Research on the Motivations of IWOM Spread under the Background of Cross-Cultural

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Abstract. Internet word-of-mouth spread is an important way for the network shopping platform to acquire new customers, and the motivation of spread guides the behavior of the customers. Based on the Hofstede's culture dimension theory, use the customers of China and America as an example. Collect data of books form Amazon, through factor analysis to extract 7 motivations of IWOM spreading. And through the regression analysis, this paper studies the specific differences of motivations of IWOM spreading under the background of cross-cultural. The regression analysis finds that the cultural difference has a great influence on intrinsic motivation of IWOM spread. But it does not have obvious effects on extrinsic motivation. The results of research would make contributions to enriching the related theory and guiding enterprises to formulate marketing strategy of IWOM under the background of cross-cultural.

1. Introduction
In the traditional sense of the word of mouth (WOM) is not for the purpose of commercial marketing refers to the informal communication of the information of the brand, products and services, the influence will be limited to the social scope of consumer, and as time goes on, the influence of WOM would quickly diminished. In recent years, with the popularity of Internet applications, more consumers post the product reviews on the Internet, formed the internet word-of-mouth (IWOM) which was more influential with the Internet as the platform of production and propagation.

According to the report of CNNIC, there were 695 million Internet users in China in 2016, 618 million. Among them, the online shopping accounts for 50 percent of Internet users. China is expected to become the world's largest online shopping market by 2017 [1]. WOM is the key factor which affects the purchase decision of consumers. Another survey by CIC found that IWOM affects nearly 90 percent of consumers in non-purchasing situations. Consumer’s favorite brand, promotion activities, the attention of a specific product and serious adverse events will prompt consumers to focus on IWOM. It is clear that most Internet users are looking at the IWOM in a particular area.

Based on the low cost and two-way communication of the Internet, the IWOM has overcome the shortage of traditional word of mouth that can only communicate within a limited boundary of social and weaken fast as time goes on and the distance increases. And because of the anonymity and timeliness of the Internet, consumers can transmit the information to anyone at any time, which make the scope of influence of IWOM extend of the geometric level [2].
There are two main forms of IWOM. One is that the enterprise offers consumer oriented information. It is the information of product description or expert recommendation. The second is that consumers post the feeling about products into the internet, and it will quickly collect all kinds of positive, negative or neutral reviews from consumers, then they form the IWOM. Because of the high credibility and strong experiential of this type of reviews, it is often perceived by consumers as more valuable than the information provided by the enterprise. Therefore, it is an important reference to understand the motivations of consumers spreading IWOM for enterprises to develop their marketing strategy.

2. The relevant research of motivation of WOM spreading

In Internet which is anonymous and individuals interact frequently virtual environment, for convenience, consumers may avoid supplying themselves information and only benefit from information provided by other consumers. If all consumers have this mentality, IWOM cannot spread. The online shopping platform that relies on promoting by IWOM and the enterprise that hopes to improve their customer relations through IWOM will face huge losses. Therefore, we need to fully understand the characteristics of IWOM and lucubrate the motivation of it.

2.1. The characteristics of IWOM

The carrier of IWOM which is the new media has determined it has the following characteristics:

1) Anonymity, the new media age can't confirm the true identity of the spreader of IWOM. IWOM is an informal communication as same as the traditional WOM. And the anonymity of the Internet makes it impossible for the receiver of IWOM to determine whether IWOM still has a non-commercial as traditional word of mouth, such as many merchants encourage users to spread IWOM through material or mental rewards. IWOM is not necessarily the spread of C2C. The companies can anonymously disseminate harmful information about their competitors to mislead consumers.

2) Diversity, this includes the diversity of IWOM forms and the diversity of channels of spread. The word of mouth can be a simple text, a picture, or an audio and video format, no longer limited to the oral language as traditional WOM. The channel of IWOM spread can be either a regular shopping platform or a micro blog, BBS and instant messenger.

3) Universality, the main form of traditional WOM spread is face-to-face transmission. It is limited by WOM, the number of participants is limited, and the rate of spread is slow too. Because of the virtuality and convenience of the Internet, the spread of IWOM is almost no longer limited by space and time. IWOM information can be viewed, copied and reproduced anywhere, so that the recipient of IWOM is free to access all kinds of IWOM. The scope of influence extends from daily relationships to the entire Internet. The breadth and speed of IWOM cannot match by the traditional WOM.

4) Sustainability, the traditional WOM is prevalent in the short term after an event, the information of WOM mainly spreads through the interpersonal communication by face-to-face, it often cannot give a person with a clear impression and also hard to avoid the recession of attention to events over time. But IWOM can be recorded, the IWOM is a well-documented form of visible text that is already materialized online, which makes it easier for the recipient to browse and reference. And with the addition of new IWOM, the information of IWOM can continue for a long time and the content of IWOM keeps accumulating, the spread scope keeps expanding, it makes IWOM realize the increase of marginal effect and plays a more sustained impact.

In addition to the above major features of IWOM, because the application of web 2.0 technology makes it more interactive, Internet users around the world have the freedom and initiative to express different perspectives on a product, the diversified IWOM greatly reduces the risk of perceptions of product. But the anonymity of the Internet has brought the two-sided of IWOM. The reviews in the Internet have lost their strict control system and binding. If the spreader lacks a sense of social responsibility and self-control, he may deliberately spread false IWOM and undermine the credibility of IWOM. As you see IWOM is a double-edged sword. It is still an important way to build new communication between the main body and the outside world.
2.2. The motivation research of IWOM
Motivation is the driving force of behavior that motivates people to achieve their desires or achieve their goals, which largely determines people's behavior [3]. The motivation of IWOM spread is the inner performance of consumers who spreading information to other consumers, it is a driving force of achieving specific objectives by spreading WOM on the Internet.

Only if enterprise understands the motivation that consumers spread IWOM, and according to the different motivation to set up the corresponding incentive measures, can they strengthen the tendency of IWOM spread by consumers, then increase the value of IWOM spread.

Some researches have been done by scholars at home and abroad about the motivation of WOM spread. Early on, the main research was the spread motivation of offline WOM. Dichter is an early scholar who studies the motivation of WOM spread, and he offers four motivations of spreading positive WOM: product related, self-related, others related and information related [4]. And others such as Sundaram have found that there is a difference between positive WOM and negative WOM [5]. With the popularization of the Internet, the focus shifted to the motivation of online WOM spread, but the research focuses on the discovery phase. Although the research on motivation of WOM spread is divided into online and offline environments, the elements of motivation are essentially the same. An empirical study of German consumers distills eight motivations of IWOM, which includes helping network platforms, self-improvement, and economic stimulus [6].

From these researches on motivation of offline and online WOM, a number of scholars have studied this area and have proposed multiple motivational types for WOM [7]. But the study of single samples in particular area and the study in different areas combine with the cultural background of the motivation of IWOM spread were less studied.

2.3. The cultural differences in the motivation of IWOM Spread
In contrast to the individualistic culture, the collectivist culture is more likely to share information and maintain human relations, emphasizing the values of low profile, tolerance and harmony. The Chinese people are influenced by the long-term Confucian thought and have a deep culture of collectivism. Therefore, the motivation of IWOM spread may be differences between Chinese consumers and the western consumers of individualistic culture.

Existing researches show that there is a difference in the motivation of WOM spread in different cultures. For the research of the motivation of offline WOM spread found that under the background of collectivism culture the reason why consumers spread WOM could be for maintenance relationship or emotional communication, under the background of individualistic culture the reason why consumers spread WOM could be for achieving affirmation or self-actualization [5]. For the research of motivation of online IWOM also found that, the number of IWOM of the same products from America which is the representative of individualism culture was significantly higher than China which is the representative of collectivism culture. The reason is still lack of a plausible explanation [8].

As early as 2006, Fong and Burton researched the comparison between Chinese and American consumers' IWOM behavior on the BBS, it shown that the different cultural backgrounds and market characteristics have created the effect of IWOM on the Chinese consumer over the USA consumer [9]. Then, the two researchers also compared the behavior of seeking and spreading the information of IWOM on the network between the consumers in China and America. They found that Chinese consumers tended to seek out related IWOM, but less spread the personal experience. On the contrary, American consumers were more likely to spread IWOM [10]. Thus, to seek help through IWOM has become a spontaneous behavior in China, but the motivation to actively spread IWOM has yet to be guided and inspired. To study the different motivations among the consumers in different cultures is helpful to guide and encourage domestic consumers to spread IWOM.
3. The influence of different cultural backgrounds on the motivation of IWOM

In order to understand the motivation of consumers spreading IWOM in different cultures, we need to summarize attitudes, social norms and other consumer behavior theories and demonstrate how different cultures influence consumer behavior.

3.1. The theory of cultural dimensions

Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions is regarded as the most influential theory in the field of different culture in social science research [11]. His classification of national societies is also widely used as a basis for cross-cultural marketing and e-commerce research. His cultural framework also has strong empirical support. The framework is produced in the largest scale of cross-cultural research, including 116,000 people from more than 40 countries. Hofstede divides culture according to five aspects as shown in figure 1.

![Hofstede's cultural dimension theory](image)

Figure 1. Hofstede's cultural dimension theory.

Our work begins with the recognition of Hofstede's cultural framework, instead of verifying the validity of the architecture, we are trying to prove that consumer behavior fits this theory. We focus on the individualism and collectivism in dimensions.

Individualism-collectivism refers to the basic level that adjusts the behavior between individuals or groups, and IWOM spread is also a way of setting up connection between individuals and groups. Individualists see themselves and their immediate relatives as more important than the collective. Collectivism refers to the degree to which individuals perceive them blend in collective and opinions are affected by the collective norms and expectations or even form an opinion based on these norms and expectations. Given that the theory is a long and influential theory in the different cultural fields. We will use this cultural theory to better understand how different forms of national culture are embodied in the IWOM spread. And we need to know that these dimensions are not the only cultural stereotypes. Hofstede doesn't think that all Chinese are collectivists or that all westerners are individualists. His argument is that the differences in cultural norms are obvious in large enough samples.

3.2. Consumer attitudes and social norms

Behavioral beliefs affect the attitudes of consumers and attitudes determine the consumer's intentions and actions. Behavioral beliefs stem from social pressures called social norms that are generated by
other people's normative beliefs about approving or disapproving a person's actual behavior. In many theories, attitudes have been used as a predictor of consumer behavior. The consumer attitude here refers to the consumer's overall assessment of the product. Consumer attitudes affect the motivation of IWOM spread and the positive and negative aspects of IWOM. Social norms affect consumers when they try to perform an action. In this paper, the social norm refers to the effect that consumers think their behavior is accepted and encouraged by their social circle. Consumers may think that their families, friends, and even Internet users will enjoy these IWOM, this belief will influence their intentions and opinions.

Social norms are associated with individualism–collectivism in the Hofsted's cultural dimension, it is another key factor which affects the IWOM spread. Individualists prefer to express themselves freely, while collectivists prefer to seek collective consistency. The influence of social norms on the collectivist society is greater than that of the individualistic society.

The China has always been influenced by the traditional Confucian thought, which is a country with a collective ideology. On the contrary, America is a highly individualistic society. The cultural differences between the two countries, which can be seen in the scores of cultural dimensions, as shown in table 1.

Table 1. The cultural dimensions of China and America.

| Cultural dimensions                        | China | America |
|--------------------------------------------|-------|---------|
| Score | Rank | Score | Rank |
| Individualism-Collectivism (IDV) | 20 | 41 | 91 | 1 |
| Masculinity-Femininity (MAS) | 66 | 9 | 62 | 15 |
| Power Distance (PDI) | 80 | 7 | 40 | 38 |
| Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) | 30 | 47 | 46 | 43 |
| Long term-Short term orientation (LTO) | 100 | 1 | 29 | 25 |

From table 1, you can see that China and America are very different from each other in the cultural dimension of individualism–collectivism, which is almost in the opposite position. So, what we expect is that the influence from social to individual behavior is different under these two cultures, and to observe the differences by comparing the consumers spread the IWOM between two kinds of culture. We take the two countries as examples to study the motivations of the IWOM spread of consumers in different cultures and verify whether the different cultural backgrounds have an influence on the motivations of the IWOM spread from the consumers.

According to Hofsted's cultural dimension theory, social members under the background of Collectivist cultures, such as China, want to maintain the harmonious relationship with participants (readers and disseminator of IWOM platforms). However, the American consumers under the background of individualistic culture attach importance to free expression, so they are freer to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the product.

The motivations of the IWOM spread from the consumers have come from social norms and the purpose of meeting certain needs, such as sharing experience, gaining recognition, goods return, etc. The consumers under the background of collectivist cultures are very clear if his IWOM has violated the collective norms, he won't spread easily in order to meet their own needs. If he violates the collective norms, his IWOM will be rejected and will not be respected and accepted.

4. The empirical analysis
In order to realize the two objectives of this study: identify the motivations of the IWOM spread and the influence of cultural background on motivation. First, we need to find out the possible motivations for the IWOM spread from consumers through exploratory factor analysis. Preliminary sure the measurement scale of motivation and verify the reliability of the measurement scale based on another set of samples.
4.1. The source of the experimental data

The value of IWOM has been watched by various industries. As a typical type of product, the book sales depend on the WOM of consumers. Now the book sales are based on the Internet platform, which makes the IWOM of the consumer be a measurable variable. This article compares the book sales platform between Amazon.com and amazon.cn, which are part of the same company but respectively located at China and America. The reason we choose Amazon is that the same company can guarantee the consistency of book products and the versatility of platform settings.

The dataset consists of two datasets. In the first dataset, we randomly collected the online reviews of 100 books from Amazon.com and Amazon.cn. A random selection of 100 books will be a better representation of the entire site's books, to ensure the integrated identification of the motivations of the IWOM spread, but the results may also be deviated by the selection of books. To control the deviation, we prepared a second dataset. First of all, choose the top 100 and the last 100 books from Amazon China, then, based on the selected books, choose the same books from Amazon America. Finally, collect the online reviews of the selected books. Using the same book sample, comparing the IWOM spread in two cultures, it is possible to ensure that the difference in the motivation of the IWOM is due to the different cultural background, not the difference of the book itself.

These two datasets each have a specific function, the random selection of 100 books can reveal the general rules of the motivation of IWOM under the background of cross-cultural. Selecting the top 100 and the last 100 books can eliminate the possibility that the motivation differences of the previous dataset are caused by the different books.

The statistics information of dataset is shown in table 2, the data is collected from July 10, 2016 to August 10, 2016. Each sample includes the information of book name, book number and online reviews, among them, online reviews include the consumer personal information, the text information and rating of online review. And the reason why this study instead of the past methods of questionnaire survey to collect data by using data mining technology, because this method can avoid the not authenticity of questionnaire survey, because the investigators may be not consumption by themselves, also do not experience the product, and the time of filling out the questionnaire is limited, it can't reflect the real motivation of IWOM from consumers. But the collected online reviews reflect the consumers perception after they've actually experienced the product. Although the collected information includes personal information from consumers, the study does not consider the demographic information of consumers which used in the general motivation studies. Because the focus of this study is a social group under the background of cross-cultural, and the differences in individual variables do not affect the results of this study. The collected data of consumer information can be used for the further study of the motivation of IWOM under the background of the same cultural.

| Cultural background | Sample classification | The number of books | The number of IWOM |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Collectivism - China| Randomly collected     | 100                 | 10093              |
|                     | Top 100               | 100                 | 21238              |
|                     | Bottom 100            | 100                 | 221                |
|                     | Randomly collected    | 100                 | 2546               |
| Individualism - America| Top 100              | 100                 | 114527             |
|                     | Bottom 100            | 100                 | 6796               |

First, we referenced the conclusions of previous studies, which includes both offline and online motivations of the IWOM spread from the consumers. Based on the self-interest and altruism factors which is the core thought of individualist-collectivism, the dimension of the motivations of the IWOM spread is preliminarily defined and summarized. We randomly select 600 online reviews from the first dataset (China and America each have 300 items). The motivation of each online review is identified
the by the artificial. We eliminate the motivations of low frequency (less than 1% of the whole), and
the other motivations which do not meet the requirements are eliminated too, such as, the motivations
which do not belong to the common phenomenon and which are too abstract. The reason for these is
that this article needs to study the general motivation of the IWOM spread, there is no need to pay
attention to individual special phenomena, and 40 measurements are extracted.

4.2. Factor analysis
Using SPSS19.0 to measure the KMO and Bartlett's ball of the Top sample, and the value of KMO is
0.800, the significant level of Bartlett's ball is 0.000, which indicated that the sample can be used for
factor analysis. By the orthogonal rotation method, with a characteristic value which is greater than 1
as the evaluation criteria to determine the number of factors. And we remove 8 measurements which
the factor load is less than 0.5. 7 motivation factors are extracted in the end. The analysis results are
shown in table 3 and the name of factor is concluded by the content of measurements that covered by
each factor.

| Factors                  | The number of measurements | Load factor | Interpretation ratio | The value of α |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|----------------------|----------------|
| 1 Social interaction    | 6                          | >0.5        | 9.154                | 0.852          |
| 2 Altruism              | 5                          | >0.5        | 7.526                | 0.767          |
| 3 Self-expression       | 4                          | >0.5        | 6.357                | 0.705          |
| 4 Meeting interest      | 7                          | >0.5        | 8.524                | 0.845          |
| 5 Relieve feeling       | 3                          | >0.5        | 8.026                | 0.812          |
| 6 Material incentive    | 2                          | >0.5        | 9.216                | 0.914          |
| 7 Return                | 5                          | >0.5        | 7.351                | 0.789          |

Global consistency α=0.831, the cumulative interpretation rate of 6 factors is 76.427%.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 7 factors is greater than 0.70, and the overall Cronbach's alpha
coefficient is 0.831, above the acceptable level 0.70. The correlation coefficients on the corresponding
dimensions of all measurements are greater than the minimum standard 0.50, which indicates that the
scale has better internal consistency. In addition, the cumulative interpretation rate of 7 factors is also
greater than the minimum standard 65%, which indicates that the remaining 32 measurements are well
belongs to 7 factors, and the all load factors of the measurements are over 0.5. The load phenomenon
of cross-factor does not appear. All the data consistently showed that the results of the factor analysis
are better.

In order to verify the stability of the extracted motivation factor from cross-sample by this article,
we carry out the confirmatory factor analysis by using Lisrel8.8 based on the Bottom sample. The fit
index of model reaches the corresponding standard, which indicates that the motivation factor is the
stability of cross-sample.

4.3. Regression analysis
To study the motivations difference of social groups under the background of cross-cultural, the
impact of seven motivations on the IWOM is revealed under the individualistic-collectivist culture
through regression analysis. From the perspective of psychology and behavioristics, the motivation of
IWOM is divided into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the results of the two datasets are
summarized and the results are shown in table 4.
Table 4. The corresponding relationship between the behavior of IWOM and motivation.

| Motivational style | Spreading motivation | The number of IWOM from Amazon.cn | The number of IWOM from Amazon.com |
|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                    |                      | Randomly select                   | Top 100  | Bottom 100 | Randomly select | Top 100 | Bottom 100 |
| Intrinsic motivation | Social interaction | 2220                             | 4432     | 19         | 315           | 10087   | 315         |
|                     | Altruism             | 2234                             | 3475     | 14         | 189           | 9816    | 926         |
|                     | Self-expression      | 951                              | 1929     | 19         | 721           | 45284   | 1764        |
|                     | Meeting interest     | 2082                             | 5497     | 44         | 405           | 24817   | 2114        |
|                     | Relieve feeling      | 548                              | 2284     | 67         | 344           | 12175   | 2716        |
|                     | Material incentive   | 927                              | 526      | 46         | 96            | 5621    | 627         |
|                     | Return expectation   | 1964                             | 1128     | 61         | 286           | 4645    | 354         |

Based on the number of IWOM, seven motivational factors as independent variables, we use SPSS19.0 for regression analysis. The regression results are shown in table 5.

Table 5. Regression analysis results and differences under the background of cross-cultural.

| Control variable Independent variable | Collectivist culture | Individualistic culture | Difference |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| (Constant)                           | Beta 0.075 T 0.214   | Sig 0.63 VIF 0.187      |            |
| Social interaction                   | 0.256*** T 4.524     | Sig 1.527 VIF 0.101*    |            |
| Altruism                             | 0.134** T 2.582      | Sig 1.341 VIF 0.082     |            |
| Self-expression                      | 0.090 T 1.625        | Sig 1.014 VIF 0.294***  |            |
| Meeting interest                     | 0.125** T 2.316      | Sig 1.269 VIF 0.251***  |            |
| Relieve feeling                      | 0.102* T 2.681       | Sig 0.076 VIF 0.187**   |            |
| Material incentive                   | 0.173* T 3.247       | Sig 0.057 VIF 0.134*    |            |
| Return expectation                   | 0.217** T 4.136      | Sig 0.004 VIF 1.715     |            |

F=2.51***, R²=0.195, Durbin-w=1.971

Note: * represents p < 0.10, ** represents p < 0.05, *** represents p < 0.01.

From the results of table 5, we can first see that the models under both cultures have reached the ideal level in both the goodness of fit and the significant levels. Secondly, there are obvious differences in the analysis of individual factors, and the differences in intrinsic motivation are especially obvious. Intrinsic motivation is constrained by the background of cross-cultural. Under the background of collectivist culture, consumers are more focused on social interaction and helping others, while consumers of individualistic cultural are more liberal in expressing their views and promoting their image in the online community. The very satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the product will stimulate their motivation to spread IWOM. Under the background of collectivist culture, consumers will not easily spread extreme IWOM. This makes the IWOM more focused on the neutral views under the background of collectivist culture. While under the background of individualistic
culture, there is a big difference in IWOM, which includes the IWOM of positive, negative and neutral. From table 1, we can see that consumers of individualistic culture are more likely to spread extreme IWOM than consumers of collectivist culture. Individualism-Collectivism has no obvious difference on the extrinsic motivations of consumers, the material incentive is an important extrinsic motivation. Through previous studies we find that the material incentive is an important factor in improving the motivation of consumers to participate. The return expectation is another important extrinsic motivation besides the material incentive. Unlike the material incentive, the return expectation is not actually promised. The consumers under the background of collectivist culture are not only willing to help others through IWOM, and more believe that their contribution will be able to get returns, so they have more expectations for return.

Through these studies, the intrinsic motivation is the key motive for the IWOM spread, whether it is collectivist or individualistic culture. But under the background of collectivist culture, the spread motivation of consumers tends to social interaction and altruism, which are oriented by altruism. While under the background of individualistic culture, the spread motivation of consumers more tends to self-expression, meeting interest and relieve feeling, which are oriented by self-interest. The cultural background influences the social norm more. The behavior of consumers is gradually formed under the social norms, therefore, the motivations of consumers to spread the IWOM under different cultures have the characteristics of cross-cultural.

5. Conclusion and prospect

This study is based on the data of IWOM from the amazon platform between America and China. Through the analysis of factor analysis, seven motivations of IWOM are extracted, and based on psychology and behavioristics, the motivation of the IWOM is divided into intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation, the regression results indicate that the difference between the motivations of IWOM under the background of cross-cultural is mainly reflected in the intrinsic motivation. Among them, social interaction and altruism are the main motivations of consumers under the background of collectivist culture. Self-expression, meeting interest and relieve feeling are the main motivations of consumers under the background of individualistic culture. Therefore, the cultural background has an important influence on the consumer’s motivation of IWOM spread. Cultural background is less influence on extrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation is not the main motive for influencing consumers' IWOM. And online spread is more initiative than offline. It involves more situational factors, such as online convenience and consumer privacy concerns, which can affect the spread of IWOM.

In terms of overall regression, the values of $R^2$ and Durbin-w from the models under the two cultures are both about 0.2. It shows that the independent variables and errors in the regression model are independent of each other, the estimation of the model is reliable, and the result is more stable. The limitation of this study is that it only examines the differences in the motivations of IWOM spread in China and America. Although the cultural differences between China and America are more obvious, but the consumption level of the two countries also have bigger difference, to some extent this may affect the motivation of IWOM spread from consumers. Future research is intended to improve the sample differences, meanwhile choosing Singapore which is a blend of Chinese and western cultures as a regulated variable. Based on this, we can study how culture regulates the motivation of IWOM spread.

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