재를 실증하였다. 본 연구는 환대산업 마케터에게 국제적 Social Media 마케팅 전략에 중요한 의미를 제공할 것이라 기대된다.

핵심주제어: eWOM, social media, cross-cultural, hospitality industry, cultural dimensions

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