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The Influence of Marketing Communication in Social Media on Electronic Word-of-Mouth

Doctoral Dissertation

in the field of Management Sciences

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Abstract

In the light of decreasing effectiveness of traditional modes of marketing communication and growing reach of social media, marketers and scholars are particularly interested in marketing communication in social media and word-of-mouth. The purpose of this study, based on the uses and gratifications theory, is to assess the influence of marketing communication in social media on electronic word-of-mouth. The results of content analysis of 1,040 posts of cosmetic brands indicate that the level eWOM varies according to the communication form and appeal, the brand type and the geographic market. The study provides concrete guidelines on content having a positive influence on eWOM.

Key words

marketing communications, social media, social networks, Facebook, word-of-mouth, word-of-mouth marketing, luxury brands, cosmetic market, content analysis, uses and gratifications theory

Wpływ komunikacji marketingowej w mediach społecznościowych na komunikację nieformalną w środowisku wirtualnym

Abstract in Polish

W obliczu malejącej skuteczności tradycyjnych form komunikacji marketingowej i rosnącego zasięgu mediów społecznościowych, praktycy i teoretycy marketingu wykazują szczególne zainteresowanie komunikacją marketingową w mediach społecznościowych oraz komunikacją nieformalną. Celem niniejszej pracy, bazującej na teorii użytkowania i gratyfikacji, jest określenie wpływu komunikacji marketingowej w mediach społecznościowych na komunikację nieformalną w środowisku wirtualnym. Wyniki analizy treści 1.040 postów marek kosmetycznych wskazują, że poziom komunikacji nieformalnej zmienia się w zależności od formy i wydźwięku komunikacji, typu marki oraz rynku geograficznego. Praca dostarcza konkretnych wskazówek na temat treści mających pozytywny wpływ komunikację nieformalną w środowisku wirtualnym.

Key words in Polish

komunikacja marketingowa, media społecznościowe, sieci społecznościowe, Facebook, komunikacja nieformalna, marketing szeptany, marki luksusowe, rynek kosmetyczny, analiza treści, teoria użytkowania i gratyfikacji

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Introduction

Since the beginning of human society people have given each other friendly advice based on reciprocal personal knowledge and empathy (Dichter, 1966). In a marketplace, since ancient times, personal recommendations have driven the success of products, services and their sellers (Barreto, 2014). With the advent of mass media, advertising has become the key form of marketing communications (Kotler & Keller, 2012; Wiktor, 2013) and the number of advertising messages has started to grow exponentially. Today, the advertising clutter, the relentless flow of advertising messages from offline and online media creates an informational noise in which people get lost. In consequence, when looking for advice on purchase decisions, consumers again turn to each other (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014; Plummer, 2007). Contrary to what it may seem, the digital era brings to the fore the importance of interpersonal relations and "the oldest, newest marketing medium" – word-of-mouth (WOM) (Dellarocas, 2003; Silverman, 2005).

As the traditional modes of marketing communication appear to be losing effectiveness (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Tkaczyk, 2013; Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009) and the number of users of social media, where brands and products are discussed, is constantly growing, marketers and scholars are particularly interested in understanding how to use social media in order to influence electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Morra, Ceruti, Chierici, & Di Gregorio, 2018; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; Trusov et al., 2009). Given its enormous reach and accessibility, eWOM has now an unprecedented ability to shape consumers' attitudes toward brands, products, services and organizations, as well as influence their buying decisions.

But how eWOM can be influenced by marketing communication in social media? The current research directly addresses this question, scarcely investigated in academic literature. Specifically, as illustrated in the specific section of this study dedicated to the research gap, prior academic research poorly addresses the influence of the form and appeal of marketing communications on eWOM in social networks, as well as eWOM and marketing communication effects in social networks for different product categories. Furthermore, there is a lack of research on marketing communications of luxury brands on social media and the differences in social media usage and eWOM in an international context.

By filling this research gap, the **purpose of this study is to assess the influence of marketing communication in social media on eWOM**. Specifically, the main **research problem is to understand how marketing communication in social networks influences eWOM while considering the communication form, communication appeal, brand type and geographic market**.

Content analysis of 1,040 Facebook posts of mass-market and luxury cosmetic brands within two different geographic markets (Poland and Italy) is used to answer the research question. The selected research method allows deriving findings from the analysis of actual brand activities and actual consumer behavior, which is a significant advantage compared to studies based on declarative data.

The theoretical foundation of this study is laid by Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory - "one of the most influential theories in the field of communication research" (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 26), considered to be the most appropriate theory to explain why people choose specific media (Ruggiero, 2000; Shao, 2009). This theory is particularly suited for the study of the Internet (Johnson & Kaye, 2003; Stafford, Stafford, & Schkade, 2004) and has been widely employed to examine why and how people use social media (C. S. Lee & Ma, 2012; Wagner, Baccarella, & Voigt, 2017; Whiting & Williams, 2013). According to the U&G theory, media usage is guided by psychological and social needs people seek to satisfy (Katz et al., 1999). The needs motivate audiences to use specific media, in order to obtain specific gratifications. The explanation basis for U&G researchers are motivations - "drives, urges, wishes, or desires which initiate the sequence of events known as behavior" (Bayton, 1958, p. 282). Motivations reflect the gratifications people seek and potentially obtain from media use (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). In the current study, it is argued that eWOM in social media can be analyzed and explained on the basis of individual motivations. Different motivations lead consumers to engage in eWOM on social media to a different extent, and it is expected that the engagement will vary depending on the marketing communication form and appeal, product category and country. The marketing communication model developed by Hoffman & Novak (1996), personal behavior theories (personality traits, elaboration likelihood model), as well as the social influence theory, the theory of "the strength of weak ties" (Granovetter, 1973) and Hofstede's theory of cultural difference are used as an additional theoretical framework.

Prior studies suggest that marketing communication in social networks using videos has the highest positive influence on eWOM and underline the crucial role of the emotional appeal of marketing communications. It seems that people are more likely to exchange information about luxury brands than about mass-market brands, in particular when emotional appeals are used in the marketing communications of luxury brands. Furthermore, extant academic literature suggests that the influence of marketing communication in social networks on eWOM varies according to geographic markets. These suggestions are the basis for the research hypotheses of this study.

To the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first study to empirically investigate how the form and appeal of marketing communication in social networks influence eWOM including the investigation of brand type and geographic market. From a theoretical standpoint, it allows a deeper understanding of marketing communication processes in the virtual environment and their antecedents. Although, there is a growing research on social media, due to their dynamic character, the practice is still ahead of the theory. Studies on social media represent an important development for the field of marketing and can have a significant impact on the future course of the discipline (V. Kumar, 2015).

From a practical perspective, the intent is to provide marketers with concrete guidelines on communication content to be used on social media, in order to achieve eWOM effects. These principles take into account both mass-market and luxury brands, and the perspective of companies operating in different geographic markets.

The study is organized as follows. The first chapter presents an overview of the extant literature on marketing communications, social media and word-of-mouth. The first section is dedicated to marketing communications. It describes the essence of marketing communications, its primary goals and challenges. By presenting the U&G theory, marketing communications models and the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) the first section of the first chapter lays the theoretical foundations and outlines the scope of the study. Furthermore, the marketing communications mix, the elements of online marketing communications, online media types and media share in advertising spending are discussed, providing an extended overview of marketing communications from a practical perspective with a focus on changes that have occurred in the last decades. The second section is dedicated to social media and their role in marketing communications. User Generated Content (UGC) - the key element of

social media, functionalities and types of social media are discussed in this section. Furthermore, social media users' characteristics, motivations of social media usage and types of user behavior on social media are examined. Last but not least, this section provides an overview of the concept of social media marketing including presentation of prior studies on antecedents and consequence of consumers' brand engagement in social media, as well as on social media adoption and content strategies used by companies. The third section is focused on WOM – its definition (including a novel definition developed by the author on the basis of prior studies), valence, people's motivations of spreading WOM and its role in marketing communications. Particular attention is devoted to eWOM, its definition and characteristics. A novel definition of eWOM is provided in this section, traditional and electronic WOM are compared. Furthermore, eWOM in social media and the crucial role of online communities are discussed including motivations of spreading and searching eWOM in social media, as well as its consequences for both consumers and companies. In addition, word-of-mouth marketing - a new mode of communication within the marketing communications mix proposed by Kotler & Keller (2012) is thoroughly described. This description includes different approaches to WOM management and the main types of activities performed by companies in order to encourage WOM with a focus on clarification and comparison of different terms often not correctly and interchangeably used in prior studies. In addition, social network characteristics as one of the factors that affect viral reach and the main approaches to model the contagion process are described. The last section of the first chapter highlights the research gap that the current study aims to address.

The second chapter outlines the research. The first section provides justification of the examination of social networks, presents the research problem and specific research questions. These research questions on the basis of an extended review of prior studies lead to the development of research hypotheses presented in the second section of the chapter. The conceptual model depicts the analyzed relationships. The third section of the second chapter provides the justification of the research setting within Facebook and the cosmetic market as well as the relevance of the examination of luxury brands and the Polish and Italian markets. The following section describes the research method – content analysis and explains the reasons why it is deemed the most appropriate for the research problem. Particular attention is devoted to the criteria of objectivity, reliability, sampling and systematization to ascertain the methodological rigor of content analysis. Data collection is described in the fifth section, while the sixth section describes how data were coded – coding categories and coding

procedure. A novel classification of brand post appeals is also proposed in the latter section. In order to assure objectivity in content classification, data were manually coded by both the author and independent coders. Intercoder reliability measures are reported following the best practices suggested by prior studies. Moreover, the opinions of international experts are provided and taken into account in the operationalization of eWOM. Examination of eWOM includes sentiment analysis of user comments. The second chapter finishes with an overview of the statistical analysis method applied in this study – multivariate and univariate analysis of variance.

Empirical results are described and discussed in the third chapter. The first section of the chapter provides descriptive statistics for the analyzed data including frequency, measures of central tendency and measures of variability. The second section describes the research hypotheses testing. Contrary to many academic publications that report summary of the results without testing the assumptions of the selected statistical analysis method, an extended statistical analysis includes testing of the assumptions of both multivariate and univariate analysis of variance as well as the examination of interaction effects. The results are discussed in the third section of the chapter.

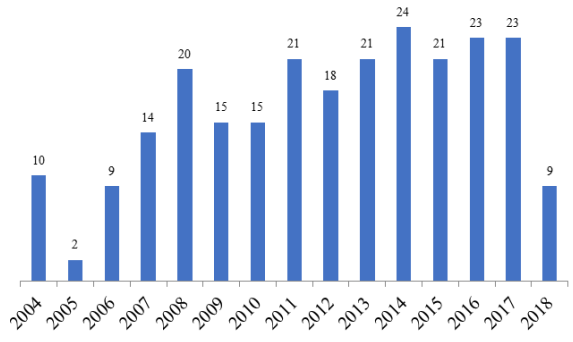
Finally, the last section of this study provides conclusions that include a summary of the research findings, theoretical and practical implications, limitations and directions for future research.

Chapter 1.

Overview of the extant literature on marketing communications, social media and word-of-mouth

Given the extended scope of academic literature on marketing communications, social media and word-of-mouth (WOM) and the limited scope of this study, in the following review a systematic approach has been adopted, guided by the research topic. In order to select the most relevant papers for the literature review, in the Scopus database, the research query was set using the keywords related to the research problem, i.e. "marketing communications", "social media", "social network", "word-of-mouth", "wom" and "e-wom". The results have been restricted to publications in English, Polish and Italian in "Business, management and accounting", "Social sciences" and "Economics, econometrics and finance". Moreover, the results have been limited to published articles and articles in press from academic journals. Seventy most cited articles have been selected as the initial basis for the review. Other relevant publications were identified by using the snowballing technique. Furthermore, in the Web of Science and Infona databases, the same set of keywords (translated in Polish) was used in order to identify relevant publications in Polish. Moreover, additional research was done in Google Scholar and Researchgate databases by using names of Polish authors identified in the search by keywords. A final set of 303 articles from academic journals was used for the current review. Two hundred forty-five of these articles (81%) were published within the last 15 years (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Number of articles from academic journals used in the review



Source: Own elaboration

Besides, the review has been enriched by 25 books, one lecture and 37 web sources for a total of 366 references (of 537 used in the entire study). The analysis moves from the macro-level of marketing communications and media that can be used in it, to the micro-level of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in social media.

1.1. Marketing communications

According to Bajdak (2013), marketing communication is a dialogue between a company and its environment – current and potential customers and other stakeholders. This **definition**, as well as the origin of the term "communication" (from the Latin "communicare" – to share), emphasizes bilateralism, interaction, relationship, and exchange, that lay the foundations of social media.

Batra & Keller (2016) provide a useful list of marketing communication **goals**:

- Creating awareness and salience
- Conveying detailed information
- Creating imaginary and personality
- Building trust
- Eliciting emotions
- Inspiring action
- Instilling loyalty
- Connecting people (creating brand advocacy and WOM)

While being one of its objectives, WOM plays a fundamental role in marketing communications, a role that is not limited to product promotion.

Marketing communications and promotion are often used as synonyms, thus it is worth underlining the differences between the two terms. Promotion is a rather unidirectional influence of a company (Wiktor, 2002) related to the product and directed at consumers, while marketing communications is a broader term, a dialogue which includes all stakeholders (Kijewska & Mantura, 2017; Koniorczyk & Sztangret, 2000; Wiktor, 2013). For instance, marketing communications can be used to attract new employees or to motivate the current ones. Marketing information deployment within market research is also regarded as a form of marketing communications, but its purposes are cognitive (e.g., examining customers' needs) rather than promotional (Kijewska & Mantura, 2017).

Marketing communication expenditure and the number of advertising messages are constantly growing thus leading to a constant decrease in advertising effectiveness and a constant increase in spending to make it effective (Godin, 2014; van den Putte, 2009). "A wealth of information creates a poverty of attention" (Simon, 1971, p. 40). As Godin (2014, p. 34) sums

up: “The more they spend, the less it works. The less it works, the more they spend”. Prior research on advertising highlights a decline of trust (Godes et al., 2005) and negative attitudes toward advertising among consumers (Internet Standard, 2012; Szubra & Trojanowski, 2018; Taranko, 2018). Therefore, one of the **major challenges** for marketers today is to find a new way to capture people’s attention and position a brand in the consumers’ mind (Kotler, 2012).

How can this major challenge highlighted by Kotler be addressed on the basis of existing theories in marketing and communication research? **Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory** is deemed particularly relevant in this case for three main reasons. Firstly, it assumes the active role of consumers that volitionally decide to participate in the communication process. Secondly, its individual-centric perspective is consistent with the personal dimension of WOM. Thirdly, the U&G theory is functionalist in its approach, thus likely to develop general guidelines and concrete problem-solving ideas applicable in the marketing practice (Morgan, 1984) being consistent with the purpose of this study.

U&G theory has its origins in media effects research (McQuail, 1983). In the 1940s, the initial studies of communications developed an approach to examining the “gratifications” which attract and keep audiences to the specific media and content types that satisfy audiences’ psychological and social needs (Katz, Hass, & Gurevitch, 1973). Diverging from other media effect theories that examine “what do the media do to people”, this approach is focused on “what do people do with the media”, thus providing an insight into functions served by a specific medium or content (Katz, 1959, p. 2). “The message of even the most potent of the media cannot ordinarily influence an individual who has no "use" for it in the social and psychological context in which he lives” (Katz, 1959, p. 2). U&G researchers distinguish gratifications sought from gratifications obtained (outcomes), and media consumption is related to the discrepancy between the two (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979). The assumptions of the U&G theory include (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Ruggiero, 2000):

- Active audiences with varying levels of activity and goal-directed media use
- Media selection initiated by the audience members
- Media competing with other sources that can satisfy the same need
- Self-awareness of the audience members and their ability to articulate many of the goals of media use
- No value judgments about the cultural significance of mass communication

Since the 1950s, U&G researchers have explored the links between gratifications and psychological or sociological origins of the satisfied needs (Ruggiero, 2000). Katz, Hass, & Gurevitch (1973) provide a list of psychological and social needs satisfied by exposure to mass media, which includes five categories of needs:

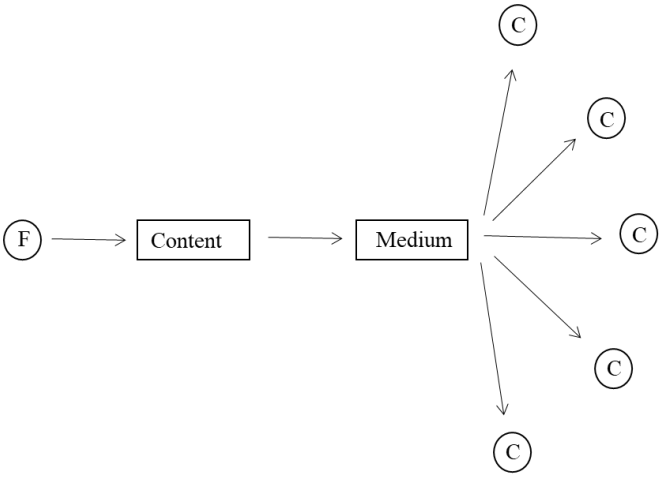
- *cognitive* (related to information, knowledge and understanding)
- *affective* (related to aesthetic, pleasurable and emotional experience)
- *escape* or tension release
- *personal integrative* (credibility, confidence, stability, and status)
- *social integrative* (keeping contact with family, friends and other people)

Over the past decades, the media have experienced a huge transformation, however, the essential needs they satisfy have remained basically the same.

Hoffman & Novak (1996) explain this media transformation by showing the evolution from a traditional one-to-many **marketing communications model** for mass media and an interpersonal communication model in the computer-mediated environment to a new model of many-to-many marketing communications in a hypermedia computer-mediated environment where users co-create content.

In the traditional model (Figure 2) communication content is transmitted from a firm (F) to consumers (C) through a medium. There is no interaction between consumers and firms.

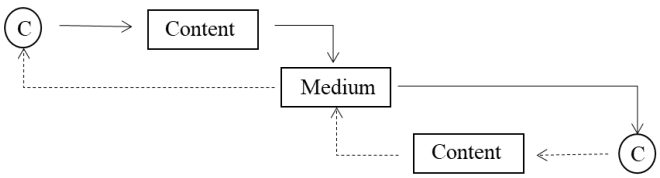
Figure 2. Traditional one-to-many marketing communications model for mass media



Source: reprinted from Hoffman and Novak (1996, p. 5)

In the interpersonal and computer-mediated communication model (Figure 3) content is transmitted through a medium from one consumer to another (solid line) but this model includes interaction, so through the medium the receiver provides feedback to the sender (dashed lines).

Figure 3. Model of marketing communications for interpersonal and computer-mediated communication

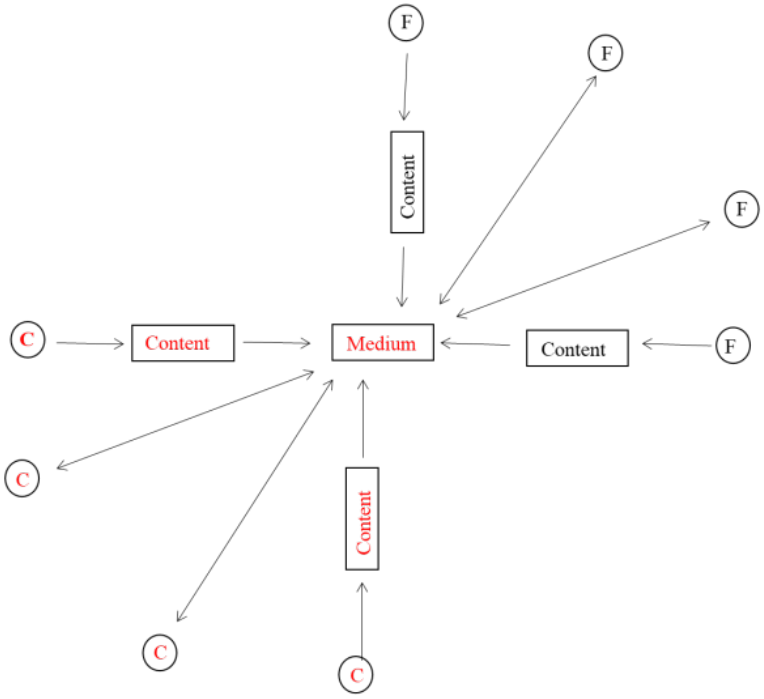


Source: reprinted from Hoffman and Novak (1996, p. 5)

It is worth mentioning that Wiktor (2002) modifies this model claiming that a firm can be one of the participants and underlining the general relevance of the interpersonal communication model for personal selling. However, for this study, the critical point is that the model in Figure 3 is implicit in word-of-mouth communication between consumers in social media (Hoffman & Novak, 1996).

The content in Figure 4 is hypermedia (i.e., combines text, images, audio and video with hypertext links) and the medium is a distributed computer network (Internet). In this model interactivity can take place both with and through the medium. Consumers and firms can interact with the medium (e.g., navigate the Internet), firms can provide content (e.g., on their websites), but also consumers can provide product-related content to the medium. Additionally, because of such interaction, the sender is also the receiver. The primary relationship is not between the sender and the receiver, but rather with the "mediated environment" they interact with. The highlighted part of the model refers to interpersonal and computer-mediated communication among consumers, detailed in Figure 3 and implicit in word-of-mouth in social media.

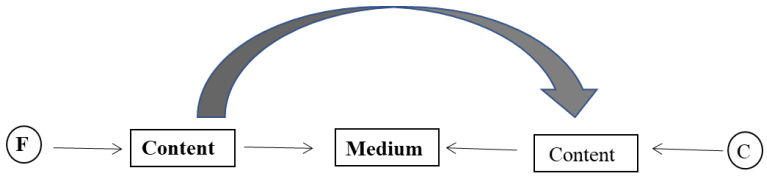
Figure 4. New model of marketing communications in a hypermedia computer-mediated environment



Source: reprinted from Hoffman and Novak (1996, p. 7)

On the basis of the model of marketing communications in a hypermedia computer-mediated environment, it is interesting to explore how the content provided by the firm to the medium influences eWOM - the additional content consumers provide. This issue is covered by the scope of this study (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Scope of the study



Source: own elaboration

One could argue that the Internet is merely another medium of marketing communication (like television, radio or newspapers); however, Hoffman and Novak (1996) show that the interactive nature of the Web creates an entirely new environment that changes the traditional parameters of mass communication.

The interactivity of the Web strengthens the core U&G theory assumption of an active audience (Johnson & Kaye, 2003; Sundar & Limperos, 2013). "Participants in the communication process have control over and can exchange roles in their mutual discourse" (Williams, Rice, & Rogers, 1988, p. 10). As Wiktor (2013) observes, consumers in the communication process become "comm-sumers" consuming and creating information. "From a marketing communications point of view, customers are no longer passive targets but are becoming active media of communications." (Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2017, p. 13). Moreover, demassification, i.e. "the control of the individual over the medium" (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 16) strengthens the U&G notion of the media selection initiated by an individual. In the hypermedia computer-mediated environment, consumers select content which is useful for them and satisfies their needs (Wiktor, 2002). This also suggests that, while searching on the Internet, users are aware of their needs (Johnson & Kaye, 2003), thus strengthening the U&G theory assumption of self-awareness. In addition, the variety of content on the Internet allows users to satisfy a wider range of needs (Johnson & Kaye, 2003; Sundar & Limperos, 2013). Stafford et al. (2004) claim that three categories of gratifications can be distinguished on the Internet:

- *content gratifications* (satisfied through the media content)
- *process gratifications* (related to the media consumption process, the experience of navigating, e.g., entertainment)
- *social gratifications* (creating and strengthening social ties)

On the basis of this classification, Sundar & Limperos (2013) argue that the new gratifications (that were not satisfied by traditional media) and can be satisfied by the new media can be classified into (the MAIN Model):

- *Modality-based* (related to the form of the content, e.g., video)
- *Agent-based* (related to the possibility of being sources of information)
- *Interactivity-based* (related to the possibility of making real-time changes to the content)
- *Navigability-based* (related to the movement through the medium)

The advent of the Internet has revived the significance of U&G theory. Contemporary academic thought suggests that the theory that "has always provided a cutting-edge theoretical approach in the initial stages" of every new communication medium, is gaining new life

(Ruggiero, 2000, p. 27). With more and more media available, motivations and gratifications become always more important components of audience analysis.

Prior research suggests that information and entertainment gratifications are the most relevant in the online environment (Polański, 2017). This finding is related to another model that provides a theoretical background for the current study, namely the **elaboration likelihood model (ELM)**. ELM is a theory of persuasion - a communication-induced attitude change, developed in the 1980s by Richard Petty and John Cacioppo, commonly used as a theoretical foundation in eWOM research (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). It proposes two different "routes to persuasion" related to different ways of information processing. Under the "central route" (or in central information processing) persuasion occurs as a result of "a person's careful and thoughtful consideration of the true merits of the information" (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, p. 125), it requires high cognitive effort and occurs when the information recipient has a high motivation and ability to process the information. On the other hand, under the "peripheral route" (or in peripheral information processing) persuasion occurs "as a result of some simple cue in the persuasion context (e.g. an attractive source)" (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, p. 125), it requires low cognitive effort and occurs when the information recipient has a low motivation and ability to process the information (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984). Information gratification can be the most relevant when users are able and want to process the information, while in the opposite case, entertainment gratifications may be expected. Media usage gratifications and routes to persuasion are also related to the two main marketing communication appeals (rational and emotional) commonly used in different modes of communication and discussed in the second chapter of this study.

The importance of hypermedia computer-mediated environment for marketing communications is related to four main elements (Wiktor, 2013):

- multiple relationships in the marketing communication process (many-to-many)
- targeting and selectivity of the message
- the possibility of communication on a global scale for every company, regardless of size, sector or financial situation
- reach and availability of the message, and speed and flexibility of the communication

In other words, in a hypermedia computer-mediated environment, every company can easily communicate with multiple actors on a global scale by using tailored messages. Companies increasingly exploit the potential of this new environment.

Kotler & Keller (2012) distinguish the following modes of communication within the **marketing communications mix**:

- *Advertising*
- *Public relations and publicity*
- *Direct marketing*
- *Sales promotion*
- *Personal selling*
- *Events and experiences*
- *Interactive marketing* (online marketing communications)
- *Word-of-mouth marketing*

Given the scope of this study, **online marketing communications** and word-of-mouth marketing deserve particular attention. Word-of-mouth marketing is discussed in a dedicated section of this chapter. There are numerous classifications of the elements of online marketing communications and their continuous development makes a univocal classification difficult to achieve. Furthermore, different authors refer to elements, forms, media, platforms, techniques, tools or channels of online marketing communications and these terms are often used interchangeably leading to the lack of common understanding of the terms. The term "elements" seems the most appropriate as it underlines the complementary character and the need for using multiple elements in online marketing communications. These elements include:

- *Websites*
- *Search Engine Marketing (SEM)*
- *E-mail marketing*
- *Mobile marketing*
- *Online advertising*
- *Social media*
- *Online partnership*
- *Online public relations*

A website is an essential element of online marketing communications, a modern "business card" of a company or brand. It can be addressed to various stakeholders of the company (e.g., current and potential customers, shareholders or employees). By conveying information, building image and facilitating sales (Karasiewicz, 2018), it fulfills crucial functions for every company.

Once a website is online, SEM is used to drive traffic to the website. The higher the rank of a website in the search engine results pages (SERPs), the higher the number of visitors (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012). SEM is defined as the positioning of the websites within search engines through the delivery of relevant content on the website (SEO) and paid marketing activities (paid search) (Karasiewicz, 2018). In paid search the company pays for clicks on the link to its website that appears at the top of search results The average click-through rate (CTR) for Google AdWords is 4.1% meaning that around four of hundred users click on a sponsored link in Google (Chaffey, 2018). This value can seem low, but actually, the average CTR in paid search is one of the highest among the elements of online marketing communications. This is related to the fact that sponsored links that appear in search results are related to the keywords typed by users, thus they precisely correspond to the searched information. SEO is vital in a long-term, however, due to its complexity, specific competencies and time are both required to improve the website's ranking in the search results. On the other hand, the results of paid search are immediate. Precise targeting (which can include various criteria, e.g. demographic, geographic or devices), high reach, high CTR and in consequence a relatively low cost-per-click (CPC) are other significant advantages of paid search. However, it is worth mentioning that still it can be costly in highly competitive sectors and users are skeptical about the relevance of sponsored links (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012; Karasiewicz, 2018).

E-mail marketing is used specifically to drive a direct response of the receiver. It includes newsletters and other periodic e-mail blasts often used to inform receivers about news and special offers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012). Thanks to the information a company possesses about users in the mailing list, it can be highly targeted and allow building long-lasting relationships. Furthermore, a company's actions are not visible to competitors (Karasiewicz, 2018). On the other hand, due to its intrusive character, cold e-mail campaigns are not well-received by users. E-mail marketing requires user opt-in to be effective (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012) or in other words, users need to volitionally decide and permit the

company to send them e-mails. The reach of e-mail marketing is relatively low and limited to the e-mail list a company has to build (which takes time) or rent. CTR for e-mail marketing usually ranges from 2% to 6% (Aral & Walker, 2011), which means that among hundred users that receive the e-mail, two to six click on its content.

Mobile marketing includes all the activities performed through mobile phones that allow an interactive communications (Karasiewicz, 2018). It includes SMS and MMS messaging, mobile apps, QR codes and location-based mobile ads. As e-mail marketing, it can be used to drive direct response of receivers, for instance to encourage them to take advantage of a special offer. Push notifications are commonly used for this goal. However, like e-mails, due to their intrusive character, messages are not seen positively by some receivers.

Online advertising refers to non-personal, paid form of presenting and promoting brands and organizations online by an identified sponsor (Karasiewicz, 2018). It includes display (banner) and video advertising as well as classifieds and directories (listings). Widely used formats of display advertising include double and triple billboards, rectangles and top layers (Internet Standard, 2012). The main advantages of online advertising are related to its high reach and the possibility of using various targeting criteria (e.g., demographic, geographic, devices or user interests). In general, online advertising is commonly used for driving brand awareness. However, due to a high number of ads, viewability issues, use of ad blockers and negative attitudes towards online advertising (Internet Standard, 2012; Szubra & Trojanowski, 2018) it is difficult to attract the attention of the target group and online advertising costs are relatively high (Karasiewicz, 2018). CTR varies among industries, channels, formats and may be higher for video ads (e.g., pre-roll) that seem to be also seen more positively by users (Chaffey, 2018; Internet Standard, 2012). Average CTR for display advertising is .05% or in other words, every 10,000 impressions of a banner on average bring only five clicks on its content (Chaffey, 2018). Furthermore, the average CTR is decreasing over time (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012; Kaznowski, 2007). This gives an idea of how difficult it is to attract users' attention and interest, and of the importance of marketers' quest for guidelines on an effective content of communication.

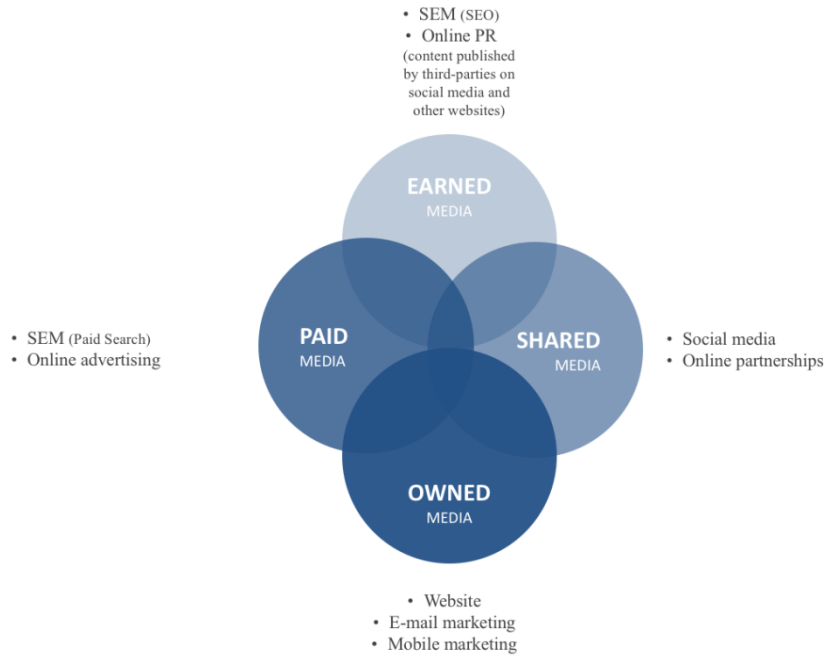
It is worth mentioning that the average CTR for advertising in social media (e.g., .90% for Facebook ads) is much higher than the average CTR for display advertising (.05%) (Chaffey, 2018).

Online partnerships are long-term collaborations with subjects like editors or online shops aimed at promoting and supporting product sales on the Internet (Karasiewicz, 2018). These actions include affiliate marketing (commission-based referral), sponsorship and co-branding (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012). The key advantage of online partnerships is payment by results. However, the results can be highly unpredictable, control over actions of partners can be limited and, due to the commissions, the cost of an online partnership can be relatively high (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012; Karasiewicz, 2018).

Online (or digital) public relations (PR) refer to "conscious, planned and continuous efforts to establish and maintain mutual understanding between the organization and its environment, and a positive image of the organization in the environment implemented via the Internet" (Karasiewicz, 2018, p. 373). Specifically, these activities are aimed at maximizing positive mentions of an organization, brand, product or service on third-party websites visited by specific target groups (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012). The target groups include not only consumers but also media (journalists), employees, investors, and other stakeholders. Bloggers and other online influencers play an always more important role in shaping consumer opinions and brand image (Królewski & Sala, 2016). This requires a strategic approach to the management of the relationships with those subjects. Company blog, online press releases, sponsored articles, influencer marketing are common elements used in digital PR activities. Communication through third parties have an important advantage of being more credible and links created on third-party websites have a positive impact on SEO. On the other hand, companies must accept that they largely lose control over the message (Karasiewicz, 2018).

A common **typology of online media** is based specifically on the subject who creates and has control over the medium or content (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Online media types



Source: adapted from Karasiewicz (2018, p. 355) and Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2012, p. 11)

Owned media are the media owned by the company. In the online context, they include company's websites, e-mail platforms or mobile apps. In these media the company has full control over the message. Paid media are the media in which companies pay for the deployment of content (e.g., a banner ad or a link to a company's website that appears within search results). The control over the content is lower than in the case of media owned by the company, however as the content is provided by the company it is still high. Shared media are the media shared by different subjects – companies and users including subjects that through their websites promote companies, brands or products within online partnerships. The control over this type of media and content is shared. Social media, discussed in detail in the next section, are a typical example of this type of media. Finally, earned media are the media owned by third-parties that have control over the medium and the content. An example can be Google that, through the PageRank algorithm, ranks web pages in search engine results. Similarly, a content about an organization, brand, product or service can appear on different websites as a result of online PR activities.

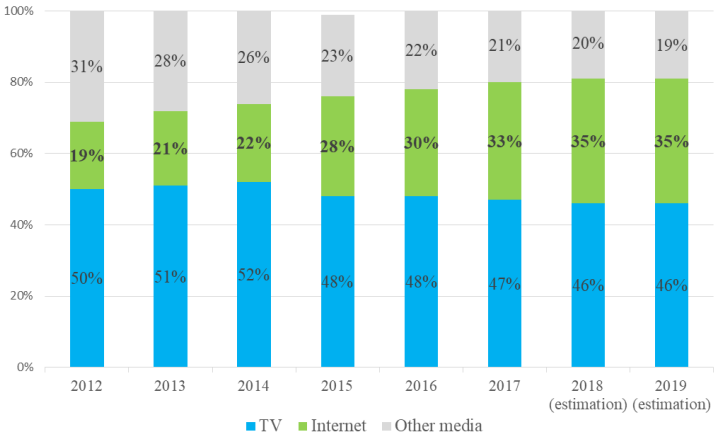
The media typology mentioned above is useful not only to group different elements of online marketing communications but also to show that the media types overlap. For instance brand pages on social media are created and managed by the brand (owned media) but the content is also created by users (shared media). Similarly, corporate blogs are owned by companies that

produce and deploy content (owned media), however, blogs are a type of social media and users can typically leave their comments (shared media). Online partnerships can be paid (paid media), but it happens only in certain cases (e.g., when a product has been purchased or a lead generated) (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012). Companies can rent e-mail lists and use paid e-mail platforms (paid media) to deploy their content. Furthermore, content about companies, brands and products (earned media) appear not only on websites but also on social media (shared media) and it can be paid (paid media).

Furthermore, the elements of online marketing communications can be classified into three groups: *intrusive* (where users are interrupted by marketing messages, e.g., by web banners), *non-intrusive* (where users choose to receive or seek marketing messages, e.g., newsletters) and *user-generated* (where users create marketing messages, e.g. on social media) (Winer, 2009).

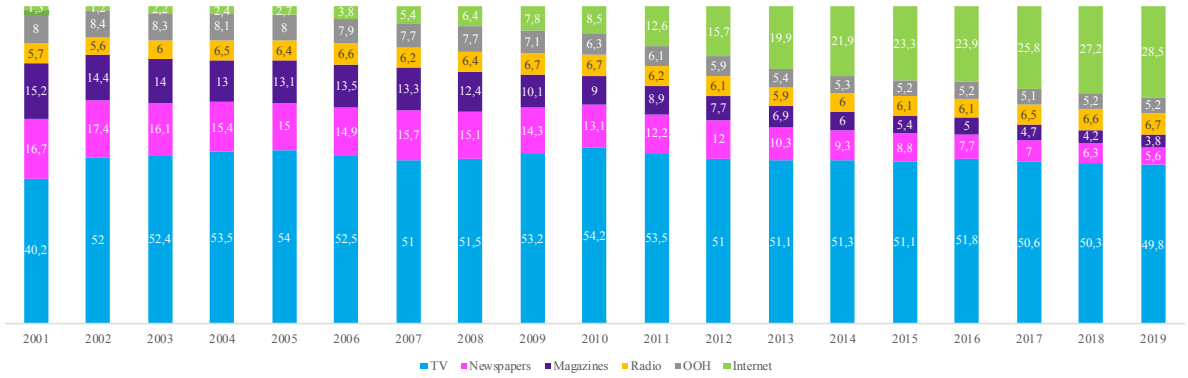
With the growing reach of the Internet, that in January 2019 registered 4,388 billion users (We Are Social, 2019), the importance of online communications grows year on year (IAB Europe, 2018; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Moorman, 2018). Looking at the changes of **media share in advertising** spending on the example of Poland (Figure 7) and Italy (Figure 8), it is evident that the Internet is pushing down other media (Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011). For instance, in Italy newspapers and magazines have lost 21.4 p.p. of media share between 2001 and 2018.

Figure 7. Share of advertising spending in Poland by medium



Source: reprinted from IAB Polska (2018b, p. 4)

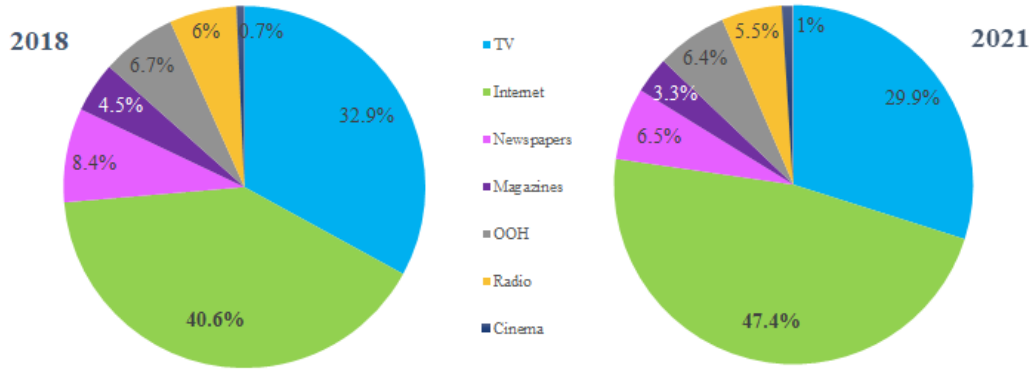
Figure 8. Share of advertising spending in Italy by medium



Source: reprinted from Surci (2018, p. 5)

At both the European and the global level, the Internet is the medium with the highest share in advertising spending and the highest growth rate (Grece, 2017; Zenith, 2019). Figure 9 illustrates the share of different media in global advertising spending in 2018 and the forecasts for 2021. In 2018, the TV share was 32.9% while Internet accounted for 40.6% but it is expected to account for 47.4% in 2021 (Zenith, 2019).

Figure 9. Share of global advertising spending by medium



Source:adapted from Zenith (2019, p. 11)

The gross digital advertising expenditure in Europe amounted to €48.0 billion in 2017, up 13.2% from €42.5 billion in 2016 and the market has doubled in size over the past five years (IAB Europe, 2018). It is important to specify that the digital advertising expenditure refers to SEM (paid search), affiliate marketing, display advertising (video and non-video), classifieds and directories, mobile marketing, social media marketing, and e-mail marketing (IAB Europe, 2018), thus it does not correspond to the classifications of online marketing communications elements and online media described before.

The success of the Internet can be attributed to its interactivity, media richness, enormous reach, relatively low cost, better targeting and result monitoring (Taranko, 2018), but it also may be related to the different role of consumers who can easily communicate with each other, as well as find and create "user-generated" marketing communications - the feature that is central for social media.

1.2. Social media

Social media transform broadcast media monologues (one-to-many) in dialogues (many-to-many) and individuals from mere consumers of content in content creators (Reyneke, Pitt, & Berthon, 2011; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; B. G. Smith & Gallicano, 2015). Social media are sometimes referred to as user-generated media (e.g., Shao, 2009), consumer-generated media (e.g. Yoo & Gretzel, 2011) or user-created content platforms (e.g. Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery, 2007). They are strictly related to the concept of Web 2.0 - "innovative trends in the use of World Wide Web technology which are mainly focused on creation of virtual communities and passing control over content to the Internet users" (Mazurek, 2009, p. 69). In a widely referenced and generally acknowledged definition of social media, Kaplan & Haenlein (2010, p. 61) define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content".

User Generated Content (UGC) must fulfill three basic requirements in order to be considered as such: it must be publicly available over the Internet (therefore it does not include e-mail or instant messages, e.g. via WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger), must reflect a certain amount of creative effort (i.e., users must create or adapt content), and must be created outside of professional routines and practices (i.e. made by non-professionals without the expectation of remuneration) (Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery, 2007). It is worth underlining that user-generated content is the key element of social media and its presence determines if a medium can be included in the category of "social media".

Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre (2011) develop a framework called "the honeycomb of social media", in which the authors describe the **functionalities of social media**:

- *identity* (the extent to which users reveal their identities)

- *conversations* (the extent to which users communicate with other users)
- *sharing* (the extent to which users distribute, exchange and receive content)
- *presence* (the extent to which users know if others are available and where they are)
- *relationships* (the extent to which users relate to each other)
- *reputation* (the extent to which users know the social standing of others and of a content)
- *groups* (the extent to which users can form communities)

Different social media have different levels of the above-mentioned functionalities. However, they are neither mutually exclusive nor they all have to be present in one social media.

Taking into account social presence/media richness and self-presentation/self-disclosure levels, Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) distinguish six **types of social media**:

- *collaborative projects* (e.g., Wikipedia)
- *blogs*
- *content communities* (e.g., YouTube)
- *social networking sites* (or social networks; e.g., Facebook)
- *virtual game worlds* (e.g., War of Warcraft)
- *virtual social worlds* (e.g., Second Life)

Another classification is provided by Munar & Jacobsen (2004). On the basis of different context richness levels, reach of communication, temporal structure, social cues amount and different levels of enabled social interactivity, control and hierarchy, the authors distinguish:

- *wikis*
- *blogs and microblogs* (e.g., Twitter)
- *media-sharing sites* (e.g., Flickr, YouTube)
- *social network sites*
- *voting sites* (e.g., Digg)
- *review sites* (e.g., TripAdvisor, Yelp)

Among other examples of social media Mangold & Faulds (2009) mention *commerce communities* (e.g., eBay, Amazon) and *podcasts* (e.g., iTunes), while Hoffman & Fodor (2010) add *forums and discussion boards* (e.g., Google Groups). It is worth underlining that

social media are continuously evolving and incorporating new features, so a univocal classification is difficult to achieve.

The number of users and the frequency of social media usage grow every year (eMarketer, 2016; Królewski & Sala, 2016; Statista, 2017b). It is difficult to define the exact number of social media users. One of the issues is related to the fact that in many industry research reports the terms "social media" and "social networks" are loosely defined and used interchangeably, leading to the inclusion of various platforms in various estimates. However, recent estimates suggest that in January 2019, active social media users reached 3.48 billion people, i.e., 45% of global population and 79% of global Internet users (We Are Social, 2019). Facebook and YouTube register the highest number of users (Statista, 2019). The former with 2.27 billion monthly active users is the third most visited website worldwide (Similarweb, 2019; Statista, 2019). 45.7% of Internet users visit Facebook and 34.1% access YouTube at least once a day (Universal McCann, 2017).

Who are the **social media users**? Prior research suggests that social media usage is influenced by users' gender, age, education, income, e-literacy levels, personality, nationality, and culture. There are ambiguous results regarding the prevalent gender of social media users. This may be related to the fact that the share of men and women may vary significantly among different types of social media. For instance, Dix, Ferguson, Logan, Bright, & Gangadharbatla (2012) cite a study by Pew Research Center according to which 80% of Pinterest users are female. Some research shows that men are more likely to share online content (Hargittai & Walejko, 2008), voice their opinions online (Mangold & Smith, 2012) and use specific social media (e.g., LinkedIn). However, a more recent research seems to suggest that most social media users are female (Eurostat, 2017a; Grant, 2017; Statista, 2018) and that women are more likely to trust the content on social media (Warner-Søderholm et al., 2018). Social media users tend to be young (GlobalWebIndex, 2017; Hargittai, 2007; Universal McCann, 2017), highly educated (Akar & Topçu, 2011), possess a higher income (Akar & Topçu, 2011) and greater Internet skills (Leung, 2004; Zhong, Hardin, & Sun, 2011) than the rest of the population. Prior studies also reveal that social media users are more likely to be narcissistic (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Mehdizadeh, 2010; Ryan & Xenos, 2011), extraverts (Acar & Polonsky, 2007; Ryan & Xenos, 2011; Yoo & Gretzel, 2011), open to experiences (Correa, Hinsley, & de Zúñiga, 2010; Kabadayi & Price, 2014; Yoo & Gretzel, 2011) with low need for cognition (NFC) (Zhong et al., 2011). The different personality traits

are related to different gratifications and motivations of social media usage and its intensity (Acar & Polonsky, 2007; Correa et al., 2010; Wagner et al., 2017).

On the basis of the U&G theory and McQuail's (1983) classification of gratifications, **social media usage motivations** can be classified into six categories (Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011):

a) *information* (e.g., surveillance – observing one's social environment, knowledge, pre-purchase information or inspiration seeking)
b) *entertainment* (e.g., passing time, cultural or aesthetic enjoyment, relaxation, sexual arousal or emotional release)
c) *integration and social interaction* (e.g., gaining a sense of belonging, seeking support/emotional support, connecting with other people or substituting real-life companionship)
d) *personal identity* (e.g., self-expression, reinforcing personal values, gaining insight into one's self or impression management and self-enhancement)
e) *remuneration* (e.g., expectation to gain rewards like economic incentives or job-related benefits)
f) *empowerment* (i.e., to exert one's influence on other people or companies)

Narcissistic people may use social media mainly for self-expression and self-enhancement (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Mehdizadeh, 2010; Ryan & Xenos, 2011). Extraverts may be more likely to engage in social interactions (Acar & Polonsky, 2007; Ryan & Xenos, 2011). Curiosity and novelty-seeking which characterize people who are open to experiences (Correa et al., 2010) may suggest that information can be an essential gratification for this group, while low need for cognition may be related to the social media use driven by searching for entertainment.

Literature to date distinguishes different typologies of social media users. For instance, on the basis of exchange and communal relationship orientation, Mathwick (2002) identifies Transactional Community Members, Socializers, Personal Connectors and Lurkers. While Lurkers stay on the sidelines and observe, Transactional Community Members and Socializers contribute to online relationships and provide feedback to online conversations. An example of a different classification is the one developed by Li & Bernoff (2008) who distinguish: Inactives, Spectators, Joiners, Collectors, Critics, and Creators.

The main point is that some authors suggest that there are typical behaviors that distinguish groups of social media users. Definitely social media user classifications provide an interesting observation of user types. However, as people often engage in multiple roles, they can be considered oversimplifications of reality and behavior classifications may be more accurate (Muntinga et al., 2011). Three **types of user behavior on social media** can be distinguished (Shao, 2009):

- *consuming* (viewing, watching or reading content without participating; commonly referred to as "lurking")
- *participating* (interacting with users or content; e.g., ranking the content, posting comments, sharing it with others)
- *producing* (creating and publishing content)

These interdependent behaviors represent a path of a gradual involvement in social media. Indeed, the U&G theory predicts different levels of audience activity that range from low to high levels of involvement (Ruggiero, 2000). It has been found that most users consume social media without participating or producing (Daugherty, Eastin, & Bright, 2008; Shao, 2009; Yoo & Gretzel, 2011). According to the widely referenced 90–9–1 rule by Jakob Nielsen (2006), 90% of users are lurkers, 9% of users contribute from time to time, and only 1% contribute frequently. The differences in content created are so high that 1% of the users create 90% of the content (Nielsen, 2006).

Academic literature to date suggests that people consume social media mainly for information and entertainment, participate in them for integration and social interaction and produce content to create the personal identity (Daugherty et al., 2008; C. S. Lee & Ma, 2012; Shao, 2009). Information, entertainment, social interactions, and self-status seeking are the main gratifications of using social media (GlobalWebIndex, 2018c; C. S. Lee & Ma, 2012; N. Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009). The crucial role of entertainment as the gratification of media consumption has been confirmed since the early studies in the field of communication research, "escape" from reality is the central theme (Katz, 1959). In a recent study, Universal McCann (2017) confirms that Internet users are more likely to share entertaining than useful content.

It is worth pointing out that the usage motivations may differ by social media types. For example, entertainment may be particularly relevant for content communities like YouTube

(Shao, 2009; Wyrwisz & Żydek, 2016), while integration and social interaction may be particularly relevant for social networks (Oh & Syn, 2015; W. S. Tsai & Men, 2013; Yoo & Gretzel, 2011). As new social media and content types continue to emerge, motivations to use them carry on expanding. However, it can be argued that all of them can be explained on the basis of the same well-established U&G approach.

Considering the enormous reach and frequency of social media usage, it is not surprising that social media are widely used in marketing. The importance of social media grows year on year. They accounted for 12% of marketing budgets in February 2018 and are expected to expand by 71% in next five years (Moorman, 2018; Szewczyk, 2015). **Social media marketing** can be defined as "the utilization of social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver and exchange offerings that have value for an organization's stakeholders" (Tuten & Solomon, 2015, p. 21).

Two streams of academic research on social media marketing can be distinguished: the first investigating the audiences' perspective and the second, nascent one, investigating the businesses' perspective (Tafesse, 2015).

The first stream is focused on **antecedents and consequences of consumers' brand engagement in social media**. Almost 40% of Internet users follow brands on social media (GlobalWebIndex, 2018c; Universal McCann, 2017). From the U&G perspective, it is important to underline that consumers volitionally choose to follow brands on social media and that they can actively participate in the communication process with brands (Szewczyk, 2015). Davis, Piven, & Breazeale (2014) argue that emotional connection with a brand can act as motivation for participation in brand communities in social media. However, in line with the general dominant behavior on social media mentioned before, most consumers do not interact with brands in an active way (Schivinski & Brzozowska-Woś, 2015; W. S. Tsai & Men, 2013). A recent study by GlobalWebIndex (2018b) reveals that only 19% of social media users ask questions, 16% share brand posts, and 15% upload a photo or a video to a brand page. The engagement is usually limited to becoming a fan of a brand page and reading brand posts, user comments or product reviews (Schivinski & Brzozowska-Woś, 2015; W. S. Tsai & Men, 2013). Users consume brand-related information on social media mainly driven by information, entertainment and remuneration motivations (Brzozowska-Woś, 2013; Muntinga et al., 2011; W. S. Tsai & Men, 2013). According to another recent study by

GlobalWebIndex (2018c), 42% of Internet users search for information on products and brands in social media. Bartosik-Purgat, (2016) reveals that on social media users mainly search for information about mobile phones and computers. Specific motivations for contributing to and producing brand-related content will be described in the section focused on eWOM in social media.

As far as the consequences of consumers' brand engagement in social media are concerned, academic literature to date shows that marketing communication in social media positively influence consumers':

- *brand attitude* (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; Szewczyk, 2015)
- *emotional attachment and relationship* with the brand (Dholakia & Durham, 2010; Hudson, Roth, Madden, & Hudson, 2015; H. Park & Kim, 2014)
- *trust* toward the brand (Gamboa & Gonçalves, 2014; Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013; Szewczyk, 2015)
- *positive word-of-mouth* (Dholakia & Durham, 2010; Hudson et al., 2015; H. Park & Kim, 2014)

All these consequences confirm the relevance of examination of marketing communication in social media and the latter evidence is particularly relevant for this study. Prior studies confirm that marketing communication in social media has an impact on WOM and this study further examines this influence. WOM can be a goal and effect of marketing communications.

The second stream of academic research focused on businesses' perspective includes two main topics: social media adoption and content strategy.

Factors related to **social media adoption by companies** include (Tafesse, 2015):

- *internal factors* (such as organization size, country, product category, internal orientation, and marketing strategy)
- *external factors* (such as competitive pressures, changing demographics and evolving customer needs)

Social media adoption is higher in B2C than in B2B companies, especially in those offering services (Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011; Moorman, 2018; Swani, Brown, & Milne, 2014).

Social media are considered to be an essential element in marketing communications (A. Kumar, Bezawada, Rishika, Janakiraman, & Kannan, 2016; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Wiktor, 2013) which, from the business perspective, influences brand awareness, brand image and product sales (Brzozowska-Woś, 2013; Facebook, 2018; Skowron & Skrzetuski, 2015). The main advantages of social media for companies include (Mazurek, 2019):

- a very high reach
- the possibility to rapidly grow brand awareness and inform customers about new products
- cost advantage in comparison to other media
- measurability of results and the possibility to reach highly engaged customers

Companies increasingly adopt social media mainly by setting up a company's profile, brand pages and distributing paid ads (Tafesse, 2015). Social media drive the growth of the Internet share in advertising spending (IAB Europe, 2018; Statista, 2015). Advertising on social media can be well-targeted and obtain higher CTR than display advertising in other channels (Szewczyk, 2015). 24% of social media users click on sponsored posts (GlobalWebIndex, 2018b). In US 90% of companies over 100 employees (Statista, 2017c) and 77.6% with less than 100 employees (BIA / Kelsey, 2016) use social media for marketing purposes. However, in the EU only less than half (45%) of enterprises with over ten employees use social media (Eurostat, 2016b) and only 18% advertise on the Internet and use social media (Eurostat, 2016a). It suggests that European companies do not fully exploit the potential of social media, even if in the EU 56% of individuals participate in social or professional networks (Eurostat, 2017a) and 32% of European Internet users trust ads on social networks (The Nielsen Company, 2015). It is worth reminding that marketing communication in social media is not equivalent to promotion. It is a dialogue that is not only product-related and addressed to a broad group of stakeholders not limited to the current and potential customers. For instance, social media can be used in employer branding or internal communications (Andrzejewska, 2013; Deloitte, 2012).

Apart from *marketing communications*, to a lesser extent, marketers use social media for *market research* (Deloitte, 2012; Moorman, 2018; Mostafa, 2013), *customer relationship management* (Eisingerich, Chun, Liu, Jia, & Bell, 2015; Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker, & Bloching, 2013; Malthouse, Haenlein, Skiera, Wege, & Zhang, 2013) and *product*

development (Berthon, Pitt, Plangger, & Shapiro, 2012; Palacios-Marqués, Merigó, & Soto-Acosta, 2015; Roberts & Candi, 2014). Moreover, the advent of social commerce and in particular the continuous development of e-commerce features in social networks suggest that social media will be always more important for *product sales* (GlobalWebIndex, 2018c; Liang & Turban, 2011; X. Lin, Li, & Wang, 2017). Prior research shows that social media users are more likely to purchase online (The Nielsen Company, 2016) and mass implementation shoppable-videos (Mazurek, 2019), as well as other features (e.g., shop section and product tags in photos on Facebook pages), will facilitate and popularize product purchase directly from social media.

Despite bringing many opportunities, social media diffusion is also related to some threats and difficulties that companies need to face. As in social media content is created by users, companies lose control over marketing communications (Kotler et al., 2017; Mazurek, 2016; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Consumers are always more influential on brands they talk about (Muntinga et al., 2011; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). It brings even more risk, considering that many companies still do not monitor social media and do not engage in user conversations (Deloitte, 2012; Szwajca, 2017; W. S. Tsai & Men, 2013). Among the companies that actively manage social media, one of the major difficulties is related to the measurement of the effectiveness and efficiency of the activities (WOMMA, 2014), which is a general problem in marketing management (Karasiewicz, 2007). Although, performance metrics and measurement guidelines have been developed in academic literature (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010; Lemanowicz & Gańko, 2014; Mazurek, 2016), in practice the number of brand page fans is used as a common (and often the only) measure of effectiveness (Michaelidou et al., 2011). Most marketers are not able to show the quantitative impact of social media marketing on business (Michaelidou et al., 2011; Moorman, 2018).

Content strategy has a crucial role in online community engagement (Chauhan & Pillai, 2013). The growing importance of content in marketing communications due to the rise of social media, led to the distinction on "content marketing" (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016) - a marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant content to a defined target group (Content Marketing Institute, 2015; Kotler et al., 2017). However, in line with D. E. Schultz (2016), it is argued that the attempts to distinguish very specific elements of marketing communications lead to increasing confusion in academic research, rather than "rational discussion and development" (D. E. Schultz, 2016, p. 277). The focus of the extant

academic research is the influence of content strategy on user response in terms of liking, commenting and sharing brand posts. These actions are used mainly as measures of user engagement (Dhaoui, 2014; Luarn, Lin, & Chiu, 2015; Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013), brand post popularity (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012; Sabate, Berbegal-Mirabent, Cañabate, & Lebherz, 2014; Swani & Milne, 2017) and, to a lesser extent, as measures of eWOM (B. Shen & Bissell, 2013; Swani, Milne, & P. Brown, 2013; Tafesse, 2015). Content analysis is a widely applied research method in these studies. Table 1 illustrates prior studies that used this method on Facebook. Specific findings of these studies are used as the basis for the development of research hypotheses and are described in the following chapter.

Vividness, interactivity and content type have been the main characteristics investigated in prior research with mixed findings (Tafesse, 2015).

Vividness (also referred to as richness) can be a feature of the medium or the content and represents its ability to stimulate different senses and depict a situation in ways that approximate reality (Steuer, 1992; Tafesse, 2015). At the level of medium, videos are more vivid than images, and images are more vivid than text. For instance, TV is more vivid than the press (Luarn et al., 2015; Tafesse, 2015). Content vividness can be enhanced by using dynamic animations or videos, audio, contrasting colors, images and links to other websites (Coyle & Thorson, 2001; Sabate et al., 2014). The more vivid the medium and content, the richer the audience's experience (Coyle & Thorson, 2001). However, some studies report a positive effect of vividness on user response (Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013), others a negative effect (e.g., Vaiciukynaite, Massara, & Gatautis, 2017).

Table 1. Content analysis on Facebook

AUTHORS	*INDUSTRY*	*NUMBER OF POSTS*	*NUMBER OF BRAND PAGES*	*INDEPENDENT VARIABLE*	*ADDITIONAL VARIABLE*	*DEPENDENT VARIABLE*	*ANALYSIS METHOD*	*MAIN RESULTS*
De Vries et al. (2012)	Food and beverage, apparel, accessories, beauty, consumer electronics	355	11	• Post characteristics (vividness, interactivity) • Content (information, entertainment) • Position of brand posts • Valence of comments	• Day of the week • Message length of brand post • Product category	Brand post popularity (number of likes and comments)	OLS regression	The interactivity of brand posts has a positive influence on the number of comments.
Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles (2013)	Food and beverage	5,035	100	• Content type (entertainment, information, remuneration) • Media type (vividness, interactivity) • Posting time (workday, peak hours)	Brand category (manufacturer/retailer)	User engagement (likes ratio, comments ratio, shares ratio, duration)	Negative binomial regression	Entertaining content has the highest positive influence on user engagement.
Swani et al. (2013)	Various (Fortune 500 companies)	1,143	193	• Message strategy (corporate branding, emotional content, calls to purchases)	• B2B/B2C (moderating variable) • Products/Services (moderating variable) • Message time • Number of fans	WOM (number of likes)	HLM analysis	The emotional appeal of brand posts has a positive influence on the number of likes. Calls to purchase are ineffective.
Chauhan & Pillai (2013)	Higher education	1,440	10	• Content type (text, image, video, link) • Frequency of posts • Posting day • Content context (about college, alumni news, students' news, business news, etc.)		User engagement (number of likes and comments)	MANOVA	User engagement depends on the content type.
Shen & Bissell (2013)	Beauty	469	6	• Post type (event, product, promotion, entertainment, other) • Post time • Reference to other channels • Media (picture, video, newspaper, magazine, other)		eWOM (number of likes, comments and shares)	ANOVA	Entertaining content is the most frequently used. Surveys receive more comments than other types of entertaining content.
Sabate et al. (2014)	Travel	164	5	• Content richness (picture, video, link) • Time frame (day of the week, time of publication)	• Length of the post • Number of fans	Content popularity (number of likes and comments)	OLS regression	Images have a positive influence on the number of likes and comments, while the presence of links has a negative influence on the number of comments.
Saxton & Waters (2014)	Non-profit organizations	1,000	100	• Content type (information, community building and dialogue, fundraising and sales, photo, etc.) • Number of fans • Organizational age • Organizational size • Industry		User reactions (number of likes, comments and shares)	• ANOVA • Negative binomial regression	Community-building and dialogue, as well as call-to-action messages attract more likes and comments, however users are more likely to share informational messages.
Dhaoui (2014)	Automotive, apparel, beauty, hotels, watches and jewelry (luxury brands)	2,355	51	• Post message (Performance, Pedigree, Paucity, Persona, Public figures, Placement, Public relations, and Pricing)	• Content form (status update, link, photo, video)	User engagement (endorsement rate, feedback rate, conversation rate, and recommendation rate)	Multiple regression	"Pedigree" has a positive influence on the endorsement rate, "Paucity" has a positive influence on the feedback rate. Both messages on "Performance" and "Paucity" drive recommendations.

Tafesse (2015)	Automotive	191	5	• Post characteristics (vividness, interactivity, novelty, brand consistency, content type – transactional, entertaining, informational)	• Fan number • Posting date • Vehicle category	eWOM (number of likes and shares)	OLS regression	Brand post vividness has a positive influence on the number of shares. Brand post novelty and consistency have a positive influence on the number of likes and shares.
Luarn et al. (2015)	Various	1,030	10	• Media type/content form (vividness level, interactivity level) • Content type (entertainment, information, remuneration, social)		User engagement (number of likes, comments and shares)	ANOVA	Links and content of high interactivity have a positive influence on user engagement. Social posts have a positive influence on the number of comments and entertainment posts on comments and shares.
Kim, Spiller, & Hettche (2015)	Various	1,086	92	• Media type (text, photo, video) • Content orientation (task, interaction and self-oriented)	• Frequency • Brand category	Consumer response (number of likes, comments and shares)	MANCOVA	Photos receive more consumer responses than videos. Consumer responses vary according to brand categories.
C. D. Schultz (2017)	Apparel and food retail	792	13	• Post characteristics (vividness, interactivity) • Content types • Timing	• Post length • Number of fans • Industry	Brand interactions (number of likes, comments, shares)	OLS regression	Brand post interactivity has a positive effect on interactions.
Kim & Yang (2017)	N/A	600	20	• Message strategy (informational, transformational) • Message form (text, photo, audio, video) • Message type (created, shared) • Message interactivity (solicitation of response)		User engagement (number of likes, comments and shares)	OLS regression	Sensory and visual features of brand posts drive user likes, rational and interactive features drive comments, and sensory, visual, and rational features drive shares.
Swani & Milne, (2017)	Various (Fortune 500 companies)	1,467	213	• Branding (corporate name, product name) • Message appeal (functional, emotional) • Content vividness (image, video)	• Goods / Services (moderating variable) • Number of fans • Message time	Content popularity (number of likes and comments)	HLM analysis	The presence of corporate brand names, informational cues, functional and emotional appeals in brand posts increase the popularity of B2B brand posts.
Vaiciukynaite, Massara, & Gatautis (2017)	Hotels	144	N/A	• Vividness (text, image, links, video) • Interactivity (links, call to action, questions, and quizzes) • Emotionality (number of emoticons and emoji, valence)		Consumer sociability behavior (number of likes, comments and shares)	ANOVA	Brand posts with photos receive the highest number of likes.
Wagner et al., (2017)	Automotive	1,948	10	• Brand post appeal (utilitarian, emotional)	• Message length • Pictures • Video • Day of the week • Shared posts	User interaction (number of likes, comments and shares)	OLS regression	Different post appeals have a different impact on user interaction.
Tafesse & Wien, (2018)	Various (Interbrand's Best Global Brands)	290	20	• Message strategy (informational, transformational and interactional)	• Industry • Number of fans • Media types	Consumer behavioral engagement (number of likes and shares)	• MANCOVA • ANOVA	Transformational message strategy and photos stimulate consumer behavioral engagement.
Gavilanes, Flatten, & Brettel (2018)	Retail	943	1	• Content category (new product announcement, current product display, sweepstakes and contests, sales, customer feedback, infotainment, organization branding)	• Day of the week • Time of day • Metrics for the negative response	Digital consumer engagement (number of clicks, likes, comments, and shares)	• MANOVA • ANOVA	Brand posts related to sweepstakes, sales and customer feedback have a positive influence on digital consumer engagement.

Source: own elaboration

Interactivity is defined as "the degree to which two or more communication parties can act on each other, on the communication medium, and on the messages and the degree to which such influences are synchronized" (Yuping Liu & Shrum, 2002, p. 54). In other words, it describes the ability to facilitate real-time interaction between the sender of a message and the receiver (Tafesse, 2015). Like vividness, interactivity can apply to the medium or content. At the level of medium, for instance the Internet is a more interactive medium than the press. Interactive content may include external links, hashtags, questions, voting, call to actions, contests and quizzes (De Vries et al., 2012; Luarn et al., 2015; C. D. Schultz, 2017). Academic literature to date shows inconclusive findings regarding the influence of content interactivity on outcome measures. Some studies report a positive effect of content interactivity on user engagement (Luarn et al., 2015), others a negative effect (Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Tafesse, 2015; Vaiciukynaite et al., 2017). This may be related to the complexity of brand posts and the fact that, as they often include links, they may drive users away from the brand page to other websites (C. D. Schultz, 2017; Tafesse, 2015).

The influence of specific content types is discussed in the following chapter.

It should be noted that the inconclusive findings of prior research on the influence of content strategy on user response may be caused by different measurement approaches (Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Tafesse, 2015) and operationalization of variables. For instance, some researchers classify brand posts including external links as vivid (Sabate et al., 2014), others as interactive (De Vries et al., 2012; Tafesse, 2015), still others as both (Luarn et al., 2015; Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; C. D. Schultz, 2017; Vaiciukynaite et al., 2017). Other researchers in the same study classify highly interactive content (e.g., questions and messages intended to elicit interactions) as a content type and a media type (Luarn et al., 2015) and obtain different results for each classification. In general, research so far is largely inconclusive as to the impact of content strategy on user response.

1.3. Word-of-mouth

In 1954, Fortune magazine published an article entitled "The Web of Word of Mouth" by William H. Whyte, Jr. giving origin to a new term in business research (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014). Whyte (1954) describes an interesting phenomenon related to new products on the American market – room air conditioners. The author observes that in urban neighborhoods the appliances (mounted in front windows) are distributed in clusters of homes, rather than randomly. Furthermore, antennas on rooftops indicate a similar distribution pattern for televisions. Whyte (1954) concludes that the possession of such goods reflects social communication patterns within the neighborhoods – people who talk together about products and services influence each other and show similar purchase behaviors. One year later, "Personal Influence" – the book by Katz & Lazarsfeld (1955) set the stage for all subsequent studies on the role of personal influence in mass communication. Katz & Lazarsfeld (1955) claim that certain people are "opinion leaders" who intercept, interpret and diffuse messages from the media. The authors introduce a "two-step flow" model of communication – the message first flows from mass media to opinion leaders and then in informal conversations from the opinion leaders to their personal networks.

Table 2 presents various **definitions of WOM**.

Table 2. Definitions of WOM

AUTHOR	*WOM DEFINITION*	*KEYWORDS*
Arndt (1967b, p. 3)	"Oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, concerning a brand, a product, or a service"	person-to-person communication, non-commercial, concerning a brand, a product, or a service
Westbrook (1987, p. 261)	"Informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services and/or their sellers"	informal communication, directed at other consumers, about goods and services and/or their sellers
Bone (1992, p. 579)	"Exchange of comments, thoughts, and ideas among two or more individuals in which none of the individuals represent a marketing source"	among individuals, none the individuals represent a marketing source
Charlett, Garland, & Marr (1995, p. 42)	"A message about an organization's products or services or about the organization itself. Usually WOM involves comments about product performance, service quality, trustworthiness, and modus operandi, passed on from one person to another"	passed on from one person to another, about an organization's products or services or about the organization itself
Anderson (1998, p. 6)	"Informal communication between private parties concerning evaluations of goods and services"	informal communication, between private parties, evaluations of goods and services

Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel (2001, p. 404)	"Informal transmission of ideas, comments, opinions, and information between two or more individuals, neither one of which is a marketer"	informal, between individuals
Silverman (2005, p. 193)	"Positive or negative communication of products, services, and ideas via personal communication of people who have no commercial vested interest in making that recommendation"	communication of people, no commercial vested interest, communication of products, services
Carl (2006, p. 605)	"Informal, evaluative communication (positive or negative) between at least two conversational participants about characteristics of an organization and/or a brand, product, or service that could take place online or offline"	informal, between at least two participants, evaluative communication, about an organization and/or a brand, product, or service
East, Hammond, & Lomax (2008, p. 215)	"Informal advice passed between consumers. It is usually interactive, swift, and lacking in commercial bias"	informal, between consumers, lacking in commercial bias
Petrescu & Korgaonkar (2011, p. 216)	"Unpaid verbal consumer-to-consumer communication, regarding a brand or product"	unpaid, consumer-to-consumer communication, regarding a brand or product
Barreto (2014, p. 637)	"An oral or written communication process, between a sender and an individual or group of receivers, regardless of whether they share the same social network, with the purpose of sharing and acquiring information, on an informal basis"	informal, communication
Standing, Holzweber, & Mattsson (2016, p. 722)	"The process of conveying information from person to person, both online or offline"	person to person
Baker, Donthu, & Kumar (2016, p. 226)	"An interactive exchange of information between two or more consumers that is not commercially motivated"	not commercially motivated, between consumers

Source: Own elaboration

The key elements that emerge from the definitions are *interpersonal* communication, its *informality*, non-commercial character and *commercial content* related to products, services or organizations. Drawing on extant definitions, in this study, WOM is defined as informal, interpersonal communication between two or more individuals about a brand, product, service or an organization.

WOM includes product-related discussion, sharing brand content, direct recommendations and mere mentions of products, services and their sellers (Berger, 2014). It is worth underlining that WOM includes two different behaviors and thus can be analyzed from two different perspectives: opinion giving and opinion seeking.

The **valence of WOM** can be positive, negative or neutral. While positive WOM (PWOM) encourages product or service choice, negative WOM (NWOM) discourages it (East et al., 2008). The neutral WOM provides the recipient with descriptive information without any

evaluative direction (Purnawirawan, De Pelsmacker, & Dens, 2012). One of the popular metrics of people's intention to provide PWOM is net-promoter score (NPS) based on the question "How likely is it that you would recommend our company to a friend or colleague?" and calculated by subtracting the percentage of "detractors" (extremely unlikely to recommend) from the percentage of promoters (extremely likely to recommend) (Reichheld, 2003, p. 1). Academic research that distinguishes between positive and negative WOM is focused on comparative analysis of their volume (i.e. on answering the questions: Are consumers more likely to spread positive or negative opinions? Which type of WOM is dominant in a marketplace?), their impact, motivations (i.e. Why and when do consumers spread positive and negative opinions?) and senders. For most of these streams there are some common believes which researchers try to verify with mixed findings (Angelis, Bonezzi, Peluso, Rucker, & Costabile, 2012).

Despite the common belief that consumers are more likely to spread NWOM than PWOM (Angelis et al., 2012; Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014) prior research does not provide strong support for that belief. Some scholars claim that "people are three to 10 times more likely to tell others about a negative experience than a positive one" (Silverman, 1997, p. 33). Donavan, Mowen, & Chakraborty (1999) confirm that negative messages are more likely to be spread. Anderson (1998) reports that dissatisfied customers engage in greater WOM than satisfied customers but underlines that "in a sizable proportion of cases, the difference between the two is probably not significant" (Anderson, 1998, p. 15) and that the common suppositions concerning the size of the difference are exaggerated. According to Silverman (1997), the ratio is around 3:1 in favor of NWOM, however, East, Hammond, & Wright (2007) analyze 15 product categories and find the same average ratio in favor of PWOM. For instance, they report that for luxury brands the incidence of given PWOM exceeds 5.1 times that of NWOM (East et al., 2007). More recent findings obtained via Keller Fay Group's TalkTrack (a tool developed to monitor WOM), show that 62% of WOM is positive and only 9% negative (Baker et al., 2016). Tkaczyk (2018) reports that Polish consumers are more likely to spread PWOM than NWOM. Moreover, since in competitive markets products that cause dissatisfaction are not likely to survive and on average 83% of customers are satisfied (Peterson & Wilson, 1992), it is reasonable to suppose that PWOM is more frequent than NWOM. In addition, as consumers control what products or services they buy, positive information about their choices can signal competence, while negative information can signal incapacity. Self-enhance motivation can lead consumers to generate positive WOM about

their own consumption experiences and only transmit NWOM about others' experiences (Angelis et al., 2012). To conclude, it is reasonable to suppose that PWOM is more prevalent than NWOM (East et al., 2007; Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014).

Another common belief is related to the higher impact of NWOM (East et al., 2008). Again empirical findings are mixed (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014). Some research reports that the effect of NWOM on product evaluations (Weinberger & Dillon, 1980) and purchase intentions (Arndt, 1967a; Baker et al., 2016) is greater than that of PWOM. This may be related to the expectancy of favorable information. NWOM is infrequent, surprising, it draws more attention, and it can be considered more useful than PWOM (Fiske, 1980; Mizerski, 1982). On the other hand, other studies indicate that the effect of PWOM on purchase intentions is greater than that of NWOM (East et al., 2008). In sum, PWOM may have a greater impact than NWOM, the results of extant studies do not allow to draw a univocal conclusion (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014).

The third common belief states that satisfactory experiences drive PWOM and negative experiences drive NWOM (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014). In part, this belief derives from prior research showing higher frequencies of WOM for extremely satisfied or dissatisfied consumers (e.g., Anderson, 1998). However, a growing body of research shows that WOM can be driven by opportunities and other ego- and social-related motivations (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014). In a widely cited study by Dichter (1966), the author claims that consumers do not talk about products or services unless they "get something out of it" (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014). People are driven by four different **motivations to spread** PWOM (Dichter, 1966; Sundaram, Mitra, & Webster, 1998):

- *product-involvement* (experience with the product, excitement)
- *self-involvement* (gratification of emotional needs, including self-enhancement and reassurance)
- *others-involvement*/altruism or desire to help the company (i.e., the need to "give" something to the other person or company)
- *message involvement* (stimulated by product promotion not necessarily by direct consumer experience with the product)

Regarding the latter, Graham & Havlena (2007) find that online advertising is the primary driver of offline brand discussion. Also NWOM is driven by four motivations: *vengeance*

*(*against a company because of negative experiences), *anxiety reduction* (to vent anxiety, anger and frustration), *altruism* (to warn other people) and *advice seeking* (to resolve problems) (De Matos & Rossi, 2008; Sundaram et al., 1998). In sum, customer satisfaction appears to be less important than other factors driving WOM (East et al., 2007; Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014; Mangold, Miller, & Brockway, 1999).

Last but not least, there is a common belief that satisfied customers always spread PWOM and dissatisfied customers always spread NWOM (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014). Empirical research shows that such an assumption would be an oversimplification of complex determinants of positive and negative WOM. For instance, prior research shows that depending on the characteristics of WOM recipients, the same people can disseminate both positive and negative opinions on the same products or services (East et al., 2007; Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014). For instance, the same person can recommend an ideal holiday destination for practicing sports to a sportsman and not recommend it when talking to a person traveling with children. There is also evidence that people who spread NWOM are 3.5 times more likely to spread PWOM (although, importantly, not necessarily about the same brand) (East et al., 2007). Independently from being satisfied or not, some people enjoy advising others of new products or services. They are sometimes referred to as “market mavens” - "individuals who have information about many kinds of products, places to shop, and other facets of markets, and initiate discussions with consumers and respond to requests from consumers for market information" (Feick & Price, 1987, p. 85). Prior research seems to suggest that market mavens are more likely to be female (Higie, Feick, & Price, 1987).

In addition, it is worth mentioning that PWOM is usually about brands consumers own in a given moment, while NWOM is usually referred to past brands or these that have never been owned (East et al., 2007). Furthermore, the volume of PWOM and sometimes NWOM is positively related to market share (East et al., 2007), which is also important from the research perspective – the examination of brands with a high market share may allow obtaining a high amount of data for the analysis.

While recognizing the important **role of WOM in marketing communications**, marketing practitioners show a growing interest in WOM (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014; Plummer, 2007). This interest is related to the evidence that WOM can be both an advertising impact measure and a highly credible driver of product sales (Plummer, 2007). The growing importance of

WOM is a result of "demand-side factors" related to WOM seeking behavior (growing diversity and complexity of products, growing information available on the Internet, diminishing trust toward traditional media) and "supply-side" factors related to WOM giving behavior (growing volume of interpersonal communication due to technological developments, faster diffusion of information, lower cost of using interpersonal communication channels and easier aggregation of interpersonal communication) (Godes et al., 2005; Plummer, 2007). For instance, through mobile apps of review sites like Tripadvisor o Yelp, users can easily provide restaurant reviews almost in real-time, and other users can easily access a large number of reviews in one place before choosing a restaurant.

There is evidence that WOM is a primary source of information for consumers when they make buying decisions (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; East et al., 2007; Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014). WOM is particularly important when there is a high involvement of a consumer (Dwyer, 2007), when decisions are related to *new* (Bone, 1992; Derbaix & Vanhamme, 2003; Moldovan, Goldenberg, & Chattopadhyay, 2011), *complex, high risk products* (Brzozowska-Woś & Schivinski, 2017), those *bringing intangible benefits* (De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008) and *services* (Hogan, Lemon, & Libai, 2004; Murray, 1991; Sweeney, Soutar, & Mazzarol, 2008). WOM not only reduces the risks related to products (functional and financial risks) but also risks related to consumers (psychological risks) and their interaction with the social environment (social risks) (Buttle, 1998; v. Wangenheim & Bayón, 2004).

On the basis of U&G theory, Grunig (1979) argues that people use media to obtain information needed to face everyday life situations. Since early U&G studies, mass media influence has been compared with personal influence, revealing the weaker role of the former (Ruggiero, 2000).

> Random conversations about brands are now more credible than targeted advertising campaigns. Social circles have become the main source of influence, overtaking external marketing communications and even personal preference. Customers tend to follow the lead of their peers when deciding which brand to choose. (Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2017, p. 7)

It is agreed upon in academic literature that WOM has a much greater impact on consumers than traditional modes of marketing communication (King, Racherla, & Bush, 2014; Packard

& Berger, 2017; Trusov et al., 2009). In one of the first studies on WOM, Katz & Lazarsfeld (1955) claim it is "two times more effective than radio advertisements, four times more than personal selling, seven times more than print advertisements" (Trusov et al., 2009, p. 92). It is attributed to the fact that WOM is perceived as the most trustworthy source of information (Chu & Kim, 2011; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; The Nielsen Company, 2015). Cho, Huh, & Faber (2014) reveal that if a message comes from a trusted sender, the trust toward advertiser becomes less important.

Recommendations are an important value that companies obtain from customers (Doligalski, 2013). Numerous studies confirm the positive impact of WOM on product awareness (Engel, Blackwell, & Kegerreis, 1969; Sheth, 1971), consumer expectations (Anderson & Salisbury, 2003), pre-usage attitudes (Day, 1971; Godes & Mayzlin, 2004; Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991), post-usage judgements (Bone, 1995; Burzynski & Bayer, 1977; Senecal & Nantel, 2004) and sales (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Dellarocas, Zhang, & Awad, 2007; Godes & Mayzlin, 2009). Customers acquired through WOM add nearly twice as much long-term value to the company compared to customers acquired through traditional marketing efforts (Villanueva, Yoo, & Hanssens, 2008). A referred customer is approximately 25% more valuable than a non-referred customer and referred customers are more likely to bring additional customers through their own WOM (Schmitt, Skiera, & Van den Bulte, 2011). In addition, prior research reveals that giving recommendations to others improves customers' loyalty, thus stimulating WOM seems not only useful for gaining new customers but also for keeping the current ones (Garnefeld, Helm, & Eggert, 2011; Ryu & Feick, 2007). Moreover, by encouraging PWOM, marketers can reduce marketing communications expenditure (Holmes & Lett, 1977; Kotler et al., 2017), because marketing messages are conveyed by consumers.

1.3.1. Electronic word-of-mouth

By facilitating and accelerating the diffusion of information, the advent of the Internet and social media has broadened the reach of WOM (Chu & Kim, 2018; De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008; Ertimur & Gilly, 2012). Currently the term "word-of-mouth" includes a more common traditional (offline) word-of-mouth (hereafter "traditional WOM") and Internet-facilitated electronic word-of-mouth (hereafter "eWOM") also referred to as "word-of-mouse" (J. Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007; Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014; Steffes & Burgee, 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, p. 39). This **definition** is widely used and generally acknowledged in academic literature. However, it is worth mentioning that various studies classify traditional WOM and eWOM in different ways, not always consistent with this definition. On one hand, according to the definition eWOM is "made available via the Internet", it is Internet-mediated, it follows that the communication via telephone (without use of the Internet) is considered as traditional WOM (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014; Levy & Gvili, 2015; Lovett, Peres, & Shachar, 2013). On the other hand, some researchers refer to "electronically-mediated" communication and classify one-to-one telephone calls, e-mail and instant-messages as eWOM (Barreto, 2014; Toder-Alon, Brunel, & Fournier, 2014). This brings forward another incongruence with the definition that states that eWOM is "made available to a multitude of people". Apart from Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) (the authors of the above-mentioned definition), all the other authors mentioned above refer to eWOM as both one-to-one and one-to-many communication. In a recent study, Chu & Kim (2018, p. 1) define eWOM as "the behavior of exchanging marketing information among consumers in online environments or via new technologies (e.g., mobile communication)" providing a broader definition which may contain different eWOM classifications to date. Drawing on extant definitions, in this study, eWOM is defined as informal, interpersonal, and Internet-mediated communication between two or more individuals about a brand, product, service or an organization.

Apart from the definition, the first question that arises is: what are the **differences between traditional WOM and eWOM**? Table 3 illustrates the main differences highlighted in academic literature.

Table 3. Comparison between traditional WOM and eWOM

	TRADITIONAL WOM	*EWOM*
Participants	People know each-other (strong ties)	People do not know each other (weak ties, anonymity)
Message	More tailored	Less tailored
Availability	Usually private	Usually public
Reach	Limited (one-to-one / few people)	Enormous (online communities)
Context	Face-to-face	Internet- or electronically-mediated
Communication form	Spoken (less salient)	Written (more salient, impacts future eWOM)
Communication mean	Words, tone of voice, facial expressions, body language	Mainly text-based messages
Persistence	Real time (transitory and synchronous)	Not time-bounded (less transitory, asynchronous)
Content	Stable	Changing
Sender and receiver	Concentrated in one or few places	Dispersed
Effort to transmit	Lower	Higher

Source: Own elaboration based on Barreto (2014, p. 635-638), King et al. (2014, p. 169-172); Standing et al. (2016, p. 724)

While traditional WOM occurs among people who know each other well - usually family members and friends (strong ties), eWOM usually occurs among acquaintances and strangers (weak ties) (King et al., 2014; Moe & Schweidel, 2012; Standing et al., 2016). As people know each other well, traditional WOM is also more tailored than eWOM (Barreto, 2014). While traditional WOM is usually private (King et al., 2014) or limited to a small group of people, eWOM is usually public and harnesses the unlimited reach of the Internet (Dellarocas, 2003; Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014; Standing et al., 2016). A related point to consider is that eWOM is easier to monitor than WOM (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). Traditional WOM typically happens in face-to-face context, while eWOM is Internet- (or electronically-) mediated (Barreto, 2014; De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008; King et al., 2014). This context difference entrails other differences: traditional WOM is spoken but in face-to-face situations the communication extends beyond spoken words (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014; Standing et al., 2016) including tone of voice, facial expressions and body language (Hornik, Shaanan Satchi, Cesareo, & Pastore, 2015; Lovett et al., 2013). eWOM is based on written, mainly text-based messages (Standing et al., 2016) that are more salient in consumers' evaluations of meaning, credibility and usefulness (King et al., 2014). Moreover, the context implies that traditional WOM occurs in real-time, the message is transitory and the communication is synchronous

(the receiver is expected to respond, usually immediately), as opposed to eWOM (Hennig-Thurau, Wiertz, & Feldhaus, 2015; Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014; Standing et al., 2016). Once transmitted, traditional WOM cannot be changed, while eWOM can usually be erased, modified or enriched by the sender, the receiver or other users (Berger, 2014; Moe & Schweidel, 2012). In traditional WOM, senders and receivers are concentrated in one or few places, while eWOM is usually dispersed (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; King et al., 2014; Steffes & Burgee, 2009). Last but not least, Berger argues that traditional WOM transmission requires less effort than the transmission of eWOM that takes longer to produce (Berger, 2014; Berger & Iyengar, 2013). However, it is worth mentioning that the possibility of forwarding messages (i.e., via e-mail or on social media) has simplified and accelerated the diffusion of eWOM.

On the basis of the theory of "the strength of weak ties" (Granovetter, 1973) academic research shows that the influence of weak ties on information dissemination is at least as strong as the influence of strong ties (Goldenberg, Libai, & Muller, 2001). Although at the individual or small group level, strong ties can be perceived as more influential in decision making, weak ties demonstrate a crucial bridging function that allows information to spread across distinct groups (J. J. Brown & Reingen, 1987; Granovetter, 1973). Due to the influence of weak ties, product information can diffuse from a specific group of consumers to an entire market. Furthermore, more recent studies on eWOM reveal that weak ties can be more influential than strong ties and that eWOM in social media can be equally influential as primary experience (Goldenberg et al., 2001; Steffes & Burgee, 2009).

eWOM in social media, sometimes referred to as sWOM (Balaji, Khong, & Chong, 2016; Eisingerich et al., 2015), is the dominant form of eWOM (Chu & Kim, 2018). Consumers spread eWOM on social media in various ways, for instance by posting reviews or ratings on review sites and blogs, participating in discussions in online communities, commenting and sharing brand content on social networks or creating user-generated advertising (Berthon, Pitt, & Campbell, 2008).

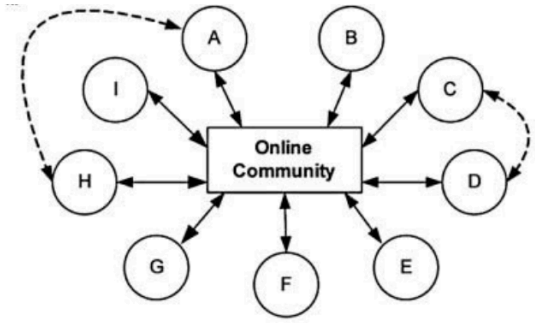
Prior academic research shows that most of the eWOM in social media is positive (Moe & Schweidel, 2012) and that positive content is more viral (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Mangold & Smith (2012) confirm the dominance of positive eWOM for 14 different product categories. Tkaczyk (2018) confirms its dominance specifically within the Polish market.

Godes & Mayzlin (2004) claim that in online conversations positive comments about television shows occur almost twice as often than negative. Barreto (2015) cites a study conducted on social network users and reports the same ratio. Yong Liu (2006) and Hennig-Thurau, Wiertz, & Feldhaus, (2015) find that most online movie reviews are positive, while Chevalier & Mayzlin (2006) and Wojnicki & Godes (2017) conclude the same for book reviews and Bronner & de Hoog (2010) for opinions on holiday sites. As mentioned before, positive reviews can serve as an indicator of expertise and create a positive image of the person who provides them, thus the underlying motivation can be self-enhancement (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Mangold & Smith, 2012; Wojnicki & Godes, 2017). Indeed, consumers tend to attribute positive online reviews to the reviewers and negative online reviews to the product (Chen & Lurie, 2013). Reviews with a clear positive or negative valence are considered to be more useful than neutral reviews (Forman, Ghose, & Wiesenfeld, 2008; Purnawirawan et al., 2012). However, for the experience goods (i.e., products that consumers need to try or purchase in order to evaluate its quality) there is some evidence that consumers consider moderate reviews to be more helpful (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). Regarding the relative impact of positive and negative eWOM in driving product success prior findings are inconclusive (Marchand, Hennig-Thurau, & Wiertz, 2017).

Social media are particularly suited for eWOM because the communities embedded in them allow marketing messages to spread quickly to a large group of people (Carr & Hayes, 2014; Gręboszc-Krawczyk & Siuda, 2017; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). **Online** (or "virtual") **communities** are consumer groups of a different size that meet and interact online to achieve personal and shared goals (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004). Three essential elements of a community are: consciousness of kind (feeling of connection and uniqueness, legitimacy), rituals and traditions (to maintain the community e.g. sharing of proper experiences or brand-related content online) and moral responsibility (integrating and retaining members, and assisting them in the use of product or service) (Muniz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001). Online communities offer unprecedented research, marketing, development and communication opportunities for marketing practitioners (Mazurek, 2008).

Kozinets (1999), Muniz Jr. & O'Guinn (2001) and Dwyer, (2007) argue that eWOM accounts for the major part of consumer interactions in online communities. Within the context of online communities, J. Brown, Broderick, & Lee (2007) develop a conceptualization of an online social network that includes WOM communication flows (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Online social network



Source: reprinted from J. Brown et al. (2007, p. 12)

Like in the model of marketing communications in a hypermedia computer-mediated environment by Hoffman & Novak (1996), J. Brown et al. (2007) argue that, once the content is posted, the online community becomes the primary unit of relationship and medium of communication. Social ties between individuals are less relevant in an online environment, the relationship is between an individual and a website (J. Brown et al., 2007). Users interact with the online community, i.e. the website (solid lines), rather than with single users (dashed lines). High-value content for the community attracts attention with little reference to those who originated the content (J. Brown et al., 2007). Homophily (a desire to be associated with similar people) is present in most networks, but it is not an important driver of preferential attachment (Dwyer, 2007), it is rather related to the content than to individuals (J. Brown et al., 2007). Unlike traditional media, through which consumers consume content passively, in online communities content is created through the active participation of users (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002). User participation in an online community is volitional, intentional (it is a purposive and goal-directed action) and can be analyzed from two perspectives: group motivations or personal motivations (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002).

From the group perspective, on the basis of the social influence theory, prior academic research reveals that the participation in online communities can be driven by user identification (social identity - self-awareness as a member of the community and intention to maintain positive relationships with other members) (Cheung & Lee, 2010; Hsu & Lin, 2008), internalization (group norms – perceived congruence of values) (Dholakia et al., 2004) and compliance (subjective norms - the need to gain approval of others) (Cheung & Lee, 2010).

From the personal perspective it is worth distinguishing motivations of two distinct facets of eWOM in social media: (a) opinion giving (that includes opinion-passing) and (b) opinion seeking.

a) Why do people spread eWOM on social media?

The extant research suggests that users spreading eWOM on social media represent a very small group of brand fans (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014) and that self-presentation / *self-enhancement* is one of the key motivations of spreading eWOM on social media (De Vries, Peluso, Romani, Leeflang, & Marcati, 2017; Eisingerich et al., 2015; Lampel & Bhalla, 2007). In general, people are less willing to share eWOM on social media than traditional WOM, because of the perceived social risk (Eisingerich et al., 2015) - people can expose themselves to critics. However, this risk is mitigated by the desire for self-enhancement. People with a high need for self-enhancement are more willing to spread eWOM on social media than offline (Eisingerich et al., 2015). It is no wonder that the personality traits related to self-expression on social media correspond to some of those related to social media usage (narcissism, extraversion, openness to experiences and NFC) mentioned before. Prior research reveals that self-expressiveness on social media is related to narcissism (Leung, 2013; Mehdizadeh, 2010; Y. Sung, Kim, & Choi, 2018), extraversion (Pagani, Goldsmith, & Hofacker, 2013; Zywica & Danowski, 2008) and openness to experience (Kabadayi & Price, 2014). People spread eWOM on social media to gain attention, signal connoisseurship, uniqueness and social status (Fu, Wu, & Cho, 2017; Lovett et al., 2013; Y. Sung et al., 2018). In online communities, most active users that spread information become recognized as authorities (Mathwick, 2002). The asynchrony of the medium allows people to think and spend more time editing messages in order to present themselves as they want (Berger & Iyengar, 2013). Prior research comparing motivations of spreading traditional WOM and eWOM on social media brings very interesting findings. When talking to just one person (spreading traditional WOM) people are more likely to focus on the recipient and share the content that is useful to the specific person (Barasch & Berger, 2014) or share feelings about brands (satisfaction/dissatisfaction, excitement) to balance emotional arousal (Berger, 2014; Lovett et al., 2013). While when talking to a broad audience and weak ties (e.g., spreading eWOM on social media) people often share what makes them look good (Barasch & Berger, 2014; Berger, 2014; Lovett et al., 2013).

Another important motivation for eWOM diffusion on social media is the desire for *social interaction* (Azar, Machado, Vacas-De-Carvalho, & Mendes, 2016; Kozinets, 2016; Muntinga et al., 2011). People have a fundamental desire for social relationships, thus spread eWOM on social media to participate in and belong to online communities in which they socialize with other brand fans and with people behind the brand (Berger, 2014; Davis et al., 2014; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Other motivations mentioned in prior studies include *altruism* or concern for other consumers (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; T. Smith, Coyle, Lightfoot, & Scott, 2007). People can share opinions on social media to help others in choosing the right (or avoiding the wrong) product, service or company.

In addition, people can spread eWOM, in order to receive some kind of benefit/remuneration from companies or users. eWOM diffusion on social media can be driven by the *desire for economic incentives* (De Vries et al., 2017; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Moreover, for some innovative products (e.g., fax, e-mail and Skype), network externalities can occur, i.e. product utility to a consumer can increase as more consumers adopt it (Peres, Muller, & Mahajan, 2010; Vilpponen, Winter, & Sundqvist, 2006).

Last but not least, there is some evidence that *entertainment* and *empowerment* may also act as motivations for spreading eWOM on social media (Azar et al., 2016; De Vries et al., 2017; Rohm, Kaltcheva, & Milne, 2013). People may spread eWOM on social media to pass time, release emotions related to the product, service or company or to exert influence on other people or companies (for instance to co-create the product or make the company change its features).

As far as the specific opinion passing behavior is concerned, prior research focused on forwarding video advertisements, reveals it can be motivated by self-enhancement (reputation), expected relationships and altruism (Hayes & King, 2014; Hayes, King, & Ramirez, 2016; D. G. Taylor, Strutton, & Thompson, 2012). Prior research shows also that a strong consumer-brand relationship increases the intention to share advertising messages on social networks (Hayes & King, 2014; Shan & King, 2015).

b) Why do people search for eWOM on social media?

Prior research reveals that the motivations that drive consumers to seek eWOM on social media include: need for *information* (to reduce pre- and post-purchase search/evaluation efforts and risk) (Berger, 2014; King et al., 2014; Muntinga et al., 2011), *entertainment* (King et al., 2014; Muntinga et al., 2011) and *desire for economic incentives* (remuneration) (Moran & Muzellec, 2017; Muntinga et al., 2011).

As mentioned before, eWOM seeking and eWOM giving behaviors are related – opinion givers may also be opinion seekers and vice versa (Sun, Youn, Wu, & Kuntaraporn, 2006). It is worth noticing that the eWOM spreading and seeking motivations evidenced in the extant research correspond to social media usage motivations (information, entertainment, integration and social interaction, personal identity, remuneration, empowerment) and partially to those of PWOM spreading revealed by Dichter (1966) (product-involvement, self-involvement, others-involvement, message involvement).

Finally, it is worth mentioning the consequences of eWOM in social media for (a) consumers and (b) companies.

a) What are the consequences of eWOM in social media for consumers?

Academic literature to date shows that eWOM in social media help consumers to make *more informed purchase decisions* (King et al., 2014; Senecal & Nantel, 2004). eWOM in social media influence consumer *attitudes* toward brands (Doh & Hwang, 2009; Purnawirawan et al., 2012; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). It makes consumers more convinced that a product or service meets their needs and preferences (Clemons & Gao, 2008), *trust* the seller (Awad & Ragowsky, 2008; Ladhari & Michaud, 2015; Mazzucchelli et al., 2018), thus making the consumers more willing to pay higher prices (Ba & Pavlou, 2002; Clemons & Gao, 2008; Pavlou & Dimoka, 2006). According to GlobalWebIndex (2018c), 25% of Internet users between 16-24 years old admit that seeing a brand/product "liked" on social media is a purchase driver. Moreover, prior research shows that the engagement in eWOM on social media, as the engagement in WOM in general mentioned before, leads to higher *loyalty* of consumers (Gauri, Bhatnagar, & Rao, 2008; King et al., 2014; McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002).

b) What are the consequences of eWOM in social media for companies?

From the companies' perspective, prior studies show that eWOM in social media has an impact on *reputation* (Balaji et al., 2016; Dellarocas, 2003; Jones, Temperley, & Lima, 2009), *sales* (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Gopinath, Thomas, & Krishnamurthi, 2014; Yong Liu, 2006) and *stock market performance* (Schweidel & Moe, 2014; Tirunillai & Tellis, 2012). Yoon et al. (2018) reveal that the number of comments a company receives on Facebook brand posts is has a significant, positive impact on its revenue. "On average, a 1% increase in number of comments would yield about a .0063% increase in revenue" (Yoon et al., 2018, p. 31). Moreover, prior research reveals that eWOM in social media translates more easily into sales for products for which alternative sources of information are relatively scarce suggesting its particular relevance for small companies, new and niche products (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015; Libai et al., 2010; Zhu & Zhang, 2010).

1.3.2. Word-of-mouth marketing

Word-of-mouth marketing (also referred to as buzz marketing) is a new mode of communication within marketing communications mix proposed by Kotler & Keller (2012), neither distinguished in the previous classification by Kotler (1991), nor by other authors (Wiktor, 2013), indicating the particular importance WOM has gained in recent times (Carl, 2006; Ferguson, 2008). It is important to underline that WOM is the goal and effect of marketing communications, while word-of-mouth marketing is an element of marketing communications mix that includes specific activities performed by a company explicitly aimed at driving WOM (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010). For instance, WOM can be an effect of an advertising campaign or an event, even if driving WOM was not their primary goal. In many academic studies "WOM" and "WOM marketing" are used interchangeably, leading to confusion and lack of a common understanding of these terms. This is particularly evident in case of Polish studies in which both WOM (informal communication among consumers) and WOM marketing (activities performed by a company) are often referred to as "marketing szeptany" in which the term "marketing" suggests a profit-oriented activity, which is not the case of WOM.

There are different managerial perspectives on WOM that lead to different approaches to manage it. Mazurek & Tkaczyk (2016) provide a useful and comprehensive overview of these approaches by distinguishing separated, passive, responsive and active WOM management. From the first perspective, WOM is out of knowledge and control of the organization, so no

activities are undertaken. It can be argued that according to this view WOM is only an effect of marketing communications, which cannot be managed. The latter conviction is also shared by marketers who adopt the passive perspective and limit their activity to WOM monitoring (e.g., through social media monitoring tools), as well as by those who also respond to users trying to get involved in conversations (responsive WOM). On the other hand, the active perspective assumes that WOM can be actively managed for instance by using specific content, product seeding and influencers.

Similarly, companies can play four different, non-mutually exclusive roles in relation to eWOM in social media (Godes et al., 2005). They can act as:

- *observers* (observe what users say without interfering)
- *moderators* (take steps to encourage conversation)
- *mediators* (ask for recommendations and actively use them - for instance in advertising)
- *participants* (anonymously create eWOM)

In order to benefit from its important consequences, rather than hoping that consumers will spread positive opinions spontaneously, companies increasingly try to manage and encourage both traditional WOM and eWOM (Barreto, 2014; Godes & Mayzlin, 2009; Haenlein & Libai, 2017). Encouraging WOM is considered as a fast, cheap and, due to its credibility, an effective way to overcome consumer resistance to marketing communication (Notarantonio & Quigley, 2009; Purnawirawan et al., 2012; Trusov et al., 2009). Moreover, if done in an ethically correct way, it shapes a new more equal and transparent relationship between consumers and companies based on exchange and reciprocal support (Mathwick, 2002). Marketing in the interactive world is a collaborative activity with the marketer helping the consumer to buy and the consumer helping the marketer to sell (Godin, 2014).

Word-of-mouth marketing "finds ways to engage customers so they choose to talk with others about products, services, and brands." (Kotler & Keller, 2012, p. 562). It is about giving people a reason to talk about a brand, product, service or an organization, and making it easier for conversations to take place. Natural, spontaneous conversations that occur among users are referred to as "organic" or "endogenous" WOM, while messages driven by WOM marketing are referred to as "amplified", "promoted", "fertilized" or "exogenous" WOM (Barreto, 2014; Godes & Mayzlin, 2009; Libai et al., 2010).

So how WOM can be stimulated and accelerated? The two main types of activities described in academic literature are related to:

1) Online brand communities

2) WOM programs

The first, basic type of activity to encourage spontaneous conversations among users on social media requires the establishment of an online brand community (e.g., Facebook brand page), production of "talkable" content and management of conversations (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012; Hayes & King, 2014; Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014). The scope of the current study is related to this type of activity. Extant academic literature does not clarify what a "talkable" content is and whether it is different for different brand types and geographic markets and this study is aimed at clarifying this issue.

However, in order to provide a full picture and considering that there seems to be a lack of common understanding of word-of-mouth marketing, it is worth mentioning the second type of activity. WOM program is "a marketing initiative that aims to trigger a WOM process by targeting a certain number of individuals and incentivizing them to spread WOM" (Haenlein & Libai, 2017, p. 70). The main types of WOM programs include (Haenlein & Libai, 2017):

a) *Seeding programs*:

- Product seeding: a selected group of people ("influencers") receive the product and is expected to talk about it (I. Chae, Stephen, Bart, & Yao, 2017; Haenlein & Libai, 2017; Niedzielska, 2016)
- Viral marketing: encouraging individuals to spread brand messages (e.g., advertisements) through electronic channels

b) *Referral programs*:

- Referral reward: encouraging existing customers to bring new customers in order to get a reward, used mainly in a B2C setting; particularly important for weak ties and less known brands (Ryu & Feick, 2007)
- Business reference: using references from existing customers to acquire new customers (used mainly in B2B setting)

- Affiliate marketing: paying fees (based on sales, leads or clicks) to referring subjects that drive people to the company's website/e-commerce; as mentioned before it can also be considered as an online partnership

c) *Recommendation programs:*

- Narrowband recommendations: also referred to as "ambassador programs", using specific individuals to promote the product to their social networks
- Broadband recommendations: encourage recommendations via review sites (i.e., Yelp, TripAdvisor)

Using specific individuals to promote the product is also referred to as influencer marketing, which is often a paid activity including product seeding. It should be underlined that some of WOM programs cast doubts on the informal character of amplified WOM, as people can be more driven by economic incentives than by other motivations. It sheds light also on ethical concerns related to WOM marketing discussed in studies by Martin & Smith (2008), Kimmel (2015) and Niedzielska (2016).

Among the WOM programs, viral marketing has gained particular attention and interest from both academics and marketers (Blazevic et al., 2013). As in academic literature the terms "buzz", "viral marketing" and "viral advertising" are often used interchangeably (Golan & Zaidner, 2008; Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011; Porter & Golan, 2006), it is worth examining their exact meaning and how they are related to eWOM.

Buzz marketing (or WOM marketing) is an "amplification of initial marketing efforts by third parties through their passive or active influence" (Thomas, 2004, p. 64). The difference between buzz marketing and eWOM is that the former is a marketing activity, while the latter can be the effect of this activity. Buzz marketing includes both offline and online interpersonal communication, while eWOM represents online messages only (Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011).

Viral marketing is sometimes referred to as "WOM advertising" (José-Cabezudo & Camarero-Izquierdo, 2012; Phelps, Lewis, Mobilio, Perry, & Raman, 2004; Vilpponen et al., 2006). It refers to offline and online marketing activities performed to encourage consumers to forward commercial messages (advertisements or other business generated commercial

messages) to other consumers online (Bampo, Ewing, Mather, Stewart, & Wallace, 2008; Dobele, Toleman, & Beverland, 2005; Niedzielska, 2016). eWOM can be the effect of these actions. Thus the main difference between viral marketing and eWOM is that the former is the cause, while the latter may be the effect (Ferguson, 2008). According to most papers, the term viral marketing was introduced by Jurvetson and Draper in 1997 to describe Hotmail e-mail service. In each e-mail sent from Hotmail account there was a message stating that the service was free, thus leading to the viral attraction of new users that grew from zero to 12 million in 18 months (Galeotti & Goyal, 2009; Heine, 2010; Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011). For television and radio it took 10 and 20 years to reach the same number of users (Pavlik & McIntosh, 2004). Another example of viral marketing is PayPal that due to financial incentives for referrals, reached 3 million users in 9 months (De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008) or Burger King's Whopper Sacrifice campaign in which a free sandwich was offered for every 10 friends removed from Facebook (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011; Niedzielska, 2016).

Viral advertising is a subset of viral marketing (Eckler & Bolls, 2011). While viral marketing may include both offline and online marketing activities, viral advertising refers to online marketing activities only (Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011). In viral marketing various business-generated messages are used, while in viral advertising the content is an advertisement that can be business or consumer-generated (Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011; Porter & Golan, 2006). Entertainment and controversial characteristics are often used in advertisements, in order to make the users pass them along (Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011). Appeals related to humor and sexuality are the most used in viral advertisements, as well as content showing pets (Golan & Zaidner, 2008; Porter & Golan, 2006), which is related to the idea that "pets, sex and the absurd" is the kind of content people are most likely to pass along (L. K. Hansen, Arvidsson, & Nielsen, 2011, p. 34). Unlike traditional and online advertising, the transmission of viral advertising is personal and not paid (Golan & Zaidner, 2008). Tipp-Ex's "Hunter Shoots a Bear" or Dove's "Evolution" are well-known examples of viral advertising campaigns.

Table 4 summarizes the comparison between the above-mentioned terms. It is worth highlighting that eWOM includes forwarding business-generated commercial messages, as it is particularly important for the operationalization of eWOM in the current study.

Table 4. Terminology comparison

TERM	*CAUSE / EFFECT*	*PURPOSE*	*TRANSMISSION PLATFORM*	*OBJECT*	*DIRECTION*
eWOM	Effect	Interpersonal communication	Online	Business and consumer-generated messages	Consumer-to-consumer
Buzz marketing	Cause (offline and online activity)	Interpersonal communication	Offline or online	Business and consumer-generated messages	Consumer-to-consumer
Viral marketing	Cause (offline and online activity)	Forward of commercial messages	Online	Business-generated commercial messages	Business-to-consumer-to-consumer
Viral advertising	Cause (online activity)	Forward of advertisements	Online	Business or consumer-generated advertisements	(Business-to-) consumer-to-consumer

Source: Adapted from Petrescu & Korgaonkar (2011, p. 211)

Prior research reveals three types of factors can affect viral reach, i.e. "the volume of message sharing and forwarding by Internet users" (Alhabash & McAlister, 2015, p. 1319) or, to put it simply, how many users will pass along commercial messages. These factors include *individual characteristics* (e.g., age, gender, e-literacy level, personality traits and motivations described in the previous sections), *message characteristics* (investigated in the current research) and *social network characteristics* (how the network is structured) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011; Liu-Thompkins, 2012). This third factor is important in encouraging eWOM on social media, as it is related to the role of "influencers" in marketing communications.

The central thesis related to the **social network characteristics** is that the structure of social networks can affect the viral reach and the impact of a message and that the role of each user in information diffusion depends on his/her position in the network (Liu-Thompkins, 2012). There are two main approaches to model the contagion process (Zheng, Zhong, Zeng, & Wang, 2012):

a) *micro-level models*: preferential attachment, threshold, cascade, and competitive
b) *macro-level models*: like susceptible-infective-removed (SIR) or Bass model

The assumption in **micro-level models** is that, apart from consumer interactions, the diffusion is driven by consumer heterogeneity. Since the study of Katz & Lazarsfeld in 1955, there has been a body of evidence suggesting that some people may have more social influence than others (Goldenberg, Han, Lehmann, & Hong, 2009; Iyengar, Van den Bulte, & Valente,

2011). The well-known "small world phenomenon" suggests that there is a small number of intermediaries (around six) between any two individuals, i.e. nodes of the network (Dodds, Muhamad, & Watts, 2003; Milgram, 1967; Travers & Milgram, 1969), thus every individual can be easily reached by "infecting" a small group of people (Camarero & San José, 2011). Furthermore, there is some evidence of this phenomenon on the Internet: on average any two pages randomly selected are only separated by 19 links (Steyer, Garcia-Bardidia, & Quester, 2006) and any two Facebook users by 3.57 users (Bhagat, Burke, Diuk, Filiz, & Edunov, 2016). In the specific context of eWOM diffusion on social media, there is some evidence that supports the scale-free network approach (e.g., Steyer et al., 2006) or in other words that there is a small number of users that have a high number of connections (Bampo et al., 2008; Kiss & Bichler, 2008; Liu-Thompkins, 2012). This perspective will probably lead marketers to use celebrities and other opinion leaders in their eWOM programs. The impact of marketing communication in social media on eWOM may be different if the content shows, is created or deployed by "influencers". Companies try to identify these influencers and verify their expertise and credibility by measuring the number of contacts in their social networks, their activity (the content they deploy and the deployment frequency) and interactions of their social networks (Allsop, Bassett, & Hoskins, 2007). In particular, prior research underlines the growing importance of bloggers and provides guidance on how companies can manage relationships with them (Carr & Hayes, 2014; Kozinets et al., 2010; Wiażewicz & Zatwarnicka-Madura, 2016). For instance, Kozinets et al. (2010) in a netnographic study reveal how companies using eWOM programs on social media face a situation of networked coproduction of narratives. Apart from communicating marketing messages and staking their reputation and trust relationships on them, bloggers alter the messages to make them more believable, relevant, or palatable to the community.

On the other hand, **macro-level models** assume that social network is homogenous and individuals have equal probability of being "infected" by one another (Zheng et al., 2012), thus there are no nodes of particular importance. Watts & Dodds (2007) examine threshold, cascade and SIR models and claim that large cascades of influence are driven by a critical mass of easily influenced individuals that are influenced by other easily influenced individuals. Therefore, there is no need to identify a small group of highly influential opinion leaders or market mavens in order to obtain higher reach and influence of eWOM, their role in forming public opinion is not more important than the role of average consumers (T. Smith et al., 2007; Watts & Dodds, 2007). Similarly, Sorokin (2013) shows that family and

acquaintances are the most relevant opinion leaders and she suggests that using celebrities for product recommendations is not effective. Rather than on trying to find and engage the supposed influencers, marketers should focus on giving consumers positive experiences with the brand, so that they can recommend it to others (Allsop et al., 2007). It is worth mentioning that in certain product categories (e.g., cosmetics) the trend of moving away from celebrity endorsements to niche influencers and turning common consumers into brand ambassadors is already clear and it seems that this trend will expand and grow in the future (Fashion and Beauty Monitor, 2017). For instance P&G, through its specific division dedicated to WOM marketing called Tremor, in 2006 launched Vocalpoint – a web platform joining the community of moms. Women are the key decision-makers in the buying process of FMCG products, so attracting attention and engaging this target group is of crucial importance for P&G. Moms are the main target group for P&G's baby and family care products. Vocalpoint joins over 500,000 moms around the US (eMarketer, 2011), who receive regular updates in a newsletter, receive coupons and samples, test products and share their opinions with over 25-30 other moms a day (Ferguson, 2008) both offline and online. There is some evidence that the loyalty and advocacy effect created through this program, leads to an increase in sales by 10-30% (Marsden, 2006). Another example is Philips, which created a specific website on which consumers can apply to the company's WOM program. Once part of this program consumers test the company's products, share opinions and are rewarded by keeping the products (Philips, 2019). Marketers who adopt this macro-level perspective may also be more likely to focus on content strategy and community management on social media, in order to strengthen the role of common individuals in brand advocacy. This perspective is consistent with the scope of this study aimed at providing guidelines on content that drives eWOM.

To conclude, the role of consumers in credible content creation is always more important and it can rapidly influence the market success or failure of a product (Moe & Schweidel, 2012; Muntinga et al., 2011; Tafesse & Wien, 2017). It has been agreed in the academic literature that eWOM in social media has a much stronger and longer-lasting effect on consumer behavior than traditional modes of marketing communication (Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006; Trusov et al., 2009). It is perceived as less-intrusive than company-generated communication, since, as mentioned before, consumers actively search for online opinions by themselves (Purnawirawan et al., 2012). In the case of experience products like hotels (Confente & Vigolo, 2018; Ladhari & Michaud, 2015; Raguseo & Vitari, 2017) or restaurants (Chen & Lurie, 2013; Cheung & Lee, 2012) the importance of eWOM in social media is particularly

evident, but the potential of eWOM is unlimited, and there is no doubt that it will shape the future of advertising (Chu & Kim, 2018). As Kozinets (2016, p. 834) argues "follow-up research into the topic should emphasize the diversity of consumers and the multiplicity of their needs" as well as "various social and cultural aspects" (p. 836) of eWOM in social media.

1.4. Research gap

Literature review on marketing communications, social media and WOM shows some important research gaps this study aims to address:

A. Influence of marketing communication form and appeal on eWOM in social networks
B. eWOM and marketing communication effects in social networks in different product categories
C. Marketing communications of luxury brands on social media in an international context
D. Differences between countries in social media usage and eWOM

A. Influence of marketing communication form and appeal on eWOM in social networks

Two motivations of WOM identified by Dichter (1966) have been scarcely addressed in prior research on eWOM in social media: product involvement and message involvement. Since Lovett et al. (2013) claim that people are more willing to share emotions (such as excitement about a product and satisfaction) in more personal and intimate one-to-one offline conversations than on social media, the absence of the former can be somehow justified. As far as the latter is concerned, the central question is what kind of messages involves consumers to such an extent as to drive eWOM in social media. In other words, as mentioned before, what kind of content is "talkable". Content quality describing its potential to be forwarded is sometimes referred to as "stickiness" (Porter & Golan, 2006). "Studies broadly suggest that alignment between content characteristics and consumer motivation is a significant source of content transmission and behavioral engagement in social media" (Tafesse & Wien, 2018, p. 10). Advertising content is likely to have the highest impact on sharing behavior (Hayes & King, 2014). However, there is a lack of research on eWOM as a result of message involvement in the context of social media (Berger, 2014). The few existing studies (Akpinar & Berger, 2017; Araujo, Neijens, & Vliegenhart, 2015; Gopinath et al.,

2014; B. Shen & Bissell, 2013; Swani et al., 2013; Tafesse, 2015) are described in the following chapter. Mazurek (2019) notices that in recent times academic journals emphasize the research on factors increasing user interaction with brand content in social networks. Sabate, Berbegal-Mirabent, Cañabate, & Lebherz (2014) see more research opportunities in content-level analyses in social networks. In particular, Swani et al. (2013), as well as more recently Tafesse & Wien (2017), claim that future studies should investigate the use of different communication forms in social networks. Similarly, according to Cho et al. (2014), Yadav & Pavlou (2014), as well as Ketelaar et al. (2016), the relation between content characteristics and user sharing behavior should still be investigated. Lee & Hong (2016) call specifically for further studies on user sharing behavior of video advertising. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that there is no evidence of studies on animations in the context of marketing communication in social media.

B. eWOM and marketing communication effects in social networks in different product categories

Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles (2013), Lee & Hong (2016) as well as more recently Wagner et al. (2017) highlight the need to investigate the moderating role of product category in the relationship between brand communication and user response in social networks. Similarly, Ketelaar et al. (2016) argue that the influence of marketing communication in social networks on eWOM should be investigated for different types of products. B. Shen & Bissell (2013) indicate specifically that marketing communications of beauty brands and its influence on eWOM on Facebook should be further investigated.

C. Marketing communications of luxury brands on social media in an international context

Heine & Berghaus (2014) argue that, despite growing interest, there is relatively little empirically founded research on digital marketing of luxury brands. Annie Jin (2012), Üçok Hughes, Bendoni, & Pehlivan (2016) and Dhaoui (2014) call for research on luxury brands to expand the understanding of brand image management in the age of social media. Tafesse & Wien (2017) put forward the idea of comparing marketing communication content of mass-market and luxury brands. According to Godey et al. (2016), it would be particularly interesting to investigate the influence of marketing communications of luxury brands on social media on consumer behavior in different cultures. Kapferer & Valette-Florence (2016)

suggest that in international and cross-cultural investigations the role of luxury brands' communication content might be particularly relevant. Shukla (2011) underlines the need to provide a comparison of luxury consumption between the developed and emerging markets, specifying that the impact of interpersonal influences is a potential avenue for future research.

D. Differences between countries in social media usage and eWOM

Culture influences both human needs and the ways they are satisfied (Ruggiero, 2000). The strength of the U&G theory lays in "its ability to allow researchers to study mediated communication situations via a single or multiple sets of psychological needs, psychological motives, communication channels, communication content and psychological gratifications within a particular or cross-cultural context" (C. A. Lin, 1996, p. 574). Newhagen suggests that cultural levels of analysis may represent the unique contribution of communication research to the understanding of the Internet (Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996). Ngai et al. (2015) confirm that little research has been conducted to reveal the influence of cultural differences on social media usage and argue that understanding whether any differences in social media usage exist among cultures is important. Furthermore, the vast majority of extant studies on social media marketing use data from the developed countries (in particular from the American market) and university students, thus being of limited generalizability to other countries increasingly significant in the global economy (Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi, & Algharabat, 2017; Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). For this reason, in future research, it is worth considering different countries, cultures (e.g., collectivist vs. individualist) and target groups (J. Lee & Hong, 2016; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; Wagner et al., 2017). In particular, there is a lack of research on European countries (Posey, Lowry, Roberts, & Ellis, 2010). Furthermore, Lam, Lee, & Mizerski (2009) note that WOM behavior in different cultures may change depending on the consumption context and the types of products. For example, products that are used discreetly (e.g., hygiene products) or products that reflect poorly on the WOM communicator might be less discussed in most cultures. Further investigation of eWOM in social media for different product categories in an international context is deemed necessary also by Bartosik-Purgat (2018). Academics argue specifically that a cross-cultural investigation of eWOM (Chu & Choi, 2011; Chu & Kim, 2011; Mishra & Satish, 2016) and brand post popularity (De Vries et al., 2012) in social networks would be a fruitful avenue for future research (Wagner et al., 2017).

Chapter 2.

Research overview

2.1. Research problem

The research gap reveals a lack of studies in the specific context of social networks, which as mentioned before, are a type of social media. It is worth mentioning other reasons why the examination of this type of social media is deemed particularly relevant for this study.

Social networks are the most used type of social media (Parzonko, 2015). Well-known examples of social networks include SixDegrees (the first recognizable social network launched in 1997), LinkedIn, MySpace, hi5 and Facebook (launched in 2004), as well as Nasza Klasa launched in Poland in 2006. Social networks are sites that "allow a user to build and maintain a network of friends for social or professional interaction" (Trusov et al., 2009, p. 92). Key components of a social network are personalized user profiles (Trusov et al., 2009) in which users display personal information and a list of "friends". The personal nature of social networks makes them particularly relevant for eWOM. The growth of social networks itself is driven by eWOM referrals – users inviting other people to join the network (Trusov et al., 2009). In social networks users are identifiable and share messages with people belonging to their personal networks, thus eWOM in social networks is conceptually closer to the traditional WOM (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015; Marchand et al., 2017). Information in a social network is more trustworthy as it comes from identifiable, known sources (Chu & Choi, 2011; Chu & Kim, 2018; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015). Social networks include specific features that facilitate and accelerate eWOM spreading, for instance, instant messaging systems (e.g., Messenger), that allow sending private and group messages among users (Boyd & Ellison, 2007), and mobile applications (Chu & Kim, 2011; Y. Sung et al., 2018). Indeed, social networks are the most popular type of social media for online sharing (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Almost 30% of Polish Internet users say they share content posted on social networks at least once a week (Universal McCann, 2015). Furthermore, the personal character of social networks makes them an ideal environment for self-expression and self-promotion or personal storytelling (Mehdizadeh, 2010; Pagani, Hofacker, & Goldsmith, 2011; van Dijck, 2013). Impression management is a major motivation of participation in social networks (Krämer & Winter, 2008) and at the same time, as mentioned before, the key motivation of spreading eWOM on social media. In addition to self-expression/promotion, social networks usage motivations that correspond to the motivations of eWOM in social media include

information (searching), entertainment and social interactions (Dunne, Lawlor, & Rowley, 2010; Mortazavi, Esfidani, & Barzoki, 2014; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). Considering the above-mentioned pieces of evidence, it is expected that a study in a context of social networks will allow obtaining a high amount of data.

Furthermore, social networks may be the most relevant type of social media for marketing communications (Trusov et al., 2009). They are widely used in marketing communications, allow companies to create brand communities (Gręboszc-Krawczyk & Siuda, 2017; Zaglia, 2013), to deploy highly targeted advertising messages and to reach specific consumers at relatively low cost (Aral & Walker, 2011; H. Chae & Ko, 2016; Nelson-Field, Riebe, & Sharp, 2012). Prior research suggests that among social media, social networks are perceived as the most impactful on a company's performance (Moorman, 2018). Indeed Babić Rosario, Sotgiu, De Valck, & Bijmolt (2016, p. 298) find that the effect of eWOM on sales is stronger for social media "that enable eWOM receivers to assess their own similarity to eWOM senders on the basis of username, avatar, profile page, and geographic location". Therefore, the examination of social networks is also relevant from the practical perspective.

The main research problem of this study is to understand how marketing communication in social networks influences eWOM while considering the:

- **communication form (image, animation, video)**
- **communication appeal (rational, emotional)**
- **brand type (mass-market, luxury)**
- **geographic market (Poland, Italy)**

The main research problem requires specific questions to be answered:

1) How does the form of marketing communication in social networks influence eWOM?
2) How does marketing communication appeal in social networks influence eWOM?
3) How does marketing communications of mass-market and luxury brands in social networks influence eWOM?
4) What are the differences between the influence of marketing communication appeal in social networks on eWOM for mass-market and luxury brands?
5) What are the differences between the influence of marketing communication appeal in social networks on eWOM within the Polish and Italian markets?

2.2. Research hypotheses

The common gratifications expected of spreading eWOM on social media and using social networks emerging from the literature are self-expression/promotion, entertainment and social interactions. Jahn & Kunz (2012) examine the gratifications of brand page usage and engagement in social networks finding support for the three main types of gratifications (self-oriented, content-oriented and relationship-oriented) using both qualitative and quantitative methods. However, it is worth mentioning that there is no evidence of an empirical study confirming that these are actually the main gratifications of eWOM in social networks. The extant studies are either focused on one gratification only, e.g. self-enhancement (Eisingerich et al., 2015) or do not include some of the gratifications mentioned above, e.g. self-expression/promotion (Azar et al., 2016) or entertainment (Fu et al., 2017). However, as the three common gratifications (self-expression/promotion, entertainment and social interactions) clearly emerge from the literature, they are deemed appropriate for the development of the research hypotheses in this study.

Considering the different communication forms, it seems reasonable to argue that a video includes a higher number of peripheral cues than other forms of content. A video can convey more messages and can be more attractive than other forms of communication (e.g., a text or an image), thus it can be more persuasive under both central or peripheral route identified in the ELM model. The usage of the content of high vividness (video) in marketing communication in social media creates an experience that is more similar to real, direct experience with a brand/product (Coyle & Thorson, 2001). A video content cues the "realism heuristic" – by being more authentic and offering a more intense experience than images or animations, it can be more trusted (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). H. Li & Bukovac (1999), as well as Bruce, Murthi, & Rao (2017), argue that animation in banner ads can attract users' attention and foster user engagement. Sung & Cho (2012) claim that the content of high vividness has a stronger potential than the content of low and moderate vividness (e.g., text and still pictures) to shape consumers' immediate attitudes toward advertising. It seems reasonable to expect that these immediate attitudes can lead to eWOM. Furthermore, taking into consideration both U&G theory and the common gratifications of spreading eWOM on social media and using social networks, a video gratifies users' need for entertainment more than an image (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). Moreover, the attractiveness and richness of this form may make it more relevant for self-expression and self-promotion. However, as mentioned before, the findings of prior research on the influence of content vividness on user

comments (product-related discussion) and shares (forwarding product-related content) in social networks are far from being conclusive. Many scholars find a non-significant (De Vries et al., 2012; C. Kim & Yang, 2017; Vaiciukynaite et al., 2017) or negative (Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; C. D. Schultz, 2017; Swani & Milne, 2017) effect of post vividness on the number of user comments. Sabate et al. (2014) argue that brand posts with images have a positive influence on the number of user comments but find no evidence for videos. Some scholars report that brand posts with images obtain more comments than posts with videos (D. H. Kim et al., 2015) and that brand posts with images have a higher positive influence on the number of comments than brand posts with videos (Wagner et al., 2017). However, Luarn et al. (2015) reveal that people comment on brand posts with videos more than on those with images. Regarding the relationship between post vividness and post sharing, again some studies obtain non-significant (Vaiciukynaite et al., 2017) or partially significant (Tafesse, 2015) results. Other studies reveal that brand posts with images are more likely to be shared by users than posts with videos (D. H. Kim et al., 2015) and that brand posts with images have a higher positive influence on the number of shares than brand posts with videos (Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; C. D. Schultz, 2017). In contrast, other scholars find that people are more likely to share posts with videos than posts with images (Luarn et al., 2015; Malhotra, Malhotra, & See, 2013) and that brand posts with videos have a higher positive influence on the number of shares than brand posts with images (C. Kim & Yang, 2017; Tafesse, 2015). On Facebook, user engagement rate is higher for video posts (6.03%) than for image posts (4.48%) (We Are Social, 2019). Eckler & Bolls (2011), as well as IAB Europe (2018), underline the growing importance of video advertising (that registered a 34.8% growth in advertising spending in 2017) and, in line with Universal McCann (2017) and GlobalWebIndex (2018a) highlight user engagement in watching videos online. It suggests that this form (usually more expensive than animations and images) may be particularly effective in marketing communications and marketers should use it more often (Kaplan & Mazurek, 2018); however, as mentioned before, this hypothesis requires further investigation. Therefore:

- ***H1****: Marketing communication in social networks using videos has the highest while using images has the lowest positive influence on eWOM.*

Two main appeals can be distinguished in marketing communications: a rational (also informational, utilitarian or functional) and an emotional appeal. The question whether the former or the latter is more effective has been widely examined in academic literature often

leading to a lack of consensus among scholars (Heath & Stipp, 2011; Teichert, Hardeck, Liu, & Trivedi, 2018; Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999). As far as the research on traditional media is concerned, according to Holbrook (1978), more factual content should be perceived as more credible. Golden & Johnson (1983) find that informational appeal of TV commercials is more liked and elicit higher purchase intentions than emotional appeal. Other scholars claim that both informativeness and entertainment of advertising are crucial to its effectiveness (Ducoffe, 1995, 1996) and that as "there are purchase decisions where thinking is most involved and others where feeling dominates" (Vaughn, 1980, p. 30), the importance of each appeal depends on factors as product category (Akbari, 2015; Swaminathan, Zinkhan, & Reddy, 1996; R. E. Taylor, 1999), NFC (McKay-Nesbitt et al., 2011; Ruiz & Sicilia, 2004) and knowledge of the advertised brand (Dens & De Pelsmacker, 2010). Ducoffe (1995) finds a substantial positive correlation between advertising informativeness and its value, however, he claims that consumers may ignore informative advertisements unless they find them entertaining enough to focus their attention (Ducoffe, 1995). Although advertisers often use factual information (Heath & Stipp, 2011; Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999) to generate highly efficient central information processing (F. Hansen, 2005), this processing is not feasible in the real world where the attention of consumers is scarce (F. Hansen, 2005; Heath & Stipp, 2011). Indeed, Van den Putte (2009) finds that campaign recall and appreciation is the largest for TV commercials in which entertaining content is used. Similarly, Geuens, De Pelsmacker, & Faseur (2011) argue that "emotional ads outperform non-emotional ones in terms of the attitude towards the ad and the brand" (Geuens et al., 2011, p. 424). Zarantonello, Schmitt, & Jedidi (2014) analyze 257 TV commercials and find that emotional appeal has a stronger relationship with brand knowledge in countries with medium and high GDP. It all suggests that when there is an abundance of information and the attention of consumers is scarce emotional appeal is more effective. Similarly, in studies focused on print advertisements, McKay-Nesbitt, Manchanda, Smith, & Huhmann (2011) find that young adults recall emotional advertisements better than rational ones, and Teichert, Hardeck, Liu, & Trivedi (2018) reveal that emotional appeals are more effective for reaching various marketing communications goals from building awareness to influencing purchase intention. Literature in psychology reveals that people talk about emotional episodes in 90 to 96% of the cases and the more emotionally intense the event, the more frequent and extended social sharing (Christophe & Rimé, 1997). Derbaix & Vanhamme (2003) find that "the more surprised the consumers are, the more they will spread WOM" (Derbaix & Vanhamme, 2003, p. 109), thus an emotional appeal of marketing communications may positively influence eWOM. Indeed,

Gopinath et al. (2014) examine the influence of rational and emotional appeals in traditional advertising on eWOM and find that only emotional advertisements influence user recommendations in online forums that in turn have a direct positive impact on product sales.

As far as online marketing communications is concerned, some scholars find that most people prefer online advertisements that provide interesting information (Szubra & Trojanowski, 2018). In the specific context of social media, Araujo, Neijens, & Vliegenhart (2015) find that informational content obtains higher levels of re-tweeting and Kim & Yang (2017) report that emotional appeals have a negative influence on the number of shares, while rational appeals have a positive influence on the same measure. However, most studies suggest a higher impact of emotional appeals. "Surprise and joy effectively concentrate attention and retain viewers"(Teixeira, Wedel, & Pieters, 2012). 41% of Internet users like humor in online advertising and only 23% like online advertising messages that provide useful information (Internet Standard, 2012). On the basis of the analysis of 240 video advertisements shared on social media, Akpinar & Berger (2017) reveal that video advertisements with an emotional appeal have a higher influence on the number of shares than those with an informative appeal.

In social networks, post appeal (i.e., "the overall theme of a post") might be a central driver of user response (Wagner et al., 2017, p. 607). Most empirical studies focused on Facebook also confirm that the emotional appeal of communication has a higher influence on the number of comments and shares. On the basis of a content analysis of marketing communications on Facebook of 193 Fortune 500 companies, Swani et al. (2013) argue that the use of emotional appeal increases the number of likes. Shen & Bissell (2013) analyze brand posts of beauty brands and find that entertaining content is used more often and that surveys garner more comments than other types of entertaining content. Swani & Milne (2017) argue that emotional appeals have a positive influence on the number of comments and find no evidence for the influence of functional appeals. Pletikosa Cvijikj & Florian (2013) find that an emotional appeal of communications has the largest effect (compared to information and remuneration appeals) on both user comments and shares. Similarly, Luarn et al. (2015) show that people are more likely to comment on and share entertaining brand posts than informational and remuneration brand posts. Furthermore, on the basis of U&G theory, Wagner et al. (2017) argue that the fit of post appeal to users' needs (gratifications expected) determine user response in terms of likes, comments and shares. It can be argued that the common gratifications of spreading eWOM on social media and using social networks

revealed by prior research (self-expression/promotion, entertainment and social interactions) are emotional rather than rational. While processing information in social networks consumers follow "peripheral route" relying on heuristics, social cues, and simple inferences in their attitude formation (Schulze, Schöler, & Skiera, 2014; Zhong et al., 2011). As consumers expend little thought elaborating on a message, emotional content may be more appreciated and shared. Therefore:

- ***H2****: Emotional appeal of marketing communication in social networks has a higher positive influence on eWOM than rational appeal.*

"Brand characteristics play an important role in explaining the level of WOM" (Lovett et al., 2013, p. 440). Chung & Darke (2006) argue that people share more WOM for self-related products than for the utilitarian ones. Richins (1983) shows that the higher the price, the greater the likelihood of negative WOM if the product fails to satisfy customers' expectations. As mentioned before, self-expression and self-promotion are among the main common motivations of spreading eWOM on social media and using social networks. Prior research reveals that they are also the key motivations of consumer engagement with luxury brands on social media (Kwon, Ratneshwar, & Thorson, 2017; Pentina, Guilloux, & Micu, 2018). Brands are powerful means of self-expression in social networks (Y. Sung et al., 2018; Wallace et al., 2014). Users harness the symbolic value of brands or products to express their self-concepts and ideal self-identities (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012; D. G. Taylor et al., 2012; Wallace, Buil, & de Chernatony, 2014) for instance by publishing "brand-selfies" (Pentina et al., 2018; Schivinski & Brzozowska-Woś, 2015; Y. Sung et al., 2018). It follows that on social media people are probably more likely to share content that is self-concept relevant, status-related, unique, entertaining and surprising (Barasch & Berger, 2014; Berger, 2014; Berger & Iyengar, 2013). People are more likely to share online advertisements that express their identity (D. G. Taylor et al., 2012). The self-expressiveness of online advertisements is higher when the brand is consistent with self-concept, the involvement in the product category is higher and when the advertisement is entertaining (D. G. Taylor et al., 2012). Lovett et al. (2013) reveal that on social media people tend to talk more about brands that are highly differentiated, exciting, those with higher perceived quality, and confirm that premium brands generate a higher level of eWOM in social media than value brands. Therefore:

- ***H3****: Marketing communication in social networks has a higher positive influence on eWOM for luxury brands than for mass-market brands.*

Luxury brands elicit emotions, bring personal and hedonistic gratifications. “Luxury is closer to art than to mere function”, hedonism dominates over functionality (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, p. 315). Purchase decisions of luxury goods are driven by emotions (Taranko, 2018) and so are the behaviors of liking and sharing of luxury brand posts (Pentina et al., 2018). It suggests that the effectiveness of a certain message appeal may also depend on the brand or product type (Wagner et al., 2017). A rational appeal may be more effective for utilitarian products, whereas emotional appeal for value-expressive products (Wagner et al., 2017). Indeed, Lee & Hong (2016) suggest that the impact of the emotional appeal on user engagement on social networks can be higher for hedonic products than for the utilitarian ones. Dhaoui (2014) argues specifically that the emotional value of luxury brands messages on social networks increases the recommendation rate. Therefore:

- ***H4****: For luxury brands emotional appeal of marketing communication in social networks has a higher positive influence on eWOM than rational appeal.*

The use of social media and personal sources of information for purchase decisions can be explained on the basis of Hofstede’s theory of cultural difference (Hofstede, 1980) and in particular of cultural dimensions of individualism/collectivism, long-/short-term orientation, uncertainty avoidance and power distance (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014).

Individualism-collectivism is one of the most commonly used dimensions in cross-cultural studies and a robust dimension of national culture (Minkov, 2018). The individualist cultures demonstrate an independent view of the self that emphasizes separateness, internal attributes, and uniqueness of individuals, while collectivist cultures demonstrate an interdependent view of the self that emphasizes connectedness, social context, and relationships (J. L. Aaker & Maheswaran, 1997). In sum, this dimension reflects the extent to which people are self-centered or group-oriented (Luo, Wu, Shi, & Xu, 2014). Chau et al. (2002) compare the purpose of Internet usage between users from Hong Kong and the US. The results of their study reveal that respondents from the collectivist culture tend to view the Internet as a means for social interaction, whereas those from the individualist culture are more likely to use it to seek and obtain information (Chau et al., 2002). Pfeil, Zaphiris, & Ang (2006) find that the lower the Individualism Index Value (IDV) of a country, the more user contributions to Wikipedia. Similarly, Goodrich & de Mooij (2014) argue that in collectivist cultures there is more interpersonal communication (also about products and brands). Social media usage and trust in online forums are negatively related to individualism (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014). In

one of the few studies focused on the European market (France and UK), Posey, Lowry, Roberts, & Ellis (2010) reveal that the tendency toward collectivism increases self-disclosure in online communities. The expected gratifications of social interactions may lead to a higher level of eWOM in social networks in collectivist cultures. Indeed, Chu & Choi (2011) find that, by offering, seeking and passing along opinions, Chinese users (from a horizontal collectivist culture) engage in eWOM in social networks significantly more than their American counterparts (from a vertical individualist culture). The authors refer to a typology of cultures that expands individualism-collectivism with a horizontal-vertical dimension (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998), which refers to the hierarchy that is high in vertical and low in horizontal cultures. However, in an empirical study with participants from Canada and Singapore, Chung & Darke (2006) show that people from the collectivist culture spread less WOM than people from the individualist culture. Furthermore, on the basis of a survey conducted in Singapore and in Australia, Lam et al. (2009) argue that individualism has a strong positive effect on WOM between weak ties, which may suggest that people from more individualist cultures are more likely to spread eWOM on social media. Indeed, Fong & Burton (2008) reveal that users of US online discussion boards are significantly more likely to spread eWOM than users of Chinese discussion boards. Similarly, Lai & County (2013) find that American customers are more likely to provide online product reviews than Chinese customers.

Self-expression and self-promotion may be particularly relevant gratifications of spreading eWOM in social networks in individualist cultures, however, Goodrich & de Mooij (2014) argue that these gratifications are particularly relevant in short-term oriented cultures, i.e. those standing tor "the fostering of virtues related to the past and present—in particular, respect for tradition, preservation of "face," and fulfilling social obligations" (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p. 239). Indeed, Facebook penetration and number of friends positively correlate with the short-term orientation of a culture (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014).

Uncertainty avoidance is "the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations" (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 191). In low uncertainty avoidance cultures, as opposed to high uncertainty avoidance cultures, people believe that other people can be trusted (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014).

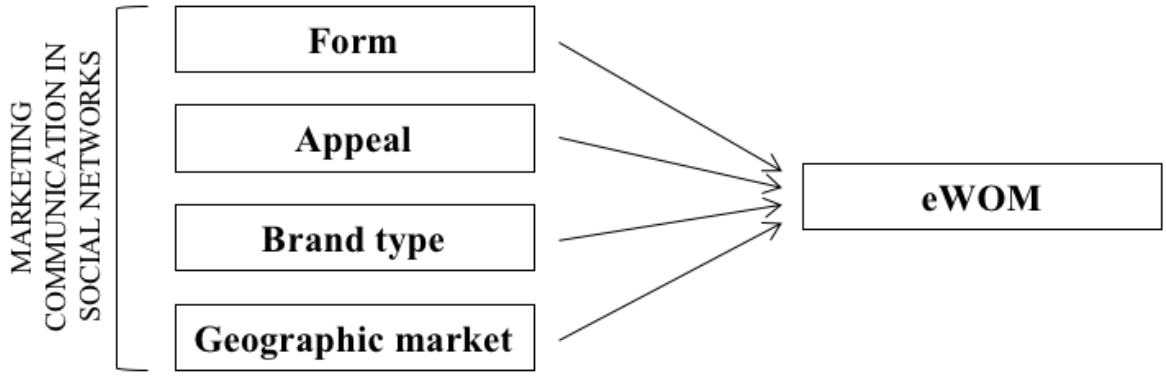
Social media usage and trust in online forums is positively related to power distance (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014), i.e. "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 61). Inequalities are expected in high power-distance cultures, while cultures low in power distance are more egalitarian (Lam et al., 2009). Lam et al. (2009) find that the more consumers value high power distance, the more they are likely to engage in WOM.

As far as other culture classifications are concerned, on the basis of Trompenaars' model of cultural differences (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998), Hathaway (2018) finds a strong correlation between social media penetration rates and the factor related to individualism, as well as a moderate correlation between social media penetration rates and affective/neutral and universal/particular factors. In sum, prior research suggests that in different geographic markets, different cultures influence eWOM in social networks, but the relationship is neither clear nor the impact of other factors (e.g., age, income or education structure of population) can be excluded. Therefore:

- ***H5****: The influence of marketing communication in social networks on eWOM varies according to geographic markets.*

Figure 11 illustrates the conceptual model including the independent variables (marketing communication form, appeal, brand type, geographic market) and the dependent variable (eWOM).

Figure 11. Conceptual model



Source: Own elaboration

2.3. Research setting

2.3.1. Facebook

Invented in 2004 at Harvard University by Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook is now a global social network with the highest number of users and also a key marketing communication channel (Lemanowicz & Gańko, 2014; Malhotra et al., 2013; G. C.-C. Shen, Chiou, Hsiao, Wang, & Li, 2016). On Facebook companies create pages on which they publish different types of content and interact with users. Some large companies create so-called global pages on which different content can be published for different geographic markets. From the current research perspective, this setting allows comparisons between marketing communications and consumer behavior in different countries. The content published on a page is referred to as "post" and appears in the central part of the page referred to as "wall" or "timeline" (Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). Users can see the posts by becoming "fans" of (or "liking") a brand page. Facebook brand pages are online brand communities (Azar et al., 2016) mostly made up of heavy buyers (Nelson-Field et al., 2012) making them particularly relevant for the study of brand advocacy and eWOM. The average organic reach of a post (without sponsoring) is 6% of the fanbase (We Are Social, 2019). In other words, if a company does not pay for a post, on average, only 6% of users who follow the page will see the post. Companies use two ways to extend the reach of their posts within both fans and other Facebook users.

The first way, which also allows choosing a specific target group for each post, is by sponsoring posts or creating ads. Google and Facebook, account for more than 60% of global online advertising revenues. Facebook alone accounts for 18% but its advertising revenue growth rate is more than twice as high as Google's (WARC, 2017). The average CTR for Facebook ads (.90%), Google display (.60%) and Google AdWords (4.1%) is much higher than the average CTR for display advertising (.05%) (Chaffey, 2018).

The second way to extend the reach of posts is by harnessing eWOM. Facebook users can publish posts on a brand page (if allowed by the company), express reactions on posts ("like", "love", "haha", "wow", "sad" or "angry"), comment on them and share them. On the basis of the intensity of initial user interaction on a non-sponsored brand post, Facebook algorithm decides how relevant the post may be to other users and whether to show it or not in their news feeds (Wagner et al., 2017). Thus, user interaction determines the ultimate reach of a

brand post. By "liking" a brand post users demonstrate their endorsement of a brand or content (Azar et al., 2016; Dhaoui, 2014; Packard & Berger, 2017) and provide feedback to the brand visible also to other users. Comments and shares represent a form of eWOM (Fogel, 2010; Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Tafesse, 2015). When a user comments on or shares a brand post, this post can appear in the news feeds of the user's friends (Chu, 2011; Kabadayi & Price, 2014). Therefore commenting and sharing increase the reach and impact of brand posts. With an average number of 150 contacts for each Facebook user (which interestingly coincides with "Dunbar's number" - a cognitive limit to the number of people with whom one can maintain stable social relationships), the reach of eWOM on Facebook is enormous (Camarero & San José, 2011; Hill & Dunbar, 2003). For the top brand pages, friends of fans can be an even 34 times larger audience than fans (Lipsman, Mudd, Rich, & Bruich, 2012).

When users comment on brand posts the feedback they provide is richer than a reaction and both the brand and other users can add further comments. As mentioned before, commented brand posts can be distributed automatically to the news feeds of users' friends, it does not require any actions from users. Prior research reveals that passive-broadcast features, that do not require any effort from users are particularly effective in generating social contagion (Aral & Walker, 2011).

The act of sharing is a deliberate action and specifically expresses users' desire to show the brand posts to their network of friends (Fogel, 2010; Hoffman & Fodor, 2010; Tafesse, 2015). By sharing brand posts users provide feedback to the brand (visible also to other users), self-appoint themselves as brand ambassadors and the shared brand posts also appear on the users' profile pages, becoming a part of the users' presentation on Facebook (Gavilanes et al., 2018; Malhotra et al., 2013; van Dijck, 2013). "Share may be a strategic behavior related to self-presentation and thus needs more cognitive effort than does comment" (Kim & Yang, 2017, p. 442). According to Chu (2011), pass-along behaviors of advertisements on Facebook are determined by self-disclosure and status seeking.

Gratifications of using social media as well as those of spreading and seeking eWOM were described in the previous chapter. Gratifications of using social networks were mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. How about specific gratifications of using Facebook?

According to Zhang, Tang, & Leung (2011), the gratifications people obtain from using Facebook include social surveillance, recognition, entertainment, and network maintenance. Entertainment is "the strongest predictor of perceived importance of Facebook in people's lives, as well as the time they actually spent on the site" (Zhang et al., 2011, p. 738). Recognition seems to be the second strongest gratification influencing the perceived importance of Facebook, log-in frequency and the number of friends (Zhang et al., 2011). This is consistent with other studies that find that brand following and interactions with brands on Facebook are means of consumer self-expression and self-promotion, forming part of consumers' virtual selves (Schau & Gilly, 2003; van Dijck, 2013; Wallace, Buil, & de Chernatony, 2017). On Facebook users state they "like" a brand to express themselves and state who they are (Lipsman et al., 2012; Wallace et al., 2014, 2017). Park et al. (2009) reveal similar four primary needs (information, self-status seeking, entertainment, socializing) for group participation in Facebook. It is worth noticing that these needs and gratifications correspond to the common gratifications of eWOM in social media and using social networks revealed by other studies (information, self-expression/promotion, entertainment and social interactions). This further confirms the relevance of this social network for the current study. The specific Facebook features that allow users to express a reaction, comment and share, offer rich data for analysis of eWOM. The data is public thus it is not surprising that Facebook was used in numerous prior empirical studies of social networks.

In sum, Facebook is selected for the current research in order to obtain a high amount of data for the analysis, to compare different geographic markets and to provide practical relevance to the results.

2.3.2. Cosmetic market

Cosmetic (or beauty) market includes four product categories: fragrances, make up, skincare and haircare. Most of the brands in this market are owned by seven companies: L'Oréal, Unilever, Procter & Gamble, Estée Lauder Companies, Colgate-Palmolive, Johnson & Johnson and Shiseido. Some cosmetic brands create global pages on Facebook, which, as mentioned before, allows comparisons between geographic markets.

Women are the main consumers in this market, which is important because, as mentioned before, prior research suggests that women are more likely to be market mavens (Higie et al., 1987), to pass along online messages (Phelps et al., 2004) and to use social media (Eurostat, 2017a; Grant, 2017; Statista, 2018). Women more often than men like and comment on Facebook posts (We Are Social, 2019). They are more active than men in opinion seeking and opinion giving on social media (Bartosik-Purgat, 2018). Furthermore, women are more likely to use social networks for entertainment and relational purposes (Barker, 2009) – motivations that correspond to those of spreading eWOM on social media. Although Schivinski & Brzozowska-Woś (2015) argue that among Polish consumers, men contribute to and create brand-related content on social media more often than women, the differences among different product categories are not examined. Furthermore, Bartosik-Purgat (2016) argues that 40.8% of Polish respondents often and very often search for information on cosmetic brands on social media (which is the highest result among the analyzed countries) and that social media are particularly relevant marketing communication channel for cosmetic brands in Poland.

WOM programs (especially product seeding) are relevant for and widely used in marketing communications of beauty brands (I. Chae et al., 2017; Fashion and Beauty Monitor, 2017; Haenlein & Libai, 2017). 55% of marketing specialists from the beauty industry claim that influencers provide new and creative ways to gain the attention of consumers and build audiences (Fashion and Beauty Monitor, 2017). 84% of these specialists work with digital influencers and 76% argue that influencers and celebrities are critical or very important in promotion on social media (Fashion and Beauty Monitor, 2017). Furthermore, most of them argue that the influence of a large community of influencers, ambassadors and fans will be critical for beauty brands' success (Fashion and Beauty Monitor, 2017). Sorokin (2013) finds that 40% of consumers willing to be involved in product seeding would like to test cosmetics.

The analysis of cosmetic brands is deemed interesting also because possession and consumption of cosmetics usually are not publicly visible, so sharing information about cosmetic brands can be the only way to reveal their possession. This may be particularly relevant to luxury brands. Chao & Schor (1998) find that the share of women buying expensive cosmetic brands increases with the visibility of the product (e.g., it is higher for lipsticks than for facial cleansers). This finding suggests consumers may want to reveal the possession of luxury cosmetic brands and this can be achieved by spreading eWOM in social networks. Beauty is the third largest personal luxury goods category (after accessories and apparel) that accounts for 18% of online global online personal luxury goods market by value (Bain & Company, 2019). According to Deloitte (2018) in the financial year 2016 (ending 30 June 2017), beauty was the top-performing category of luxury brands registering sales growth at 7.6%. Consumers (especially Millennials) declare that their spend on luxury cosmetics will grow in the future (BCG & Altagamma, 2017). Due to their accessibility, cosmetics are the most often purchased luxury product category (Polskie Badanie Czytelnictwa, 2017), while WOM and social media are the most important information sources about luxury cosmetic brands (KPMG, 2015), thus this category may provide a high amount of data for the analysis of eWOM for luxury brands.

In sum, the cosmetic market is selected for the current research in order to obtain a high amount of data for the analysis and to compare marketing communications of mass-market and luxury brands on European markets.

2.3.3. Luxury brands

In economics, luxury goods are "goods that have an income elasticity of demand that is greater than 1: a 1 percent increase in income leads to more than a 1 percent increase in demand for a luxury good" (Varian, 2010, p. 285). However, this strictly economic definition has several limitations. Luxury is a highly subjective concept including psychological, social and cultural aspects. Even though there is no general agreement in academic literature on what constitutes a luxury good, the various definitions refer to high quality, high price, rarity and a high level of aesthetics of luxury goods (Ankiel & Stachowiak, 2016; Dryl & de Araujo Gil, 2016; Ko, Costello, & Taylor, 2017). Moreover, acclaim and status they confer are at least equally important (Ankiel & Stachowiak, 2016).

Global luxury goods market includes nine segments (luxury cars, personal luxury goods, luxury hospitality, fine wines and spirits, gourmet food and fine dining, fine art, high-end furniture and housewares, private jets and yachts, luxury cruises) (Bain & Company, 2019). Despite the recent crisis, the luxury goods market grows at a higher rate than other industries (Stępień & Mruk, 2018). From 1996 to 2018, the global personal luxury goods market (the second biggest segment after luxury cars) registered a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6% (Bain & Company, 2019). It grows mainly due to the democratization of luxury (goods once reserved for a very limited group of consumers are now more accessible to others) and the growing importance of emerging markets (e.g. China, Middle East, Russia) (Granot, Russell, & Brashear-Alejandro, 2013; Shukla, 2011; Truong, McColl, & Kitchen, 2009). Europe is the top region for luxury sales by value, followed by the Americas (Bain & Company, 2019). As far as the nationality of consumers is concerned, Chinese consumers account for the biggest part of global luxury purchases (33%) and drive the market growth (Bain & Company, 2019). The market growth is also fueled by Generation Y that accounts for 31% of personal luxury goods sales and is expected to account for 45% in 2025 (Bain & Company, 2019). It is worth mentioning that almost 50% of consumers from this generation use social networks to research products (GlobalWebIndex, 2017). According to a study by BCG & Altagamma (2017), 72% of luxury consumers use social media to interact with luxury brands, especially on Facebook. Ankiel & Stachowiak (2016) further reveal that 59% of users who follow luxury fashion brands interact with them by "liking" brand content and 20% by commenting on it.

However, “there was no love at first sight between luxury and digital” (Heine & Berghaus, 2014, p. 224). Traditionally the main media used for marketing communications of luxury brands were magazines and, for more accessible categories (e.g., cosmetics) TV (Castillan et al., 2017; Polskie Badanie Czytelnictwa, 2017). For a long time, luxury brands were skeptical about using social media because of the dissonance between the egalitarian character of this type of media and the exclusive character of luxury brands (Deloitte, 2018; Dryl, 2015; Okonkwo, 2009). Another issue is the lack of control over messages related to the dominance of user-generated content (Annie Jin, 2012; Okonkwo, 2009; Üçok Hughes et al., 2016) and the consequent risk of losing an exclusive image. First luxury brands (Gucci and Burberry) started using social media in 2009 (Dryl, 2015; A. J. Kim & Ko, 2012; Phan, Thomas, & Heine, 2011). Today luxury brand marketers are increasingly shifting advertising budgets to digital channels (Napean and Unity Marketing, 2018; Zenith, 2018) and social media are considered to be a promising marketing communication channel for luxury brands (Godey et al., 2016; A. J. Kim & Ko, 2012; Napean and Unity Marketing, 2018). 77% of luxury goods and services marketers invest in social media advertising and promotion (Napean and Unity Marketing, 2018). In 2017, the share of social media in advertising expenditure of the luxury industry was of 2.7% and it is expected to account for 3.1% by 2019 (Zenith, 2018).

Luxury marketing is a challenge for both marketing theory and practice (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Wiedmann & Hennigs, 2013). “Luxury brands must be desired by all, consumed only by the happy few” (Kapferer, 1997, p. 255). In order to be desired luxury brands need be both known (create brand awareness) and considered as such (create brand image). The role of marketing communication in social media is to build awareness and dream of luxury, a dream that needs to be constantly regenerated (Godey et al., 2016; Kapferer, 1997; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). In the future, the use of social media without compromising brand values will be the biggest challenge for luxury brands (Deloitte, 2018; Fashion and Beauty Monitor, 2018).

Table 5 depicts social media activity of luxury brands with the highest number of fans in one week (November 3-9, 2017) on Facebook and Instagram, two of the most relevant social media for marketing communications of luxury brands (BCG & Altagamma, 2017). It is worth noticing the high number of followers and the high frequency of posting as well as the high share of video content.

Table 5. Luxury brands with the highest number of fans on social media

	LOUIS VUITTON	*CHANEL*	*BURBERRY*	*GUCCI*	*DIOR*	*HERMÈS*
FACEBOOK brand page	www.facebook.com/LouisVuitton/	www.facebook.com/chanel/	www.facebook.com/Burberry/	www.facebook.com/GUCCI/	www.facebook.com/Dior/	www.facebook.com/hermes/
Number of fans	20.59 million	20.3 million	17.3 million	16.5 million	16.2 million	2.88 million
Posting frequency	0.6 posts/day	0.5 posts/day	0.3 posts/day	3.3 posts/day	1.1 posts/day	0.1 posts/day
PTAT	269 621	213 293	19 914	120 711	140 593	21 342
Engagement rate	1.31%	1.1%	0.1%	0.73%	0.87%	0.75%
Post type	58% image, 42% video	47% image, 47% video, 6% text	25% image, 75% video	95% image, 5% video	15% image, 79% video, 6% text	100% video
INSTAGRAM brand page	www.instagram.com/louisvuitton/	www.instagram.com/chanelofficial	www.instagram.com/burberry/	www.instagram.com/gucci/	www.instagram.com/dior/	www.instagram.com/hermes/
Number of followers	19.8 million	24.8 million	10.3 million	18.7 million	17.6 million	5.7 million

PTAT = People Talking About This - the number of people that interacted with a brand page and brand posts
Engagement rate = percentage ratio between PTAT and the number of fans
Source: own elaboration based on data retrieved from Likealyzer, Facebook and Instagram

What are the consequences of marketing communication in social media for luxury brands? The research of Kim & Ko (2012) focused on Louis Vuitton brand and Korean market suggest that the luxury brands' marketing activity on social media entertains users, stimulates their desire for luxury and creates interaction among users, which can lead to WOM effects (A. J. Kim & Ko, 2012). In a more extended study, including five luxury brands and four counties (China, France, India and Italy), Godey et al. (2016) reveal that marketing communication in social media has significant positive effects on brand awareness, brand image and consumer behavior (brand preference, loyalty and willingness to pay a premium price). Social media can also be used as an effective marketing communication channel in the positioning of luxury brands (Bianchi, 2018). The content published by luxury fashion brands on social media makes consumers visit brand offline/online store (68%) or brand website (52%), purchase brand products (39%) and recommend the brand (26%) (Ankiel & Stachowiak, 2016).

Furthermore, the relevance of eWOM in social media for luxury brands is related to the following pieces of evidence from the academic literature:

- Given the high cost of purchase and the high risk of counterfeiting, online information research from credible sources is particularly relevant to luxury brands and social media can serve as evaluation forums (Annie Jin, 2012)

- In the case of hedonic goods, consumers prefer recommendations from other consumers over professional reviews by critics (Dellarocas et al., 2007; D. Smith, Menon, & Sivakumar, 2005)
- Consumption can be a form of self-expression and self-promotion (Schau & Gilly, 2003) and luxury brands may be used to communicate social status and unique identity (Annie Jin, 2012; Lovett et al., 2013; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004)

From the U&G theory perspective, as self-expression/promotion seem to be important gratifications of spreading eWOM on social media and using social networks, the latter evidence is particularly relevant for the scope of this study. Prior research suggests that the purchase of luxury brands is more related to personal preferences and the need for status than to financial resources (Han, Nunes, & Drèze, 2010; Polskie Badanie Czytelnictwa, 2017; Stępień & Mruk, 2018). Consumers are often motivated to acquire products on the basis of what they represent to them, to their social reference groups and other groups (Han et al., 2010; Leigh & Gabel, 1992; Stępień, 2018). As Veblen notes in his classical treatise from 1899 "The Theory of the Leisure Class" what confers status is "conspicuous consumption" – exhibiting rather than accumulating wealth. However, it is not necessary to consume a product to transfer its meaning. If "we are what we have" (Belk, 1988, p. 139), "we are what we post" as well (Schau & Gilly, 2003, p. 385). Social networks allow consumers to create digital collages on their profiles to express their individual and affiliative identity. By sharing brand communications consumers use the symbolic value of a brand to represent their identity and social status to others, just as if they were actually consuming the advertised products (Lovett et al., 2013; Schau & Gilly, 2003; Taylor et al., 2012). Users choose brands on the basis of the image of a typical brand user they identify with or want to resemble (Han et al., 2010). As social networks allow users to present an "ideal self", people can choose brands that they cannot afford in the real world, to express themselves online (Schau & Gilly, 2003; Wallace et al., 2014). Furthermore, as self-expression on social media, luxury brand consumption is positively influenced by narcissistic orientation (Kang & Park, 2016).

"Luxury purchases have two facets: indulging in one's pleasure (luxury for self) and demonstration of success (luxury for others)" (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, p. 321). Other scholars refer to self-referenced (or personally oriented) motivations (subjective and private, bringing affective, symbolic and utilitarian gratifications, e.g. pleasure, self-expression, quality-assurance) and other-referenced (or socially oriented) motivations (socially-

recognized and public; e.g. ostentation, non-conformity/uniqueness, conformity with the reference group) (Amatulli & Guido, 2011; S. Tsai, 2005; Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Siebels, 2009). Interesting results emerge from prior research on the different motivations of luxury brand purchase between consumers from Western (e.g., US, Italy, France) and Eastern countries. It seems that for Western consumers luxury is for themselves, personally oriented, often hedonic purchase motivations play a dominant role, while for Eastern consumers luxury is for others, it must be socially recognized and public. Western consumers are driven by the consistency with their individual style, while Eastern consumers purchase luxury goods mainly to convey their social status and display their wealth (Phau & Prendergast, 2000; Shukla, 2011; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Cheema & Kaikati (2010) argue that consumers with need for uniqueness (that might be more represented in Western individualist cultures) are not likely to share information about "their" brands. Han et al. (2010, p. 15) reveal that wealthy consumers with a low need for status purchase "quiet" luxury goods to associate with their own kind that can recognize these goods, while wealthy consumers with a high need for status purchase "loud" luxury goods to "signal to the less affluent that they are not one of them". Is it the same with sharing luxury brand content? Luxury has the function of creating social stratification (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009), thus it is particularly interesting to compare consumer behavior in high and low power-distance cultures. Commenting on brands or sharing interesting brand messages on proper Facebook profile may contribute to one's perceived status and thus lead to user's self-enhancement within a reference group (Pentina et al., 2018; Wolny & Mueller, 2013). Users from cultures in which hierarchy and status are particularly relevant may spread eWOM on social media more than other users, in order to obtain status-related gratifications. Interestingly, Stępień & Mruk (2018) mention that the perception and display of luxury goods may be related to religion. For instance, in Catholic countries, ostentatious display of hedonic goods may not be seen positively (Stępień & Mruk, 2018), thus it may be the same with sharing luxury brand content.

In sum, luxury brands are selected for the current research in order to fill the research gap in academic literature described in the first chapter, compare geographic markets and to provide practical relevance to the results.

2.3.4. The Polish and Italian markets

European markets have been scarcely addressed in marketing literature on social media and WOM. Specifically, only 26 articles providing empirical research findings from the Polish market have been identified in Scopus, Web of Science, Infona, Google Scholar and Researchgate databases by searching without time restrictions (Table 6) suggesting a significant research gap. In addition, in many of these studies, there is a lack of theoretical background and some methodological issues that cast doubts on research findings (e.g., sample bias, response bias, lack of validity and reliability verification, lack of an appropriate statistical analysis).

Table 6. Empirical research articles on social media and WOM in Poland

AUTHOR	*RESEARCH FIELD*	*RESEARCH METHOD*	*MAIN RESULTS*
Andrzejewska (2013)	Usage of social media for building brand image and online communication in the brewing sector	Case study (Kompania Piwowarska)	A description of social media used by the company, activity assessment and recommendation for improvements
Brzozowska-Woś (2013)	Social media and brand image	Survey (n=368)	On social media, the respondents follow brands they like, which bring them positive emotions. Users are likely to follow brands they buy in order to access information (e.g., about sales promotion which is the preferred type of content).
Sorokin (2013)	Product seeding	Survey (n=136)	Most respondents are aware of product seeding programs, would like to participate in them and would recommend the tested products.
Tkaczyk (2013)	WOM in marketing communication	Survey (n=102)	Classification of WOM usage in marketing communication. Most aspiring entrepreneurs are willing to stimulate and use WOM. They agree that customers providing WOM should be rewarded.
Lemanowicz & Gańko, (2014)	Methods for evaluation of the effectiveness of social media marketing	Case study (Johnnie Walker)	A positive assessment of the described Facebook campaign
Tkaczyk & Krzyżanowska (2014)	Consumer attitude toward paid recommendations	Survey (n=145)	A positive correlation between the acceptance of remuneration for recommendations and materialism. The acceptance of monetary remuneration for recommendations is higher for men. A positive correlation between the susceptibility to societal influence and willingness to accept remuneration for recommendations.
Parzonko (2015)	Social media and consumer behavior	Survey (n=110)	87% of respondents use social networks at least once a day. 78% of respondents do not buy a product if it has negative opinions on social media. 74% of respondents search for product information on social media. 73% of respondents follow brands they like.
Schivinski & Brzozowska-Woś (2015)	Online brand-related activities of Polish consumers	Survey (n= 2,253)	Polish consumers are more likely to consume than to create online brand-related content. Women are more likely to read brand e-mails and watch online advertisements than men. Men are more likely to contribute to and create online brand-related content.

Schivinski & Dabrowski (2015)	The influence of firm- and user-generated content on Facebook on brand equity	Survey (n=302)	Firm-created and user-generated social media communications have a positive influence on brand awareness/associations. User-generated social media communication has a positive influence on brand loyalty and perceived brand quality.
Schivinski & Łukasik (2015)	Consumers' online brand-related activities	• Online focus groups • Online in-depth interviews • Netnography	A classification of consumers' online brand-related activities in three main categories (consumption, contribution, creation)
Skowron & Skrzetuski (2015)	Social media in marketing communications	Survey (n=216)	A common use of social media (in particular of Facebook) among Polish companies. Main advantages of social media are the possibility of building brand awareness and low cost. The need for monitoring is seen as the major disadvantage.
Szewczyk (2015)	Social media and display advertising	Case study (Quweta.pl)	A comparative analysis of Facebook and Google display campaigns reveals higher CTR for the Facebook campaign.
Tkaczyk (2015)	Consumer product involvement and WOM	Survey (n=1,000)	The higher the purchase decision involvement in a product category, the higher the propensity to generate WOM.
Wrzochul-Stawinoga (2015)	Building an image of an institution of higher education on Facebook	Content analysis	A description of typical and distinctive content on Facebook for higher education institutions.
Ankiel & Stachowiak (2016)	Luxury brand communications in social media and consumer behavior	Survey (n=100)	69% of respondents follow a luxury fashion brand on social media. Obtaining product information and discount coupons are the main reasons for following luxury fashion brands.
Bartosik-Purgat (2016)	Social media as product information sources	Survey (n=296)	On social media users mainly search for information about mobile phones and computers. 40.8% of Polish respondents often and very often search for information on cosmetic brands on social media (the highest result among the analyzed countries). The more frequently the respondents use Facebook, the more they search for information on cosmetics.
Hajduk (2016)	Social media in marketing communications	Survey (n=596)	85% of respondents use Facebook. Communication through mobile devices becomes always more common.
Jaska & Werenowska, (2016)	Brand promotion in social media	Survey (n=133)	Brand promotion in social media is seen as cheaper than the promotion in traditional media. 77% of respondents agree that constant communication with customers is an advantage of social media.
Mazurek & Tkaczyk (2016)	WOM management	Survey (n=89)	A classification of managerial perspectives on WOM and different approaches to managing it. A weak positive correlation between the company's size and its tendency to actively manage WOM.
Schivinski & Dabrowski (2016)	The influence of firm- and user-generated content on Facebook on brand equity and brand attitude	Survey (n=504)	Firm-created communication has a positive influence on brand attitude. User-generated communication has a positive influence on brand equity and brand attitude. Brand equity and brand attitude have a positive influence on purchase intention.
Wiażewicz & Zatwarnicka-Madura (2016)	Fashion blogs	Survey (n=785)	49% of respondents (93.5 % women) read fashion blogs mainly looking for inspiration and interesting ideas. Most of them think that product and brand opinions on blogs are credible.
Wyrwisz & Żydek (2016)	YouTube in marketing communications	Survey (n=445)	88.3% of respondents declare they access YouTube every day. Most respondents search for entertaining content. YouTube allows companies to build communities and interact with customers.

Brzozowska-Woś & Schivinski (2017)	The influence of the perceived risk and trust toward brands on eWOM	Survey (n=319)	A negative influence of the perceived risk on brand trust. A positive influence of the perceived risk and brand trust on eWOM. Partial negative mediation of brand trust in the relationship between the perceived risk and eWOM.
Siuda (2017)	Preferences toward marketing communication content in online brand communities	Survey (n=151)	Most Polish respondents prefer content including images, practical information on products and sales promotions published 1-2 times a week.
Szulżyk-Cieplak, Puchtel, & Płecha (2017)	Online advertising on social media	Survey (n=200)	47% of respondents visit brand pages on social media. According to the respondents, discount coupons (39.5%) and information on sales promotions (34.5%) positively influence their purchase decisions.
Bartosik-Purgat (2018)	eWOM in social media in consumer decision-making process	Survey (n=296)	80% of Polish respondents use Facebook at least once a day. The more often they use it, the more often they seek information about products, ask acquaintances for advice on product purchase and recommend products to others. Women seek product information on Facebook and spread negative opinions more often than men.

n = Polish sample size
Source: own elaboration based on data from Scopus, Web of Science, Infona, Google Scholar and Researchgate

Similarly, only 18 articles providing empirical research findings from the Italian market have been identified in the Scopus database by searching without time restrictions (Table 7).

Table 7. Empirical research articles on social media and WOM in Italy

AUTHOR	*RESEARCH FIELD*	*RESEARCH METHOD*	*MAIN RESULTS*
Soscia (2007)	The role of emotions in predicting post-consumption behavior	• Experiment • Survey (n=182)	Gratitude has a positive influence on repurchase intention and positive WOM. Guilt has a negative influence on complaint behavior and negative WOM.
Vasalou, Joinson, & Courvoisier (2010)	Factors influencing user motivations for using Facebook	Survey (n=95)	The main motivations of using Facebook for Italian users include keeping contact with people they know (offline), joining groups and events. Games and applications are more important for Italian users than for their US counterparts.
Pagani et al. (2011)	The influence of personality on active and passive use of social networks	• Survey (n=738) • Survey (n=277)	Innovativeness is positively related to the active and passive use of social networks, while self-identity expressiveness and social identity expressiveness are positively related to the active use of social networks.
Valentini & Romenti (2011)	Evaluation of blog content on a company in crisis	Content analysis	Bloggers have explored technical, economic aspects of the crisis of Alitalia and its consequences for the community. Negative sentiment of posts and comments.
Romani, Grappi, & Dalli (2012)	Emotions toward brands and their behavioral effects	• Survey (n=98, 146, 227, 421, 146, 1,217)	Specific negative emotions affect specific behavioral outcomes (switching, complaining, and negative word of mouth).
Di Pietro & Pantano (2013)	Social network-related factors influencing purchase intentions of travelers	Survey (n=1,183)	Perceived usefulness of Facebook and eWOM have the highest positive influence on the purchase intention of a tour package.
Grappi, Romani, & Bagozzi (2013)	Moral emotions and other-regarding virtues influencing NWOM	Survey (n=65, 280)	Contempt, anger and disgust have a positive influence on NWOM.

Mauri & Minazzi (2013)	Web reviews, customer expectations and purchase intention	Survey (n=349)	A positive correlation between the valence of web reviews and both hotel booking intention and the level of customer expectations.
Pagani et al. (2013)	The relationship between extraversion, social identity expressiveness and the active use of Facebook	Survey (n=853)	Extraversion and social identity expressiveness are positively related to the active use of Facebook.
Pantano & Corvello (2013)	Company's reactions on negative eWOM in social networks	Interviews (no details provided) (n=237)	Most common reactions of companies to negative eWOM in social networks include: providing excuses and explanation, acceptance of consumer's request, no reaction, and product substitution.
Martini, Massa, & Testa (2014)	Customer co-creation projects on social media	Case study (Barilla)	A description of the customer co-creation project implemented by Barilla.
Nadeem, Andreini, Salo, & Laukkanen (2015)	Factors influencing consumer trust, attitudes and loyalty toward clothing online retailers	Survey (n=288)	Website service quality and consumers predispositions to use Facebook for online shopping have a positive influence on trust toward an online retailer. Peer recommendations affect consumers' attitudes and have a significantly stronger influence on the attitudes of women than men.
Floreddu & Cabiddu (2016)	Facebook brand page management and online reputation of insurance companies	Content analysis	A typology of social media communication strategies. Companies with high reputation are more likely to respond to customers' comments on Facebook, than those with medium and low reputation.
Godey et al. (2016)	Social media marketing of luxury brands	Survey (n=202)	Social media marketing has a positive influence on brand awareness, brand image and consumer behavior (brand preference, loyalty and willingness to pay a premium price).
Ananda, Hernández-García, & Lamberti (2017)	Social media marketing of fashion brands	• Semi-structured interviews • Content analysis	The perceived importance of social media is the main driver for the implementation of social media marketing. Supporting brand awareness and sales are the main objectives of social media marketing in SMEs. Companies neither focus on building relationships with customers nor on user engagement and advocacy.
Confente & Vigolo (2018)	Determinants of hotel online booking intention among generations	Survey (n=557)	The earlier the generation, the less likely to book a hotel online. Previous online travel purchase is the main predictor of hotel online booking intention. eWOM has a positive influence on online booking intention.
Morra, Ceruti, Chierici, & Di Gregorio (2018)	The influence of communication through social and traditional media on brand equity	Survey (n=183)	User-generated communication in social media positively influences perceived brand quality and loyalty. Firm-created social media communication positively influences brand awareness/associations. Perceived brand quality and brand loyalty positively influence brand equity. Communication through traditional media has a negative influence on brand awareness/associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty.
Morra, Gelosa, Ceruti, & Mazzucchelli (2018)	The influence of firm- and user-generated content on social media on brand equity and purchase intention of luxury brands	Survey (n=198)	UGC has a positive influence on both overall brand equity and purchase intention of counterfeit products.

n = Italian sample size
Source: own elaboration based on data from Scopus

It is worth mentioning that in neither of the two markets studies examining the influence of marketing communication in social media on eWOM have been identified.

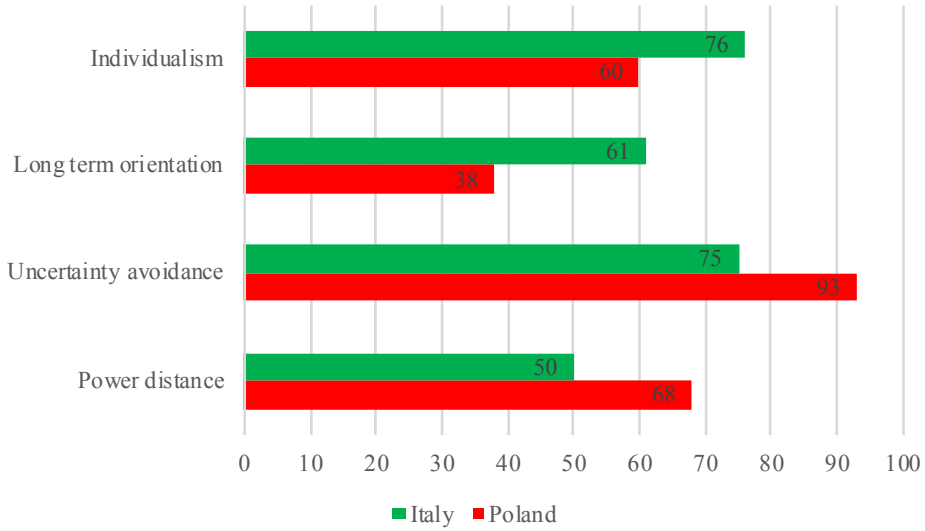
Furthermore, as mentioned in the previous chapter, there is a research gap related to the differences between countries in social media usage and eWOM, and the current study attempts to determine whether the influence of marketing communication in social networks on eWOM varies according to geographic markets. As mentioned before, the differences may be related to cultural aspects. Again, it is worth underlining that this study neither aims to verify if the culture influences eWOM in social networks, nor if the culture is more important than other factors that characterize different geographic markets (e.g., age, income or educational structure of population) and that may moderate the influence of marketing communication in social media on eWOM. However, as the extant academic research suggests that the culture may influence eWOM in social media, it is deemed appropriate comparing European countries that show large score differences on scales measuring cultural dimensions.

Although, Hofstede's framework has received criticism for issues as limited theoretical grounding, unrepresentative sample and lack of contemporary relevance (McSweeney, 2002; Minkov, 2018), there is evidence that "more contemporary cultural frameworks have provided only limited advancements compared with Hofstede's original work", cultural distance constructs based on Hofstede's and Trompenaars' frameworks have strong convergent validity (Magnusson, Wilson, Zdravkovic, Xin Zhou, & Westjohn, 2008, p. 196) and the differences identified between countries are still relevant (Beugelsdijk, Maseland, & van Hoorn, 2015). Therefore, these two frameworks are used to compare Polish and Italian cultures.

The index values proposed by Hofstede are plotted on a scale from 0 to 100. As mentioned before, prior academic research suggests that the use of social media and personal sources of information for purchase decisions can be explained on the basis of cultural dimensions of individualism/collectivism, long-/short-term orientation, uncertainty avoidance and power distance (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014). Figure 12 depicts the comparison between Italy and Poland based on these dimensions of Hofstede's framework. It is worth underlining that group-level dimensions in the Hofstede's framework describe national averages and the framework can be applied at the national level of analysis, not at the individual. As "averages

are calculated for items that are unrelated at the individual level and which therefore do not constitute a cultural dimension at the individual level" (Brewer & Venaik, 2014, p. 1076), it is not possible to state whether the differences at the individual level exist and whether the differences between the two countries are statistically significant. Any projection national-level culture characteristics onto individuals is a form of "ecological fallacy" – an error commonly committed by scholars (Brewer & Venaik, 2014).

Figure 12. Hofstede's framework: score comparison between Italy and Poland



Source: own elaboration based on Hofstede et al. (2010)

The Individualism Index Value (IDV) is a measure to assess the level of a society's individualism/collectivism (Hofstede et al., 2010). Scores close to 100 represent more individualist societies (e.g., US 91, Australia 90), while scores close to 0 correspond to more collectivist societies (e.g., Guatemala 6, Pakistan 14, China 20). "Social scientists assume that individualism is more prevalent in industrialized Western societies than in other societies, especially more traditional societies in developing countries." (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). Italy is one of the most individualist societies in Europe (IDV 76), while IDV for Poland is only 60, suggesting that Poland is a more collectivist society than Italy (Hofstede et al., 2010). It is worth mentioning that this result seems to be confirmed by GLOBE study and a recent study by Minkov et al. (2017). The country practice score on institutional collectivism for Poland is 4.53, while the same score for Italy is 3.68 (GLOBE, 2004). However, as mentioned before, the effect collectivism on eWOM spreading is not clear.

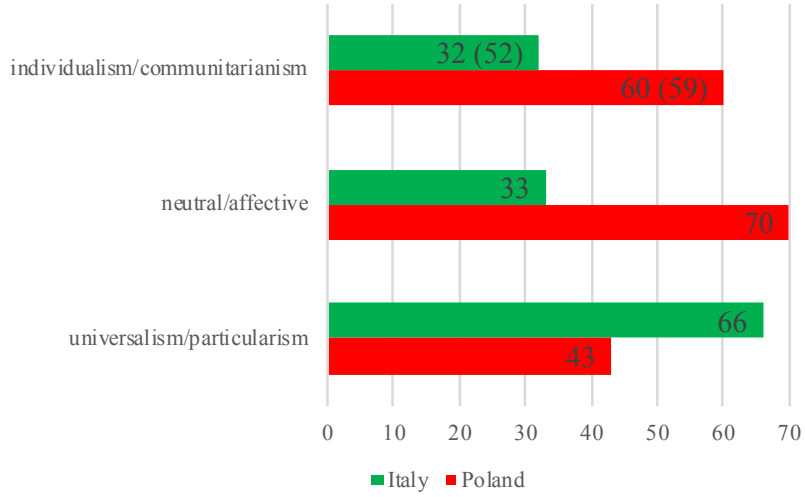
Long-Term Orientation (LTO) Index values close to 100 represent more long-term oriented societies (e.g., South Korea 100), while scores close to 0 refer to more short-oriented societies (e.g., Egypt 7). There is a considerable difference between the scores of Italy and Poland. LTO score for Italy is 61 and for Poland is only 38, suggesting that the Polish society is more short-term oriented. Goodrich & de Mooij (2014) argue that Facebook penetration and number of friends positively correlate with a short-term orientation and suggest that the underlying reason is related to the need for self-enhancement. The share of individuals who use social networks seems to be higher in Poland (48%) than in Italy (43%) (Eurostat, 2017a) as the engagement rate on Facebook (the average number of people who interact with a Facebook page's posts vs. the page reach) that is 3.8% in Poland and 3.1% in Italy (We Are Social, 2019). However, Facebook penetration rate (advertising audience compared to the population aged 13+) is higher in Italy (59%) than in Poland (51%) (We Are Social, 2019), so again the existence of this relationship is not clear. In sum, on the basis of this dimension, no prediction regarding the level eWOM in social networks in the two countries can be made.

Italy's Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) score is 75, while Poland's is 93, suggesting that in Poland people feel more threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations. According to Goodrich & de Mooij (2014) in low uncertainty avoidance cultures, as opposed to high uncertainty avoidance cultures, people believe that other people can be trusted, which may suggest that in Italy people rely on eWOM in social networks more than in Poland.

Italy scores 50 on Power Distance Index (PDI), while Poland scores 68, suggesting that Poland is a more hierarchical society. As mentioned before, Goodrich & de Mooij (2014) argue that social media usage and trust in online forums are positively related to power distance. Lam et al. (2009) find that the more consumers value high power distance, the more likely they are to engage in WOM. Furthermore, as mentioned before, in more hierarchical societies people may be more likely to spread eWOM about luxury brands to enhance the proper status. In sum, prior studies suggest that in Poland the level of eWOM in social networks may be higher than in Italy.

Figure 13 depicts the comparison between Italy and Poland based on the selected dimensions from the Trompenaars' model of cultural differences.

Figure 13. Trompenaars' model of cultural differences: comparison between Italy and Poland



Source: own elaboration based on Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1998)

The scores are based on answers to a question (or two questions in case of individualism) related to the specific cultural dimension. Surprisingly, the scores on the dimension of individualism/communitarianism, contrary to the results of Hofstede's and GLOBE studies (GLOBE, 2004), suggest that Polish society is more individualist than Italian society. This further confirms that it is difficult to foresee how this dimension will influence eWOM in social networks. The scores on the neutral/affective dimension suggest that Italian culture is more affective than Polish. In Italy people show their emotions plainly which can be positively related to eWOM spreading. Italy scores 66 on the universalism/particularism dimensions, suggesting that in Italians, more than Poles feel the obligation to be "truthful and unbiased". In this case, the survey question refers specifically to writing a review of a restaurant, thus it is particularly relevant to the subject of this study. 66% of Italians would not write a false review to help a close friend and only 43% of Poles. This may suggest that eWOM in social networks is considered more trustworthy in Italy, however again it is difficult to foresee how this will influence eWOM in social networks.

Contrary to most pieces of evidence from academic literature that underline the importance of emotional content, brand content providing information about products and sales promotions seems particularly relevant for Polish consumers (Ankiel & Stachowiak, 2016; Siuda, 2017; Szulżyk-Cieplak et al., 2017).

As far as luxury brands are concerned, Italy is perceived as the best country of luxury products manufacturing (BCG & Altagamma, 2017) and the leading country in terms of number of companies, while "Eastern Europe is expected to become one of the fastest growing markets for luxury goods expenditure over the next few years" (Deloitte, 2018, p. 9). 17.6% of Polish consumers (18-59 years old) purchase luxury brands and the luxury goods market in Poland grows dynamically (Ankiel & Stachowiak, 2016; Polskie Badanie Czytelnictwa, 2017). Interestingly, the study by Dubois, Czellar, & Laurent (2005) suggests that consumers in Poland have more positive attitudes toward luxury than their Italian counterparts. However, consumer behavior in the luxury market in Poland is poorly studied (Ankiel & Stachowiak, 2016).

Digital advertising expenditure per capita is higher in Italy than in Poland - €43.4 vs. €23.9 in 2017, in both countries below the European average of €64.4 (IAB Europe, 2018). 42% of enterprises in Italy and only 26% in Poland use social networks, showing a penetration rate significantly below the average of 45% for the EU (Eurostat, 2017c). 14% of Polish and 13% of Italian enterprises with over ten employees advertise on the Internet and use social media, again below the average of 18% for the EU (Eurostat, 2016a). On the other hand, as both academic literature and industry reports confirm, social media represent an effective marketing channel. For 45% of Polish Internet users, social media are information sources (McKinsey & Company, 2016). Universal McCann (2017) reports that 36.3% of Internet users in Poland join online brand communities. Bartosik-Purgat (2018) finds a correlation between the frequency of using Facebook and eWOM behavior among Polish respondents. Indeed, companies in Poland seem to be aware of the high potential of social media. The expenditure on advertising in social media in this market registers the highest growth (54%) among digital advertising formats (IAB Polska, 2018a).

In sum, the Polish and Italian markets have been selected for the current study, in order to address the research gap in academic literature and explore whether the influence of marketing communication in social networks on eWOM varies according to geographic markets. In addition, the results of the current study may provide marketing practitioners in both countries with concrete guidelines on how to take advantage of the potential of social media that still has not been fully exploited (Eurostat, 2017b; Szwajca, 2017).

2.4. Research method

Traditional methods used in U&G research that depend on self-reported gratifications have been criticized for not measuring the actual behavior of individuals (Ruggiero, 2000). Most empirical studies on social media and WOM are based on quantitative research. In particular, as the survey method is often used, the results of the extant studies are likely to be affected by response bias. In order to derive findings from the analysis of actual eWOM behavior of consumers that is evident due to the specific features of Facebook (commenting on and sharing of brand posts), **content analysis** has been selected for the current study. Previous studies highlight the usefulness of examining the actual eWOM behaviors in social media (Bartosik-Purgat, 2018) and specifically, the actual forwarding of marketing communications (Hayes, King, & Ramirez, 2016; Ketelaar et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2012). Kolbe & Burnett (1991, p. 243) define content analysis as "an observational research method that is used to systematically evaluate the symbolic content of all forms of recorded communication". This definition already suggests the face validity of the research method for the current study in which communication is measured. As underlined by Babbie (2010, p. 333), content analysis is the study of recorded human communication particularly well suited to understand "who says what, to whom, why, how, and with what effect?" directly addressing the problem of this research. Furthermore, on Facebook brand pages data are publicly available, thus the cause (marketing communications – brand posts) and the effect (eWOM - user comments and shares) can be observed together. Furthermore, content analysis method is deemed appropriate for this study for two other important reasons.

Firstly, satisfactory results, high validity and reliability levels have been confirmed by prior research. As shown by prior studies focused on Facebook and eWOM, content analysis has a high predictive validity, because it allows prediction of consumer behavior, as well as a high concurrent validity, because it allows discrimination between users who spread eWOM and those who do not. Jahn & Kunz (2012) analyze motivations of brand page usage and user engagement and find support for the results of user-generated posts analysis using both qualitative (focus group interviews) and quantitative (survey) methods. In a study of consumer-generated advertising on YouTube, Lawrence, Fournier, & Brunel (2013) find support for the results of a content analysis in online experiments and an online survey. Similarly, in a study focused on discussions in online brand communities, Hajli, Shanmugam, Papagiannidis, Zahay, & Richard (2017) confirm the results of a content analysis in an e-mail, telephone and face-to-face interviews. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2015) confirm the results of

content analysis of Twitter messages in a survey with 600 respondents. In extant research, reliability has been addressed primarily by the use of multiple coders.

Secondly, content analysis is frequently applied in all areas of media research (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011) and the vast majority of social media studies (McKenna, Myers, & Newman, 2017). In order to demonstrate the wide-spread use of content analysis in communication, Riffe & Freitag (1997) show that about 25% research articles published in "Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly" in 25 years are content analyses. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in marketing literature, this method is used specifically to examine user engagement (Dhaoui, 2014; Luarn et al., 2015; Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013), brand post popularity (De Vries et al., 2012; Sabate et al., 2014; Swani & Milne, 2017) and eWOM (B. Shen & Bissell, 2013; Swani et al., 2013; Tafesse, 2015) on Facebook brand pages. It is worth mentioning that this research method is widely used not only by scholars but also by practitioners. Social media monitoring tools provide marketers with pieces of evidence (e.g., on eWOM or online campaign results) based on content analysis.

Dwyer (2007) argues explicitly that it is recommended to use content analysis to determine the importance of text messages posted to online communities.

On the other hand, content analysis with a qualitative approach can be stigmatized as subjective (Sabate et al., 2014). It is related to the fact that communication content contains both denotative (explicit) and connotative (implicit) meanings (Hensel, 2019) and it is subject to subjective interpretation. In order to assure objectivity in content classification, the brand posts used in the current study were coded manually by both the author and independent coders that worked separately and coded the content on the basis of strict rules for content classification. As underlined by Kim & Yang (2017), in a content analysis of brand posts, manual coding is more accurate than automated coding, due to the human ability of capturing message features and the nuanced use of language. Rules and procedures applied by coders as well as intercoder reliability measures are reported in section 2.6.2.

In the current study particular attention is devoted to the criteria of objectivity, reliability, sampling, and systematization to ascertain the methodological rigor of content analysis. The study draws on guidelines for methodological rigor and best practices described by Kolbe & Burnett (1991), McMillan (2000), Krippendorf (2004), Babbie (2010), Wimmer & Dominick

(2011) and Lacy, Watson, Riffe, & Lovejoy (2015). Content analysis includes four phases: "data collection, coding, analysis of content, and interpretation of results" (Duriau, Reger, & Pfarrer, 2007, p. 8). The first three phases are described in the following sections, while the results and their interpretation are provided in the third chapter.

2.5. Data collection

In August 2018, a preliminary research was conducted in order to identify cosmetic brands for the current study. As pointed out by McMillan (2000) in web-based content analysis, research subjects are commonly identified by using a list available in a given category and a search engine. Firstly, Brand Finance's (2016) "50 Most Valuable Cosmetics Brands" and Deloitte (2018) "Global Powers of Luxury Goods" reports were used to identify mass-market and luxury cosmetic brands. In order to obtain a high amount of data, it was necessary to identify the most popular Facebook global brand pages. The number of fans is publicly available data on Facebook, so it was possible to rank the cosmetic brands included in the above-mentioned reports in terms of the number of fans. In addition, to allow data comparison, it was necessary to identify brand possessing a global brand page with separate pages for the Polish and Italian markets. The following cosmetic brands met the selection criteria:

- *Mass-market cosmetic brands*: L'Oréal Paris (35,026,516 fans), Dove (28,258,331 fans; owned by Unilever), Nivea (21,952,109 fans; owned by Beiersdorf), Revlon (9,232,603 fans), Vichy (7,892,343 fans, owned by L'Oréal), Olay (7,862,656 fans; owned by Procter & Gamble), Max Factor (7,328,876 fans; owned by Coty), Neutrogena (5,149,157 fans; owned by Johnson & Johnson), Rimmel London (3,473,323 fans; owned by Coty) and Schwarzkopf (2,751,146 fans; owned by Henkel)
- *Luxury cosmetic brands*: Clinique (11,111,196 fans; owned by Estée Lauder Companies), Lancôme (10,041,075 fans; owned by L'Oréal), Benefit Cosmetics (6,197,433 fans; owned by LVMH), Shiseido (2,557,001 fans), Clarins (2,445,083 fans) and Guerlain (1,298,765 fans; owned by LVMH)

An additional verification through a search engine on Socialbakers platform, which ranks Facebook brand pages in terms of the number of fans and which had been used in prior academic research (Luarn et al., 2015) confirmed that there were no global cosmetic brand pages with a higher number of fans in the two markets. Indeed, the identified luxury cosmetic

brands had been analyzed in previous studies focused on luxury brands. Lancôme was analyzed in the studies by Heine & Berghaus (2014) and Kapferer & Valette-Florence (2016). Dhaoui (2014) analyzed Lancôme and Guerlain in a study focused on marketing communications of luxury brands in social media. Guerlain was also analyzed by Vigneron & Johnson (2004) as a brand having a subsequent degree of perceived luxury. Lancôme, Clinique, Benefit Cosmetics and Clarins were included in Statista (2017a) research on luxury brands. Clinique was analyzed as a high-end beauty brand in the study of B. Shen & Bissell (2013). Lancôme and Clinique were included in Polskie Badanie Czytelnictwa (2017) report focused on the Polish market, thus they can be regarded as relevant for the international context of this study. It is also worth mentioning that Lancôme and Guerlain are members of Comité Colbert – an exclusive, internationally recognized association promoting the French luxury industry.

In order to ensure the validity of the research, data source triangulation was applied. Data were obtained from the official Facebook brand pages of eight cosmetic brands (four mass-market and four luxury brands), each of them in Poland and Italy. In order to compare brands with a similar number of fans, cover all four product categories of cosmetics and obtain a high amount of data, the following brands have been selected for the current study:

- *Mass-market cosmetic brands*: **Revlon** (make-up), **Max Factor** (make-up), **Rimmel London** (make-up), **Schwarzkopf** (haircare)
- *Luxury cosmetic brands*: **Clinique** (fragrances, make-up, skincare), **Lancôme** (fragrances, make-up, skincare), **Clarins** (make-up, skincare), **Guerlain** (fragrances, make-up, skincare)

It is worth mentioning that the total number of fans of the analyzed four mass-market cosmetic brands (22,785,948) is similar to the number of the analyzed four luxury cosmetic brands (24,896,119).

A Facebook global brand page includes a complete list of posts published by a brand in each country. The sampling frame was defined as all brand posts published on Facebook brand pages from June 1, 2017 to November 5, 2018, covering over seventeen months. In this period there were 1,573 posts published in Poland and 2,551 posts published in Italy by the eight selected brands. There were 2,277 posts of luxury brands and 1,847 posts of mass-market

brands. All the 4,124 posts were downloaded and saved. In order to guarantee the accuracy of the data that may change over time and ensure independence from potentially changing Facebook policies, as recommended by McMillan (2000), all data for the analysis were collected in short time (i.e., within two days).

In most of the studies on marketing communications, social media and WOM examined by the author non-representative convenience and purposive samples are used. A sample of brand posts published in a certain period of time (often covering four weeks) or a selection of a certain number of posts capturing the most recent before a selected date in reverse chronological order (e.g., Kim & Yang, 2017) are commonly used. In this study, a systematic **random sample** of brand posts was used. As no periodicity had been observed in the sampling frame, systematic sampling was deemed appropriate for the sample selection. Table 8 depicts the sampling frame and the sampling interval for each data set.

Table 8. Sampling frame and sampling interval

BRAND		*BRAND FACEBOOK PAGE*		*NUMBER OF POSTS IN THE SAMPLING FRAME (N)*		*SAMPLING INTERVAL (k)*	
		Poland	*Italy*	*Poland*	*Italy*	*Poland*	*Italy*
Luxury	*Lancôme*	*https://www.facebook.com /lancomepolska/*	*https://www.facebook.com /LancomeItalia/*	*160*	*115*	*2.46*	*1.77*
	Guerlain	*https://www.facebook.com /GuerlainPoland/*	*https://www.facebook.com /GuerlainItalia/*	*189*	*239*	*2.91*	*3.68*
	Clarins	*https://www.facebook.com /ClarinsPolska/*	*https://www.facebook.com /ClarinsItalia/*	*260*	*602*	*4.00*	*9.26*
	Clinique	*https://www.facebook.com /CliniquePolska/*	*https://www.facebook.com /CliniqueItalia/*	*393*	*319*	*6.05*	*4.91*
Mass-market	*Revlon*	*https://www.facebook.com /RevlonPolska/*	*https://www.facebook.com /revlonitaly/*	*204*	*442*	*3.14*	*6.80*
	Max Factor	*https://www.facebook.com /MaxFactorPolska/*	*https://www.facebook.com /MaxFactorItalia/*	*116*	*312*	*1.78*	*4.80*
	Rimmel London	*https://www.facebook.com /rimmellondonPL/*	*https://www.facebook.com /rimmellondonIT/*	*183*	*457*	*2.82*	*7.03*
	Schwarzkopf	*https://www.facebook.com /SchwarzkopfPolska/*	*https://www.facebook.com /testaneraIT/*	*68*	*65*	*1.05*	*1.00*

Source: Own elaboration

It is worth mentioning that there was a large difference between the number of brand posts in the sampling frame between the two markets. In the same period, there were 2,551 brand posts published in Italy and only 1,573 brand posts published in Poland, showing the lower frequency of brand posts in the Polish market. There were 2,277 posts of luxury brands and

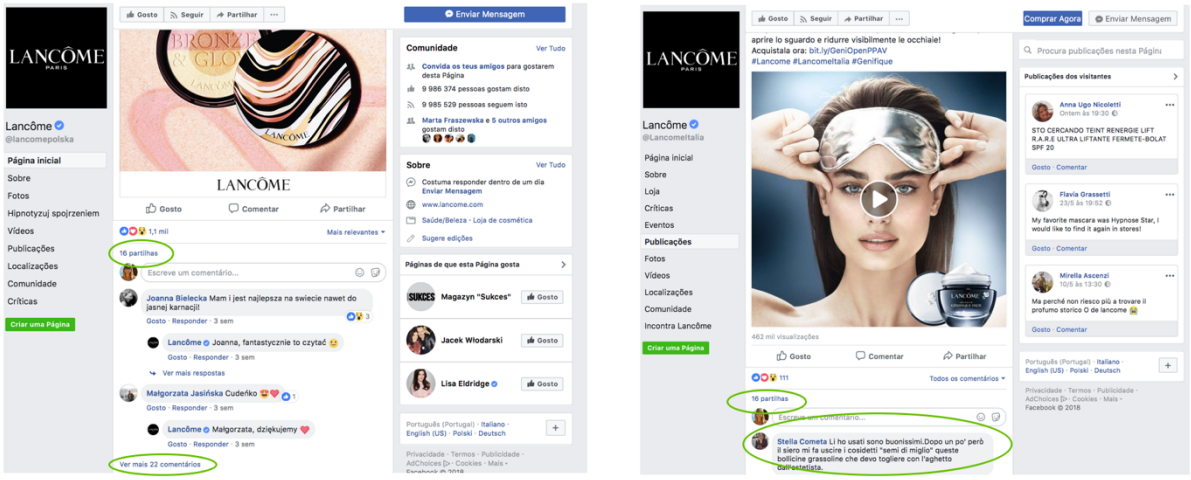
1,847 posts of mass-market brands, which suggest that contrary to what one would expect considering the skepticism of luxury brands about social media, luxury brands use them more frequently.

The non-integer sampling intervals were rounded down to the integer. The first brand post was selected at random between the most recent brand post in the sampling frame and the sampling interval. In each brand page the first post was followed by every *k*th (sampling interval) post being selected by moving through the sampling frame, thus each item had an equal chance of being included in the analysis. Through this systematic sampling, 65 brand posts have been randomly selected from each brand's page in each country, leading to a final sample of **1,040 Facebook brand posts**.

2.6. Coding

A Facebook brand post represents the unit of analysis or sampling unit (Krippendorf, 2004) in this study. As mentioned before, the specific structure of global brand pages on Facebook allows brands to differentiate marketing communications on different geographic markets and distinguish consumer behavior within different markets. Figure 14 illustrates two examples of units of analysis – brand posts from Lancôme's global brand page. The global page is divided into separate country pages. The example shows the brand page on the Polish and Italian markets. Different content and local language are used in marketing communications within the two markets, and the brand page brings together the local brand community. Under each post, which includes both textual and visual content, the number of reactions, comments and shares are shown. As mentioned before, the content of comments is publicly available and users are identifiable.

Figure 14. Examples of units of analysis



Source: reprinted from Facebook – Lancôme's global brand page (Poland and Italy)

The following two sections describe recording (or coding) units, i.e. the elements of brand posts that were coded (Krippendorf, 2004). The coding of the independent variable draws on qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Mayring, 2000), applies an inductive approach to generate coding categories and a deductive approach in coding procedure.

2.6.1. Coding categories

The recording units were the form of a brand post, its appeal, brand type (mass-market, luxury) and geographic market (Poland, Italy). In addition, product category (more than one, fragrances, make-up, skincare, haircare, none) and day of the week when a brand post was published were coded for each brand post. The coding categories were derived from empirical data.

Regarding **brand post form**, every post in the sample included both textual and visual content. In a careful examination of all 1,040 brand posts, three forms of visual content were discovered: image, animation and video.

As far as **brand post appeal** is concerned, marketing literature to date offers different models for content classification that often correspond to communication appeal classification mentioned before. For Holbrook (1978) there is a contrast between factual (logical, tangible) and evaluative content (emotional, intangible). He underlines that both types of meanings are present "in any communication; only their relative balance varies" (Holbrook, 1978, p. 547).

Vaughn (1980) proposes a model based on the dichotomies driving buying decisions (thinking vs. feeling and high vs. low involvement) in which he distinguishes four goals of advertising strategy (informative, affective, habit formation and self-satisfaction) that correspond to different types of advertising content. Aaker & Norris (1982) observe that advertising is either informational/rational/cognitive or image/emotional/feeling. Similarly, Puto & Wells (1984) distinguish between informational and transformational content of advertising. Informational advertising is cognitive-based and provides factual information about the brand. Transformational advertising is affect-based, emotional and "transforms" use of the brand in a richer, warmer, enjoyable and more exciting experience. Laskey, Day, & Crask (1989) further develop this typology and distinguish comparative, unique selling proposition, preemptive, hyperbole and generic-informational advertising within informational message strategy, and user image, brand image, use occasion and generic-transformational within the transformational message strategy. Taylor (1999) provides a detailed classification of rational and emotional content called "six segment strategy wheel". This classification, also used in various studies in online context (Golan & Zaidner, 2008; Hwang, McMillan, & Lee, 2003; C. Kim & Yang, 2017), distinguishes among two main categories of "message strategies": a "transmission view", which corresponds to a rational approach, and a "ritual view", which corresponds to an emotional approach. Ertimur & Gilly (2012) go back to the ancient times referring to Aristotle's conceptualization of credible communication components and assess YouTube video advertisements along the dimensions of ethos, logos, and pathos. Accordingly, a message can persuade via ethos by drawing attention to its source, via logos by presenting rational claims, and via pathos by using emotional appeals. The classical dichotomous appeal classification (rational vs. emotional) is the basis for Wagner et al. (2017) who develop specific categories for the automotive industry. An industry-specific classification has also been developed by B. Shen & Bissell (2013) for Facebook brand posts of beauty brands, however, their classification includes only four categories (product, promotion, event, and entertainment) without any specific category for emotional content. Entertainment category includes calling for direct interactions between the brand and users (e.g., Q&A, survey, beauty pool, activity with reward, Facebook applications), that other scholars classify as social (Luarn et al., 2015) or interactional posts (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Tafesse & Wien (2018) note that the classical typologies of appeal developed for traditional media may not be exhaustive for marketing communications in digital channels and argue that interactional appeal specific for social media and related to its interactive nature should be distinguished. In order to distinguish more specific types of messages within the rational-

emotional dichotomy of communication appeal relevant to the analyzed data, a new brand post appeal classification was developed in this study.

Following the inductive approach, once again the coding categories were derived from the empirical data. First, the author carefully read and watched brand posts one by one in order to capture both explicit and implicit meanings, and infer the main message being communicated. As mentioned before, post appeal is "the overall theme of a post" (Wagner et al., 2017, p. 607). Twenty-six preliminary appeals were discovered in the data ("product features", "product performance", "product range", "product awards", "product tutorials", "external articles", "service", "customer reviews", "gifts", "contests with product purchase", "discounts", "point of sale", "celebrities", "brand icons", "brand values", "brand places", "brand heritage", "inspiration", "events", "CSR", "lifestyle", "questions", "creative contests", "influencers", "festivity" and "live transmissions"). The author later reviewed these preliminary appeals and reduced them to 22 by joining similar appeals and splitting one of them. These appeals were used as the basis for the coding scheme used in the coding process described in the following section.

Single brand post appeals were later aggregated into twelve broader categories and joined into three broad categories of marketing communication appeal. Rational appeal refers to concrete, rational, factual information on product benefits, functional attributes and applications. Emotional appeal refers to emotional and affect-based messages emphasizing symbolic and hedonic product attributes, brand meaning and experiences, while an interactional appeal is aimed at driving conversations and consumer interactions. Grouping of the coding categories (Table 9) was based on previous studies (Luarn et al., 2015; Tafesse, 2015; Tafesse & Wien, 2018).

Table 9. Marketing communication appeal classification

BRAND POST APPEAL	*CATEGORY OF BRAND POST APPEAL*	*AGGREGATED CATEGORY OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION APPEAL*
Product features	Product characteristics	Rational
Product performance		
Product range		
Product awards		
Product tutorials		
External articles	External articles	
Customer reviews	Customer reviews	
Gifts	Special offers	
Discounts		
Celebrities	Celebrities	Emotional
Brand values	Brand	
Brand places		
Brand heritage		
CSR		
Senses	Inspiration	
Inspiration		
Lifestyle		
Events	Events	
Contests	Contests	Interactional
Questions	Feedback	
Festivity	Festivity	
Live transmissions	Live transmissions	

Source: Own elaboration based on Luarn et al. (2015, p. 508-510), Tafesse (2015, p. 933-934), Tafesse & Wien (2018, p. 241-253)

Interestingly, Tafesse (2015) points out that the content of brand posts corresponds to the different needs that users satisfy by using social media. Marketing practitioners may intuitively use communication appeals that correspond to the different needs of consumers. Indeed, the three aggregated categories of marketing communication appeal seem to correspond to the common gratifications of eWOM in social media and using social networks (information, self-expression/promotion, entertainment, and social interactions) (Table 10).

Table 10. Marketing communication appeals vs. gratifications of eWOM in social media and using social networks

CATEGORY OF BRAND POST APPEAL	*AGGREGATED CATEGORY OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION APPEAL*	*GRATIFICATIONS*
Product characteristics	Rational	Information
Customer reviews		
Special offers		
External articles		
Brand	Emotional	Self-expression/promotion & entertainment
Celebrities		
Inspiration		
Events		
Festivity	Interactional	Social interactions & entertainment
Feedback		
Contests		
Live transmissions		

Source: Own elaboration

This observation has important implications. If user reactions a to brand content are related to the gratifications satisfied by eWOM in social media and using social networks, then the communication appeal which drives the highest engagement of users may indicate the most important need users seek to satisfy by following brands on social networks. For instance, if the rational content is preferred by users (i.e., it attracts the highest number of positive reactions, comments and shares), this may suggest that the need for information is the most relevant. In this case, consumers would follow brands on social networks mainly to obtain information from both the brand and other consumers (seek eWOM). Clearly, the most important gratifications cannot be defined unambiguously in this analysis. For instance, the need for entertainment may be satisfied by both emotional content and interaction with the brand and other users. However, the analysis can provide some important suggestions that can be verified in further research.

As far as the dependent variable is concerned, in the few prior studies focused on eWOM on Facebook (B. Shen & Bissell, 2013; Swani et al., 2013; Tafesse, 2015), eWOM is operationalized in different ways. Swani et al. (2013) refer to the number of likes, Tafesse (2015) to the number of likes and shares, while B. Shen & Bissell (2013) use the number of likes, comments and shares. An important question arises: does every user reaction on

Facebook can be considered as eWOM? In order to clarify this issue, three experts were asked to provide their opinion. Thorsten Hennig-Thurau is Professor of Marketing & Media at the University of Muenster and the author of the widely used and generally acknowledged definition of eWOM mentioned in the first chapter. David Godes is Professor and the Chair of the Marketing Department at Robert H. Smith School of Business, who previously taught at Harvard Business School and is specialized in social networks and WOM. Robert V. Kozinets is Hufschmid Professor at USC Annenberg at the University of Southern California, a global expert on social media and consumer research, who invented the research method known as netnography. The question was: ”Do you think that in a research eWOM can be operationalized as comments and shares on Facebook? How about reactions? Do you think they can be considered as eWOM?” The answers are listed below:

- Theses are certainly no trivial questions. In the attached JAMS article, we differentiate between different types of WOM, and comments on Facebook would fall into what we label here as microblogging WOM. In a later IJRM paper, we use the broader label of social media WOM for this type of WOM. I hope this helps a little. Shares would probably be a different, but related measure of such SWOM.. (T. Hennig-Thurau)

- I think there's no question that comments, shares (and, I believe, likes) can be seen as eWOM. The best citation for this is probably, Hennig-Thorau et al (2004) "Electronic Word of Mouth via Consumer-Opinion Platforms: What Motivates Consumers to Articulate Themselves on the Internet?" They define it 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 Intemet." So, again, I don't think there's any question. (David Godes)

- “Sure Anna. They are all eWOM, and much more...” (Robert V. Kozinets)

The answers suggest that there is some doubt on whether “likes” can be considered as eWOM. David Godes says he believes that “likes” can be seen as eWOM and refers to Thorsten Hennig-Thurau who actually does not cite “likes” in his answer. “Likes” are also not cited in neither of the two articles cited by Thorsten Hennig-Thurau (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015; Marchand et al., 2017), while it is specifically argued in these articles that the statement

must be written and "broadcast in real time to some or all members of the sender's social network" (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015, p. 376).

In the current study, it is argued that not every user reaction can be considered as eWOM and that "likes" of brand posts cannot be seen as eWOM for four main reasons. First of all, eWOM as WOM is "communication directed at other consumers" (Westbrook, 1987, p. 261), while "likes", and more generally user reactions to a brand post, can be seen as content evaluations directed at the brand publishing the content (Gavilanes et al., 2018), providing feedback to the brand and building the relationship with the brand rather than with other users (Kabadayi & Price, 2014). Secondly, eWOM (as traditional WOM) is an exchange of comments, thoughts, opinions and ideas (Blackwell et al., 2001; Bone, 1992) or more broadly an exchange of information (Baker et al., 2016; Blackwell et al., 2001; Standing et al., 2016). "Likes" are unidirectional, other users cannot reply to this kind of statement, and the information they provide is very limited (Kabadayi & Price, 2014). "Likes" are rather declarations of one's tastes than explicit endorsements (Packard & Berger, 2017). Thirdly, it is argued that user-generated content in general and specifically eWOM requires a certain amount of creative input from the author who creates or adapts the message (Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery, 2007), while "likes" (or reactions) are passive and not even written, they are simple clicks on a button. Last but not least, eWOM is strictly related to the viral effect, thus other users in the network of the person who spreads eWOM should see the message. Indeed, the authors of prior studies expressly refer to the viral effect and the higher reach of a brand post. According to Swani et al. (2013) "liking" is "equivalent to sharing information with all of the connections within a user's social network" (p. 270), because "when a user clicks the Like button and engages with a message post, the message is likely to instantaneously appear in his/her friends' feeds " (p. 272). However, this as the two other studies (B. Shen & Bissell, 2013; Tafesse, 2015) were written before, in April 2015, Facebook has changed the news feed settings, in a way that brand posts users "like" do not appear to their network of friends (Eulenstein, 2015). There is no doubt that commenting and sharing are exchanges of information that provide clear evidence of eWOM effects (Fogel, 2010; Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Tafesse, 2015). As mentioned before, users who share a brand post (often by adding own text) intentionally deploy it among their networks of friends and the post becomes part of their self-presentation in social networks. The viral effect is also obtained if users comment on brand posts as the commented brand posts can automatically appear in the

news feeds of the users' friends. Thus both commenting and sharing increase reach and impact of brand posts.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that the endorsement through explicit recommendations is stronger and more persuasive than "liking", "people are more likely to choose a product someone else recommended, rather than liked, because the former signals that the endorser both likes the product more and has more domain expertise" (Packard & Berger, 2017, p. 572). Comments "offer richer evidence of a seller's past transactions beyond crude positive and negative ratings, and they (…) represent the true basis of the value of feedback mechanisms." (Pavlou & Dimoka, 2006, p. 393).

In sum, considering the above-mentioned pieces of evidence, in the current study **eWOM was operationalized as the number of comments on a brand post and shares of a brand post** on Facebook. Furthermore, positive, neutral and negative comments were distinguished.

It is worth mentioning that an important disadvantage of this measure is related to the fact that the number of reactions, comments and shares on Facebook brand posts can be influenced by post promotion (sponsoring of posts in order to obtain a higher reach within the target group). The higher the investment, the higher the audience reached by the brand post and so the number of reactions, comments and shares. Such confidential data as the budget spent on each brand post is not available for the analysis. However, it is clear that the more people see the post, the more they "react". Indeed, the analysis of the sample used in this study confirms that there is a strong and statistically significant positive ($r = .80$, $p < .001$) correlation between the number of impressions (data available for animations and videos) and the number of reactions. Thus, the number of reactions to a single post suggests the size of the audience it has reached. In order to exclude the influence of post promotion, the analysis of the dependent variable in this study is based on indicators - comment rate (CR) and share rate (SR) that were calculated as follows:

Equation 1. $$CR = \frac{N_C}{N_R}$$

Equation 2. $$SR = \frac{N_S}{N_R}$$

Where N_C is the number of comments on a brand post, N_S is the number of shares of a brand post, and N_R is the number of reactions to a brand post. In 1,038 of 1,040 collected posts, the number of reactions was higher than 0, in 1,035 the number of reactions was higher than the

number of comments, and in 1,029 the number of reactions was higher than the number of shares.

The number of comments and shares was related to the size of the audience also in prior studies (Dhaoui, 2014; Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). However, in these studies, the number of brand page's fans was used to estimate the audience. As promoted posts are also shown to the people who are not fans, the number of reactions is deemed as a more accurate indicator of a single post's audience.

2.6.2. Coding procedure

The deductive coding procedure described in this section draws on Weber protocol, widely referenced in academic literature (Duriau et al., 2007). It suggests the following steps of coding:

1) Definition of the recording units.
2) Definition of the coding categories.
3) Test of coding on a sample of text.
4) Assessment of the accuracy and reliability of the sample coding.
5) Revision of the coding rules.
6) Return to Step 3 until sufficient reliability is achieved.
7) Coding of all the text.
8) Assessment of the achieved reliability or accuracy.

Table 11 depicts the coding scheme for brand post form with three coding categories. Codes correspond to coding categories.

Table 11. Coding scheme for brand post form

CODE NUMBER	*CODE LABEL*	*CODE DESCRIPTION*
1	Image	A static picture
2	Animation	A sequence of static images sometimes creating an illusion of movement or static images with minor elements moving
3	Video	Movie or 3D animation often "telling a story"

Source: Own elaboration

As images are static, they are easily distinguishable from other, dynamic forms of content. However, the sample included 24 brand posts for which the distinction between animation and video was not straightforward. In order to assure objectivity in the classification, these brand posts were coded by both the author and two independent coders. Coders were selected among employees of an advertising agency, in order to assure a good understanding of different forms of content used in marketing communications. The two coders both coded the sample of 24 posts on the basis of the above-mentioned definitions and, as recommended (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991), they made their coding decisions independently. The coefficient of agreement (also referred to as simple agreement, percent agreement or proportional agreement), i.e. "the total number of agreements divided by the total number of coding decisions" (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991, p. 248) was .64, which corresponds to .72 of proportional reduction in loss (PRL) reliability measure (Rust & Cooil, 1994)[1]. The PRL measure is one of the most recent measures of intercoder reliability developed specifically for qualitative data used in marketing research, it takes into account the possibility of random agreement and can be used for more than two coders (Rust & Cooil, 1994). This measure was used in previous studies on social media (Swani, Brown, & Milne, 2014; Swani & Milne, 2017; Wagner, Baccarella, & Voigt, 2017). Rust & Cooil (1994, p. 9) consider "a PRL level of .70 being adequate for early or exploratory work (which describes most of the work published in academic marketing journals) and .90 being adequate for advanced marketing research practice". Considering the early, exploratory character of the assessment of animations which, as mentioned before, to the best of the author's knowledge were not examined in prior research in the context of social media, the intercoder reliability was adequate. As suggested by Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken (2002) and Lacy et al. (2015), disagreements in coding were resolved through discussion and the author coded all the remaining brand posts.

Table 12 depicts the coding scheme with 22 codes of brand post appeal. Codes correspond to coding categories.

[1] As the PRL measure values are provided in tables only for a limited number of coding categories, on the basis of the equation defined by Rust & Cooil (1994, p. 11), a Gnu Octave (high-level programming language for scientific computing) scripts were developed for the computation of PRL reliability measure in this study. The scripts are available for all researchers at http://bit.ly/PRLmeasure and can be used in further studies.

Table 12. Coding scheme for brand post appeal

CODE NUMBER	*CODE LABEL*	*CODE DESCRIPTION*
1	Product features	Product characteristics, what/how it is? e.g., ingredients, color range
2	Product performance	Product action, benefit, how it works? e.g., hydrates, reduces wrinkles
3	Product range	Mentioning or showing other products e.g., eyeliner + lipstick
4	Product awards	Mentioning awards that the product received
5	Product tutorials	Guidelines on how to use the product (other than not live videos), e.g. a step-by-step demonstration how to use the product, a consultant helping to choose the right product shade without any special event, dermatologist advice, personalized beauty routine
6	External articles	Links to articles from blogs or magazines
8	Customer reviews	Mentioning or citing product opinions of consumers or re-posting UGC, e.g. recommended by XX% of women, "my favorite lipstick" – Kate Smith
9	Gifts	Gifts that you receive if you buy the product, e.g. a bag, another product
10	Contests	Informing about a contest, inviting users to participate, showing the winners
11	Discounts	Price reduction, e.g. -20%, Sale, Black Friday, Cyber Monday, free delivery
13	Celebrities	Mentioning or showing celebrities, e.g. an actress, a singer, an influencer
14	Brand values	Specific reference to the brand and its core values, e.g. innovation, "in (brand name) we believe that…"
15	Brand places	Specific reference to the brand and its places (other than shops), e.g. a spa, a hotel, a bar
16	Brand heritage	Specific reference to the elements of brand history, e.g. its traditions, its founder, logo, iconic bottle or product
17	Senses	Sensory stimulation, e.g. showing food or wine, talking about music or water immersion
18	Inspiration	Emotions and using emotional or metaphorical language, e.g. talking about or showing joy, play, fun, love, sensuality, positivity; using inspirational quotes, e.g. "life is beautiful", inspiring to do something, e.g. spread the happiness, relax
19	Events	Special events, e.g. inviting users to join events in shops or follow them online, Milano Fashion Week
20	Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)	Mentioning engagement in social causes, e.g. environment-friendly products, charitable donation
21	Lifestyle	Talking about self-expression, personal style, personal way of living or thinking e.g., shocking hair color, long hair lover, businesswoman, sportswoman
22	Questions	Encouraging feedback from users
25	Festivity	Special occasions, e.g. Friendship Day, Kissing Day, Mother's Day, Halloween, Valentine's Day, New Year's Eve, solstice
26	Live transmissions	Live broadcast, a video simultaneously recorded and broadcasted, e.g. live streaming from an event in shop, make-up artist performance

Source: Own elaboration

In order to assure objectivity in the classification, brand posts were coded by both the author and two independent coders. In this case, female graduate students were chosen, in order to assure familiarity with social networks, knowledge of the cosmetic market and proper understanding of communication content targeted to the female audience. Each coder participated in a training session during which the coding process and the coding scheme were explained and, as recommended by Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Campanella Bracken (2010), a small pre-sample of posts was coded. It was underlined that brand posts might have more than one appeal and coders were explicitly asked to code the dominant appeal. The discussion confirmed that coders had a good understanding of the coding scheme. As recommended (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991; Lacy et al., 2015), coders were independent of the author and worked independently of one another on the basis of the comprehensive coding scheme that was provided after the training session.

As recommended by Mayring (2000), the codes and the intercoder reliability were checked after 50% of the dataset had been coded. The coefficient of agreement was .52, which corresponds to .85 of PRL reliability measure (Rust & Cooil, 1994). As there was a sufficient level of measurement objectivity, the coders proceeded with the coding of the whole sample.

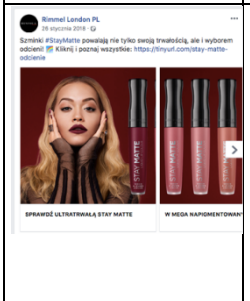
The reliability sample (used to assess the final intercoder reliability) was the same as the full sample, i.e. included 1,040 brand posts. The coefficient of agreement for the whole sample was .68 which corresponds to PRL measure of .94, thus above the desired levels. However, in order to exclude that some of the coding categories were poorly defined, intercoder reliability measures were also calculated for all single coding categories. This analysis was performed for all brand posts for which at least one coding agreement was achieved. The mean coefficient of agreement for 22 coding categories calculated on a sample of 1,008 posts was .75 and the mean PRL .95 thus again above the desired levels. Table 13 illustrates the intercoder reliability level for each code showing the adequate level for all of them. Disagreements in coding were resolved by using a “majority” decision rule (as there was an odd number of coders) and in less than 5% of cases in which no majority was gained, they were resolved through discussion until a consensus was reached. Table 14 depicts examples of brand posts in each category.

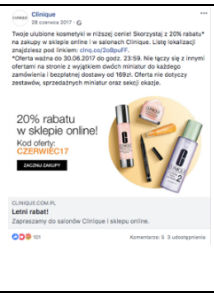
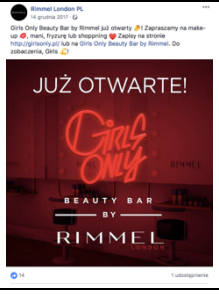
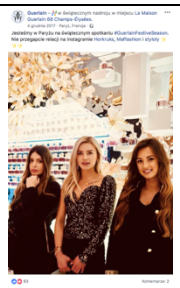
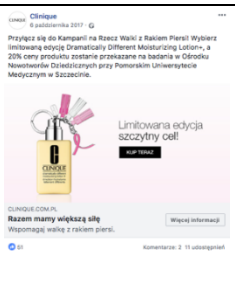
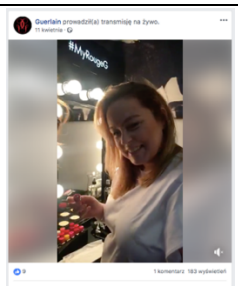
Table 13. Intercoder reliability levels for coding categories of brand post appeal

CODE LABEL	*COEFFICIENT OF AGREEMENT*	*PRL*
Product features	.54	.87
Product performance	.70	.95
Product range	.52	.85
Product awards	.67	.94
Product tutorials	.71	.95
External articles	.80	.98
Customer reviews	.74	.96
Gifts	.87	.99
Contests	.82	.98
Discounts	.90	.99
Celebrities	.69	.94
Brand values	.67	.94
Brand places	.93	1
Brand heritage	.86	.99
Senses	.67	.94
Inspiration	.53	.86
Events	.83	.98
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)	.85	.99
Lifestyle	.56	.88
Questions	.83	.98
Festivity	.72	.95
Live transmissions	1	1

Source: Own elaboration

Table 14. Brand posts examples in each category

PRODUCT FEATURES	PRODUCT PERFORMANCE	PRODUCT RANGE	PRODUCT AWARDS	PRODUCT TUTORIALS
				
e.g., color range	e.g., foundation does not weight down skin, does not dry it out and leaves it radiant all day long	e.g., a highlighter and a concealer	e.g., best anti-cellulite Elle Beauty award	e.g., step 1: lipstick, step 2: top coat

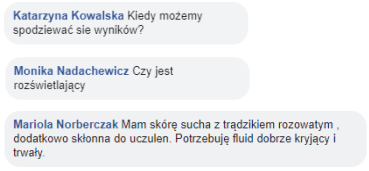
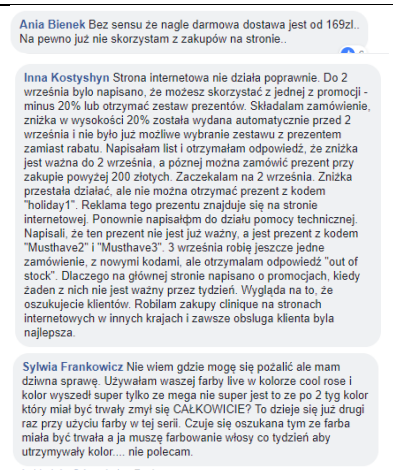
EXTERNAL ARTICLES	CUSTOMER REVIEWS	GIFTS	CONTESTS	DISCOUNTS
				
e.g., link to a blogger review	e.g., "after around 7 days you can see the first results" Luisa P.	e.g., choose your gift	e.g., #FestivalStar contest invitation	e.g., 20% discount
CELEBRITIES	BRAND VALUES	BRAND PLACES	BRAND HERITAGE	SENSES
				
e.g., Penelope Cruz	e.g., "In Lancôme we believe that happiness is the most attractive form of beauty"	e.g., beauty bar by Rimmel	e.g., "the art of packaging, a savoir-faire by Guerlain"	e.g., juicy fruit
INSPIRATION	EVENTS	CSR	LIFESTYLE	QUESTIONS
				
e.g., "share your happiness and make others happy, tag the friend you will make happy today"	e.g., Christmas meeting in Paris, invitation to follow it on Instagram	e.g., donating 20% of the product price to the organization fighting against breast cancer	e.g., sportswoman	e.g., "what are your plans for the weekend?"
FESTIVITY	LIVE TRANSMISSIONS			
				
e.g., Halloween	e.g., make-up show			

Source: Own elaboration

As far as comments on and shares of brand posts are concerned it is worth mentioning that the number of comments and shares can change over time and be lower for more recent posts. In order to provide reliable data, the data initially collected by the author were checked again after two months by the independent coders and updated where necessary. Only user comments were coded, brand comments or comments of other companies (e.g., beauty shops) were not taken into account.

Furthermore, a sentiment analysis (also referred to as "opinion mining"), i.e. "a computational study of opinions, sentiments, emotions, and attitude expressed in texts towards an entity" (Ravi & Ravi, 2015, p. 14) was performed in order to evaluate user comments. The analyzed 1,040 brand posts had 9,552 user comments. Five hundred eighty-nine brand posts had at least one comment. All the comments were carefully read one by one by the author and classified as positive, neutral or negative. Positive opinions and emotions expressed by users in text or through an emoticon/emoji and tagging of other users were classified as positive comments. Questions related to the content, neutral comments or ambiguous emoticons/emoji and comments not related to the content were classified as neutral. Negative opinions and emotions expressed by users in text or through an emoticon/emoji were classified as negative comments. Table 15 illustrates the examples of positive, neutral and negative comments.

Table 15. Positive, neutral and negative comment examples

POSITIVE COMMENTS	*NEUTRAL COMMENTS*	*NEGATIVE COMMENTS*
		

Source: Own elaboration

After the positive, neutral and negative comments had been coded by the author, all the comments were evaluated again by two independent coders (female graduate students) who

coded negative comments. Coders worked independently of one another and were not aware of how the author assessed the comments. The coefficient of agreement calculated on the whole sample was .92 which corresponds to PRL measure of .99 indicating a very high level of measurement objectivity.

The author coded the number of shares of brand posts, as well as the brand type, geographic market, product category and day of the week.

2.7. Statistical analysis method

As independent variables were of nominal scale and dependent variables (comment rate and share rate) conceptually related were of ratio scale, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test the hypotheses. Furthermore, the data were analyzed by univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs).

The use of both MANOVA and follow-up ANOVAs is a recommended (Leary & Altmaier, 1980) and common approach, used in prior studies (e.g. Gavilanes et al., 2018; Sen & Lerman, 2007; Tafesse & Wien, 2018) which in the current study allowed examination of the influence of the independent variables on each dependent variable on a larger sample. Two separate analyses were performed, the first for the comment rate and the second for the share rate.

The assumptions of one-way ANOVA are independence (within groups and between groups, random samples), adequate sample size ($n \geq 30$), normality (the populations from which the samples are drawn approximately normally distributed) and homogeneity of variance (equal variances of the distributions). The additional assumptions of MANOVA are linearity (dependent variables linearly related to each other), the absence of multicollinearity, the equality of covariance matrices and the absence of multivariate outliers. Furthermore, multivariate normality is assumed in MANOVA. Contrary to many academic publications that report summary of the results without testing the assumptions of the selected statistical analysis method, an extended statistical analysis provided in the second section includes testing of the assumptions of both multivariate and univariate analyses of variance, as well as the examination of interaction effects.

Chapter 3.

Results

The results described in this chapter draw on the best practices to allow and improve replication research provided by Bergh, Sharp, Aguinis, & Li (2017). They include reporting precise p-levels rather than cut-offs and preliminary verification of models.

3.1. Descriptive statistics

Before testing the hypotheses, the descriptive statistics described in this section, on the basis of the analysis of 1,040 brand posts, provide a general overview of marketing communications of the analyzed brands and eWOM effects.

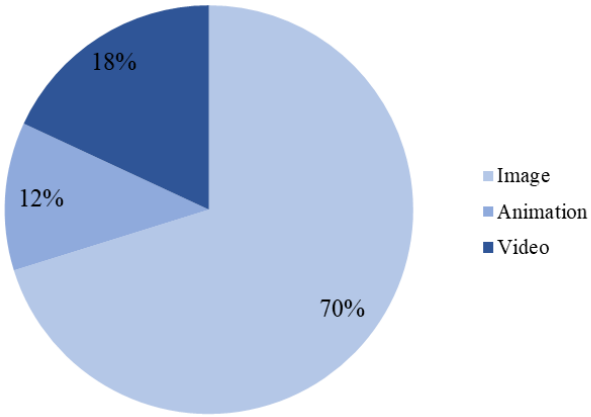
The frequency of the brand post form is summarized in Table 16. Figure 15 depicts the relative frequency. Images were the most frequently used communication form, they accounted for 70% of all brand posts. More vivid content was much less frequent. Videos were used in 18% of all brand posts and only 12% of the analyzed posts were animations.

Table 16. Frequency of brand post form

BRAND POST FORM	*N*	*%*
Image	730	70%
Animation	122	12%
Video	188	18%

Source: Own elaboration

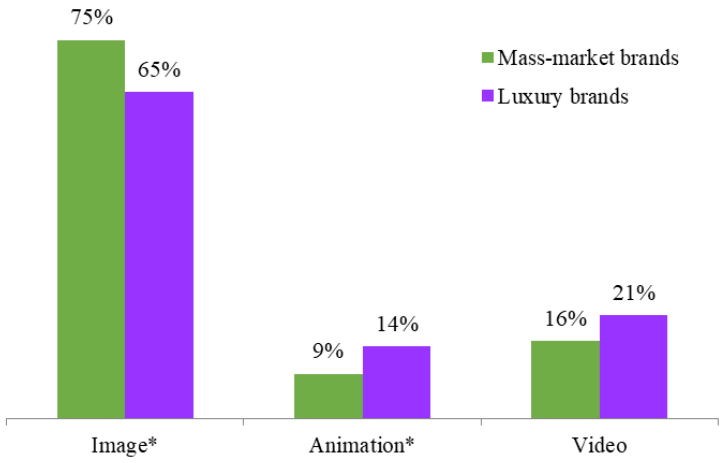
Figure 15. Relative brand post form frequency



Source: Own elaboration

Figure 16 depicts the relative frequency of the brand post form for mass-market and luxury brands.

Figure 16. Relative brand post form frequency for mass-market and luxury brands

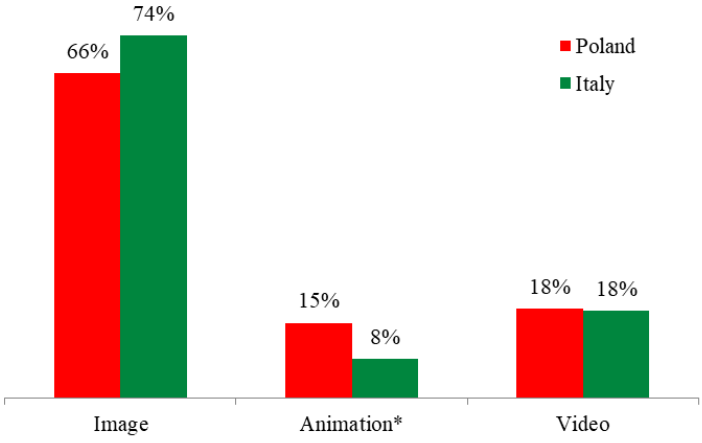


** The difference is significant at the .05 level*
Source: Own elaboration

There was a statistically significant difference between the frequency of images (chi-square = 3.995, df = 1, p = .046) and animations (chi-square = 6.426, df = 1, p = .011) between mass-market brands and luxury brands. Images are used more frequently by mass-market brands and animations are used more frequently by luxury brands.

Figure 17 depicts the relative frequency of brand post form within the Polish and Italian markets.

Figure 17. Relative brand post form frequency within the Polish and Italian markets



** The difference is significant at the .001 level*
Source: Own elaboration

There was a statistically significant difference (chi-square = 11.836, df = 1, p = .001) between the frequency of animations in the Polish and Italian markets. In Poland animations were used more often than in Italy.

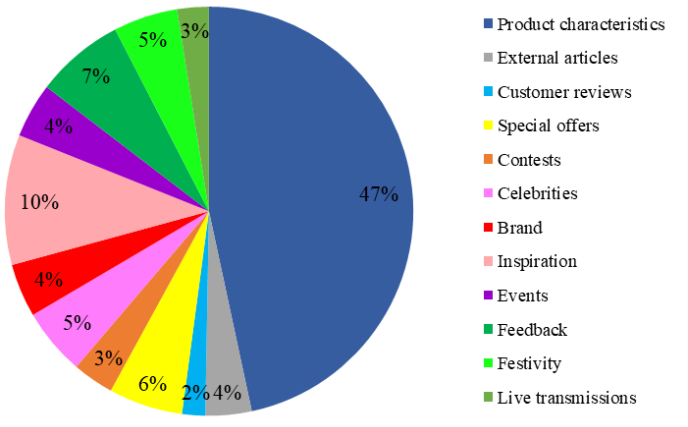
The frequency of brand post appeals is summarized in Table 17. Figure 18 depicts the relative frequency.

Table 17. Frequency of brand post appeals

CATEGORY OF BRAND POST APPEAL	*N*	*%*
Product characteristics	485	47%
External articles	38	4%
Customer reviews	19	2%
Special offers	61	6%
Contests	34	3%
Celebrities	55	5%
Brand	44	4%
Inspiration	107	10%
Events	45	4%
Feedback	73	7%
Festivity	53	5%
Live transmissions	26	3%

Source: Own elaboration

Figure 18. Relative frequency of brand post appeals



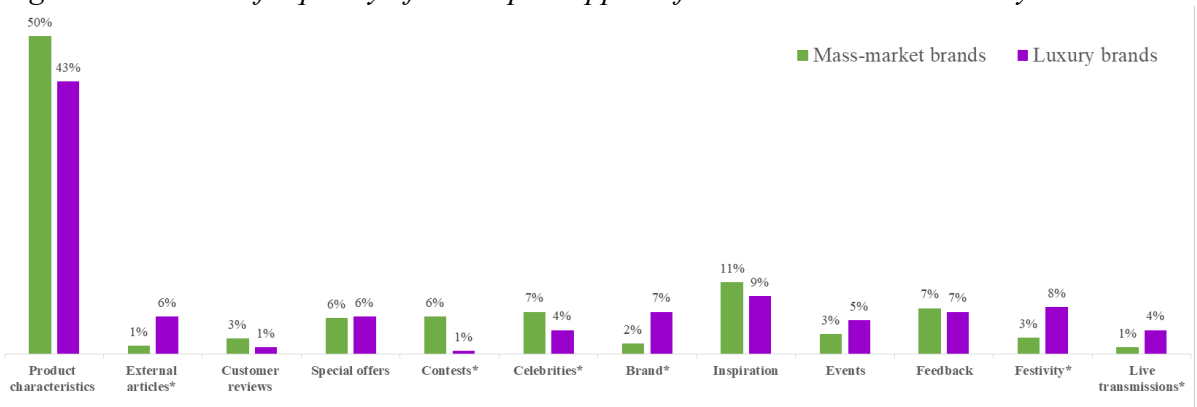
Source: Own elaboration

Product characteristic was the most frequent appeal, dominant in 47% of brand posts. Product performance and product features (e.g., ingredients or color range) were described more often.

The second most common category included inspirational brand posts, however, they accounted for only 10% of all brand posts being much less frequent than the previous category. Brand posts that solicit user feedback had a similar share of 7%.

Figure 19 depicts the relative frequency of brand post appeals for mass-market and luxury brands.

Figure 19. Relative frequency of brand post appeals for mass-market and luxury brands

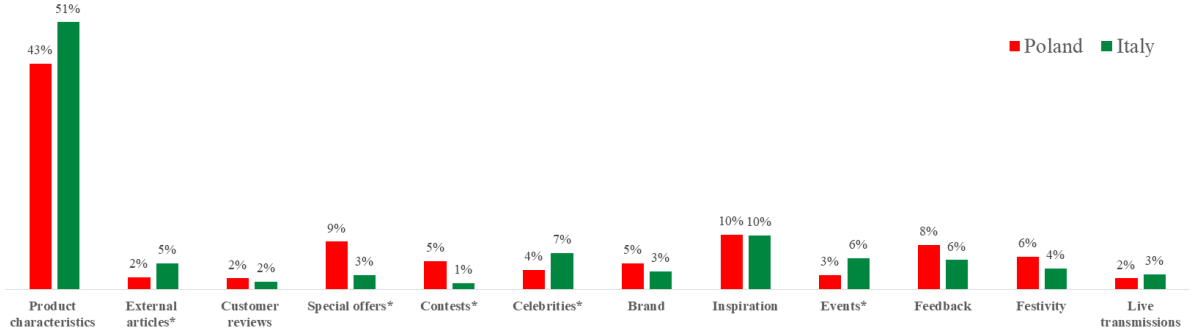


** The difference is significant at the .05 level*
Source: Own elaboration

There was a statistically significant difference between the frequency of posts related to external articles (chi-square = 15.158, df = 1, p = .000), contests (chi-square = 23.059, df = 1, p = .000), celebrities (chi-square = 4.091, df = 1, p = .043), brand (chi-square = 15.364, df = 1, p = .000), festivities (chi-square = 11.792, df = 1, p = .001), and live transmissions (chi-square = 7.538, df = 1, p = .006) between mass-market brands and luxury brands.

Figure 20 depicts the relative frequency of brand post appeals within the Polish and Italian markets.

Figure 20. Relative frequency of brand post appeals within the Polish and Italian markets



** The difference is significant at the .05 level*
Source: Own elaboration

There was a statistically significant difference between the frequency of brand posts related to external articles (chi-square = 5.158, df = 1, p = .023), special offers (chi-square = 17.852, df = 1, p = .000), contests (chi-square = 14.235, df = 1, p = .000), celebrities (chi-square = 5.255, df = 1, p = .022), and events (chi-square = 6.422, df = 1, p = .011) in the Polish and Italian markets.

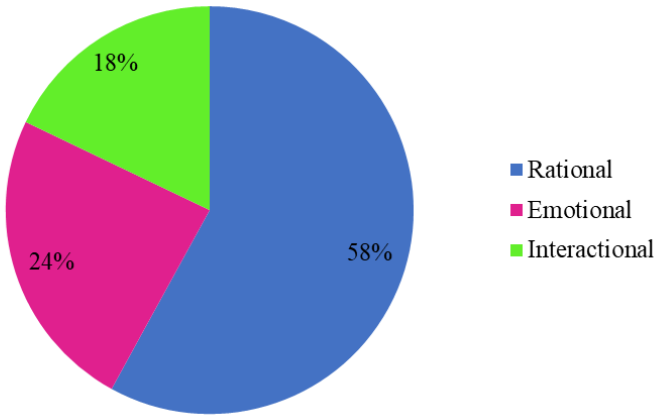
Finally, the frequency of the three main marketing communication appeals is reported in Table 18. Figure 21 depicts the relative frequency.

Table 18. Frequency of marketing communication appeals

MARKETING COMMUNICATION APPEAL	*N*	*%*
Rational	603	58%
Emotional	251	24%
Interactional	186	18%

Source: Own elaboration

Figure 21. Relative frequency of marketing communication appeals

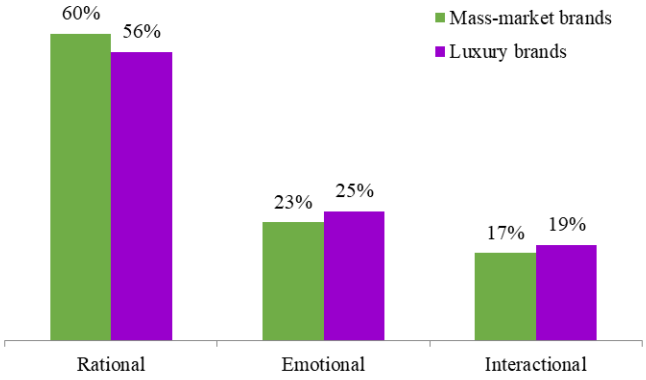


Source: Own elaboration

Rational appeals were used most frequently in marketing communications of the analyzed brands. They were dominant in 58% of all brand posts. Emotional appeals were dominant in approximately a quarter (24%) of the analyzed brand posts. Brand posts with an interactional appeal, specific for social media, accounted for 18% of the analyzed posts.

Figure 22 depicts the relative frequency of marketing communication appeals for mass-market and luxury brands.

Figure 22. Relative frequency of marketing communication appeals for mass-market and luxury brands

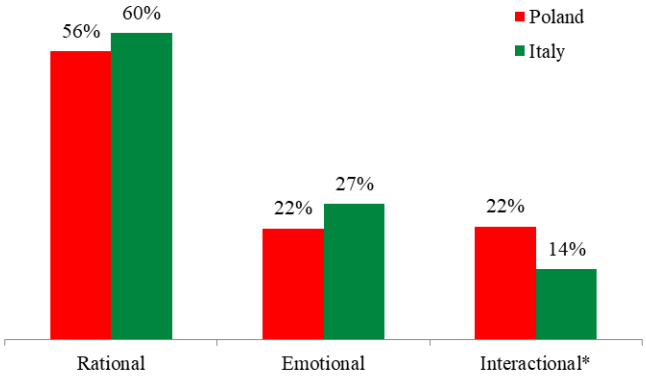


Source: Own elaboration

No statistically significant differences were found between the frequency of marketing communication appeals between mass-market and luxury brands.

Figure 23 depicts the relative frequency of marketing communication appeals within the Polish and Italian markets.

Figure 23. Relative frequency of marketing communication appeals within the Polish and Italian markets

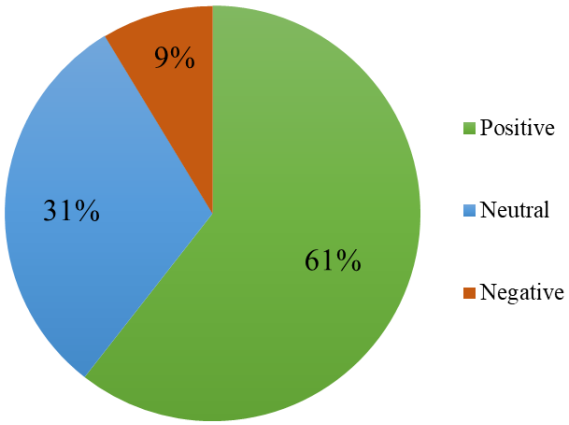


** The difference is significant at the .001 level*
Source: Own elaboration

There was a statistically significant difference (chi-square = 10.409, df = 1, p = .001) between the frequency of interactional appeals between the Polish and Italian markets. In Poland interactional appeals were used more often than in Italy.

Figure 24 shows the share of positive, neutral and negative posts in the analyzed sample of 1,040 brand posts.

Figure 24. Sentiment analysis of brand posts



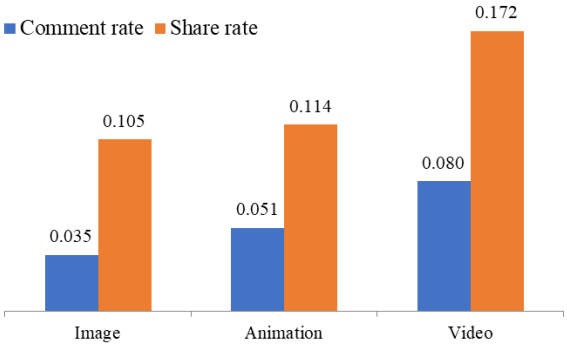
Source: Own elaboration

The analysis confirms the results of prior studies on eWOM in social media (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015; Mangold & Smith, 2012; Tkaczyk, 2018) showing that most of the comments (60.56%) were positive. Negative comments accounted for 8.68% of all comments and were related to only 129 posts in the sample. In 96% of brand posts, the number of positive comments was higher or equal to the number of negative comments. As the share of posts with negative comments in different categories was similar to the share of positive, and negative comments and the small number of posts with negative comments would not allow obtaining meaningful findings, negative comments were excluded from further analysis.

Most of the brand posts were published on Monday (n = 207, 19.9%) and the same number, on Friday (n = 207, 19.9%). Brand posts published on weekends were much less frequent, only 75 posts (7.2%) were published on Saturday and 62 (6%) on Sunday. Brand posts on make-up products accounted for 56.8% of all brand posts (n = 591), followed by brand posts on skincare that accounted for 16.3% of all brand posts (n = 169).

As far as measures of central tendency and measures of variability - mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) are concerned, the average comment rate per brand post was .0448 (SD = .1032) and the average share rate .1184 (SD = .2396). Figure 25 depicts the average comment rate and share rate for each brand post form.

Figure 25. Average comment rate and share rate for brand post form



Source: Own elaboration

The average comment rate for an image was .035 (SD = .062). The average comment rate for an animation was .051 (SD = .157) and the average comment rate for a video was .080 (SD = .163). The average share rate for an image was .105 (SD = .217). The average share rate for an animation was .114 (SD = .210) and for a video .172 (SD = .321). Statistically significant differences are described in the following section.

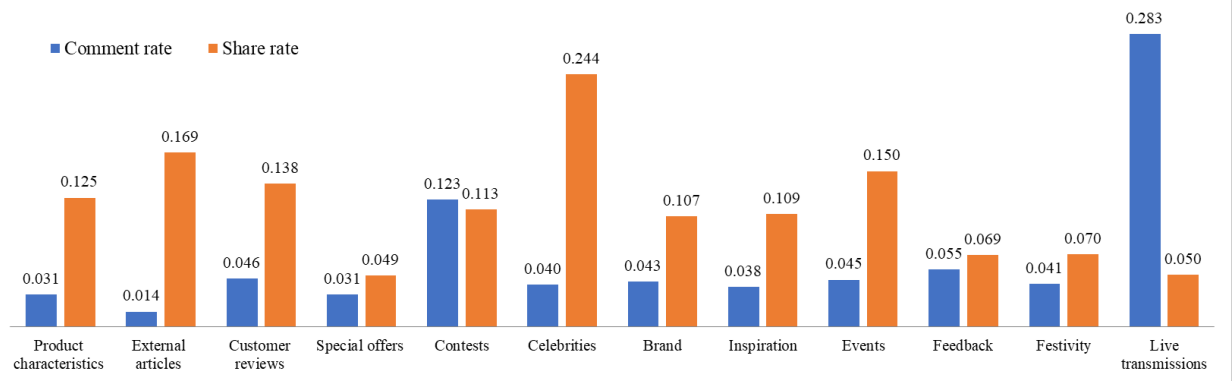
Table 19 and Figure 26 depict the average comment rate and share rate for each category of brand post appeal.

Table 19. Average comment rate and share rate for brand post appeals

CATEGORY OF BRAND POST APPEAL	*COMMENT RATE*		*SHARE RATE*	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Product characteristics	0.031	0.054	0.125	0.247
External articles	0.014	0.035	0.169	0.299
Customer reviews	0.046	0.056	0.138	0.204
Special offers	0.031	0.046	0.049	0.681
Contests	0.123	0.238	0.113	0.143
Celebrities	0.040	0.090	0.244	0.502
Brand	0.043	0.155	0.107	0.118
Inspiration	0.038	0.058	0.109	0.166
Events	0.045	0.078	0.150	0.326
Feedback	0.055	0.078	0.069	0.101
Festivity	0.041	0.139	0.070	0.120
Live transmissions	0.283	0.294	0.050	0.040

M = mean; SD = standard deviation
Source: Own elaboration

Figure 26. Average comment rate and share rate for brand post appeals



Source: Own elaboration

Live transmissions registered an average comment rate of .283 (SD = .294). The average comment rate of contests was of .123 (SD = .238) and posts that solicit user feedback registered the average comment rate of .055 (SD = .078). Statistically significant differences are described in the following section.

Brand posts with celebrities registered an average share rate of .244 (SD = .502). The average share rate of brand posts with external articles was of .169 (SD = .299) and of those about events of .15 (SD = .326).

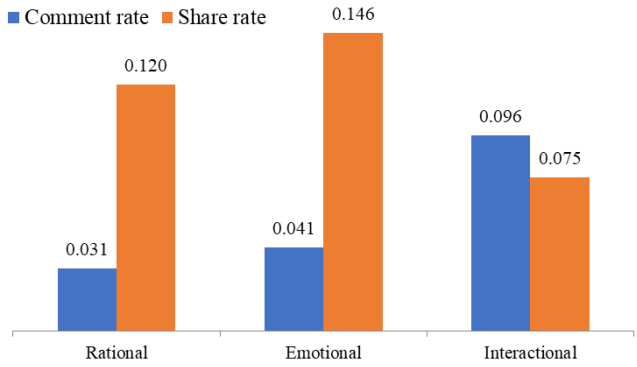
Table 20 and Figure 27 depict the average comment and share rates for each of the three broad categories of marketing communication appeal.

Table 20. Average comment rate and share rate for marketing communication appeals

MARKETING COMMUNICATION APPEAL	*COMMENT RATE*		*SHARE RATE*	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Rational	0.031	0.053	0.120	0.239
Emotional	0.041	0.092	0.146	0.300
Interactional	0.096	0.190	0.075	0.111

M = mean; SD = standard deviation
Source: Own elaboration

Figure 27. Average comment rate and share rate for marketing communication appeals



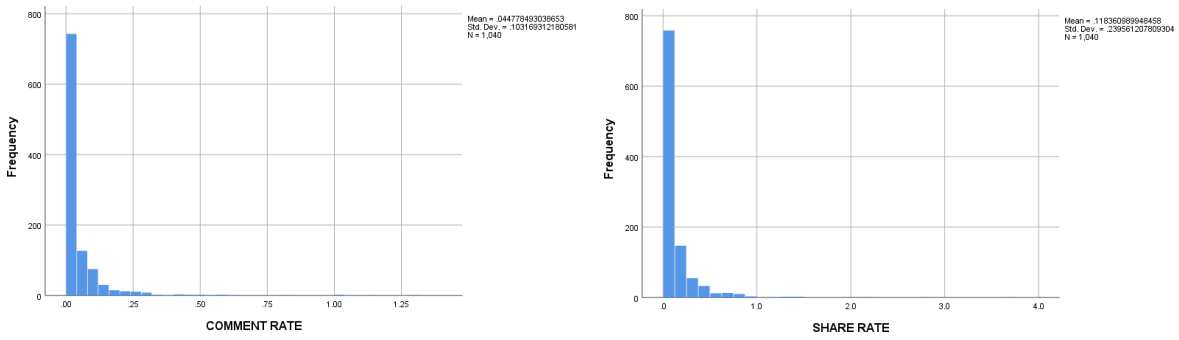
Source: Own elaboration

The average comment rate for a rational appeal was of .031 (SD = .053). The average comment rate for an emotional appeal was of .041 (SD = .092) and for an interactional appeal of .096 (SD = .19). The average share rate for a rational appeal was of .12 (SD = .239) and the average share rate for an emotional appeal of .146 (SD = .3). The average share rate for an interactional appeal was of .075 (SD = .111). Statistically significant differences are described in the following section.

3.2. Hypotheses testing

As shown in Figure 28, the distributions of comment and share rates were highly skewed (skewness 6.142 and 6.726 respectively; standard error of skewness 0.076 for both measures).

Figure 28. Distribution of comment rate and share rate

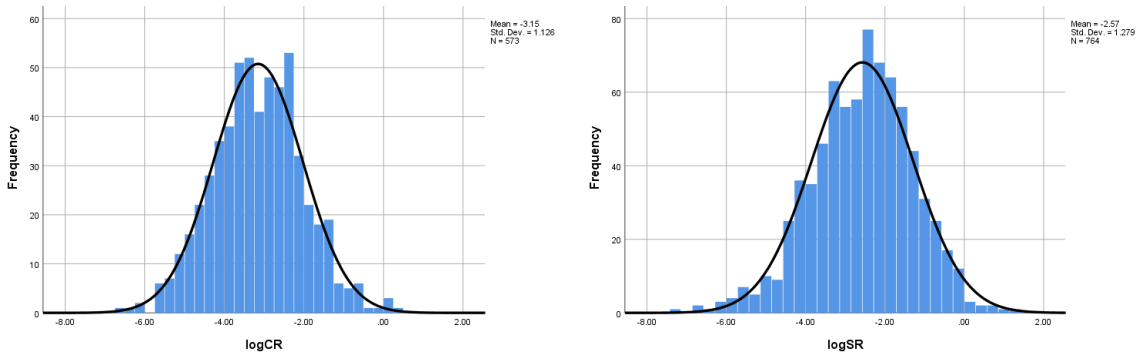


Source: Own elaboration

There were 467 brand posts (45% of the sample) that received no comments and 276 brand posts (27% of the sample) that had not been shared, or, in other words, for which the data on eWOM were missing. This shows how difficult it is to obtain eWOM effects. The main

research question of this study (i.e. how marketing communication in social networks influences eWOM) including the comparison of the relative influence of different forms and appeals of marketing communications, for different brand types and within different geographic markets implies that, in order to be compared, the eWOM effects should be observed in each of the analyzed groups. The analysis of brand posts with no comments or shares would bring no results and due to the inclusion of these posts in the statistical analysis the final results could be biased. Therefore brand posts that received no comments or that had not been shared were excluded from the analysis. In order to normalize the data to meet the assumptions of ANOVA, the comment rate and the share rate were log-transformed. Figure 29 depicts the distribution of log-transformed comment rates (N = 573) and share rates (N = 764).

Figure 29. Distribution of log-transformed comment rate and share rate



Source: Own elaboration

According to H1, marketing communication in social networks using video has the highest while using images has the lowest positive influence on eWOM. The independent variable was of nominal scale (3 levels), the dependent variables (comment rate and share rate) were of ratio scale.

MANOVA was performed on 474 brand posts for which the data were available for both log-transformed comment and share rates (N = 474) of which 333 were images, 38 animations and 103 videos. First, the assumptions of MANOVA were tested. The dependent variables were linearly related to each other. No multicollinearity was found between the dependent variables (Pearson Correlation = 0.366, $p < 0.01$). However, the Box's test of equality of covariance matrices was statistically significant ($p = .000$), thus the assumption was not met.

The inter-item covariance matrix confirmed that the assumption of equality of covariance matrices was violated (Table 21).

Table 21. Communication form: inter-item covariance matrix

FORM		*LOGCR*	*LOGSR*
Image	logCR	1.109	.578
	logSR	.578	1.600
Animation	logCR	1.124	.357
	logSR	.357	1.268
Video	logCR	1.285	-.121
	logSR	-.121	.971

Source: Own elaboration

Moreover, Levene's test of equality of error variances based on mean was significant for the share rate ($p = .021$) indicating that the equal variances assumption was violated for this variable, even if it is worth mentioning that the F test is quite robust against violation of this assumption (Lindman, 1974).

The presence of two multivariate outliers was revealed. After the exclusion of the two outliers, the maximum Mahalanobis distance of 13.09 was lower than the critical value of 13.82 for two predictor values, thus the assumption of the absence of multivariate outliers was met. As it was found that the inclusion of the two outliers did not affect the overall results, they were kept in the final sample.

As Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality was statistically significant ($p < .05$) for the comment rate (animation and videos) and the share rate (images) (Table 22), the assumption of multivariate normality was not met. However, the F test is deemed robust to deviations from normality, in particular when, as in this case, the sample size is large (Lindman, 1974).

Table 22. Communication form: tests of normality

	FORM	*SHAPIRO-WILK*		
		STATISTIC	*DF*	*SIG.*
logCR	Image	.995	333	.443
	Animation	.926	38	.015
	Video	.972	103	.029
logSR	Image	.991	333	.032
	Animation	.974	38	.501
	Video	.982	103	.169

Source: Own elaboration

As some of the assumptions of MANOVA were violated, the accuracy of the significant result F (4, 942) = 13.771, p = .000, Pillai's Trace .107, η^2 = .053 (Table 23) could not be ascertained. However Pillai's Trace test is considered to be the most robust of the MANOVA tests, particularly recommended if some assumptions are not met (Olson, 1974), so the result is deemed relevant. Partial eta squared of .053 (that as there is only one predictor variable is equivalent to eta squared – the measure of effect size for a sample) suggested that 5.3% of the variance of eWOM in the sample was explained by the communication form.

Table 23. Communication form: MANOVA

EFFECT		*VALUE*	*F*	*HYPOTHESIS DF*	*ERROR DF*	*SIG.*	*PARTIAL ETA SQUARED*
Form	Pillai's Trace	.107	13.271	4.000	942.000	.000	.053

Source: Own elaboration

The data were further analyzed by single factor analysis of variance or one-way ANOVA. Firstly, the comment rate (N = 573) was analyzed. There were 407 images, 53 animations and 113 videos in the population. Table 24 illustrates the descriptive statistics.

Table 24. Communication form – comment rate: descriptive statistics

	N	*MEAN*	*STD. DEVIATION*	*STD. ERROR*	*95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL FOR MEAN*		*MINIMUM*	*MAXIMUM*
					LOWER BOUND	*UPPER BOUND*		
Image	407	-3.3222	1.09062	.05406	-3.4285	-3.2160	-6.58	-.69
Animation	53	-2.8117	1.04574	.14364	-3.0999	-2.5235	-5.65	.14
Video	113	-2.6937	1.13223	.10651	-2.9048	-2.4827	-4.62	.25
Total	573	-3.1511	1.12585	.04703	-3.2434	-3.0587	-6.58	.25

Source: Own elaboration

Although the Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality was not statistically significant (p = .264) for images, it was statistically significant for animations (p = .006) and videos (p = .03), thus the assumption of normality was not met for all groups at the alpha level of .05. However, these values are not the sole determination of normality. The examination of skewness (images -.157, animations .442, videos .376; standard error of skewness .121, .327, .227 respectively) and kurtosis (images -.285, animations 2.016, videos -.522; standard error of kurtosis .241, .644, .451 respectively) revealed that the skewness and kurtosis values divided by their standard errors were lower than $\pm$3.29 suggesting that score values did not significantly depart from normality.

The Levene's homogeneity of variances test was not statistically significant, therefore the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met.

The null hypothesis stated that comment rate did not depend on the communication form, all three samples with different communication form were drawn from populations with equal means $\mu 1 = \mu 2 = \mu 3$. There was a statistically significant difference determined by ANOVA ($F(2,570) = 17.375$, $p = .000$) (Table 25), so it was possible to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 25. Communication form – comment rate: ANOVA

	SUM OF SQUARES	*DF*	*MEAN SQUARE*	*F*	*SIG.*
Between Groups	41.662	2	20.831	17.375	.000
Within Groups	683.364	570	1.199		
Total	725.026	572			

Source: Own elaboration

The effect of the communication form on comment rate was statistically significant – at least one of the analyzed groups was significantly different from the other.

Omega squared (the measure of effect size for a population) of 0.054 revealed that 5.4% of the variance in the comment rate in the population was explained by the communication form, thus there was a small effect size.

Post-hoc Tukey HSD test (Table 26) showed statistically significant differences between images and both animations (p = .004) and videos (p = .000).

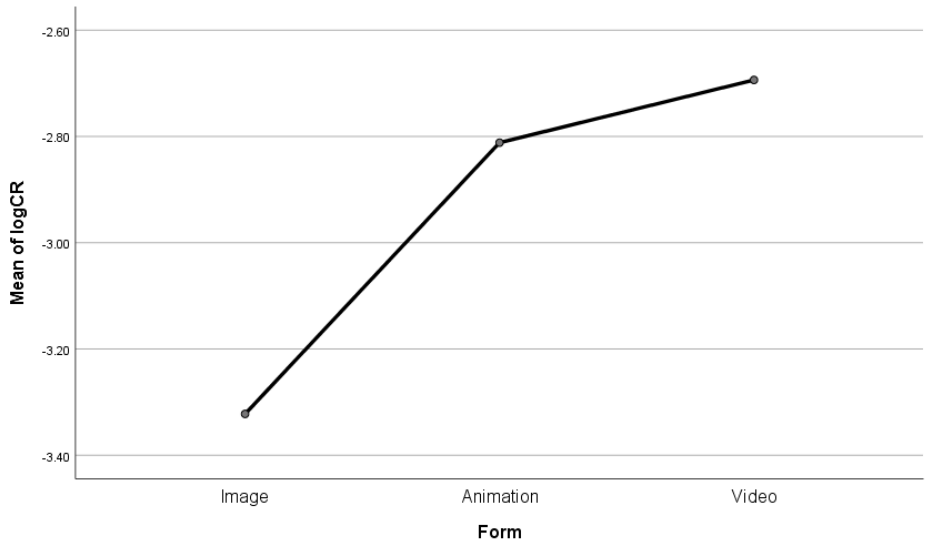
Table 26. Communication form – comment rate: post-hoc Tukey HSD test

(I) FORM	*(J) FORM*	*MEAN DIFFERENCE (I-J)*	*STD. ERROR*	*SIG.*	*95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL*	
					LOWER BOUND	*UPPER BOUND*
Image	Animation	-.51053*	.15989	.004	-.8863	-.1348
	Video	-.62850*	.11643	.000	-.9021	-.3549
Animation	Image	.51053*	.15989	.004	.1348	.8863
	Video	-.11797	.18229	.794	-.5463	.3104
Video	Image	.62850*	.11643	.000	.3549	.9021
	Animation	.11797	.18229	.794	-.3104	.5463

** The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.*
Source: Own elaboration

As shown in Figure 30, the comment rate is significantly lower for images than for animations and videos. No statistically significant difference was found between animations and videos.

Figure 30. Communication form – comment rate: means plot



Source: Own elaboration

Secondly, the share rate (N = 764) was analyzed by one-way ANOVA. There were 542 images, 73 animations and 149 videos in the population. Table 27 illustrates the descriptive statistics.

Table 27. Communication form – share rate: descriptive statistics

	N	*MEAN*	*STD. DEVIATION*	*STD. ERROR*	*95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL FOR MEAN*		*MIN.*	*MAX.*
					LOWER BOUND	*UPPER BOUND*		
Image	542	-2.7212	1.31844	.05663	-2.8324	-2.6099	-7.30	1.30
Animation	73	-2.2770	1.14127	.13358	-2.5433	-2.0107	-4.72	.18
Video	149	-2.1620	1.07277	.08788	-2.3357	-1.9883	-5.12	1.01
Total	764	-2.5697	1.27891	.04627	-2.6605	-2.4789	-7.30	1.30

Source: Own elaboration

The Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality was not statistically significant for animations (p = .608) and videos (p = .259), however, it was statistically significant for images (p = .007), thus the assumption of normality was not met for all groups at the alpha level of .05. However, the examination of skewness (images -.321, animations .046, videos .306; standard error of skewness .105, .281, .199 respectively) and kurtosis (images .147, animations -.329, videos .103; standard error of kurtosis .209, .555, .395 respectively) revealed that the skewness and kurtosis values divided by their standard errors were lower than ± 3.29 suggesting that score values did not significantly depart from normality.

The Levene's homogeneity of variances test was statistically significant, therefore the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not met.

The null hypothesis stated that the share rate did not depend on the communication form, all three samples with different communication form were drawn from populations with equal means $\mu 1 = \mu 2 = \mu 3$. There was a statistically significant difference determined by ANOVA ($F(2,761) = 13.727$, p = .000) (Table 28), however, as the assumption of homogeneity of variance has been violated, Welch and Brown-Forsythe robust tests were performed and both confirmed (p = .000) that it was possible to reject the null hypothesis (Table 29).

Table 28. Communication form – share rate: ANOVA

	SUM OF SQUARES	*DF*	*MEAN SQUARE*	*F*	*SIG.*
Between Groups	43.454	2	21.727	13.727	.000
Within Groups	1204.511	761	1.583		
Total	1247.965	763			

Source: Own elaboration

Table 29. Communication form – share rate: robust tests of equality of means

	STATISTIC[a]	*DF1*	*DF2*	*SIG.*
Welch	16.192	2	179.107	.000
Brown-Forsythe	16.652	2	266.574	.000

a Asymptotically F distributed.
Source: Own elaboration

The effect of the communication form on the share rate was statistically significant, at least one of the analyzed groups was significantly different from the other.

Omega squared of 0.032 revealed that 3.2% of the variance in the share rate in the population was explained by the communication form, thus there was a small effect size.

Post-hoc Games-Howell test (used as equal variances were not assumed) (Table 30) showed statistically significant differences between images and both animations (p = .008) and videos (p = .000).

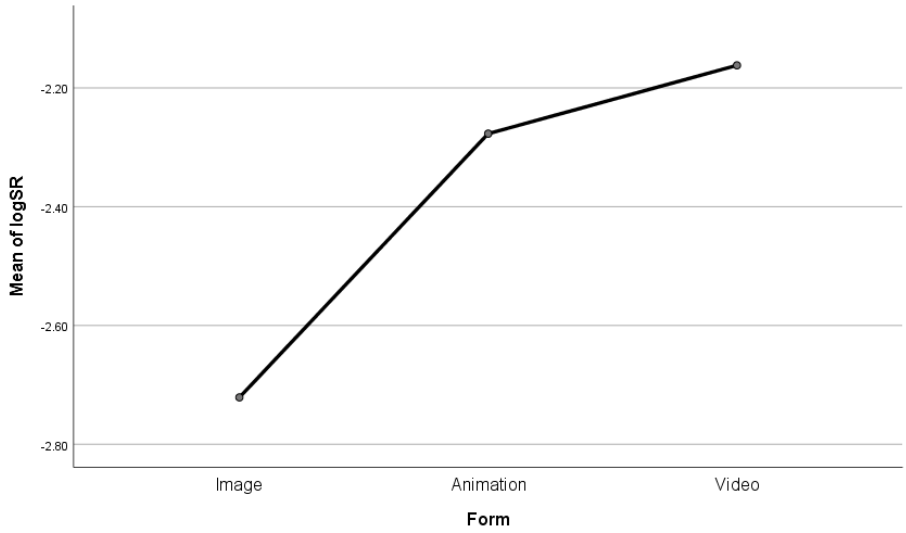
Table 30. Communication form – share rate: post-hoc Games-Howell test

(I) FORM	*(J) FORM*	*MEAN DIFFERENCE (I-J)*	*STD. ERROR*	*SIG.*	*95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL*	
					LOWER BOUND	*UPPER BOUND*
Image	Animation	-.44415*	.14509	.008	-.7893	-.0990
	Video	-.55916*	.10455	.000	-.8055	-.3128
Animation	Image	.44415*	.14509	.008	.0990	.7893
	Video	-.11501	.15989	.753	-.4939	.2639
Video	Image	.55916*	.10455	.000	.3128	.8055
	Animation	.11501	.15989	.753	-.2639	.4939

** The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.*
Source: Own elaboration

As shown in Figure 31, the share rate is significantly lower for images than for animations and videos. Again, no statistically significant difference was found between animations and videos.

Figure 31. Communication form – share rate: means plot



Source: Own elaboration

Therefore **H1 is partially supported: marketing communication in social networks using images has the lowest positive influence on eWOM, while there is no statistically significant difference between animations and videos**.

An additional analysis was performed to examine the differences between the influence of marketing communication form on eWOM for mass-market and luxury brands (Appendix A).

According to H2, emotional appeal of marketing communication in social networks has a higher positive influence on eWOM than rational appeal. The independent variable was of nominal scale (3 levels), the dependent variables (comment rate and share rate) were of ratio scale.

MANOVA was performed on 474 brand posts for which the data were available for both log-transformed comment and share rates (N = 474) of which 259 had a rational appeal, 123 an emotional appeal and 92 an interactional appeal. First, the assumptions of MANOVA were tested. The dependent variables were linearly related to each other. No multicollinearity was found between the dependent variables (Pearson Correlation = 0.366, $p < 0.01$). Box's test of equality of covariance matrices was statistically significant ($p = .001$), thus the assumption was not met. However, the examination of the inter-item covariance matrix did not confirm large differences between covariance matrices (Table 31).

Table 31. Communication appeal: inter-item covariance matrix

APPEAL		*LOGCR*	*LOGSR*
Rational	logCR	1.007	.589
	logSR	.589	1.648
Emotional	logCR	1.029	.439
	logSR	.439	1.444
Interactional	logCR	1.833	.508
	logSR	.508	1.203

Source: Own elaboration

Moreover, Levene's test of equality of error variances based on mean was significant for comment rate (p = .000) indicating that the equal variances assumption was violated for this variable, even if as mentioned before, the F test is quite robust against violation of this assumption (Lindman, 1974).

The presence of two multivariate outliers was revealed. After the exclusion of the two outliers the maximum Mahalanobis distance of 13.09 was lower than the critical value of 13.82 for two predictor values, thus the assumption of the absence of multivariate outliers was met. As it was found that the inclusion of the two outliers did not affect the overall results, they were kept in the final sample.

As Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality was statistically significant (p = .031) for the share rate (rational appeal) (Table 32), the assumption of multivariate normality was not met. However, as mentioned before, the F test is deemed robust to deviations from normality, in particular when, as in this case, the sample size is large (Lindman, 1974).

Table 32. Communication appeal: tests of normality

	APPEAL	*SHAPIRO-WILK*		
		STATISTIC	*DF*	*SIG.*
logSR	Rational	.988	259	.031
	Emotional	.986	123	.227
	Interactional	.983	92	.280
logCR	Rational	.993	259	.297
	Emotional	.989	123	.428
	Interactional	.989	92	.652

Source: Own elaboration

As some of the assumptions of MANOVA were violated, the accuracy of the significant result F (4, 942) = 13.318, p = .000, Pillai's Trace .107, η^2 = .054 (Table 33) could not be ascertained. However, as mentioned before, Pillai's Trace test is considered to be the most robust of the MANOVA tests, particularly recommended if some assumptions are not met (Olson, 1974), so the result is deemed relevant. Partial eta squared of .054 suggested that 5.4% of the variance of eWOM in the sample was explained by the communication appeal.

Table 33. Communication appeal: MANOVA

EFFECT		*VALUE*	*F*	*HYPOTHESIS DF*	*ERROR DF*	*SIG.*	*PARTIAL ETA SQUARED*
Appeal	Pillai's Trace	.107	13.318	4.000	942.000	.000	.054

Source: Own elaboration

The data were further analyzed by one-way ANOVA. Firstly, the comment rate (N = 573) was analyzed. There were 311 posts with a rational appeal, 143 posts with an emotional appeal and 119 posts with an interactional appeal in the population. Table 34 illustrates the descriptive statistics.

Table 34. Communication appeal – comment rate: descriptive statistics

	N	*MEAN*	*STD. DEVIATION*	*STD. ERROR*	*95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL FOR MEAN*		*MINIMUM*	*MAXIMUM*
					LOWER BOUND	*UPPER BOUND*		
Rational	311	-3.2985	1.03608	.05875	-3.4141	-3.1829	-6.49	-.88
Emotional	143	-3.2513	1.09337	.09143	-3.4320	-3.0705	-6.04	.00
Interactional	119	-2.6454	1.24831	.11443	-2.8720	-2.4188	-6.58	.25
Total	573	-3.1511	1.12585	.04703	-3.2434	-3.0587	-6.58	.25

Source: Own elaboration

The Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality was not statistically significant for rational appeal (p = .058), emotional appeal (p = .778) and interactional appeal (p = 0.848), thus the assumption of normality was met for all groups.

The Levene's homogeneity of variances test was not statistically significant, therefore the assumption of homogeneity of variances was also met.

The null hypothesis stated that comment rate did not depend on the communication appeal, all three samples with different communication appeals were drawn from populations with equal means $\mu 1 = \mu 2 = \mu 3$. As there was a statistically significant difference determined by ANOVA ($F(2,570) = 16.035$, $p = .000$) (Table 35), it was possible to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 35. Communication appeal – comment rate: ANOVA

	SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIG.
Between Groups	38.619	2	19.310	16.035	.000
Within Groups	686.407	570	1.204		
Total	725.026	572			

Source: Own elaboration

The effect of the communication appeal on comment rate was statistically significant – at least one of the analyzed groups was significantly different from the other.

Omega squared of .050 revealed that 5% of the variance in the comment rate in the population was explained by the communication appeal, thus there was a small effect size.

Post-hoc Tukey HSD test (Table 36) showed statistically significant differences between rational appeal and interactional appeal ($p = .000$), emotional appeal and interactional appeal ($p = .000$).

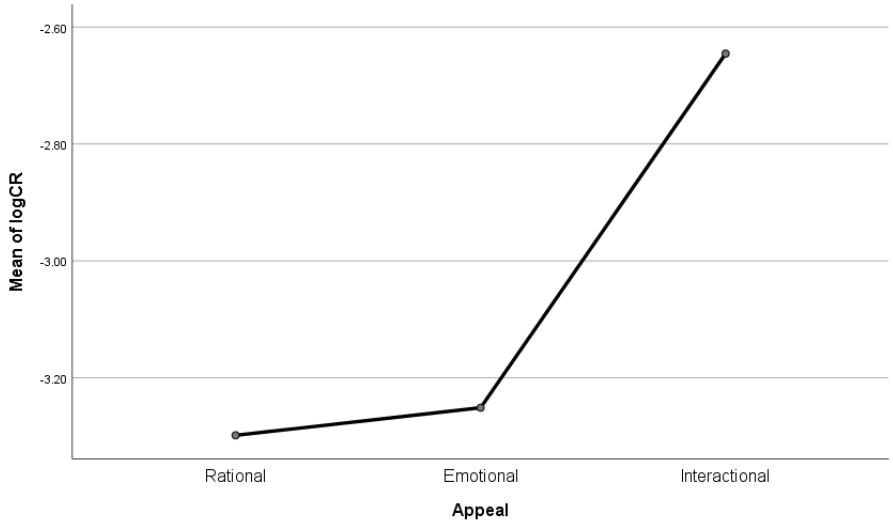
Table 36. Communication appeal – comment rate: post-hoc Tukey HSD test

(I) APPEAL	*(J) APPEAL*	*MEAN DIFFERENCE (I-J)*	*STD. ERROR*	*SIG.*	*95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL*	
					LOWER BOUND	*UPPER BOUND*
Rational	Emotional	-.04717	.11087	.905	-.3077	.2134
	Interactional	-.65305*	.11829	.000	-.9310	-.3751
Emotional	Rational	.04717	.11087	.905	-.2134	.3077
	Interactional	-.60587*	.13616	.000	-.9258	-.2859
Interactional	Rational	.65305*	.11829	.000	.3751	.9310
	Emotional	.60587*	.13616	.000	.2859	.9258

** The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.*
Source: Own elaboration

As shown in Figure 32, the comment rate is significantly lower for rational and emotional appeals than for an interactional appeal. No statistically significant difference was found between a rational appeal and an emotional appeal.

Figure 32. Communication appeal – comment rate: means plot



Source: Own elaboration

As far as specific brand post appeals are concerned, post-hoc Tukey tests in one-way ANOVA revealed that the average comment rate was significantly higher (p = .000) for live transmissions than for brand posts focused on product characteristics, external articles, customer reviews, special offers, celebrities, brand, inspiration, events, user feedback, and festivities. Furthermore, the average comment rate was significantly higher for brand posts related to contests than for those focused on product characteristic (p = .000), special offers (p = .014), celebrities (p = .001), inspiration (p = .002), events (p =.04), user feedback (p = .011) and festivities (p = .047).

Secondly, the share rate (N = 764) was analyzed by one-way ANOVA. There were 445 brand posts with a rational appeal, 189 posts with an emotional appeal and 130 posts with an interactional appeal in the population. Table 37 illustrates the descriptive statistics.

Table 37. Communication appeal – share rate: descriptive statistics

	N	*MEAN*	*STD. DEVIATION*	*STD. ERROR*	*95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL FOR MEAN*		*MINIMUM*	*MAXIMUM*
					LOWER BOUND	*UPPER BOUND*		
Rational	445	-2.5555	1.29374	.06133	-2.6760	-2.4349	-7.30	1.30
Emotional	189	-2.4253	1.27943	.09307	-2.6089	-2.2417	-5.92	1.01
Interactional	130	-2.8282	1.19543	.10485	-3.0356	-2.6207	-6.58	-.46
Total	764	-2.5697	1.27891	.04627	-2.6605	-2.4789	-7.30	1.30

Source: Own elaboration

Although the Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality was not statistically significant for emotional appeal (p = .574) and interactional appeal (p = .128), it was statistically significant for rational appeal (p = .004), thus the assumption of normality was not met for all groups. However, the examination of skewness (rational appeal -.380, emotional appeal -.084, interactional appeal -.402; standard error of skewness .116, .177, .212 respectively) and kurtosis (rational appeal .513, emotional appeal -.082, interactional appeal -.028; standard error of kurtosis .231, .352, .422 respectively) revealed that the skewness and kurtosis values divided by their standard errors were lower than $\pm$3.29 suggesting that score values did not significantly depart from normality.

The Levene's homogeneity of variances test was not statistically significant, therefore the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met.

The null hypothesis stated that the share rate did not depend on the communication appeal, all three samples with different communication appeal were drawn from populations with equal means $\mu 1 = \mu 2 = \mu 3$. As there was a statistically significant difference determined by ANOVA ($F(2,761) = 3.916$, $p = .02$) (Table 38), it was possible to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 38. Communication appeal – share rate: ANOVA

	SUM OF SQUARES	*DF*	*MEAN SQUARE*	*F*	*SIG.*
Between Groups	12.714	2	6.357	3.916	.020
Within Groups	1235.250	761	1.623		
Total	1247.965	763			

Source: Own elaboration

The effect of the communication appeal on the share rate was statistically significant, at least one of the analyzed groups was significantly different from the other.

Omega squared of .008 revealed that 0.8% of the variance in the share rate in the population was explained by the communication appeal, thus there was a small effect size.

Post-hoc Tukey HSD test (Table 39) showed statistically significant differences between emotional appeal and interactional appeal (p = .016) only.

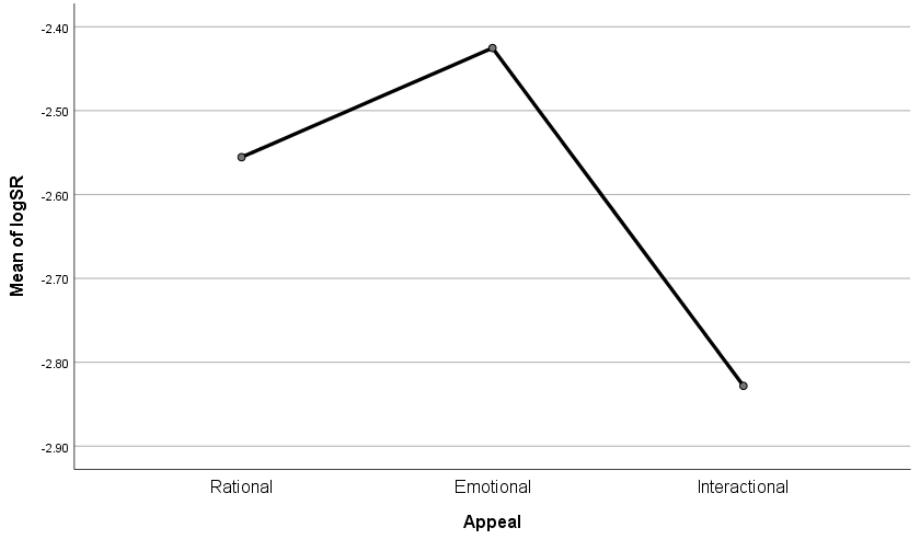
Table 39. Communication appeal – share rate: post-hoc Tukey HSD test

(I) APPEAL	*(J) APPEAL*	*MEAN DIFFERENCE (I-J)*	*STD. ERROR*	*SIG.*	*95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL*	
					LOWER BOUND	*UPPER BOUND*
Rational	Emotional	-.13015	.11062	.468	-.3899	.1296
	Interactional	.27270	.12702	.081	-.0256	.5710
Emotional	Rational	.13015	.11062	.468	-.1296	.3899
	Interactional	.40284*	.14517	.016	.0619	.7437
Interactional	Rational	-.27270	.12702	.081	-.5710	.0256
	Emotional	-.40284*	.14517	.016	-.7437	-.0619

** The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.*
Source: Own elaboration

As shown in Figure 33, the share rate is significantly lower for an interactional appeal than for an emotional appeal.

Figure 33. Communication appeal – share rate: means plot



Source: Own elaboration

In addition, post-hoc Tukey tests in one-way ANOVA revealed that the average share rate was significantly higher for external articles (p = .012), celebrities (p = .019) and events (p = .008) than for brand posts that solicit user feedback.

In sum, **H2 is not supported: there is no statistically significant difference between the influence of the emotional appeal and the rational appeal of marketing communication in social networks on eWOM**.

According to H3, marketing communication in social networks has a higher positive influence on eWOM for luxury brands than for mass-market brands. The independent variable – brand type, was of nominal scale (2 levels), the dependent variables (comment rate and share rate) were of ratio scale.

MANOVA was performed on 474 brand posts for which the data were available for both log-transformed comment and share rates (N = 474) of which 212 were brand posts of mass-market brands and 262 brand posts of luxury brands. First, the assumptions of MANOVA were tested. The dependent variables were linearly related to each other. No multicollinearity was found between the dependent variables (Pearson Correlation = 0.366, p < 0.01). However, the Box's test of equality of covariance matrices was statistically significant (p = .000), thus the assumption was not met. The inter-item covariance matrix confirmed that the assumption of equality of covariance matrices was violated (Table 40).

Table 40. Brand type: inter-item covariance matrix

BRAND TYPE		*LOGCR*	*LOGSR*
Mass-market	logCR	1.519	.905
	logSR	.905	1.844
Luxury	logCR	1.029	.201
	logSR	.201	1.233

Source: Own elaboration

Moreover, Levene's test of equality of error variances based on mean was significant for the comment rate (p = .022) indicating that the equal variances assumption was violated for this variable, even if the F test is quite robust against violation of this assumption (Lindman, 1974).

Again the presence of two multivariate outliers was revealed. After the exclusion of the two outliers the maximum Mahalanobis distance of 13.09 was lower than the critical value of 13.82 for two predictor values, thus the assumption of the absence of multivariate outliers was met. As it was found that the inclusion of the two outliers did not affect the overall results, they were kept in the final sample.

As Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality was statistically significant ($p < .05$) for the comment rate (luxury brands) and the share rate (mass-market and luxury brands) (Table 41), the assumption of multivariate normality was not met. However, the F test is deemed robust to deviations from normality, in particular when, as in this case, the sample size is large (Lindman, 1974).

Table 41. Brand type: tests of normality

	BRAND TYPE	*SHAPIRO-WILK*		
		STATISTIC	*DF*	*SIG.*
logSR	Mass-market	.984	212	.015
	Luxury	.988	262	.024
logCR	Mass-market	.989	212	.096
	Luxury	.977	262	.000

Source: Own elaboration

As some of the assumptions of MANOVA were violated, the accuracy of the significant result $F (2, 471) = 5.882$, $p = .003$, Pillai's Trace .024, $\eta^2 = .024$ (Table 42) could not be ascertained. However, again it is worth underlining that Pillai's Trace test is considered to be the most robust of the MANOVA tests, particularly recommended if some assumptions are not met (Olson, 1974), so the result is deemed relevant. Partial eta squared of .024 suggested that 2.4% of the variance of eWOM in the sample was explained by the communication form.

Table 42. Brand type: MANOVA

EFFECT		*VALUE*	*F*	*HYPOTHESIS DF*	*ERROR DF*	*SIG.*	*PARTIAL ETA SQUARED*
Brand type	Pillai's Trace	.024	5.882[a]	2.000	471.000	.003	.024

a Exact statistic
Source: Own elaboration

The data were further analyzed by single factor analysis of variance or one-way ANOVA. Firstly, the comment rate (N = 573) was analyzed. There were 277 brand posts of mass-market brands and 296 brand posts of luxury brands in the population. Table 43 illustrates the descriptive statistics.

Table 43. Brand type – comment rate: descriptive statistics

	N	*MEAN*	*STD. DEVIATION*	*STD. ERROR*	*95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL FOR MEAN*		*MINIMUM*	*MAXIMUM*
					LOWER BOUND	*UPPER BOUND*		
Mass-market	277	-3.0179	1.20277	.07227	-3.1602	-2.8757	-6.58	.25
Luxury	296	-3.2757	1.03538	.06018	-3.3941	-3.1572	-5.51	.00
Total	573	-3.1511	1.12585	.04703	-3.2434	-3.0587	-6.58	.25

Source: Own elaboration

The Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality was statistically significant for mass-market brands (p = .003) and luxury brands (p = .000), thus the assumption of normality was not met for both groups. The examination of skewness (mass-market -.406, luxury .532; standard error of skewness .146, .142 respectively) and kurtosis (mass-market .170, luxury .285; standard error of kurtosis .292, .282 respectively) revealed that the skewness value for luxury brands divided by its standard error was higher than $\pm$3.29 (3.75) confirming that the distribution significantly departs from normality, however, the F test is deemed robust to deviations from normality, in particular when, as in this case, the sample size is large (Lindman, 1974).

The Levene's homogeneity of variances test was statistically significant therefore the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not met.

The null hypothesis stated that the comment rate did not depend on the type of brand, both samples were drawn from populations with equal means $\mu 1 = \mu 2$. There was a statistically significant difference determined by ANOVA ($F(1,571) = 7.586$, $p = .006$) (Table 44), however as the assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated, Welch and Brown-Forsythe robust tests (Table 45) were performed and both confirmed ($p = .006$) that it was possible to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 44. Brand type – comment rate: ANOVA

	SUM OF SQUARES	*DF*	*MEAN SQUARE*	*F*	*SIG.*
Between Groups	9.506	1	9.506	7.586	.006
Within Groups	715.520	571	1.253		
Total	725.026	572			

Source: Own elaboration

Table 45. Brand type – comment rate: robust tests of equality of means

	STATISTIC[A]	*DF1*	*DF2*	*SIG.*
Welch	7.511	1	545.905	.006
Brown-Forsythe	7.511	1	545.905	.006

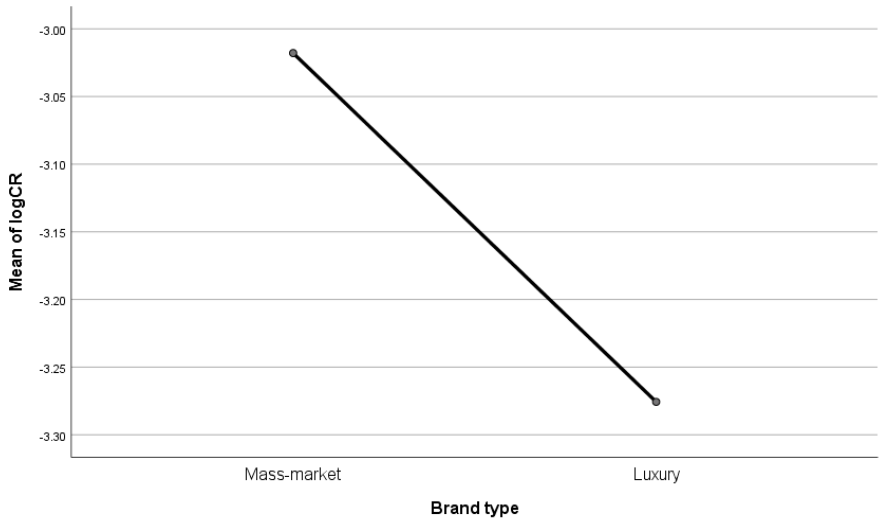
a Asymptotically F distributed
Source: Own elaboration

The effect of the brand type on the comment rate was statistically significant, the two analyzed groups were significantly different from each other.

Omega squared of .011 revealed that 1.1% of the variance in the comment rate in the population was explained by the brand type, thus there was a small effect size.

As shown in Figure 34, the comment rate is significantly higher for mass-market brands than for luxury brands.

Figure 34. Brand type – comment rate: means plot



Source: Own elaboration

Secondly, the share rate (N = 764) was analyzed by one-way ANOVA. There were 361 brand posts of mass-market brands and 403 brand posts of luxury brands in the population. Table 46 illustrates the descriptive statistics.

Table 46. Brand type – share rate: descriptive statistics

	N	*MEAN*	*STD. DEVIATION*	*STD. ERROR*	*95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL FOR MEAN*		*MINIMUM*	*MAXIMUM*
					LOWER BOUND	*UPPER BOUND*		
Mass-market	361	-2.5284	1.43856	.07571	-2.6773	-2.3795	-7.30	1.30
Luxury	403	-2.6067	1.11725	.05565	-2.7161	-2.4973	-5.65	-.17
Total	764	-2.5697	1.27891	.04627	-2.6605	-2.4789	-7.30	1.30

a Between-component variance is negative. It was replaced by 0.0 in computing this random effects measure.
Source: Own elaboration

The Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality was statistically significant for both mass-market (p = .004) and luxury brands (p = .000), thus the assumption of normality was not met. However, the examination of skewness (mass-market -.349, luxury -.229; standard error of skewness .128, .122 respectively) and kurtosis (mass-market .451, luxury -.634; standard error of kurtosis .256, .243 respectively) revealed that the skewness and kurtosis values divided by their standard errors were lower than $\pm$3.29 suggesting that score values did not significantly depart from normality.

The Levene's homogeneity of variances test was statistically significant therefore the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not met.

The null hypothesis stated that the share rate did not depend on the type of brand, both samples were drawn from populations with equal means $\mu 1 = \mu 2$. Both ANOVA ($F(1,762) = .713$, $p = .399$) (Table 47) and Welch and Brown-Forsythe robust tests ($p = .405$) (Table 48) were not statistically significant, thus it was not possible to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 47. Brand type – share rate: ANOVA

	SUM OF SQUARES	*DF*	*MEAN SQUARE*	*F*	*SIG.*
Between Groups	1.167	1	1.167	.713	.399
Within Groups	1246.797	762	1.636		
Total	1247.965	763			

Source: Own elaboration

Table 48. Brand type – share rate: robust tests of equality of means

	STATISTIC[a]	*DF1*	*DF2*	*SIG.*
Welch	.694	1	677.104	.405
Brown-Forsythe	.694	1	677.104	.405

a Asymptotically F distributed
Source: Own elaboration

The effect of the brand type on the share rate was not statistically significant.

In sum, **H3 is not supported.** The effect of the brand type on eWOM was statistically significant for the comment rate only and the relation was different than expected – the comment rate was higher for mass-market brands than for luxury brands.

According to H4, for luxury brands emotional appeal of marketing communication in social networks has a higher positive influence on eWOM than rational appeal. The independent variable was of nominal scale (3 levels), the dependent variables (comment rate and share rate) were of ratio scale.

MANOVA was performed on luxury brands for which the data were available for both log-transformed comment and share rates (N = 262) of which 130 had a rational appeal, 75 an emotional appeal and 57 an interactional appeal. First, the assumptions of MANOVA were tested. The dependent variables were linearly related to each other. No multicollinearity was found between the dependent variables (Pearson Correlation = 0.178, $p < 0.01$). Box's test of equality of covariance matrices was statistically significant ($p = .001$), thus the assumption was not met. However, the examination of the inter-item covariance matrix did not confirm high differences between covariance matrices (Table 49).

Table 49. Luxury brands – communication appeal: inter-item covariance matrix

APPEAL		*LOGCR*	*LOGSR*
Rational	logCR	.705	.313
	logSR	.313	1.241
Emotional	logCR	.791	.193
	logSR	.193	1.185
Interactional	logCR	1.677	.181
	logSR	.181	1.153

Source: Own elaboration

Levene's test of equality of error variances based on mean was significant for the comment rate ($p = .000$) indicating that the equal variances assumption was violated for this variable, even if as mentioned before, the F test is quite robust against violation of this assumption (Lindman, 1974).

Also in this case, the presence of two multivariate outliers was revealed. After the exclusion of the two outliers the maximum Mahalanobis distance of 13.09 was lower than the critical value of 13.82 for two predictor values, thus the assumption of the absence of multivariate outliers was met. As it was found that the inclusion of the two outliers did not affect the overall results, they were kept in the final sample.

As Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality was statistically significant ($p < .05$) for the comment rate (emotional and interactional appeal) and the share rate (rational appeal) (Table 50), the assumption of multivariate normality was not met. As mentioned before, the F test is deemed robust to deviations from normality, in particular when, as in this case, the sample size is large (Lindman, 1974).

Table 50. Luxury brands – communication appeal: tests of normality

	APPEAL	*SHAPIRO-WILK*		
		STATISTIC	*DF*	*SIG.*
logCR	Rational	.991	130	.556
	Emotional	.954	75	.009
	Interactional	.949	57	.018
logSR	Rational	.975	130	.015
	Emotional	.981	75	.308
	Interactional	.975	57	.298

Source: Own elaboration

As some of the assumptions of MANOVA were violated, the accuracy of the significant result F (4, 518) = 9.918, p = .000, Pillai's Trace .142, η^2 = .071 (Table 51) could not be ascertained. Partial eta squared of .071 suggested that 7.1% of the variance of eWOM in the sample was explained by the communication form.

Table 51. Luxury brands – communication appeal: MANOVA

EFFECT		*VALUE*	*F*	*HYPOTHESIS DF*	*ERROR DF*	*SIG.*	*PARTIAL ETA SQUARED*
Appeal	Pillai's Trace	.142	9.918	4.000	518.000	.000	.071

Source: Own elaboration

The data were further analyzed by one-way ANOVA. Firstly, the comment rate (N = 296) was analyzed. There were 141 luxury brand posts with a rational appeal, 87 luxury brand posts with an emotional appeal and 68 luxury brand posts with an interactional appeal in the population. Table 52 illustrates the descriptive statistics.

Table 52. Luxury brands – communication appeal – comment rate: descriptive statistics

	N	*MEAN*	*STD. DEVIATION*	*STD. ERROR*	*95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL FOR MEAN*		*MINIMUM*	*MAXIMUM*
					LOWER BOUND	*UPPER BOUND*		
Rational	141	-3.52132	.86407	.07277	-3.66519	-3.37746	-5.50939	-1.38629
Emotional	87	-3.27967	.96962	.10395	-3.48632	-3.07301	-5.24401	.00000
Interactional	68	-2.76114	1.24799	.15134	-3.06322	-2.45906	-4.98910	.00000
Total	296	-3.27566	1.03538	.06018	-3.39410	-3.15722	-5.50939	.00000

Source: Own elaboration

The Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality was not statistically significant for the rational appeal (p = .681) and the interactional appeal (p = .064), however, it was statistically significant for the emotional appeal (p = .023) thus the assumption of normality was not met for all groups. The examination of skewness (rational appeal .123, emotional appeal .353, interactional appeal -.353; standard error of skewness .204, .258, .291 respectively) and kurtosis (rational appeal -.250, emotional appeal .345, interactional appeal -.739; standard error of kurtosis .406, .511, .574 respectively) revealed that the skewness and kurtosis values divided by their standard errors were lower than $\pm$3.29 suggesting that score values did not significantly depart from normality.

The Levene's homogeneity of variances test was statistically significant therefore the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not met.

The null hypothesis stated that the comment rate did not depend on the communication appeal, all three samples with different communication appeals were drawn from populations with equal means $\mu1 = \mu2 = \mu3$. There was a statistically significant difference determined by ANOVA ($F(2,293) = 13.406$, $p = .000$) (Table 53), however, as the assumption of homogeneity of variance has been violated, Welch and Brown-Forsythe robust tests (Table 54) were performed and both confirmed ($p = .000$) that it was possible to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 53. Luxury brands – communication appeal – comment rate: ANOVA

	SUM OF SQUARES	*DF*	*MEAN SQUARE*	*F*	*SIG.*
Between Groups	26.512	2	13.256	13.406	.000
Within Groups	289.732	293	.989		
Total	316.244	295			

Source: Own elaboration

Table 54. Luxury brands – communication appeal – comment rate: robust tests of equality of means

	STATISTIC[a]	*DF1*	*DF2*	*SIG.*
Welch	10.522	2	145.015	.000
Brown-Forsythe	11.760	2	183.509	.000

a Asymptotically F distributed.
Source: Own elaboration

The effect of the communication appeal on the comment rate was statistically significant for luxury brands, at least one of the analyzed groups was significantly different from the other.

Omega squared of .077 revealed that 7.7% of the variance in the comment rate in the population was explained by the communication appeal, thus there was a medium effect size.

Post-hoc Games-Howell test (used as equal variances were not assumed) (Table 55) showed statistically significant differences between an interactional appeal and both rational (p = .000) and emotional (p = .015) appeals.

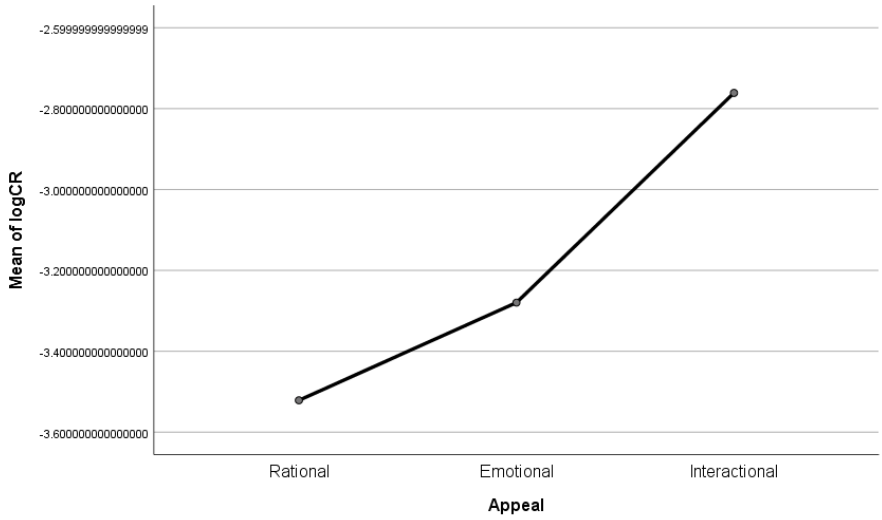
Table 55. Luxury brands – communication appeal – comment rate: post-hoc Games-Howell test

(I) APPEAL	*(J) APPEAL*	*MEAN DIFFERENCE (I-J)*	*STD. ERROR*	*SIG.*	*95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL*	
					LOWER BOUND	*UPPER BOUND*
Rational	Emotional	-.24166	.12689	.141	-.54174	.05843
	Interactional	-.76018*	.16793	.000	-1.15976	-.36061
Emotional	Rational	.24166	.12689	.141	-.05843	.54174
	Interactional	-.51852*	.18360	.015	-.95408	-.08297
Interactional	Rational	.76018*	.16793	.000	.36061	1.15976
	Emotional	.51852*	.18360	.015	.08297	.954083

** The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level*
Source: Own elaboration

As shown in Figure 35, the comment rate is significantly lower for rational and emotional appeals than for an interactional appeal. No statistically significant difference was found between rational appeal and emotional appeal.

Figure 35. Luxury brands – communication appeal – comment rate: means plot



Source: Own elaboration

It is worth mentioning that while, in case of mass-market brands, the comment rate was significantly (p = .016) higher for contests than for product characteristics, in case of luxury brands, the comment rate was significantly (p = .000) higher for live transmissions than for all the other brand post appeals.

Secondly, the share rate (N = 403) was analyzed by one-way ANOVA. There were 228 luxury brand posts with rational appeals, 104 luxury brand posts with emotional appeals and 71 luxury brand posts with interactional appeals in the population. Table 56 illustrates the descriptive statistics.

Table 56. Luxury brands – communication appeal – share rate: descriptive statistics

	N	*MEAN*	*STD. DEVIATION*	*STD. ERROR*	*95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL FOR MEAN*		*MINIMUM*	*MAXIMUM*
					LOWER BOUND	*UPPER BOUND*		
Rational	228	-2.53868	1.10156	.07295	-2.68243	-2.39493	-5.65249	-.17045
Emotional	104	-2.55010	1.09333	.10721	-2.76272	-2.33747	-5.62595	-.31845
Interactional	71	-2.90792	1.16736	.13854	-3.18423	-2.63161	-5.40268	-.73571
Total	403	-2.60668	1.11725	.05565	-2.71609	-2.49727	-5.65249	-.17045

Source: Own elaboration

Although the Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality was not statistically significant for the emotional appeal (p = .157) and interactional appeal (p = .292), it was statistically significant

for the rational appeal (p = .007), thus the assumption of normality was not met for all groups. However, the examination of skewness (rational appeal -.204, emotional appeal -.300, interactional appeal -.146; standard error of skewness .161, .237, .285 respectively) and kurtosis (rational appeal -.691, emotional appeal -.433, interactional appeal -.748; standard error of kurtosis .321, .469, .563 respectively) revealed that the skewness and kurtosis values divided by their standard errors were lower than $\pm$3.29 suggesting that score values did not significantly depart from normality.

The Levene's homogeneity of variance test was not statistically significant therefore the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met.

The null hypothesis stated that the share rate did not depend on the communication appeal, all three samples with different communication appeals were drawn from populations with equal means $\mu1 = \mu2 = \mu3$. As there was a statistically significant difference determined by ANOVA ($F(2,400) = 3.170$, $p = .043$) (Table 57), it was possible to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 57. Luxury brands – communication appeal – share rate: ANOVA

	SUM OF SQUARES	*DF*	*MEAN SQUARE*	*F*	*SIG.*
Between Groups	7.830	2	3.915	3.170	.043
Within Groups	493.964	400	1.235		
Total	501.794	402			

Source: Own elaboration

The effect of the communication appeal on the share rate was statistically significant, at least one of the analyzed groups was significantly different from the other.

Omega squared of .011revealed that 1.1% of the variance in the share rate in the population was explained by the communication appeal, thus there was a small effect size.

Post-hoc Tukey HSD test (Table 58) showed statistically significant differences between the rational appeal and the interactional appeal (p = .04).

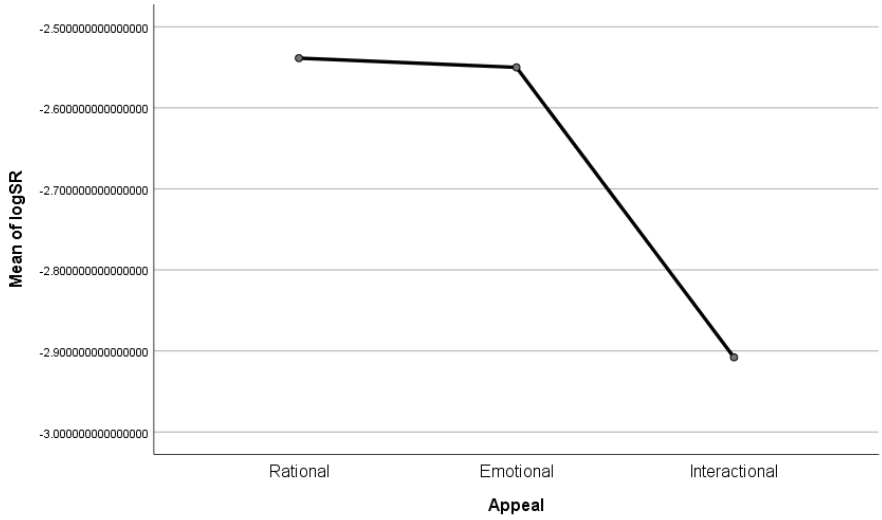
Table 58. Luxury brands – communication appeal – share rate: post-hoc Tukey HSD test

(I) APPEAL	*(J) APPEAL*	*MEAN DIFFERENCE (I-J)*	*STD. ERROR*	*SIG.*	*95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL*	
					LOWER BOUND	*UPPER BOUND*
Rational	Emotional	.01141	.13149	.99586	-.29792	.32075
	Interactional	.36924*	.15103	.03951	.01395	.72453
Emotional	Rational	-.01141	.13149	.99586	-.32075	.29792
	Interactional	.35783	.17108	.09284	-.04463	.76028
Interactional	Rational	-.36924*	.15103	.03951	-.72453	-.01395
	Emotional	-.35783	.17108	.09284	-.76028	.04463

** The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level*
Source: Own elaboration

As shown in Figure 36, the share rate is significantly lower for the interactional appeal than for the rational appeal. Neither between rational appeal and emotional appeal nor between emotional appeal and interactional appeal a statistically significant difference was found.

Figure 36. Luxury brands – communication appeal – share rate: means plot



Source: Own elaboration

It is worth mentioning that while in the case of mass-market brands the share rate was significantly (p = .017) higher for contests than for posts soliciting user feedback, for luxury brands no significant differences between specific brand post appeals were found.

In sum, **H4 is not supported: for luxury brands, there is no statistically significant difference between the influence of the emotional appeal and the rational appeal of marketing communication in social networks on eWOM**.

According to H5, the influence of marketing communication in social networks on eWOM varies according to geographic markets. The independent variable – geographic market, was of nominal scale (2 levels), the dependent variables (comment rate and share rate) were of ratio scale.

MANOVA was performed on 474 brand posts for which the data were available for both log-transformed comment and share rates (N = 474) of which 222 were brand posts from the Polish market and 252 from the Italian market. First, the assumptions of MANOVA were tested. The dependent variables were linearly related to each other. No multicollinearity was found between the dependent variables (Pearson Correlation = 0.366, $p < 0.01$). The Box's test of equality of covariance matrices was statistically significant ($p = .000$), thus the assumption was not met. However, on the basis of the examination of inter-item covariance matrix (Table 59), the differences between covariance matrices were deemed acceptable.

Table 59. Geographic market: inter-item covariance matrix

COUNTRY		*LOGCR*	*LOGSR*
Poland	logCR	1.364	.835
	logSR	.835	1.458
Italy	logCR	1.139	.318
	logSR	.318	1.023

Source: Own elaboration

Moreover, Levene's test of equality of error variances based on mean was significant for the share rate ($p = .05$) indicating that the equal variances assumption is violated for this variable.

Also in this case, the presence of two multivariate outliers was revealed. After the exclusion of the two outliers the maximum Mahalanobis distance of 13.09 was lower than the critical value of 13.82 for two predictor values, thus the assumption of the absence of multivariate outliers was met. As it was found that the inclusion of the two outliers did not affect the overall results, they were kept in the final sample.

As Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality (Table 60) was statistically significant ($p = .028$) for the comment rate (Italy), the assumption of multivariate normality was not met. Again it is worth

reminding that the F test is deemed robust to deviations from normality, in particular when, as in this case, the sample size is large (Lindman, 1974).

Table 60. Geographic market: tests of normality

	COUNTRY	*SHAPIRO-WILK*		
		STATISTIC	*DF*	*SIG.*
logCR	Poland	.993	222	.351
	Italy	.988	252	.028
logSR	Poland	.990	222	.110
	Italy	.997	252	.860

Source: Own elaboration

As some of the assumptions of MANOVA were violated, the accuracy of the significant result F (2, 471) = 85.801, p = .000, Pillai's Trace .267, η^2 = .267 (Table 61) could not be ascertained. However Pillai's Trace test is considered to be the most robust of the MANOVA tests, particularly recommended if some assumptions are not met (Olson, 1974), so the result is deemed relevant. Partial eta squared of .267 suggested that 26.7% of the variance of eWOM in the sample was explained by the geographic market.

Table 61. Geographic market: MANOVA

EFFECT		*VALUE*	*F*	*HYPOTHESIS DF*	*ERROR DF*	*SIG.*	*PARTIAL ETA SQUARED*
Country	Pillai's Trace	.267	85.801[a]	2.000	471.000	.000	.267

a Exact statistic
Source: Own elaboration

The data were further analyzed by single factor analysis of variance or one-way ANOVA.

Firstly, the comment rate (N = 573) was analyzed. There were 304 brand posts from the Polish market and 269 brand posts from the Italian market in the population. Table 62 illustrates the descriptive statistics.

Table 62. Geographic market – comment rate: descriptive statistics

	N	*MEAN*	*STD. DEVIATION*	*STD. ERROR*	*95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL FOR MEAN*		*MINIMUM*	*MAXIMUM*
					LOWER BOUND	*UPPER BOUND*		
Poland	304	-2.9785	1.14121	.06545	-3.1073	-2.8497	-6.58	.25
Italy	269	-3.3460	1.07747	.06569	-3.4754	-3.2167	-6.04	-.48
Total	573	-3.1511	1.12585	.04703	-3.2434	-3.0587	-6.58	.25

Source: Own elaboration

The Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality was statistically significant for the Polish market (p = .017) and the Italian market (p = .024), thus the assumption of normality was not met. However, the examination of skewness (Poland -.260, Italy .347; standard error of skewness .140, .149 respectively) and kurtosis (Poland .410, Italy .051; standard error of kurtosis .279, .296 respectively) revealed that the skewness and kurtosis values divided by their standard errors were lower than $\pm$3.29 suggesting that the score values did not significantly depart from normality.

The Levene's homogeneity of variances test was not statistically significant therefore the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met.

The null hypothesis stated that the comment rate did not depend on the geographic market, both samples were drawn from populations with equal means $\mu 1 = \mu 2$. There was a statistically significant difference determined by ANOVA ($F(1,571) = 15.597$, $p = .000$) (Table 63), thus it was possible to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 63. Geographic market – comment rate: ANOVA

	SUM OF SQUARES	*DF*	*MEAN SQUARE*	*F*	*SIG.*
Between Groups	19.277	1	19.277	15.597	.000
Within Groups	705.749	571	1.236		
Total	725.026	572			

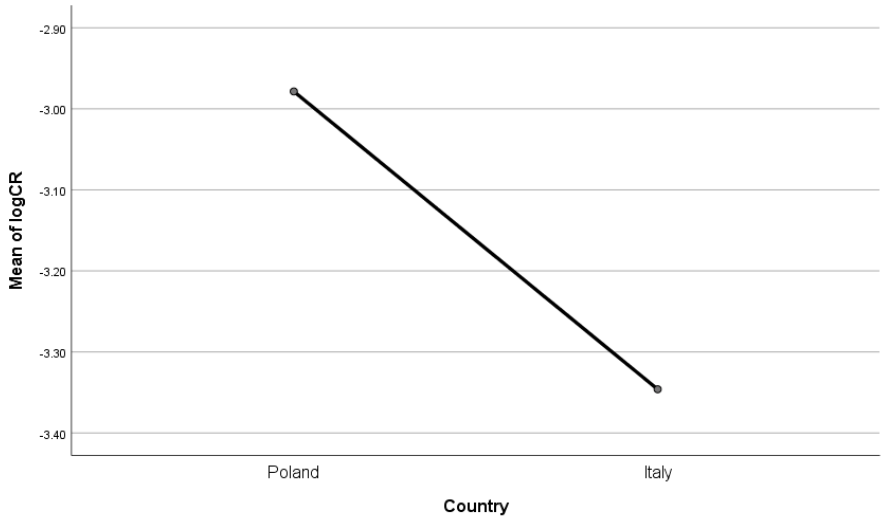
Source: Own elaboration

The effect of the geographic market on the comment rate was statistically significant, the two analyzed groups were significantly different from each other.

Omega squared of .025 revealed that 2.5% of the variance in the comment rate in the population was explained by the geographic market, thus there was a small effect size.

As shown in Figure 37, the comment rate was significantly higher for the Polish market than for the Italian market.

Figure 37. Geographic market – comment rate: means plot



Source: Own elaboration

Secondly, the share rate (N = 764) was analyzed by one-way ANOVA. There were 305 brand posts from the Polish market and 459 brand posts from the Italian market in the population. Table 64 illustrates the descriptive statistics.

Table 64. Geographic market – share rate: descriptive statistics

	N	*MEAN*	*STD. DEVIATION*	*STD. ERROR*	*95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL FOR MEAN*		*MINIMUM*	*MAXIMUM*
					LOWER BOUND	*UPPER BOUND*		
Poland	305	-3.2668	1.21690	.06968	-3.4039	-3.1297	-7.30	.27
Italy	459	-2.1065	1.09693	.05120	-2.2071	-2.0059	-5.63	1.30
Total	764	-2.5697	1.27891	.04627	-2.6605	-2.4789	-7.30	1.30

Source: Own elaboration

The Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality (Table 65) was not statistically significant for the Italian market (p = .867) and statistically significant for the Polish market (p = .024), thus the assumption of normality was not met.

Table 65. Geographic market – share rate: tests of normality

	COUNTRY	*SHAPIRO-WILK*		
		STATISTIC	*DF*	*SIG.*
logSR	Poland	.989	305	.024
	Italy	.998	459	.867

Source: Own elaboration

However, the examination of skewness (Poland -.338, Italy -.076; standard error of skewness .140, .114 respectively) and kurtosis (Poland .222, Italy .105; standard error of kurtosis .278, .227 respectively) revealed that the skewness and kurtosis values divided by their standard errors were lower than $\pm$3.29 suggesting that score values did not significantly depart from normality.

The Levene's homogeneity of variances test was not statistically significant therefore the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met.

The null hypothesis stated that the share rate did not depend on the geographic market, both samples were drawn from populations with equal means $\mu 1 = \mu 2$. There was a statistically significant difference determined by ANOVA ($F(1,762) = 187.749$, $p = .000$) (Table 66), thus it was possible to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 66. Geographic market – share rate: ANOVA

	SUM OF SQUARES	*DF*	*MEAN SQUARE*	*F*	*SIG.*
Between Groups	246.701	1	246.701	187.749	.000
Within Groups	1001.264	762	1.314		
Total	1247.965	763			

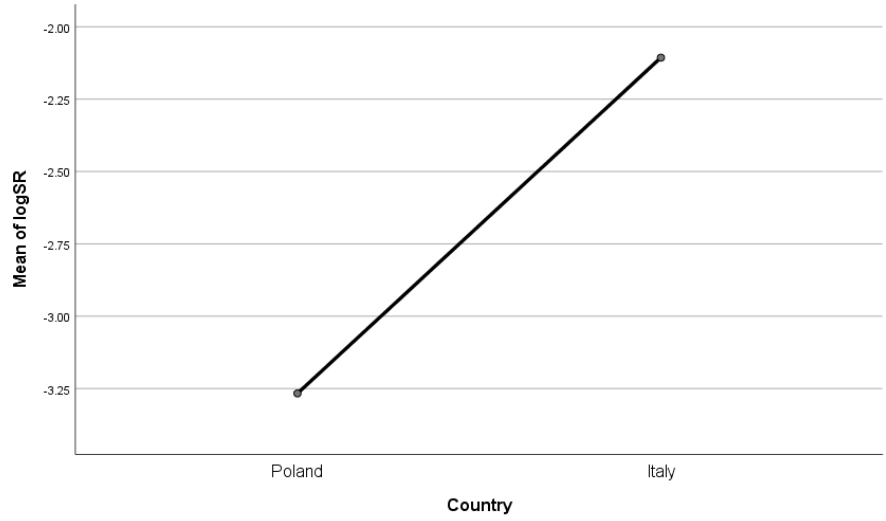
Source: Own elaboration

The effect of the geographic market on the share rate was statistically significant, the two analyzed groups were significantly different from each other.

Omega squared of .196 revealed that 19.6% of the variance in the share rate in the population was explained by the geographic market, thus there was a large effect size.

Interestingly, the effect was the opposite of the one found for the comment rate. As shown in Figure 38, the share rate was significantly higher for the Italian market than for the Polish market.

Figure 38. Geographic market – comment rate: means plot



Source: Own elaboration

In sum, **H5 is supported. The influence of marketing communication in social networks on eWOM varies according to geographic markets.**

How exactly eWOM varies according to geographic markets? Additional analyses were performed using two-way ANOVA to assess interactions between geographic market and each independent and controlled variable on the two dependent variables. The analyses revealed statistically significant interactions ($p < .05$) between geographic market and day of the week (on both the comment rate and the share rate), geographic market and product category (on the comment rate). However, the most interesting interactions, were found between geographic market and brand type ($p = .049$), geographic market and marketing communication appeal ($p = .002$) as well as between geographic market and brand post appeal ($p = .003$) on the comment rate and in case of the latter also on share rate.

The results of the additional analysis confirmed that the main effects of geographic market and brand type as well as interaction effect were all significant ($p < .05$) (Table 67). As mentioned before, the main effect of geographic market was larger than the main effect of brand type.

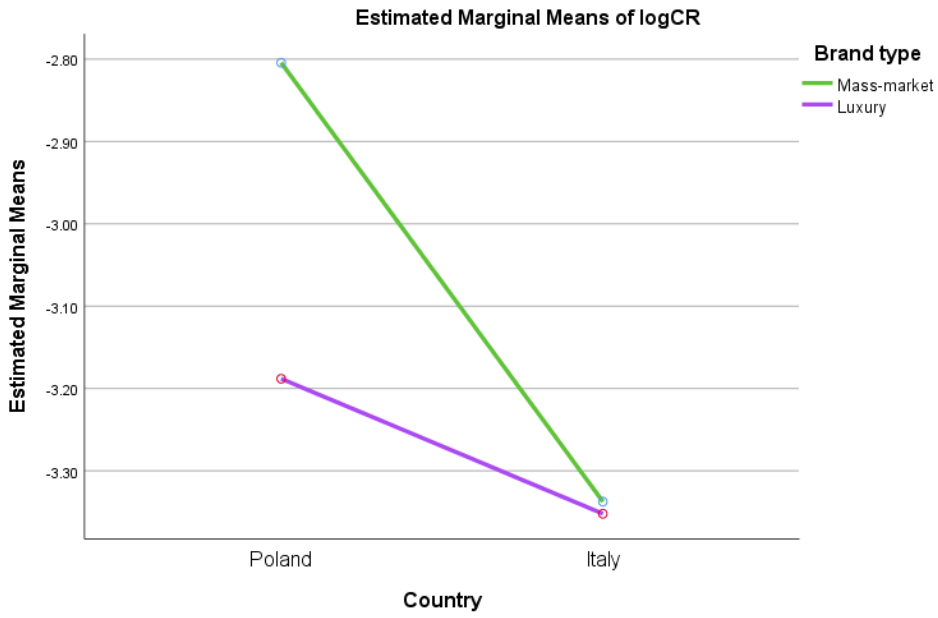
Table 67. Geographic market – brand type - comment rate: tests of between-subjects effects

SOURCE	*TYPE III SUM OF SQUARES*	*DF*	*MEAN SQUARE*	*F*	*SIG.*	*PARTIAL ETA SQUARED*
Corrected Model	30.393[a]	3	10.131	8.299	.000	.042
Intercept	5621.775	1	5621.775	4605.005	.000	.890
Country	16.987	1	16.987	13.915	.000	.024
Brand type	5.552	1	5.552	4.548	.033	.008
Country * Brand type	4.762	1	4.762	3.901	.049	.007
Error	694.633	569	1.221			
Total	6414.449	573				
Corrected Total	725.026	572				

a R Squared = .042 (Adjusted R Squared = .037)
Source: Own elaboration

Nonparallel lines in the profile plot (Figure 39) indicate an interaction between geographic market and brand type.

Figure 39. Geographic market – brand type – comment rate: profile plot



Source: Own elaboration

The mean comment rate was higher in Poland than in Italy and it was higher for mass-market brands than for luxury brands. The effect of the geographic market was enhanced by the effect of the brand type. The highest mean comment rate was for mass-market brands in Poland. The comment rate for mass-market brands was significantly ($p = .003$) higher than the comment rate for luxury brands.

The results of the additional analysis also confirmed that the main effects of geographic market and marketing communication appeal as well as interaction were all significant ($p < .05$) (Table 68). As mentioned before, the main effect of communication appeal was larger than the main effect of geographic market.

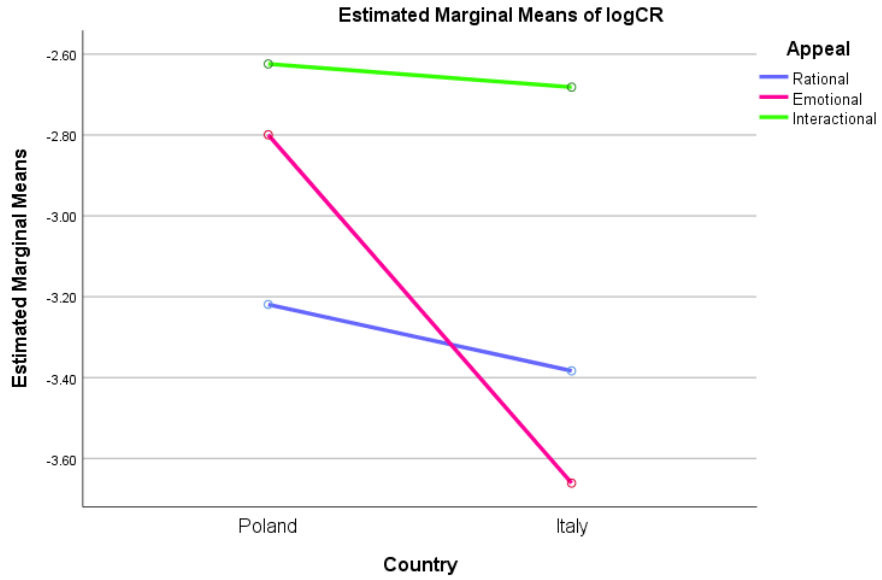
Table 68. Geographic market - communication appeal - comment rate: tests of between-subjects effects

SOURCE	*TYPE III SUM OF SQUARES*	*DF*	*MEAN SQUARE*	*F*	*SIG.*	*PARTIAL ETA SQUARED*
Corrected Model	67.285[a]	5	13.457	11.601	.000	.093
Intercept	4383.294	1	4383.294	3778.583	.000	.870
Country	15.244	1	15.244	13.141	.000	.023
Appeal	35.426	2	17.713	15.270	.000	.051
Country * Appeal	14.262	2	7.131	6.147	.002	.021
Error	657.741	567	1.160			
Total	6414.449	573				
Corrected Total	725.026	572				

a R Squared = .093 (Adjusted R Squared = .085)
Source: Own elaboration

Nonparallel lines in the profile plot (Figure 40) indicate an interaction between geographic market and communication appeal.

Figure 40. Geographic market – communication appeal – comment rate: profile plot



Source: Own elaboration

The comment rate was higher in Poland than in Italy and it was the highest for interactional appeal. The highest mean comment rate was for interactional appeal in Poland. The effect of the communication appeal was enhanced by the effect of the geographic market, however the effect of the emotional appeal was different in the two markets. The use of an emotional appeal had a positive influence on the comment rate in Poland and a negative influence in Italy.

As shown in Table 69, in Poland, apart from the significant difference (p = .001) between the comment rate for interactional appeal and rational appeal, the comment rate is significantly higher (p = .016) for emotional appeal than for rational appeal, while in Italy the difference between comment rate for emotional and rational appeal is not significant.

Table 69. Geographic market - communication appeal - comment rate: post-hoc Games-Howell test

COUNTRY	(I) APPEAL	(J) APPEAL	MEAN DIFFERENCE (I-J)	STD. ERROR	SIG.	95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL	
						LOWER BOUND	UPPER BOUND
Poland	Rational	Emotional	-.41991*	.14956	.016	-.7742	-.0656
		Interactional	-.59506*	.16523	.001	-.9867	-.2035
	Emotional	Rational	.41991*	.14956	.016	.0656	.7742
		Interactional	-.17516	.18521	.612	-.6139	.2636
	Interactional	Rational	.59506*	.16523	.001	.2035	.9867
		Emotional	.17516	.18521	.612	-.2636	.6139
Italy	Rational	Emotional	.27757	.14036	.122	-.0550	.6101
		Interactional	-.70189*	.21339	.005	-1.2155	-.1883
	Emotional	Rational	-.27757	.14036	.122	-.6101	.0550
		Interactional	-.97946*	.23098	.000	-1.5321	-.4268
	Interactional	Rational	.70189*	.21339	.005	.1883	1.2155
		Emotional	.97946*	.23098	.000	.4268	1.5321

** The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level*
Source: Own elaboration

The results of the additional analysis also showed that the main effects of geographic market and brand post appeal as well as interaction were all significant ($p < .05$) (Table 70). The main effect of brand post appeal was larger than the main effect of the geographic market.

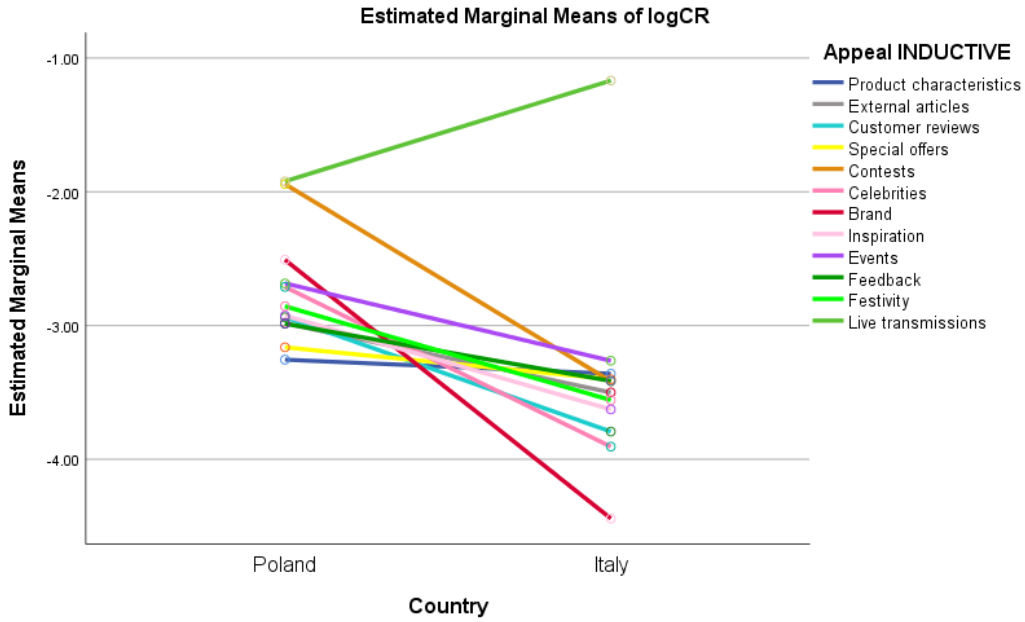
Table 70. Geographic market – brand post appeal - comment rate: tests of between-subjects effects

SOURCE	TYPE III SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIG.	PARTIAL ETA SQUARED
Corrected Model	148.320[a]	23	6.449	6.139	.000	.205
Intercept	1874.093	1	1874.093	1784.059	.000	.765
Country	21.930	1	21.930	20.877	.000	.037
Brand post appeal	55.095	11	5.009	4.768	.000	.087
Country * Brand post appeal	30.119	11	2.738	2.607	.003	.050
Error	576.706	549	1.050			
Total	6414.449	573				
Corrected Total	725.026	572				

a R Squared = .205 (Adjusted R Squared = .171)
Source: Own elaboration

Nonparallel lines in the profile plot (Figure 41) indicate an interaction between geographic market and brand post appeal.

Figure 41. Geographic market – brand post appeal – comment rate: profile plot



Source: Own elaboration

As mentioned before, the comment rate was higher in Poland than in Italy. Statistically significant differences were found between the influence of some brand appeals on comment rate between the Polish and Italian markets. The comment rate on brand posts related to contests ($p = .037$), celebrities ($p = .009$), brand ($p = .001$) and inspiration ($p = .002$) was significantly higher in Poland than in Italy.

The results also confirmed that the main effects of geographic market and brand post appeal as well as interaction on the share rate were all significant ($p = .000$) (Table 71). The main effect of brand post appeal was larger than the main effect of geographic market.

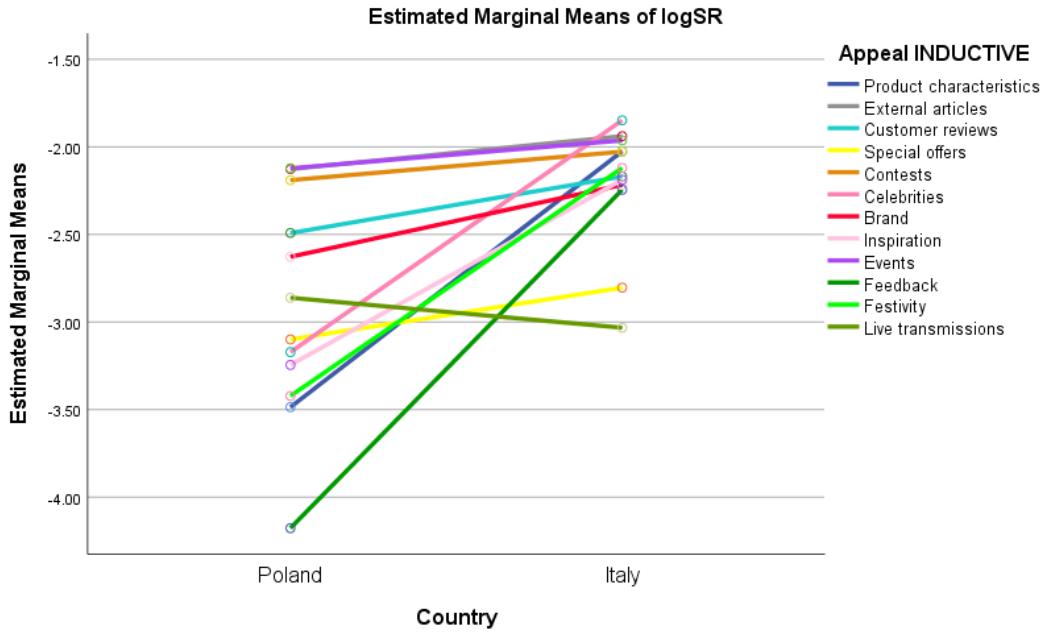
Table 71. Geographic market – brand post appeal - share rate: tests of between-subjects effects

SOURCE	*TYPE III SUM OF SQUARES*	*DF*	*MEAN SQUARE*	*F*	*SIG.*	*PARTIAL ETA SQUARED*
Corrected Model	345.083[a]	23	15.004	12.297	.000	.277
Intercept	2042.025	1	2042.025	1673.639	.000	.693
Country	38.371	1	38.371	31.449	.000	.041
Brand post appeal	44.963	11	4.088	3.350	.000	.047
Country * Brand post appeal	49.956	11	4.541	3.722	.000	.052
Error	902.882	740	1.220			
Total	6292.870	764				
Corrected Total	1247.965	763				

a R Squared = .277 (Adjusted R Squared = .254)
Source: Own elaboration

Nonparallel lines in the profile plot (Figure 42) indicate an interaction between geographic market and brand post appeal.

Figure 42. Geographic market – brand post appeal – share rate: profile plot



Source: Own elaboration

As mentioned before, the share rate was higher in Italy than in Poland. Specifically, in Italy the share rate was significantly higher for brand posts related to product characteristics (p = .000), celebrities (p = .009), inspiration (p = .000), feedback (p = .000) and festivities (p = .000).

The results of hypothesis testing are summarized in Table 72.

Table 72. Hypothesis testing results

HYPOTHESIS	*RESULT*
H1 (marketing communication form)	Supported for images, not supported for videos
H2 (marketing communication appeal)	Not supported
H3 (brand type)	Not supported
H4 (luxury brands – appeal)	Not supported
H5 (geographic market)	Supported

Source: Own elaboration

3.3. Discussion

This study examined the influence of marketing communication form and appeal on eWOM including a comparative analysis of mass-market and luxury brands in two different European countries.

Firstly, it showed that the form of marketing communication in social networks influences eWOM. Consistent with prior studies (C. Kim & Yang, 2017; Luarn et al., 2015; Tafesse, 2015), it revealed that marketing communications using videos have a higher positive influence on eWOM than marketing communications using images. Furthermore, it showed that, in general, there is no statistically significant difference between the influence of videos and animations. Users are more likely to comment and share dynamic communication forms of high vividness that are more entertaining, more attractive and convey more messages than static forms of communication. These forms may be more effective in attracting users' attention. The richness and attractiveness of animations and videos may make them more relevant to satisfy users' need for entertainment (that may be particularly relevant for young users of social media), self-expression and self-promotion. As these forms of communication can convey more messages, they can also provide more topics for a discussion thus leading to social interactions between users. If the visual content approximates reality (as it is in case of videos) it seems to be less important. However, a comparative analysis of mass-market and luxury brands showed that the higher level of eWOM for videos than for images was always significant. In other words, video "always worked" better than images while in some cases

(the share rate of mass-market brand posts and the comment rate of luxury brand posts) there was no statistically significant ($p < .05$) difference between the influence of images and animations. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that both animations and videos are rarely used by brands, accounting for only 30% of all brand posts in the analyzed sample.

Secondly, the results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between the influence of emotional appeal and rational appeal of marketing communication in social networks on eWOM. This finding contributes to a long academic debate on the effects of different marketing communication appeals on consumer behavior, highlighting the role of interactional appeal recently distinguished by academics and specific for social media (Luarn et al., 2015; Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Furthermore, this study reveals that different communication appeals generate different user behaviors. In accordance with De Vries et al. (2012), Luarn et al. (2015), Kim & Yang (2017) and Gavilanes et al. (2018), the findings show that the interactional appeal of communications drives user comments. This might be explained by users' need for social interactions and entertainment. Users follow brands in order to interact with people behind the brand and other brand fans, and this type of posts give the users a possibility to do so. Interactional posts often include questions and users reply to them by commenting on posts. Both the content of interactional brand posts (e.g., contests or live transmissions) and the act of commenting can also be a source of entertainment, a way to pass time and release emotions related to the product. Among the analyzed independent variables, communication appeal had the largest effect on the comment rate. Furthermore, consistently with Luarn et al. (2015), the findings of this study reveal that an emotional appeal of communications is more effective than an interactional appeal in driving user shares. This can be explained on the basis of users need for self-expression/promotion. Brand posts with emotional appeals are not strictly related to the product. They convey emotions, brand values and experiences with which users can identify. Sharing this type of posts allows users to make a statement about how they feel and who they are. Moreover, these posts can attract attention and elicit emotions of a broader audience, not only of those who may be interested in a product and sharing interesting posts can enhance one's status.

The new classification of brand post appeals derived from empirical data allows identification of specific appeals that stimulate eWOM. Brand posts on contests and live transmissions are particularly effective in driving user comments and brand posts related to celebrities, events and using external articles in driving user shares. In sum, the findings underline the positive

influence of interactional and emotional appeal of communications on eWOM, however, it also shows that in marketing communication these appeals are used less frequently than a rational appeal that accounted for more than a half (58%) of the analyzed posts. For instance, brand posts on celebrities accounted for 5% of the analyzed posts, brand posts related to events or external articles for 4% each, while live transmissions as posts related to contests accounted for only 3% of all brand posts.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that the appeal classification proposed in this study is partially consistent with the general framework proposed by Tafesse & Wien (2018) (Table 73). By confirming the relevance of most of the categories of brand post appeal developed by Tafesse & Wien (2018) in the context of the cosmetic market, the current study provides a contribution to the study by Tafesse & Wien (2018).

Table 73. Comparison between the proposed classification of brand post appeal and the classification by Tafesse & Wien (2018)

CATEGORY OF BRAND POST APPEAL (this study)	*CORRESPONDING BRAND POST CATEGORY* (Tafesse & Wien, 2018)	*AGGREGATED CATEGORY OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION APPEAL*
Product characteristics	Functional & Educational	Rational
Customer reviews		
Special offers		
External articles	Educational	
Brand	Brand resonance & Cause-related	Emotional
Celebrities	Brand resonance & Emotional	
Inspiration	Emotional & Experiential & Personal	
Events	Experiential	
Festivity	Current event	Interactional
Feedback	Personal & Brand community & Customer relation	
Contests	Brand community	
Live transmissions	Customer relation	

Source: Own elaboration based on Tafesse & Wien (2018, p. 241-253)

Thirdly, the findings of the current study show that the effect of the brand type on eWOM is statistically significant on the comment rate only. Moreover, contrary to expectations, the comment rate is significantly higher for mass-market brands than for luxury brands. The possible explanation of this finding is that users are more likely to talk about common ground

topics (Berger, 2014). Expressing opinions on products that are more accessible can drive conversations with a broader group of consumers satisfying the need for social interactions. Specifically, in the case of mass-market brands, the comment rate was significantly ($p = .016$) higher for contests than for product characteristics. However, brand posts related to contests accounted for only 6% of brand posts of mass-market brands, suggesting that marketers do not fully exploit their potential.

Fourthly, the results indicate that, as for all the analyzed brands and contrary to expectations, also for luxury brands, there is no statistically significant difference between the influence of emotional appeal and rational appeal of marketing communication in social networks on eWOM. The results for luxury brands are similar to the results for all analyzed brands. Users are more likely to comment on brand posts with an interactional appeal, than on those with rational and emotional appeals. As mentioned before, this might be explained by users' need for social interactions and entertainment. Users may follow luxury brands in order to interact with people behind the brand and other brand fans, and posts with interactional appeal give the users a possibility to do so, which may also be a source of entertainment. However, the analysis of the frequency of appeals for luxury brands showed that, as in the case of mass-market brands, interactional appeals are used less frequently. Brand posts with an interactional appeal accounted for only 19% of luxury brand posts. In the case of luxury brands, the comment rate was significantly ($p = .000$) higher for live transmissions than for all the other brand post appeals. Although the frequency of live transmissions in marketing communications of luxury brands was significantly higher than in marketing communications of mass-market brands, they accounted for only 4% of luxury brand posts.

On the other hand, brand posts with interactional appeals are less shared than those with rational appeals. Again the explanation might be related to the type of response to interactive posts solicit, that is answering to a question, expressing a proper opinion on a topic leading to commenting rather than sharing. Although a brand post with a rational appeal seems to be more relevant to satisfy the need for information, rather than the need for self-expression/promotion related to the sharing behavior, still it can be more relevant for sharing than an interactional brand post. By sharing rational posts, one may express its connoisseurship and preference for high-quality products.

Finally, as expected, the results of this study confirmed that the influence of marketing communication in social networks on eWOM varies according to geographic markets. The presence of significant differences among countries is consistent with prior studies on WOM (Chung & Darke, 2006; Lam et al., 2009), eWOM on discussion boards and Amazon (Fong & Burton, 2008; Lai & County, 2013), and provides novel evidence from a social network. The comment rate was significantly higher for the Polish market than for the Italian market. As mentioned before, this difference may be related to cultural aspects. In line with prior research on WOM (Lam et al., 2009), in a more hierarchical society, people may be more likely to engage in eWOM in social networks. If the individuals in Polish society are more group-oriented, the need for social interactions may be particularly relevant for Polish users of social networks. Internet users from collectivist cultures tend to view the Internet as a means for social interaction (Chau et al., 2002). Users may comment on brand posts to interact with the brand and other brand fans, help others, build relationships and strengthen the sense of belonging to the brand community. The highest comment rate for mass-market brands in Poland further supports this explanation. Users are more likely to comment on posts of brands that are accessible to a broader group of people that can add further comments. Specifically, the comment rate on brand posts related to contests was significantly ($p = .037$) higher in Poland than in Italy. It seems that marketers may have understood the importance of this type of posts (in general and in particular within the Polish market), as their frequency is significantly higher in Poland than in Italy (chi-square = 14.235, df = 1, $p = .000$). This is also consistent with the study by Deloitte (2012) which reveals that 75% of Polish marketers use this type of content on social media. However, still, the frequency of brand posts related to contests is low, they accounted for only 5% of all brand posts from the Polish market. As mentioned before, the scores on the Trompenaars' neutral/affective dimension of culture suggest that Italy is a more affective culture than Poland and that in Italy people may be more likely to show their emotions. This could suggest that the comment rate for posts with emotional appeals would be higher in Italy than in Poland. However, unexpectedly, the analysis revealed a significantly higher comment rate for emotional appeal in Poland than in Italy. Furthermore, contrary to prior research which underlines the preference of Polish social media users for brand content providing product and sales promotion information (Ankiel & Stachowiak, 2016; Siuda, 2017; Szulżyk-Cieplak et al., 2017), in Poland the comment rate was significantly higher for the emotional appeal than for the rational appeal. No significant difference was found between the comment rate on posts related to product characteristics or special offers between the two markets however brand posts on special offers are used more

frequently in Poland than in Italy (chi-square = 17.852, df = 1, p = .000). The comment rate was significantly higher in Poland than in Italy on posts related to celebrities (p = .009), brand (p = .001) and inspiration (p = .002). Again a possible explanation can be related to the different gratifications expected from commenting on brand posts. Brand posts using emotional appeals may drive Polish users to initiate social interaction, in which they do not necessarily convey their emotions. Italian users may show their emotions by sharing brand posts rather than commenting on them.

Indeed, the share rate was significantly higher for the Italian market than for the Polish market. Specifically, in Italy the share rate was significantly higher for brand posts related to product characteristics (p = .000), celebrities (p = .009), inspiration (p = .000), feedback (p = .000) and festivities (p = .000). The higher share rate in the Italian market may also be related to a more individualist society in which users are more likely to express their uniqueness and share brand posts to satisfy their need for self-expression/promotion, even if, as mentioned before, Cheema & Kaikati (2010) argue that consumers with need of uniqueness are not likely to share information about "their" brands. Contrary to prior research (Phau & Prendergast, 2000; Shukla, 2011; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998) suggesting that sharing of luxury brand content may be higher in Poland, because of the need of expressing social status, the share rate was higher in Italy than in Poland for both mass-market and luxury brand posts. This finding may be related to the specificity of Polish culture in which due to religion and the communist past, sharing of brand posts of hedonic, luxury goods may not be seen positively. Among all the independent variables, the geographic market had the largest effect on the share rate. Interestingly, in both markets brand posts and those on celebrities seem to be particularly effective in driving eWOM (in particular comments in Poland and shares in Italy). Moreover, as mentioned before, the share rate is significantly higher for brand posts with external articles (p = .012), on celebrities (p = .019) and events (p = .008) than for brand posts that solicit user feedback. However, in practice, brand posts related to celebrities, external articles and events are used significantly less frequently (p < .05) in Poland than in Italy.

Conclusions

In view of the decreasing effectiveness of traditional modes of marketing communication and the growing importance of personal sources of information on social media, "marketers need to create brand conversations in customer communities despite not having much control over the outcome" (Kotler et al., 2017, p. 26). From this perspective, the understanding of how eWOM can be influenced by marketing communication in social media becomes crucial. This issue, scarcely investigated in academic literature, attracts the attention of both academics and marketing practitioners.

On the basis of the examination of cosmetic brands, the current study provides evidence on the influence of the marketing communication form and appeal on eWOM in social networks for both mass-market and luxury brands in two different European markets. It shows that marketing communications using videos and animations drives a higher level of eWOM than images that are less vivid and less entertaining. These forms of marketing communications might be more effective in attracting users' attention and in satisfying their need for entertainment. Video content is particularly relevant. Moreover, a novel classification of brand post appeals proposed in this study allows the identification of specific appeals that have a positive influence on eWOM. The study reveals that different communication appeals entail a different behavior of users and this behavior may be explained on the basis of different motivations. Firstly, interactional appeals of communications drive user comments. It may allow users to satisfy the need for social interactions. Specifically, on Facebook, users are the most likely to comment on live transmissions (that combine an interactive appeal with video) for luxury brands and brand posts related to contests for mass-market brands. Secondly, emotional appeals used in marketing communications have a positive influence on sharing the brand content. Sharing of this type of content may allow users to express and promote themselves in the digital environment. Specifically, users are the most likely to share brand posts related to celebrities, events and those including links to external articles. Furthermore, the findings of this study show that users are more likely to comment on brand posts of mass-market brands than on brand posts of luxury brands. Again, the expected gratification of social interactions that can be easier to obtain for common ground topics may explain this finding. In general, the results of the analysis of marketing communications of luxury brands are similar to the results of mass-market brands suggesting that the motivations on the basis of spreading eWOM in social networks are the same for both types of brands.

However, significant differences were found between the different geographic markets providing new evidence from a social network. The differences revealed seem to be supported by prior findings of cultural research studies. In Poland more than in Italy, Facebook users are more likely to comment on brand posts, in particular of mass-market brands. The comment rate in both countries is the highest for brand posts using interactional appeals. Contrary to some pieces of evidence from prior research, Polish users are more likely to comment on emotional posts than on rational posts. The share rate was significantly higher for the Italian market than for the Polish market. These findings are explained on the basis of the need for social interactions which may particularly relevant for Polish users and the need for self-expression and self-promotion that may be a key driver of users' behavior in Italy and both may be related to the characteristics of the two cultures.

Studies on social media represent an important development for the field of marketing and can have a significant impact on the future course of the discipline (V. Kumar, 2015). This study replies specifically to the call for content-level analyses in social networks (Sabate et al., 2014; Swani et al., 2013; Tafesse & Wien, 2017) for different types of products (Ketelaar et al., 2016; B. Shen & Bissell, 2013) including luxury brands (Annie Jin, 2012; Dhaoui, 2014; Üçok Hughes et al., 2016) in an international context (Bartosik-Purgat, 2018; Godey et al., 2016; Wagner et al., 2017). **The specific contribution of this study to the development of marketing communication theory is related to:**

- The examination of the influence of the marketing communication form and appeal on eWOM
- The development of a novel classification of brand post appeals
- A comparative analysis of mass-market and luxury brands
- A comparative analysis of European countries

To the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first study to empirically investigate how the form and appeal of marketing communication in social networks influence eWOM including the investigation of brand type and geographic market.

The interactional appeal of communications is strictly related to the interactive nature of social media, allows users to become content creators and brands to exploit the potential of social media and obtain eWOM effects. Users are specifically invited to share their experiences publicly. However, the results of this study suggest that most of the brands'

communications resemble auto-referential broadcast media monologues. As noticed by Kotler et al. (2017), the current research reveals that companies still seem to treat social media as another unidirectional means of communication. They seem to ignore the fact that users follow brands to interact with them and build relationships based on pleasurable, emotional experiences. In the content they deploy (often the same advertising that appears in the traditional media), they mainly use static images, glorify product performance and product features and use other rational appeals expecting users to pay attention and carefully examine rational benefits the product can bring them. **From a practical perspective, this study provides** marketers with explanations of consumers' behavior on social media and concrete guidelines on communication content to be used in social networks, in order to achieve eWOM effects. These principles take into account both mass-market and luxury brands, and the perspective of companies operating in different geographic markets.

Considering the extended scope of the study including a comparative analysis of different markets and brands, the study unavoidably has some **limitations**. First of all only one type of social media and industry were examined, thus the results may not hold in other types of social media and industries. YouTube is the second most visited website (Similarweb, 2019) and it is widely used in marketing communications, especially seen the growing importance of video content (IAB Europe, 2018). Instagram is the third social media in terms of number of users (We Are Social, 2019) and it is particularly relevant for cosmetic brands. The second limitation is related to users commenting and sharing brand posts. Although WOM, by definition, is an informal way of communication between consumers and comments of companies (e.g., beauty shops) were excluded from the analysis, it is not possible to exclude that some of the users commenting and sharing brand posts could work for the company. However, the sizes of the analyzed sample, as well as the examination of different brands, increase confidence in the research findings. Thirdly, apart from the variance in the share rate explained by the geographic market for which a large effect size was found, in case of other relationships most often the effect sizes were small. As previous similar studies using the same research and statistical analysis methods (i.e., Chauhan & Pillai, 2013; Luarn et al., 2015; B. Shen & Bissell, 2013) do not report effect sizes, it is not possible to assess whether the effect sizes revealed in this study are consistent with prior findings, however they suggest that there are other variables that may significantly influence eWOM. Fourthly, although data were coded by both the author and independent coders and the intercoder reliability measures were adequate, the subjectivity related to the chosen research method can be minimized,

however, it cannot be totally excluded. Last but not least, in the current study, it is argued that eWOM in social media can be analyzed and explained on the basis of individual motivations. Different motivations lead consumers to engage in eWOM on social media to a different extent and the level of eWOM varies depending on the marketing communication form and appeal, brand type and country. However, the possible gratifications expected from spreading eWOM in social networks (self-expression/promotion, entertainment and social interactions) used as the basis for explanations of consumer behavior are drawn from prior studies and have not been empirically tested.

Examination of gratifications expected and obtained from spreading eWOM in social networks considering the differences between mass-market and luxury brands as well as different counties and cultures is an interesting topic for **further research**. In addition, personality traits may be taken into account. Traditional methodological approach of the U&G theory with surveys among consumers in different countries may be employed in further studies. Researchers may also replicate the current study in other countries where there are large differences on culture dimensions. It would be also interesting to gather data from other industries and types of social media (e.g. Instagram) to see whether the results still hold. The classification of brand post appeals proposed in this study can be used in further studies on marketing communication in social media. Finally, by obtaining the data on post sponsoring and eWOM programs implemented by a company, further research can examine the influence of post sponsoring, which may have a significant influence on eWOM. Other possible independent variables to include in further studies may include best-selling products or those which are advertised in other media. In the current study it was observed that the number of comments and shares on some specific products was particularly high. In sum, as mentioned also in the research gap section of this study, there are numerous issues that require further investigation and provide fruitful and exciting areas for further research.

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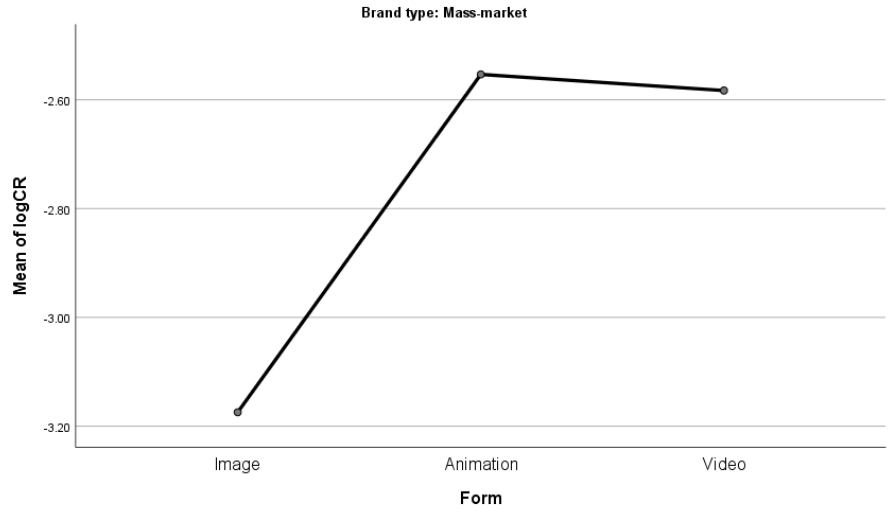
Appendix

Appendix A

The influence of marketing communication form on eWOM for mass-market and luxury brands

Post-hoc Tukey test in ANOVA revealed that there was no significant difference between animations and video for mass-market brands, the influence of each on comment rate is significantly higher (p = .032 and p = .006 respectively) than the influence of images (Figure A1).

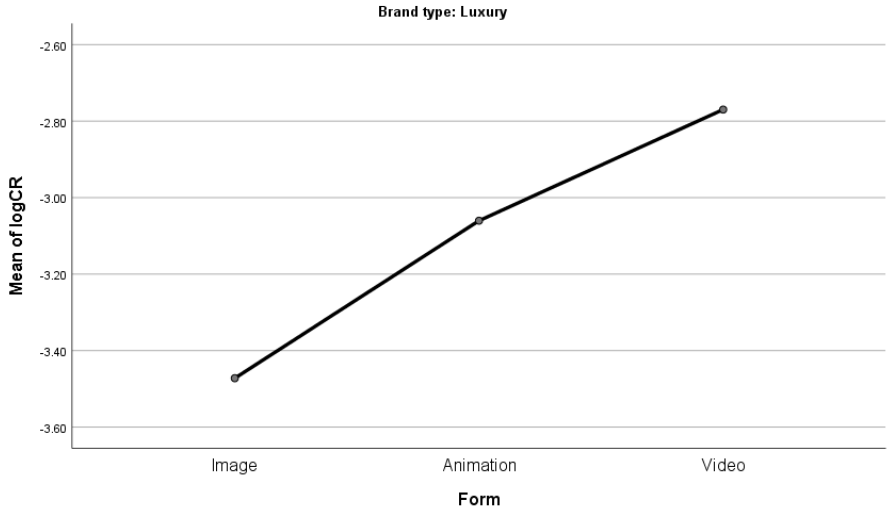
Figure A1. Mass-market brands - communication form – comment rate: means plot



Source: Own elaboration

However a different effect was found for luxury brands for which the statistically significant difference (p =.000) was found between videos (for which the mean comment rate was the highest) and images (for which the mean comment rate is the lowest) only (Figure A2).

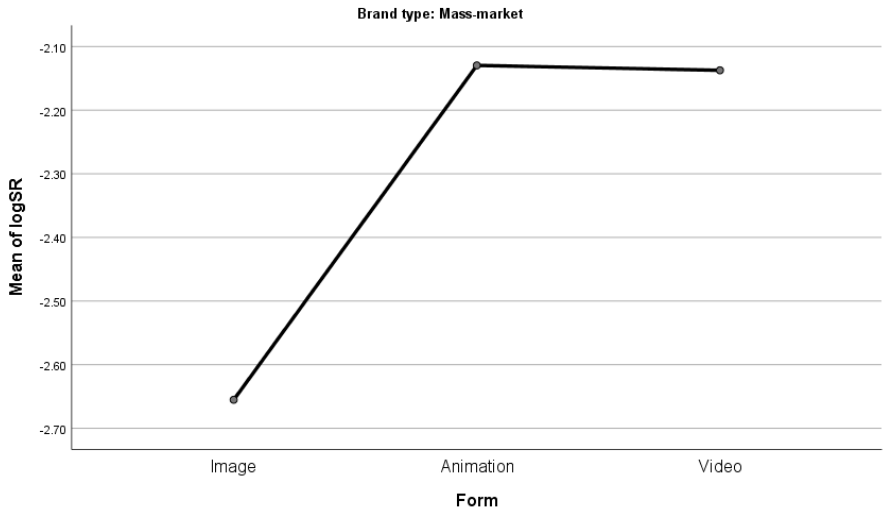
Figure A2. Luxury brands - communication form – comment rate: means plot



Source: Own elaboration

As far as the share rate is concerned for mass-market brands, again there was a statistically significant difference (p = .029) between videos and images only (Figure A3).

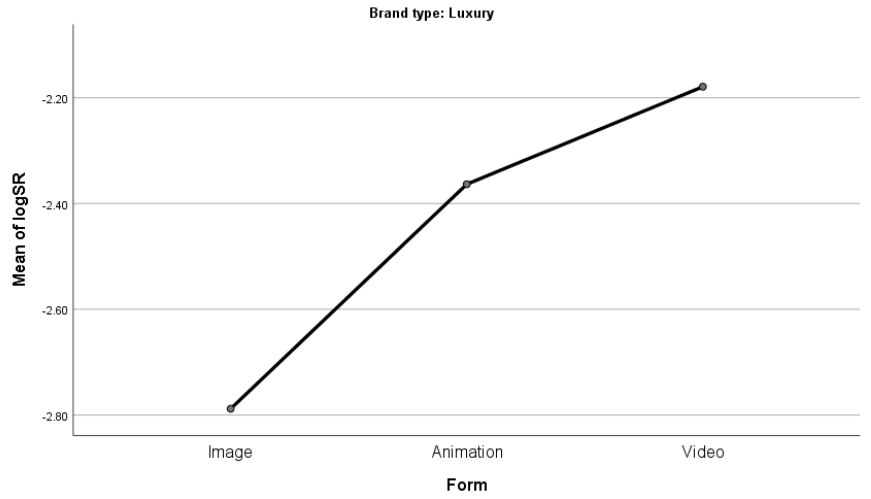
Figure A3. Mass-market brands - communication form – share rate: means plot



Source: Own elaboration

For luxury brands there was a statistically significant difference between videos and images (p = .000) and animations and images (p = .04) (Figure A4).

Figure A4. Luxury brands - communication form – share rate: means plot



Source: Own elaboration

In sum, this additional analysis reveals that the higher level of eWOM for videos than for images was always significant. In other words, video "always worked" better than images while in some cases (the share rate of mass-market brand posts and the comment rate of luxury brand posts) there was no statistically significant ($p < .05$) difference between the influence of images and animations.