



**MS Thesis
in Marketing and International Business**

**What are the motives for eWOM and co-creation on the
indie game market?**

Does the size of the company, co-creation or background variables
affect motives?

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Advisor: Dr. Gunnar Óskarsson
February 2021



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Final thesis for MS-degree in Marketing and International Business

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This thesis is a 30ECTS final thesis for the degree of Master of Science in Marketing and International Business at the School of Business in the School of Social Sciences at the University of Iceland

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Preface

This thesis is dedicated to my mother.

Abstract

Purpose - The purpose of this study aims to investigate indie game customer's motives to engage in electric word-of-mouth (eWOM) communications during the post-purchase stage. The market is almost exclusively digital, requiring internet and computer knowledge, consisting of small companies, making it ideal to investigate customer's motives to comment online and what affect the size of a company, co-creation or influencer perception has.

Design - A quantative approach was adopted consisting of an online survey built by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), one of the most cited researches in the field, to examine motives for eWOM. The survey was adapted to the indie game market and further questions were designed to answer what effects company size, co-creation and influencers perception has. Answers were examined using independent t-tests and ANOVA.

Findings - The study revealed that consumer's perception of a company's size does significantly affect their motives to engage in eWOM communications. Further, their perception of influencers and co-creation also proved to affect their motives to engage in eWOM communications. The study confirmed a difference in motives between males and females on four of the eight factors, showing a considerable difference in motives for the two genders. Finally, possible problems with the internal consistency of Thurau et al's (2004) survey was discovered for one of the eight factors. These findings could indicate a poor inter-relatedness of questions or heterogenous constructs and should be researched further.

Originality/value - While implications of the adoption of eWOM has been explored in previous research, little is known of the impact a company's size can have on these communications. Furthermore, previous studies have called for further examination into certain fields (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Ngarmwongnoi et al., 2020). By examining a market that only consists of small companies it was possible to understand the affects of size and whether co-creation or influencer perception had an impact. The research also

backs up claims from prior research (Fiske, 1980; Ahluwalia, 2002) suggesting that positive motives are more dominant than negative ones. The findings of low internal consistency could prove to have implications on research within the field, as Thureau et al. (2004) is one of the most cited research on the subject. Some findings, such as gender role in motivations, showed to have a far bigger impact than in other recent studies, adding value to the knowledge of this subject.

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1 Introduction

Word-of-mouth communication (WOM) is the process in which consumers share information and opinions that direct buyers towards and away from specific products, brands and services (Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan, 2008). Traditionally, offline WOM has shown to play a crucial role in customers' purchase decisions (Richins and Root-Schafer, 1988). With the birth of the internet it has expanded the options consumers can gather, with unbiased product or service information from other non-commercial entities, by offering electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

The importance of eWOM on the independent video games (indie game) market could be more than on other traditional markets. This could be true as the market exists almost exclusively on the internet, as games are digital and made without the support of publishers (Wawro, 2016). This market can also add considerable knowledge to the field of studies as the market has a greater reliance on eWOM than traditional markets. This stems from the fact that indie games receive less press coverage and have smaller marketing budgets than other games on the market. In order to learn about products, consumers can be reliant on eWOM communications via online platforms. As the product is consumed using computers and delivered, almost exclusively, through online channels, it requires consumers to have knowledge of computers and the internet. This makes the market an especially interesting subject for the field of online word-of-mouth studies.

The author noticed a lack of studies directed at smaller companies with regards to eWOM and what motivates individuals to write comments about them. Studies have shown people to have a very positive view of small businesses while views on large businesses are mixed (Saad, 2019). This could affect people's motives for eWOM and co-creation, therefore this study can provide additional knowledge to the topic.

The aim of this study is to examine which factors motivate indie game consumers to engage in eWOM and co-creation. Does the size of the company, co-creation or influencer perception affect their motives?

Adopting a quantitative research design, the study consists of an online survey with participants involved in video games, as either indie game consumers or developers.

Possibly, the most established groundwork in research on eWOM communication motivations comes from Thureau, Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler's (2004) research on participation via consumer-opinion platforms. Considerable research has been made in the past 16 years, there is still a need to further investigate what role demographics, company structures and co-creation can play in the motivation to engage in eWOM communications. Furthermore, there have been calls for further research with regards to different cultural settings (Iyer & Griffin, 2020) and the indie game market is by definition a cultural phenomenon. As Thureau et al's research has never been applied to the indie game market, it will add valuable and new information for to field. The indie game market is an especially interesting market to examine, as its consumers are required to have competence in using computers and navigating the internet.

This study can be of particular use for members of the indie game market, as limited research exists on it. This could also shed light on the differences in motives for eWOM when consumers are dealing the smaller companies. Potentially the results will have practical use for small and personalized companies.

Understanding the factors that motivate consumers to engage in eWOM and co-creation activities enables developers to strategically manage their eWOM and co-creation relationships.

2 Literature review

This chapter will examine the knowledge framework that exists on word-of-mouth communications, electronic word-of-mouth communications, influencer marketing and co-creation. Traditional word-of-mouth communications will be compared to its electronic counterpart and the main motives for consumers to engage in written communications about products and services will be examined. But first the indie game market will be defined and examined.

2.1 Indie games

Although video games are a somewhat young medium it has captured its own cultural status and become mainstream in little more than thirty years. It has become so big that it yields more revenue than the movie and music industries, respectively (Shieber, 2019). As with other cultural industries, video games have a vast market with massive publishers and developers that produce big budget video games with sales targets in the millions of dollars. Some have said that the market has reached a level of industrialization where video games are mass produced, with focus groups acting as the main inspiration (Cortell, 2015). This has led to unimaginative and serialized video games to dominate the market. As an apparent response, a small yet important revolution has taken place in the video game industry - the "indies" or independent developers (Cortell, 2015).

Independent developers, who are behind new and exciting projects, are not something new in the industry. The dawn of independently developed video games dates back to at least the 1980's, as fans would create games from their own bedrooms. There has however been great aspiration in the last ten years, growing from a few courageous bedroom-developers into the global sensation that it is today. After countless global successes and critical acclaim, online distribution giants like Steam have created virtual shelves dedicated solely to indie games and opened up the platform for smaller developers (Latorre, 2016).

2.1.1 Defining indie games

The first task in this study is to define independent or “indie” video games. The term has been lucid throughout history, which makes it essential to define and understand the term. Zimmerman (2002) posed the question “Do Independent games exist?” more than ten years ago. He compared the video games industry to the film industry to define independence and his results were three-fold: Independence from finance, independence of the media itself and the spirit and culture of the film. This in essence focused on where the money for production, distribution and marketing came from, but also the total budget of the movie could tell if a movie was an indie. With regards to spirit and culture he simply stated that you know an indie when you see one (Cortell, 2015).

Lipkin (2013) also tried to determine the term “indie” by giving it cultural and core values. Mainstream video games can be defined as corporate, capitalist games that emphasize on popularity and profit, rather than artistry and creativity, developed by large teams. However, many independent games have reached popularity and profits with emphasis on artistry and creativity - showing that the line between mainstream and independent games can be blurred. This made Lipkin argue that “indie” games can be defined as what is not mainstream, especially in its core values, rather than the levels of popularity or profit. Independent games will challenge set rules and are often rebellious to the system in place. Indie games will develop for nostalgia, often referring back to 8- and 16-bit era games in terms of graphics and their fun and hard nature. This is a form of rebellion, as indie developers look back at these games and refuse to display photo-realistic graphics and watered-down gameplay as is common in the mainstream.

Westecott (2013) shares the notion that mainstream games do not offer much apart from shallow and serialized experiences, in stark contrast to indie games that are exposed as artistic expressions in art shows and galleries. Westecott also compares indie games to a craft, highlighting the individualistic approach of development (Westecott, 2013).

Ruffino (2013) points out that independent video games do not only deviate from the mainstream in terms of economic and technical practices - but also artistically, culturally and creatively.

The largest annual gathering in the indie game sector is the Independent Games Festival. The rules to have a game presented at the festival are twofold: to have been

produced by an independent developer and to have been created with an “indie spirit”. Unfortunately, these rules are quite subjective, but they do point to independent games being multifaceted in nature involving production and distribution processes - but also being a cultural phenomenon with a distinct design approach with regards to the “indie spirit” (Latorre, 2016).

The first requirement intends to differentiate indie games from mainstream, commercial video games that are published by major publishers and often associated with capitalist principles. This aims to categorize indie games as games that pursue artistic and cultural purposes rather than economic benefits (Lipkin, 2013). Commercial video games are also frequently developed by large teams with budgets reaching upwards of a hundred million dollars - while indie games will generally be made without the help of a publisher, have a limited budget, but are also groundbreaking and beyond what is proposed by the mainstream industry (Ruffino, 2013).

The distinction between the two can however begin to become muddy as the market is closely examined. Online distribution channels play a crucial role in offering indie game developers the chance to reach a wide audience and market games without having a publisher. Bypassing physical sales outlets allows independent developers to make low budget video games with a low market price and a lower breakeven point. But as Jong (2013) has pointed out “most of the games that people nowadays think of as indie (...) were distributed via platforms that are owned by major publishers; they only gained such commercial success because they were successfully marketed and branded as indie games on the platforms”.

As it has been argued, the concept of “independence” is extremely complex to analyze in contemporary video games and the relationships between indie and mainstream presents many gray areas, rather than polarizing differences (Martin and Deuze, 2009).

It is clear that there are some varied opinions on the definition of independence, and it depends on the terms discussed. It can revolve around economic reasons, whilst others state that it goes further and involves artistic and cultural values. This suggests that there are more than just raw numbers behind the phenomenon, and that it should be researched beyond the economic repercussion that these games have in today’s market. In summary it can be said that indie games have at least one of the following traits: it is

developed by a small team, with a small budget, without a publisher, it focuses less on profits and more on artistic and creative visions.

2.1.2 Indie game market key figures

The video game industry is a colossal global industry that commands more than 150 billion dollars in revenue annually (Grand View Research, 2020). In some countries the industry has outgrown the film and music industries combined (Stewart, 2019). The indie game market is a niche market within the broader video game market and in 2016 it was reported that its annual revenue were at least 1 billion dollars (Wawro, 2016). The biggest platforms are Valve's Steam and Nintendo's Switch eShop (Macy, 2018). Both platforms are exclusively digital and online.

2.2 Influencer marketing

The rise of social media has given birth to a new phenomenon within eWOM and marketing in general - influencers. Influencers are individuals who have power to affect decisions of others because of their authority, knowledge, position or relationship, whether it is real or perceived (BusinessDictionary, 2019). They are individuals who have an active following and can call their followers to action (MarketingProfs, 2016). In the digital environment, strictly speaking, anyone can become an influencer. This can be achieved with the utilization of social media, comment sections, forums, reviewing or rating products for example (Gross and Wangenheim, 2018). Influencer marketing is in some respects similar to WOM, however it differs as it does not rely explicitly on recommendations (Kadekova and Holiencinova, 2018).

Influencer marketing is a swiftly growing industry that aims to promote products, services or increase brand awareness through content spread by social media users that are considered as influential - in other words the process of utilizing influencers in marketing efforts. Influencer marketing can be defined as a process where marketers connect with influencers to build mutually beneficial relationships (MarketingProfs, 2016). Influencer marketing is therefore marketing to influencers rather than regular consumers, but it has evolved to encompass specific tactics. Today the process involves influencer discovery, influencer outreach, design of influencer campaigns, influencer tracking and measurement and influencer relations (Gretzel, 2018).

Recent studies have shown influencer marketing to be an effective tool. In 2016 a study suggested that 40% of respondents purchased an item after seeing it used by an influencer on social media and Twitter users reported a 5.2 increase in purchase intent after seeing influencer or brand tweets about a product (Gretzel, 2018). Additionally, it has been reported that influencer marketing campaigns have the potential to attain 11 times greater return on investment than traditional advertisements (Gretzel, 2018).

2.3 Consumer value co-creation

Consumer value co-creation is the collaborative work between consumers and firms in an innovation process, where consumers and suppliers engage in the activity of co-ideation, co-design, co-development and co-creation of new products or services (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Co-creation is a specific form of user contribution where consumers participate with firms and voluntarily contribute input in the form of knowledge, informed opinions, experience or resources into an innovation process (Cook, 2008).

Value co-creation should not be confused with value co-production although these elements can overlap. Co-creation takes place in the consumption stage, following the production and launch of a product. Co-production, on the other hand, takes place preceding the consumption stage – or during the development of the initial product (Etgar, 2008; Lusch and Vargo, 2006a, b).

In industries where new IP is considered important, such as the video game industry, product launches are kept secret to prevent competitor replication and to reduce the chance for swift competitor copying (Roberts et al., 2014). Therefore, this study will focus on the co-creation process rather than the co-development process.

2.3.1 Co-creation in the video games industry

As the video game industry is renowned for secrecy of new intellectual properties (IPs) and products the co-development of value can only happen when a supplier adds knowledge, tools and capabilities to the customer pool of resources (Payne et al., 2008). It is impossible for consumers in the industry to co-produce value because a game must be launched before consumers can exert innovation efforts that co-develop improvements to the product (Roberts et al., 2008). This would require them to have

access to game-engine tools by those who own the game-engine and the IP. As such, indie game developers will have to rely on co-creation rather than co-development, unless they are willing to share the project with their consumers before launch.

Jawecki (2008) identified co-creation activities that all revolved around the same three outputs: revisions, improvements and enhancements to a product after launch. In the context of indie games *revisions* could refer to fixing bugs or problems with the game, *improvements* would be changes that could improve the experience and *enhancements* would relate to adding previously missing features to the game.

2.4 Word-of-mouth

Word-of-mouth communication (WOM) is the process in which consumers share information and opinions that direct buyers towards and away from specific products, brands and services (Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan, 2008). Marketing research on WOM goes back to the 1960's and over time the definitions have evolved. At the beginning, WOM was defined as face-to-face communication about companies and products between non-commercial entities (Arndt, 1967; Carl, 2016). Later, WOM took on a broader definition to include all informal communications between consumers about ownership, usage or characteristics of particular goods, services or sellers (Westbrook, 1987). With the rise of digital communications, it has been argued that WOM can be facilitated by electronic means and that the key defining aspect is the independence of the source of the message (Buttle, 1998). The broad definition of WOM today is simply a communication between consumers about a product, service or company in which the sources are considered independent of commercial influence (Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan, 2008).

Traditionally, offline WOM has shown to play a crucial role in customers' purchase decisions (Richins and Root-Schafer, 1988). The birth of the internet has expanded the options consumers can gather unbiased product or service information from other non-commercial entities by offering electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

2.4.1 Indie games' relationship with eWOM

As it has been established, indie games will generally be developed by small teams, with small budgets, without publishers and/or focus less on profits than other video games. It can therefore be concluded that generally, indie games will receive less public attention from media and advertising. If consumers want to find suitable games, they might be inclined to search via online opinion platforms. This suggests that the indie game market is more reliant on eWOM communications than other markets.

2.4.2 Motives for WOM

The leading study on WOM communication motives is by Dichter (1966). He classified four positive motivational groupings of WOM communication: message-involvement, product-involvement, self-involvement and other-involvement. However, Dichter's writing received criticism for having no detailed information about the development of his typology. This led to Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (1993) to modify Dichter's typology, rename the groupings and adding a further motive – dissonance reduction. As Dichter only had positive motivational groupings, this addition was the first negative motivational WOM communication.

In a thorough study by Sundaram et al. (1998), 390 critical-incident interviews were conducted that resulted in eight consumer motives for WOM communication. Some paralleled Dichter's (1966) and Engel's, Blackwell's and Miniard's (1993) groupings – four motives were identified as positive motives - altruism, product involvement, self-enhancement and helping the company - while the other four motives were identified as negative motives - altruism, anxiety reduction, vengeance and advice seeking.

2.4.3 Motives for eWOM

The most prominent study on eWOM communication motives to date is by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004). In an effort to identify eWOM communication motives they built on an integration of general WOM motives and motives derived from specific features of eWOM on consumer-opinion platforms.

2.4.3.1 Focus-Related Utility

The utility the consumer receives when adding value to the community through his contributions is focus-related utility (Balasubramanian and Mahajan, 2001). In an eWOM

context this would include reviews and commentary on products and services of interest to other community members. The assumption being that adding value to the community is an important goal of the individual.

Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) identified four motives based on the focus-related utility: *concern for other consumers, helping the company, social benefits and exerting power*. Each of these motivations conveys the desire to progress the primary purpose of the platform and consequently add value to the community.

2.4.3.2 Consumption Utility

Consumption utility refers to when consumers obtain value through direct consumption of other community constituents (Balasubramanian and Mahajan, 2001). In an eWOM context consumption utility refers to when individuals read product reviews and comments written by others, which can also motivate consumers to write comments (Hennig-Thurau et al, 2004). This can be consumers communicating their experiences with a product, online with a comment and requesting other consumers to comment problem-solving information. In doing so the consumer may gain more specific and useful feedback than simply reading comments written by others. This *advice seeking* motive is concerned with obtaining the abilities essential to further understand, use, operate, modify and repair a product.

2.4.3.3 Approval Utility

Approval utility refers to when a consumer receives satisfaction when other consumer use and approve of their contributions (Balasubramanian, 2001). In the context of eWOM this can refer to both informal and formal feedback. Informal approval would be when the contribution is praised by another user to the group or privately for the usefulness of the information provided. A formal feedback is enacted by the platform operators (Hennig-Thurau et al, 2004). An example would be “Most Helpful Reviews” as seen on Steam or “Top Reviews” on Amazon which are voted by other consumers.

Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) identified two distinct motives associated with approval utility, based on WOM communication literature: *self-enhancement* and *economic incentives*. Self-enhancement motivation (Engel, Blackwell and Miniard, 1993; Sundaram et al., 1998) is directed by an individual’s desire for positive acknowledgement from others. In the context of eWOM this can refer to being viewed as an expert or intelligent

shopper by other consumers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Economic incentives have proved to be an important driver of human behavior in general as they are considered by the recipient as a sign of approval (Lawler, 1984). In the context of eWOM communication this would refer to economic incentives from platform operators.

2.4.3.4 Moderator-Related Utility

The moderator-related utility is the process when a third party makes the complaint function easier for the community member. In a digital context this could refer to platform staff interacting with a company on the behalf of a customer. In an eWOM context the moderator-related utility motives are *convenience* and *problem-solving support* through the platform operator (Hennig-Thurau, 2004).

The mere existence of the platform can make the complaint process easier for the complainant. Consumers can struggle to find an appropriate individual at the company involved in the complaint process. Therefore, it can be more convenient for consumers to seek reparation. In a study conducted by Harrison-Walker (2001), disgruntled customers found convenience of complaining to be important in their decision of where to complain. " *The complaint forum may simply be easier for consumers to identify and access than the company*" (Harrison-Walker, 2001, p. 403).

Furthermore, when eWOM communication is transmitted to companies through online platform operators, the communication gives consumers the ability to express themselves with low financial and psychological risk. This process gives them hope that platform operators will actively support them in their problem-solving (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

2.4.3.5 Homeostase Utility

The homeostase utility is based on a theory that people have a desire for balance in their lives (Zajonc, 1971). The balance theory proposes that individuals strive to restore equilibrium of their previously balanced state if it has been set unbalanced (Heider, 1946, 1958; Newcomb, 1953). In the context of customer experiences, the source of unbalance comes from either strong positive or negative customer experiences. The balance can be restored by writing a comment on an opinion platform. In reference to WOM, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) identified two motives associated with homeostase utility: expressing positive emotions and *venting negative feelings*.

Balance can be restored by expressing positive emotions that are experienced from a positive customer experience (Sundaram et al., 1998). Dichter (1966) suggested the need that customers get to express positive emotions stem from a psychological tension inside them because of a strong desire to share the joy of their experience with someone. This tension can be relieved, and balance restored by writing comments online on opinion platforms that allows them to share their positive experience with others.

In the same way, venting negative feelings connected with a negative customer experience on an opinion platform can lessen the frustration and reduce anxiety associated with the event (Sundaram et al., 1998). A customer's desire for release has been known to be a major driving force behind the expression of negative personal experiences (Alicke et al., 1992; Berkowitz, 1970). Sharing a negative customer experience through online opinion platforms can help reduce the discontent related with their negative emotions (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

2.4.3.6 The eight factors

Based on these five utilities Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) developed eight driving factors as motives for eWOM. These factors are *platform assistance*, *venting negative feelings*, *concern for other consumers*, *extraversion/positive self-enhancement*, *social benefits*, *economic incentives*, *helping the company* and *advice seeking*. This study builds on these eight factors to examine the main motives to engage in eWOM communications and co-creation on the indie game market and which variables affect them.

Table 1. The eight motivating factors by Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004

Factors	Description
Platform assistance	Making use of the properties of the online media in question to engage in communication.
Venting negative feelings	Releasing negative feelings by communicating negatively or even getting revenge.
Concern for other consumers	Helping other consumers evade a bad experience they have encountered.
Extraversion/positive self-enhancement	Self-promoting by showing others you are an aware consumer.
Social benefits	eWOM used to form social relationships through online media.

Economic incentives	Getting financial reward in some form for engaging in eWOM communication.
Helping the company	Wanting to help companies get the success they deserve.
Advice seeking	Looking for advice or tips on how to solve certain problems.

2.5 Similar research

This research further investigates upon prior research done by Henning-Thurau in 2004 and the survey is built on his design. Further research has been done with various scopes and focuses. However, there is a gap in knowledge of the effects a company size has on eWOM communications. Indie games are almost exclusively published on online marketplaces, which contain an option to express eWOM communications. Furthermore, the games are made by smaller teams or individuals, which could make consumers feel a more personal bond with the creator and potentially have different motives for eWOM. The indie game market is an interesting subject for eWOM studies, as the market consists of people with computer and internet knowledge and they may be reliant on online communications for product awareness. The research questions aim to solve some key differences between the indie game market and the general public when it comes to motives to engage in eWOM communication. The research questions are as follows:

H1: There is a difference in motives for eWOM whether a person is a developer or not.

H2: There is a difference in motives for eWOM whether a person sees himself as a co-creator of the game.

H3: There is a difference in motives for eWOM based on the size of the company being commented on.

H4: There is a difference in motives for eWOM based on whether an individual will rather form an opinion on a product based on what influencers say rather than the media.

H5: There is a difference in motives for eWOM based on the gender.

This study has practical use for those working within the indie game market as it can explain the motives of their consumers and effects of eWOM on the sales of their

products. There have also been calls for further research on specific markets and the indie game market is particular for its defined size of companies (Prantl and Mičák, 2019). Understanding the difference in motives between groups gives not only developers within the market knowledge of motives behind eWOM communication, but possibly small companies working in a variety of markets.

3 Methodology

This chapter describes the research method, data collection and process of analyzing the data.

3.1 Research method

This study uses a quantitative survey focusing on indie games and eWOM, directed at a random sample of participants with connections to the indie game market. The survey can be found in Annex 1. The survey was run from August 20 to December 30, 2020 with 102 valid responses. The survey was advertised on social media, directed at individuals that either consume or develop indie games. The survey was kept up for months as it proved hard to find participants in such a niche market. Sending surveys to friends, family or fellow students was not a viable option, as only answers from indie game consumers and developers are applicable.

3.2 Participants

Participants were gathered using social media accounts linked to indie game developers, Facebook groups for indie game developers and various forums for developers. Of the 284 participants that started the survey, 158 finished and 102 of them had at, any time, registered written communication about an indie game. The other 56 were not asked further questions about eWOM communications. The sample was split evenly between males (52.9%) and females (44.1%), most were aged between 20-49 years (75.5%) and had at least a basic university degree (75.5%). The split between developers (56.9%) and non-developers (43.1%) was rather even. It is hard to make assumptions about the sample as there is no reliable data available on the indie game market's demographics, but it does catch the eye that this is a very educated group.

Table 2. Survey participants

		Number	Portion
Gender	Male	54	52.9%
	Female	45	44.1%

	Other	3	2.9%
Age	Less than 20 years	7	6.9%
	20-29 years	37	36.3%
	30-39 years	40	39.2%
	40-49 years	15	14.7%
	50-59 years	3	2.9%
	More than 60 years	0	0%
	Education	Primary School	7
Vocational qualification		7	6.9%
Matriculation examination		11	10.8%
Basic university degree		45	44.1%
Postgraduate degree		28	27.5%
Doctorate degree		4	3.9%
Indie Developer	Yes	58	56.9%
	No	44	43.1%

3.3 Methods of analysis

Adopting a quantitative research design, the method of analysis consists of an online survey with participants involved in video games, as either indie game consumers or developers. Possibly, the most established groundwork in research on eWOM communication motivations comes from Thureau, Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler's (2004) research on participation via consumer-opinion platforms. Considerable research has been made in the past 16 years, but Thureau et al's research is still amongst the most cited research on factors that motivate consumers to engage in eWOM communications, underlying its relevance to date.

Thureau et al's (2004) survey was modified to relate to indie game consumers, consisting of eight factors for motives with 26 questions. Questions about the size of company, co creation and influencers were added to further understand the indie game market, given its small nature. Participants were asked to rate their agreement to

motives on a five-point Likert scale, from Disagree to Completely agree. Finally, there are background questions regarding, age, gender, education and whether they are indie game developers themselves.

3.4 Method of data collection

The survey was online from August 20 to December 31, 2020. It was distributed on social media where consumers of indie games were targeted. On Twitter it was shared on the indie game developer account Big Fat Jay and the author's personal account, which both have a following consisting mostly of indie game consumers or developers. On Facebook the survey was shared on various groups that relate to video games, indie games and indie game development. Lastly, it was shared on various online forums that relate to indie game development.

3.5 Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis was performed with IBM's SPSS software platform and Microsoft Excel. Means were compared and analyzed using independent samples t tests, in cases where there were two independent samples, and one-way analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA), in cases where there were more than two independent samples. To confirm significant differences and understand the effect size, both Tukey's HSD post-hoc tests and Cohen's d were computed.

The independent samples t test is typically used to compare means of two independent samples. Under the null hypothesis, the t-test assumes that the two samples appear from the same normally distributed population with an unknown variance (Rochon, Gondan & Kieser, 2012). Put simply, the independent samples t test compares the means of two independent groups to determine whether there is statistical evidence that the population means are significantly different. In this study, the significance level or alpha is 0.05. This means that there is a 5% risk that the tests will conclude a significant difference when there is none.

One-Way ANOVA is a method that generalizes the independent samples t test to three or more samples (Heiberger & Neuwirth, 2009). In the same way as the independent samples t test, it uses a significance level, that equals the risk that the test will conclude

a significant difference when there is none. In this study the significance level, or alpha, for the One-Way ANOVA tests is 0.05.

When a One-Way ANOVA gives a significant result, this only indicates that at least one group differs from the other groups. In order to examine the pattern of differences between means, the One-Way ANOVA is frequently followed up by a pairwise comparison. A simple and common way of the pairwise comparison method was designed by Tukey and is called the honestly significant difference (HSD) test. The main function of Tukey's HSD test is to compute the honestly significant difference between two means and the distribution results in an exact sampling distribution of the largest difference between a set of means deriving from the same population (Abdi & Williams, 2010). In this study, Tukey's HSD post-hoc tests were conducted when One-Way ANOVA tests reported a significant difference, in order to better understand the differences between all sets of groups.

Cohen's d is one of the most used methods to measure an effect size, or how much a variable affects something (Rice & Harris, 2005). Cohen (1988) concluded effect sizes $d=.2$ as small, $d=.5$ = medium and $d=large$. Cohen's d has been found to work best for larger sample sizes of over 50, as the effects can be inflated in smaller samples. As such, this study uses Cohen's d to calculate effect sizes when independent samples t tests conclude a significant difference.

To assess internal consistency for each factor, Cronbach's Alpha was computed. Cronbach's Alpha was designed by Lee Cronbach in the 1950s to lay out a scale of the internal consistency of a test. Internal consistency explains to which extent items in a test measure the same construct or concept, exhibiting the inter-relatedness of the items. In other words, the Cronbach's Alpha evaluates the correlation of the test itself. It is generally accepted that an alpha of 0.6-0.7 shows an acceptable level of reliability, while 0.8 and higher shows a very good level (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

4 Findings

Examining the descriptive statistics from table 3 we see there are two factors that score a mean higher than four, *extraversion/positive self-enhancement* and *helping the company*. There are also two factors that score a mean lower than two, *economic incentives* and *venting negative feelings*. To measure internal consistency of the eight factors Cronbach's alpha was computed revealing that seven factors scored a good reliability of .650 or above, while one of them scored lower. *Economic incentives* scored a very low score of .227. This could be due to the low number of questions, as *economic incentives* has only two questions. The two questions had considerably different means, with respondents rating ... *I am being encouraged to do so* (2.31) more than twice as high as ... *I receive a financial reward for writing* (1.13). This could be down to respondents feeling encouraged to engage in eWOM communications without receiving any sort of financial gain in return.

Table 3. Participant motives to engage in eWOM communication

	N	M	SD	Cronbach's alpha
Platform assistance	102	3.30	.763	.699
... I believe the web administrator can forward my messages to appropriate persons in the company.	102	3.19	1.216	
... the web administrator will support my view when he talks to appropriate persons in the company	102	2.82	1.238	
... I believe the company will do more for me if I make the matter public	102	3.21	1.245	
... it is more convenient than sending an email or phoning the company	101	3.66	1.219	
... it is free of charge	101	3.69	1.093	
... complaining in public is more effective than sending a letter of complaint	102	2.90	1.248	
Venting negative feelings	102	1.35	.482	.674

... the developer caused me harm and now				
I want to harm the company	102	1.11	.342	
... I want to have my revenge on the				
developer	101	1.10	.412	
... My contribution helps me recover from				
a negative experience	102	1.79	.998	
... finding an outlet for my anger makes me				
feel good	101	1.38	.760	
Concern for other consumers	102	3.72	.777	.728
... I want to warn others of bad games	102	2.89	1.226	
... I want to prevent others from receiving				
the same bad experience I had	102	3.28	1.205	
... I want to help others to have the same				
positive experience I received	102	4.37	.855	
... I want to give others an opportunity to				
buy the right game	102	4.32	.834	
Extraversion/positive self-enhancement	102	3.82	.760	.770
... I would like to communicate my				
satisfaction with a good purchase	102	4.20	.784	
... I feel good when I can tell others about				
my successful purchases	102	3.83	1.091	
... that is how I can tell others about a good				
experience	102	4.20	.797	
... it shows my awareness as a consumer	102	3.06	1.209	
Social benefits	102	3.32	.991	.811
... I feel communicating is good for like-				
minded people	102	3.68	1.082	
... this is a fun way of relating to other people	102	3.51	1.141	
... I get to know people this way	102	2.77	1.258	
Economic incentives	102	1.72	.624	.227
... I am being encouraged to do so	102	2.31	1.117	
... I receive a financial reward for writing	102	1.13	.363	

Helping the company	102	4.73	.470	.700
... I am so pleased with the product and the company that I want to help them be successful	102	4.69	.545	
... in my opinion, good companies deserve to be supported by consumers	101	4.78	.522	
Advice seeking	102	3.32	1.024	.797
... I expect to receive advice and support from others	102	3.23	1.116	
... I hope to receive advice from other people in return and this helps me to solve my problems	102	3.42	1.130	

4.1 Difference in motives based on gender

To analyze differences in means in motives between genders we performed independent t-tests for each motivating factor.

Table 4. Male/Female motive comparison

	Male		Female	
	N=(54)		N=(45)	
	M	Sd	M	Sd
Platform assistance	3.03*	.836	3.60*	.516
Venting negative feelings	1.38	.583	1.31	.342
Concern for other consumers	3.75	.907	3.69	.621
Extraversion/positive self-enhancement	3.95	.823	3.68	.628
Social benefits	3.58*	1.10	3.01*	.764
Economic incentives	1.51*	.566	1.97*	.607
Helping the company	4.69	.526	4.83	.302
Advice seeking	2.94*	1.001	3.81*	.848

One of the research questions was to determine whether there is a difference in motives between genders. For the factor *platform assistance* female respondents were

significantly more motivated to engage in eWOM communications than males, $t(90)=-4.159$, $p=.000$ between males and females. In essence, this suggests females believe more than their male counterparts, that online platforms are more helpful and/or effective than other means of engaging in WOM communications. Using Cohen's d measure of effect size, we see a large effect of $d=0.822$, indicating a very good level of reliability.

In the motivating factor *venting negative feelings* there was no significant difference in motivation $t(88)=-.726$, $p=.469$ between males and females. Both males (1.38) and females (1.31) had low scores, suggesting that neither group is relatively motivated to engage in eWOM communications in order to release negative feelings or to seek revenge on the developer. However, it is impossible to distinguish which gender is more motivated by this factor.

In the motivating factor *concern for other consumers* there was no significant difference in motivation $t(94)=-.330$, $p=.742$ between males and females. Therefore, it is impossible to distinguish whether males or females or more motivated to engage in eWOM in order to prevent other consumers from receiving a bad experience.

In the motivating factor *extraversion/positive self-enhancement* there was no significant difference in motivation $t(97)=-1.846$, $p=.068$ between males and females. As such, it is impossible to distinguish whether males or females or more motivated to engage in eWOM in order to show that they are aware customers.

For the motivating factor *social benefits* males were significantly more motivated to engage in eWOM communications $t(94)=-3.041$, $p=.003$. This suggests that males (3.58) are likelier to engage in eWOM communications in order to form social relationships, than females (3.01). Using Cohen's d measure of effect size, we see a medium effect of $d=0.694$, indicating an acceptable level of reliability.

For the motivating factor *economic incentives* females showed a significantly higher motivation to engage in eWOM communication $t(97)=-3.796$ $p=.000$. This suggests that females (1.97) are likelier to be motivated as they are receiving financial compensation in some form, than their male (1.51) counterparts. Using Cohen's d measure of effect size, we see a medium, almost large effect of $d=0.764$. This indicates an acceptable level of reliability.

In the motivating factor *helping the company* there was no significant difference in motivation $t(87)=-1.753$, $p=.083$ between males and females. Therefore, it is impossible to distinguish which gender is more motivated by helping the company, although both males (4.69) and females (4.83) scored relatively high.

In the motivating factor *advice seeking* females showed a significantly higher motivation to communicate eWOM $t(97)=-4.574$, $p=.000$. This suggests that females (3.81) are more influenced to engage in eWOM to find advice or tips to solve problems they are facing with the product or service, than males (2.94). Using Cohen's d measure of effect size, we see a large effect of $d=0.931$. This indicates very good level of reliability.

As several motivating factors were significantly affected by respondent's gender identification, the null hypothesis is rejected. The genders significantly differ in their motivation to engage in eWOM communications based on *platform assistance*, *social benefits*, *economic incentives* and *advice seeking*. All factors showed either a medium or large effect size, using Cohen's d , indicating either acceptable or very good levels of reliability.

4.2 Difference in motives based on perception of influencers

One of the research questions was whether there is a difference in motives for eWOM if an individual will rather form an opinion on a product based on what influencers say rather than what the media says. To analyze differences in means an ANOVA test was performed. Respondents were asked the question "*... I rather form an opinion about a game based on what an influencer says than what the media says*" and presented with a five point Likert scale from "Disagree" to "Completely agree".

Table 5. Perception of influencers affect on motives

	Disagree		Neutral		Completely agree	
	N=(16)		N=(17)		N=(36)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Platform assistance	2.88*	.893	3.06	.764	3.67*	.621
Venting negative feelings	1.78	.315	1.20	.401	1.40	.512
Concern for other consumers	3.55	.988	3.82	.828	3.75	.699
Extraversion/						

positive self-enhancement	4.00	.962	3.88	.650	3.70	.795
Social benefits	3.56	1.203	3.22	.807	3.11	.969
Economic incentives	1.50	.730	1.41*	.516	1.86*	.614
Helping the company	4.69	.544	4.65	.606	4.86	.283
Advice seeking	2.66*	1.012	2.91	.834	3.76*	1.052

For the motivating factor *platform assistance* the ANOVA tests showed respondent's willingness to form an opinion on a product from an influencer did have a significant difference somewhere between the groups, based on respondents perception of influencers, $F(4, 92)=4.446$, $p=.002$. As respondents were more likely to form an opinion based on what influencers say, as opposed to traditional media, the likelier they were to be motivated by *platform assistance*. This is confirmed by Tukey HSD test, that shows a significant difference between the groups "Disagree" and "Completely agree". This suggests that as people are more influenced by influencers, the more they are motivated to engage in eWOM because they see online platforms as more helpful and/or effective than alternatives.

For the motivating factor *venting negative feelings* the respondent's willingness to form an opinion on a product from an influencer did not have a significant impact $F(4, 92)=1.840$, $p=.128$ to engage in eWOM.

For the motivating factor *concern for other consumers* the respondent's willingness to form an opinion on a product from an influencer did not have a significant impact $F(4, 92)=.522$, $p=.720$.

For the motivating factor *extraversion/positive self-enhancement* the respondent's willingness to form an opinion on a product from an influencer did not have a significant impact $F(4, 92)=.649$, $p=.359$.

For the motivating factor *social benefits* the respondent's willingness to form an opinion on a product from an influencer did not have a significant impact $F(4, 92)=1.627$, $p=.174$.

For the motivating factor *economic incentives* the respondent's willingness to form an opinion on a product from an influencer did show a significant difference somewhere between the groups based on respondents perception of influencers, $F(4, 92)=2.693$,

$p=.036$. This suggests that as people become more influenced by influencers, rather than traditional media, the more likely it is that they are being encouraged to engage in eWOM with financial compensation.

For the motivating factor *helping the company* the respondent's willingness to form an opinion on a product from an influencer did not have a significant impact $F(4, 92)=1.192, p=.320$.

For the motivating factor *advice seeking* the respondent's willingness to form an opinion on a product from an influencer did show a significant difference somewhere between the groups based on respondents perception of influencers, $F(4, 92)=5.072, p=.001$. This is confirmed by Tukey HSD test, that shows a significant difference between the groups "Disagree" and "Completely agree". The difference shows that as people's influence from influencers grows, the more likely they are to be motivated to engage in eWOM communications to look for tips or to solve problems they have run in to.

As several factors were significantly affected by respondent's perception of influencers the null hypothesis is rejected. Those who are more likely to form an opinion based on what influencers say are more likely to be motivated to engage in eWOM communications because of *platform assistance*, *economic incentives* and *advice seeking*.

4.3 Difference in motives based on whether individual is a developer

To analyze differences in means in motives between those who identify themselves as developers and those who do not, independent t-tests were performed.

Table 6. Developer/Non-developer motive comparison

	Developers		Non-developers	
	N=(58)		N=(44)	
	M	Sd	M	Sd
Platform assistance	3.38	.819	3.20	.678
Venting negative feelings	1.32	.450	1.38	.524
Concern for other consumers	3.65	.788	3.81	.761
Extraversion/positive self-enhancement	3.67*	.727	4.02*	.765
Social benefits	3.06*	.949	3.67*	.946
Economic incentives	1.73	.650	1.70	.594

Helping the company	4.69	.537	4.78	.364
Advice seeking	3.19	1.088	3.50	.915

One of the research questions was to determine whether there is a difference in motives between those who identify as developers and those who do not. In the factor *platform assistance* there was no significant difference in motivation $t(100)=1.163$, $p=.248$ between those who identified themselves as developers and those who did not.

In the factor *venting negative feelings* there was no significant difference in motivation $t(100)=-.639$, $p=.524$ between those who identified themselves as developers and those who did not.

In the factor *concern for other consumers* there was no significant difference in motivation $t(100)=-1.069$, $p=.288$ between those who identified themselves as developers and those who did not.

Respondents that did not identify themselves as developers were more likely to be motivated by *extraversion/positive self-enhancement* than those who identified themselves as developers $t(100)=-2.318$, $p=.023$. However, using Cohen's d measure of effect size, we see a small effect $d=0.462$.

Respondents that did not identify themselves as developers were more likely to be motivated by *social benefits* than those who did not identify themselves as indie game developers $t(100)=-3.215$, $p=.002$. Using Cohen's d measure of effect size, we see a medium effect $d=0.643$, indicating an acceptable level of reliability.

In the factor *economic incentives* there was no significant difference in motivation $t(100)=.225$, $p=.822$ between those who identified themselves as developers and those who did not.

In the factor *helping the company* there was no significant difference in motivation $t(99)=-1.057$, $p=.293$ between those who identified themselves as developers and those who did not.

In the factor *advice seeking* there was no significant difference in motivation $t(100)=-1.526$, $p=.130$ between those who identified themselves as developers and those who did not.

The null hypothesis is rejected on the basis of there being a significant difference in motives between developers and non-developers on the motivating factors *social benefits* and *extraversion/positive self-enhancement*. The findings showed a small and medium effect size, using Cohen's *d*.

4.4 Difference in motives based on size of company

One of the research questions was to determine whether how an individual views small companies affect the motives for engaging in eWOM. To analyze differences in means of motives based on perception on small companies and big companies an ANOVA test was performed. The factor question asked against the dependent list was "*I think small companies are more likely to listen to me than big companies*".

Table 7. Size of company's affect on motives

	Neutral N=(11)		Rather agree N=(19)		Completely agree N=(26)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Platform assistance	2.68	1.01	3.28*	.500	3.25*	.781
Venting negative feelings	1.34	.478	1.33	.453	1.36	.520
Concern for other consumers	3.73	1.222	3.71	.567	3.88	.798
Extraversion/ positive self-enhancement	4.32	.775	3.95	.675	3.98	.894
Social benefits	3.12	1.167	3.68	.878	3.67	1.01
Economic incentives	1.50	.707	1.61	.516	1.77	.751
Helping the company	4.68	.603	4.55	.575	4.71	.532
Advice seeking	3.18	1.078	2.76	.888	2.98	.943

For the motivating factor *platform assistance* the perception of a company's size and willingness to listen did not have a significant impact $F(4, 92)=1.578, p=.187$.

For the motivating factor *venting negative feelings* the perception of a company's size and willingness to listen did not have a significant impact $F(4, 92)=1.100, p=.361$.

For the motivating factor *concern for other consumers* the perception of a company's size and willingness to listen did not have a significant impact $F(4, 92)=.942, p=.443$.

For the motivating factor *extraversion/positive self-enhancement* the perception of a company's size and willingness to listen did not have a significant impact $F(4, 92)=.472$, $p=.756$.

For the motivating factor *social benefits* the perception of a company's size and willingness to listen did not have a significant impact $F(4, 92)=.662$ $p=.620$.

For the motivating factor *economic incentives* the perception of a company's size and willingness to listen did not have a significant impact $F(4, 92)=.563$, $p=.231$.

For the motivating factor *helping the company* the perception of a company's size and willingness to listen did not have a significant impact $F(4, 92)=.022$, $p=.984$.

For the motivating factor *advice seeking* the perception of a company's size and willingness to listen did not have a significant impact $F(4, 92)=.580$, $p=.696$.

It is not possible to reject the null hypothesis that indie game consumer's perception on small companies has a significant impact on motives for engaging in eWOM as those who believe the statement showed to be more likely to be motivated by *platform assistance*.

4.5 Differences in motives based on co-creation

One of the research questions was to determine whether an individual considers himself to be a co-creator affects their motives to engage in eWOM. The survey had four questions to determine an individual's perception of his co-creation. To analyze differences in means of motives based on co-creation an ANOVA test was performed for each of the co-creation questions against the eight motivation factors.

For the variable ... *I think my comments can lead to changes in the product* the analysis showed a significant difference in one of the eight motivation factors. The more respondents believed their comments could lead to changes in the product the more they were motivated to engage in eWOM by *platform assistance* $F(20, 76)=2.223$, $p=.007$. As respondents are more likely to believe that their eWOM communications can ultimately lead to changes in the product, the more likely they are to be motivated to engage in eWOM as they see online medias a more desirable way of communicating.

For the variable ... *I think developers will fix bugs if I point them out product* the analysis showed a significant difference in one of the eight motivation factors. The more

respondents believe their comments can lead to bug fixes in the product the more they are motivated to engage in eWOM by *platform assistance* $F(4, 92)=4.592$, $p=.002$. This is confirmed by Tukey HSD test, that shows a significant difference between "Disagree", "Somewhat agree" and all other groups. These findings suggest that as respondents are more likely to believe that developers will fix bugs if they point them out, the more likely they are to be motivated to engage in eWOM as they see online platforms as a desirable place to voice their communications.

For the variable ... *I think developers will improve aspects of the game if I suggest ideas* showed a significant difference in three of the eight motivation factors. The more respondents believed their comments could lead to improvements in aspects of the game the more they were motivated to engage in eWOM by *platform assistance* $F(4, 92)=4.591$, $p=.002$, *economic incentives* $F(4, 92)=2.471$, $p=.050$ and *advice seeking* $F(4, 92)=3.872$, $p=.006$. . This is confirmed by Tukey HSD test, that shows a significant difference in all three motives.

For the variable ... *I think developers will add features to enhance the game if I suggest ideas* the analysis showed a significant difference in two of the eight motivation factors. The more respondents believed their comments could lead to developers to adding features to enhance the product the more they were motivated to engage in eWOM by *platform assistance* $F(4, 92)=2.937$, $p=.025$ and *advice seeking* $F(4, 92)=3.147$, $p=.018$. This is confirmed by Tukey HSD test, that shows a significant difference in both motives.

We are able to reject the null hypothesis and confirm that if an individual believes they are engaging in co-creation it does have a significant impact on their motives for engaging in eWOM. This was confirmed by all four co-creation variables by running a One-Way ANOVA test.

5 Discussion

The aim of the study was to investigate whether indie game consumer's motives to engage in eWOM communications is impacted by the size of the company, co-creation, influencer perception or background variables. By understanding better what motives lie behind the communications, marketing managers can yield a valuable tool in controlling the narrative of communications.

The study builds on eight clusters of motives made by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) and uses his survey to identify motives for engaging in eWOM communications. To understand what impact a size of a company has on consumer motives this study added a five-point Likert question on consumer's perception of small companies' likelihood to read eWOM communication.

This study aims to investigate indie game customers' motives to engage in eWOM communications during the post-purchase stage. The market is almost exclusively digital and made up of small companies, making it ideal to investigate consumers' motives and what effects a size of a company, co-creation and influencer perception has.

The first research hypothesis was whether there was a difference in motives to engage in eWOM communications based on whether a person identified as male or female. Respondents were divided into two clusters, male and female. It was possible to reject the null hypothesis as the independent t-test found significant differences in four of the eight factors that motivate eWOM communications, indicating a considerable difference in motives between the two genders.

For the factor *platform assistance* female respondents were significantly more motivated to engage in eWOM communications than males, suggesting females are more prone to believe that online platforms are more helpful and/or effective than other means of engaging in WOM communications. Males showed to be more likely to be motivated by *social benefits*, indicating that they will further seek to engage in eWOM to form social relationships. Females showed to be significantly more likely to be motivated by *economic incentives*, suggesting they are likelier to be receiving financial compensation to motivate their eWOM communications. Finally, females showed to be

more motivated by *advice seeking*, indicating they will rather seek to engage in eWOM communications in order to find advice or tips for problem solving, rather than males.

These findings show a significant and considerable difference in the gender's motivations to engage in eWOM communications. This can be of great importance to marketers, as they aim to tailor their eWOM marketing plans to their target markets. This also shows a big difference compared to a recent study (Rúnarsson, 2019) which found only a significant difference in one of the eight factors. This could shed light on difference of motives based on markets, as the indie game market is a particular niche market.

The second research hypothesis was whether there was a difference in motives to engage in eWOM communications whether a person is an indie game developer or not. Respondents were divided into two clusters based on whether they identified as developers or not. It was possible to reject the null hypothesis as there was a significant difference in two factors that motivate eWOM communications, extraversion/positive self-enhancement and social benefits. This gives a strong argument that non-developer consumers of indie games are more motivated by the prospect of forming relationships and showing others their product awareness than those that develop their own games. These findings are interesting as they could also be applicable to other markets, where consumers also consider themselves creators or manufacturers.

The third research hypothesis was whether there was a difference in motives to engage in eWOM communications whether a person sees themselves as a co-creator. Four questions were designed, based on Jawecki (2008), and each one of them was put through an ANOVA test against the eight motivating factors. Consumers that believe their comments can lead to changes in the product were more motivated by *platform assistance*, meaning they are likelier to utilize and view online platforms as more effective than traditional ones. Consumers that believe their comments can lead to improvements based on their ideas were more motivated by *economic incentives*, *advice seeking* and *platform assistance*, suggesting that they are likelier to be encouraged by financial compensation and viewing online platforms as more as more effective than traditional ones to seek out tips for problem solving. Third, consumers that believe that developers will add features to enhance the game based on their ideas are also more likely to be influenced by *platform assistance* and *advice seeking*. Lastly, consumers that believe

developers will fix bugs if they point them out showed to be more motivated by *platform assistance*, than those who do not. There have been calls for further investigation to understand what motivation there is for consumers to participate in co-creation activities (Roberts et. al, 2014). These findings indicate that people that believe they are in fact co-creating with the manufacturer, are more likely to be motivated *economic incentives*, *platform assistance* and *advice seeking*.

The fourth research hypothesis was whether there was a difference in motives to engage in eWOM communications based on the size of the company. An ANOVA test was run with the perception of small companies versus big ones against the eight motivating factors for engaging in eWOM. This showed a significant difference in the *platform assistance factor*, as respondents that believed smaller companies are likelier to listen to them were also likelier to be motivated by platform assistance. This means that those who believe their comments likelier to be read by small companies also see online communications as a smarter way to get their point across to the companies, than traditional ways like making phone calls or sending mail. This can be a tool for marketers to use in eWOM plans, as it can be important to make consumers feel they are being heard. This is also in line with prior research, suggesting that people have a more favorable opinion of smaller companies (Saad, 2019).

The fifth and final research hypothesis was whether there was a difference in motives to engage in eWOM communications if an individual is more influenced to make an opinion about a product from the media or from influencers. To understand this an ANOVA test was performed where the eight motivating factors were compared to responses about influencers and other media. The results showed a significant difference as those who are more likely to be influenced by influencers than the media found themselves likelier to be motivated by *platform assistance*, *economic incentives* and *advice seeking*. This suggests that those who will rather form an opinion based on what an influencer says are more likely to be motivated as the feel online platforms are more convenient and effective, they are receiving some form of financial compensation and are looking for tips to solve problems they have encountered.

By looking at the results of the survey and putting them in perspective of prior research where positive and negative motivations have been discussed, it seems that consumers

within the indie game market are rather motivated by positive motivations. The lowest mean of the eight factors was *venting negative feelings* (1.35) while the highest mean was *helping the company* (4.73). Other research has indicated that positive motivations are more common than negative (Fiske, 1980; Ahluwalia, 2000), which this research also suggests. However, as this is not the scope of the research there was no significance test performed and its' significance cannot be verified.

There have been calls for increased research into specific products and services with regards to consumer motives for engaging in eWOM communications (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). This research focuses specifically on the niche video game market of indie games. The market has seen a huge rise as the digital video game market grew, becoming a popular subcategory on the biggest digital game distribution websites (Leonidas and Bernardes, 2018; Ngarmwongnoi et al., 2020). As the market is mostly digital and constructed only of small companies, it makes it especially valuable to those working with small companies online.

This research is an academic contribution to the questions that circle around motivations behind eWOM communications. As there seems to be a gap in knowledge based on what effects a size of the company can have on the topic, this was the focus of the research. There has been some research made that focused on large companies, so by focusing on a market where all companies are small by nature it presented new and valuable data (Prantl and Mičik, 2019). Findings also suggested problems with the survey, as *economic incentives* reported a very low Cronbach's alpha level of .227. This has not been discussed in previous research and could indicate flaws within one of the most cited surveys in the field of eWOM studies.

Managers, marketing representatives and other stakeholders in the indie game market, as well as other small markets can use these findings to their advantage, in constructing marketing plans that understand their consumers' motives. Prior studies have shown a positive correlation between eWOM and sales, implying that marketers should monitor these communications for their companies bottom lines. This study gives marketers a better understanding of what effect gender, company size, influencer perception and co-creation have on engaging in eWOM, helping marketers better understand, control and construct plans for these communications.

5.1 Limitations and further research

Respondents of the survey were collected using social media accounts linked to the indie game scene. Although over 200 participants began the survey only around half of them responded to have ever engaged in written eWOM communications. As almost all the sample was gathered from social media channels, it is difficult to make a definitive assumption if it reflects the indie game market as a whole.

It should also be noted that one of the eight factors, *economic incentives*, scored below an acceptable level of internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha test. This could be due to low participation or few questions within the factors. As the factor had a Cronbach's alpha level of only .227 the results of that factor should be looked at with scrutiny. Often, Cronbach's alpha levels can be explained by a low number of questions, but it can also be an indication of poor inter-relatedness between questions or heterogenous constructs (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). If this is indeed down to poor inter-relatedness or heterogenous questions it could indicate that the survey question has become outdated, as it had an alpha of .943 in the original research (Thurau et al., 2004). It would therefore be of great interest to further examine these findings.

It would be of interest to see further research made about the affects a size of a company has on eWOM communications, with the focus and scope set around a market where companies are big. Comparing results with this research could provide valuable insights and knowledge into the motives behind eWOM communications.

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Appendix 1

This survey constitutes part of a research project on electronic word of mouth and co-creation within the indie game market. The aim is to gain insight into communications via electronic word of mouth and what motivates people to use electronic word of mouth. It should take approximately 5 minutes to complete the survey. You are under no obligation to participate in the research and free to exit the survey at any time without any conditions or inconvenience. You can also start the survey, pause, and continue later. The survey is anonymous, and replies cannot be traced to individual participants. There is no financial reward for participating. If you have questions regarding the survey itself or relevant aspects, please contact Jóhann Ingi Guðjónsson (johann.ingi.g@gmail.com). By starting the survey, you agree to participate in the research.

The first questions relate specifically to feedback on pages relating to the purchase of indie games (e.g. Steam, Amazon, Itch.io, GOG etc.)

Have you, at any time, registered written communication regarding an independent video game (Indie game) on the internet?

1. Yes
2. No

I express my opinions on indie games on the Internet because...

	Disagree	Rather disagree	Some what agree	Rather agree	Completely agree
... I believe the web administrator can forward my messages to appropriate persons in the company	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

... the web administrator will support my view when he talks to appropriate persons in the company	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I believe the company will do more for me if I make the matter public	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... it is more convenient than sending an email or phoning the company	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... it is free of charge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... complaining in public is more effective than sending a letter of complaint	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I express my opinions on indie games on the Internet because...

	Disagree	Rather disagree	Some what agree	Rather agree	Completely agree
... the developer caused me harm and now I want to harm the company	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I want to have my revenge on the developer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... My contribution helps me to recover from a negative experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... finding an outlet for my anger makes me feel good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I express my opinions on indie games on the Internet because...

	Disagree	Rather disagree	Some what agree	Rather agree	Completely agree
... I want to warn others of bad games	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

... I want to prevent others from receiving the same bad experience I had	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I want to help others to have the same positive experience I received	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I want to give others an opportunity to buy the right game	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I express my opinions on indie games on the Internet because...

	Disagree	Rather disagree	Some what agree	Rather agree	Completely agree
... I would like to communicate my satisfaction with a good purchase	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I feel good when I can tell others about my successful purchases	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... that is how I can tell others about a good experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... it shows my awareness as a consumer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I express my opinions on indie games on the Internet because...

	Disagree	Rather disagree	Some what agree	Rather agree	Completely agree
... I feel communicating is good for like-minded people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... this is a fun way of relating to other people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I get to know people this way	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I express my opinions on indie games on the Internet because...

	Disagree	Rather disagree	Some what agree	Rather agree	Completely agree
... I am being encouraged to do so	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I receive a financial reward for writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I express my opinions on indie games on the Internet because...

	Disagree	Rather disagree	Some what agree	Rather agree	Completely agree
... I am so pleased with the product and the company that I want to help them to be successful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... in my opinion, good companies deserve to be supported by consumers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I expect to receive advice and support from others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I hope to receive advice from other people in return and this helps me to solve my problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I express my opinions on indie games on the Internet because...

	Disagree	Rather disagree	Some what agree	Rather agree	Completely agree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

... I am so pleased with the product and the company that I want to help them to be successful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... in my opinion, good companies deserve to be supported by consumers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I expect to receive advice and support from others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I hope to receive advice from other people in return and this helps me to solve my problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The questions below relate to why you read comments on the Internet on pages connected with indie games (e.g. Amazon, Steam, Twitter, Facebook, Metacritic etc).

Have you read comments on indie games on the Internet?

1. Yes
2. No

I read comments on about indie games on the Internet because...

	Disagree	Rather disagree	Some what agree	Rather agree	Completely agree
... this reduces purchase uncertainty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I think comments are more reliable than materials from the company	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... this opens up social contacts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... it is a pleasant experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

... this provides access to useful information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... it gives me a clearer picture of the connection between price and quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I express my opinions on indie games on the Internet because...

	Disagree	Rather disagree	Some what agree	Rather agree	Completely agree
... I think my comments can lead to changes in the product	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I think developers will read my comments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I think developers will fix bugs if I point them out	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I think developers will improve aspects of the game if I suggest ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I think developers will add features to enhance the game if I suggest ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How much do you agree with the following statement?

	Disagree	Rather disagree	Some what agree	Rather agree	Completely agree
... I think small companies are more likely to listen to me than big companies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I rather form an opinion about a game based on what an influencer says than what the media says	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Below are a few questions regarding your use of social media and websites

To what extent do you use the following media and websites for word-of-mouth?

	Never	Hardly ever	Seldo m	Rather often	Very often
Facebook	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Twitter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instagram	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discord	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metacritic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comment sections on video game websites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comment sections on Internet market places (e.g. Steam, Amazon, Itch.io, GOG etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Below are a few questions of special importance for data analysis

What is your gender?

1. Male
2. Female
3. Other

What is your age?

1. Less than 20 years
2. 20-29 years

3. 30-39 years
4. 40-49 years
5. 50-59 years
6. More than 60 years

What is the highest education level you have completed?

1. Primary school
2. Vocational qualification or comparable
3. Matriculation examination or comparable
4. Basic university degree
5. Postgraduate university degree
6. Doctorate university degree

What is your native language (mother tongue)?

1. English
2. German
3. Spanish
4. French
5. Other

How would you assess your skills in languages other than the mother tongue?

	Non e	Poor	Som e	Mod erate	Rath er good	Goo d	Very good
English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
German	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

French	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Are you an indie game developer?

1. Yes
2. No

If you wish to receive an email when the findings are ready, type it below.

