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Developing a scale for the perceived social benefits of sharing

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this research was to create a brief scale to measure perceived social benefit that would be appropriate for use in future research aiming to explore the role of this variable in determining word-of-mouth (WOM) behaviour. There is evidence that perceived social risk negatively impacts the willingness to share, but the role of perceived social benefit has not yet been explored. Understanding how perceived social risk and benefit interact to determine WOM will inform social marketing campaign design.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper outlines two studies: Study 1 was concerned with the development of the perceived social benefit of sharing scale (PSBSS), including the construction of preliminary items and the reliability and discriminant validity of the final scale. Study 2 involved an investigation of the concurrent validity of the PSBSS in relation to the likelihood to share.

Findings – Study 1 demonstrated that the perceived social benefit associated with WOM was related to social approval, impression management and social bonding. The results of Study 2 established that scores on the PSBSS predicted self-reported likelihood to engage in both face-to-face WOM and electronic WOM.

Originality/value – The PSBSS can be used to examine the role of perceived social benefit, including how the interaction between perceived social risk and benefit determines where, when and with whom people will share WOM.

Introduction

Word-of-mouth (WOM) can have social consequences for the sharers. People engage in WOM activities that make them look good but are also aware of the social dangers of such sharing behaviours (Eisingerich *et al.*, 2015). For example, the "humblebrag", a veiled attempt at self-promotion (e.g. "exhausted from standing in line for three hours – this new iPhone better be worth it!") is a common online phenomenon (Alfano and Robinson, 2014). Individuals humblebrag because they want the social reinforcement that can result from sharing something that they think sounds impressive but wish to negate the backlash that can result from boasting by adding a complaint or a relatable anecdote (Sezer *et al.*, 2015). The recent proliferation of this approach suggests that individuals are aware of the social consequences of engaging in WOM and that perceived social risk and benefit may play a role in choosing what to share with others.

Previous research has demonstrated the role of consumers' perceived social risk - the risk of disapproval or embarrassment as a result of sharing – in determining their likelihood to share WOM. There is a negative relationship between perceived social risk and individuals' likelihood to share WOM: the greater the perceived social risk, the lower the likelihood to share (Eisingerich *et al.*, 2015). Further, this perceived social risk can depend on whether the communication takes place face-to-face or online. Generally, sharing content online – referred to as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Vilpponen *et al.*, 2006; Litvin *et al.*, 2008) – is perceived to be more socially risky than face-to-face WOM because eWOM is more visible and shared with a larger audience (Mandel, 2003).

However, the greater perceived social risk incurred by eWOM is clearly not a significant barrier to online sharing, with the exponential growth of this activity in recent years testament to its engaging qualities and opportunities for self-enhancement (De Angelis *et al.*, 2012; Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004). Indeed, people can be more likely to share eWOM, rather than face-to-face WOM, provided that sharing will cast them in a positive light (Barasch and Berger, 2014; De Angelis *et al.*, 2012). This suggests that the increased perceived social risk incurred by online contexts may be offset by the potential social benefit associated with sharing. Accordingly, engaging in WOM has been shown to provide individuals with an opportunity to gain social approval, express their identity and build relationships with others (Berger, 2014).

The possibility that WOM depends on the perception of both social risk and benefit highlights the question: How does the interplay between social risk and benefit influence what people will share? Understanding the relationship between perceived risk and benefit, as well as the impact of perceived

social benefit on consumers' willingness to share, will allow marketers to more effectively generate shareable content and integrate favourable behaviours into their communication campaigns. To illuminate this research direction, a measure of how individuals perceive the social benefited related to WOM is required to complement the existing measure of perceived social risk (Eisingerich *et al.*, 2015). The current paper outlines the development and validation of a brief scale that measures perceived social benefit associated with WOM.

Conceptualisation of perceived social benefit

Before developing a preliminary scale to measure perceived social benefit, a clear definition of the construct was required. Individuals' perceptions have been shown to influence their likelihood to share WOM. Previous research has examined the role of perceived value – consumers' perception of the benefit of a product or service relative to the cost involved – as an antecedent of WOM activity (De Matos and Rossi, 2008). The current conceptualisation of perceived social benefit adopts this approach, however, focuses on the perceived social benefit (rather than perceived value) relative to the associated perceived social risk (rather than cost) involved in sharing WOM.

Therefore, previous work regarding perceived social risk, which is defined as the potential for embarrassment or disapproval for the sharer as a result of sharing WOM (Eisingerich *et al.*, 2015), served as a basis for the definition of perceived social benefit. This definition of perceived social risk highlighted the potential for perceived social benefit to involve social approval (rather than disapproval), a factor that has been shown to motivate WOM (Chu and Kim, 2011). This definition is also limited to risk to the sharer rather than to others (Eisingerich *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, the current conceptualisation of perceived social benefit also involved benefit to the sharer rather than benefit to others.

While the previous conceptualisation of perceived social risk was a useful starting point from which to define perceived social benefit, it was not sufficient to simply reverse the definition of perceived social risk. Research involving the conceptualisation of risk and benefit related to risky decision-making (Weber *et al.*, 2002) and online purchase behaviour (Forsythe *et al.*, 2006) suggests that rather than opposite ends of a continuum, perceived risk and benefit are conceptually distinct. Therefore, while perceived social benefit may be oppositional to perceived social risk (i.e. involve the opportunity for approval rather than disapproval), we conceptualised that perceived social benefit also involved distinct aspects that were not present in the current conceptualisation of perceived social risk.

A literature search was conducted to identify further aspects of perceived social benefit beyond gaining social approval. The results of this review demonstrated that sharing WOM can fulfil individuals' need for social interaction (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004). Social interaction primes motives related to impression management (Schlenker *et al.*, 1996) social bonding (Oh *et al.*, 2014) and can build social capital (Ellison *et al.*, 2007). Accordingly, people share WOM to manage the impressions others form of them (Sundaram *et al.*, 1998; Lovett *et al.*, 2013) and improve their relationships with others

(Berger, 2014; Brown *et al.*, 2007; Cheung and Lee, 2012; Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004).

Therefore, in line with the previous literature concerned with perceived social risk, social interaction and WOM motivation, perceived social benefit was defined as the potential for the sharer to gain approval from others, engage in impression management and experience social bonding as a result of sharing WOM. The following sections describe these aspects in detail and provide an outline of the preliminary items that were adapted from the literature.

Impression management
Impression management involves behaviour that verifies and enhances the self-concept, which is a set of beliefs individuals hold about their identity (Markus and Wurf, 1987). WOM provides individuals an opportunity to engage in both self-verification and self-enhancement. Self-verification involves communicating to express the self-concept, whereas self-enhancement involves communicating to maintain self-esteem through gaining approval from others (Banaji and Prentice, 1994). For example, consumers' Facebook activities have been shown to centre around communicating their self-concept to others through the brands that they interact with (Hollenbeck and Kaikati, 2012). Further, people share experiences or recommendations that they perceive will foster impressions of expertise or connoisseurship and do so to gain social approval (De Angelis *et al.*, 2012; Lovett *et al.*, 2013; Packard and Wooten, 2013). Impression management is, therefore, not only a well-established driver of social behaviour in general but a key motivator of WOM (Schlenker *et al.*, 1996; Sundaram *et al.*, 1998).

Social bonding
People are inherently driven to engage in social bonding, which involves the development and maintenance of relationships with others (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Leary, 1990). This need to build and enhance interpersonal relationships can be satisfied through creating and spreading WOM (Berger, 2014). Engaging in WOM can improve social relationships and bolster feelings of community membership (Cheung and Lee, 2012). In online social networks, individuals' frequency of WOM creation has a positive relationship to the strength of their relationships with others in the network, as well as to levels of reciprocal trust and influence (Chu and Kim, 2011). The positive influence of sharing WOM on the quality of individuals' relationships is a well-established antecedent of WOM behaviour (Lovett *et al.*, 2013).

Computer-mediated communication and altruism: perceived social benefit to the sharer?
Engaging in eWOM, rather than face-to-face WOM, can reduce social anxiety related to social bonding. Online communication can be more comfortable for individuals who have difficulty relating to others, as online communication is easier to compose and revise than face-to-face communication (Caplan, 2002). While it is possible that engaging in eWOM is beneficial to some individuals, as it facilitates social interactions for those who struggle to relate to others, it is unclear whether the computer-mediated nature of eWOM provides a perceptible social benefit to the sharer in general.

Individuals may also share their experiences and opinions to benefit those in their social network. Sharing negative experiences can warn others to avoid making similar choices, whereas sharing positive eWOM can guide purchasing decisions (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004). It is unclear whether sharing to warn or guide others is purely altruistic or whether individuals perceive that a reciprocal social benefit will occur if they share eWOM to benefit others (Berger, 2014).

Unlike the well-established links between sharing WOM, impression management and social bonding, the benefit of computer-mediated (rather than face-to-face) WOM to the sharer is unclear, as is whether or not altruistic sharing benefits the sharer in addition to others. A full investigation of these issues is beyond the scope of the current paper; however, items related to these constructs were included in the preliminary measure for exploratory purposes.

After developing the conceptualisation of perceived social benefit, two studies were undertaken. Study 1 was conducted to examine the underlying structure of a 17-item preliminary measure and construct a brief scale appropriate for use in future research. Study 2 was conducted to demonstrate the predictive validity of the scale by determining whether perceived social benefit of sharing predicted the likelihood to share.

Study 1

Study 1 tested the 17-item preliminary measure of perceived social benefit. Principle axis factor analysis was used to examine the preliminary measure and reduce the items to form a brief and reliable scale (Russell, 2002). A further aim of Study 1 was to establish the discriminant validity of the scale by comparing scores on the final measure to those related to perceived social risk (Eisingerich *et al.*, 2015; Cronbach and Meehl, 1955).

Method

Item development

To measure the perceived social benefit related to impression management and approval, seven items used in previous research were adapted for inclusion in the preliminary scale. Four items that have been used to examine the social motivations underlying luxury purchasing behaviour were altered to measure the perceived benefit of WOM to self-verification (e.g. *sharing would help me communicate my self-identity*; Wilcox *et al.*, 2009; see Table I for items). Also, the three items used to measure perceived social risk in previous research were reversed to measure the perceived social benefit of WOM to self-enhancement (e.g. *sharing would make me look good*; Eisingerich *et al.*, 2015; see Table I for items).

To measure the perceived social benefit related to social bonding, five items were adapted from the social capital literature. These items involved perceived benefit to relationships, social status and feelings of belonging (e.g. *sharing would make me feel connected with others*; Ellison *et al.*, 2007; see Table I for items).

In addition to the above items related to impression management and social bonding, four exploratory items were included in the preliminary measure. To explore the possibility that eWOM is socially beneficial due to the

Table I Preliminary 17-item measure

Approval and impression management	
1. I feel that sharing would benefit me	Eisingerich *et al.* (2015)
2. I feel I will gain approval if I share	
3. Sharing would make me look good	
4. Sharing would reflect the kind of person I see myself to be	Wilcox *et al.* (2009)
5. Sharing would help me communicate my self-identity	
6. Sharing would help me express myself	
7. Sharing would help me define myself	
Sharing to benefit relationships with others	
8. Sharing would benefit others	Kankanhalli *et al.* (2005)
9. Sharing the story would benefit my relationships with others	Wilcox *et al.* (2009)
10. Sharing would improve my social status	
11. Sharing would help me to fit in	
12. Sharing would make me feel as if I am contributing to a community	Ellison *et al.* (2007)
13. Sharing would make me feel part of a community	
14. Sharing would make me feel connected with others	
15. I would enjoy sharing	Jin, Park, and Kim (2010)
16. I would feel confident sharing	Caplan (2002)
17. I would feel comfortable sharing	

computer-mediated nature of this communication, two items were adapted from the generalised problematic internet use scale (*I would feel confident sharing*; *I would feel comfortable sharing*; Caplan, 2002), and one item was derived from a measure of the sociability and usability of online brand communities (*I would enjoy sharing*; Jin *et al.*, 2010). To examine whether sharing for others' benefit is perceived as a social benefit related WOM, two further items were adapted from the knowledge sharing literature (e.g. *sharing would benefit others*; Kankanhalli *et al.*, 2005).

Participants

Participants were recruited using Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT), which is an online labour market (Goodman and Paolacci, 2017). Potential participants responded to an advertisement placed on AMT, which outlined the nature of the study. If they chose to participate, they were directed to an online survey. To be eligible to participate, respondents needed to have active email and Facebook accounts. Participants were paid US$1.00 for taking part in the study. The final sample consisted of 100 North American participants, 46 per cent female, who had an average age of 32 (ranging from 18 to 62 years).

Procedure and measures

The study was an online survey developed using Qualtrics Survey Development software. Participants were first exposed to a brief fictional online news story describing an organic dog food company's partnership with an animal shelter. Results of a pilot study demonstrated that this story elicits happiness,

and is relatively shareable (i.e. participants were more likely to share this story than a version of the story that was emotionally neutral).

The preliminary measure of perceived social benefit was then used, and participants were instructed to respond to the items (Table I) in reference to sharing the fictional news story that they had read (e.g. *I would enjoy sharing the story*). The order of the items was randomised, and participants responded using a six-point scale (*strongly disagree – strongly agree*). Higher scores indicated greater perceived social benefit, and there was no neutral scale point to produce a directional response from participants (Sturgis *et al.*, 2014).

Participants then completed the three-item perceived social risk measure reported in Eisingerich *et al.* (2015) and demographic items. The perceived social risk items were scored on a six-point scale (*strongly disagree – strongly agree*), with higher scores indicating greater perceived social risk.

Results

Preliminary analyses were conducted to confirm sampling adequacy and the factorability of the data. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, χ^2 (136) = 1,732.25, $p < 0.001$, and the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin value was 0.91 (exceeding the suggested cut-off of 0.6; Field, 2013), demonstrating sampling adequacy and that the items were highly factorable. Further, all 17 variables were correlated at 0.43 or higher; however, none were so highly correlated as to suggest multicollinearity (i.e. no correlations exceeded 0.9; Jolliffe, 2002).

As data reduction was the primary goal of this study, principle axis factor analysis was conducted (Costello and Osborne, 2005; Russell, 2002). Two factors had eigenvalues of 1 (meeting Kaiser's criterion; Kaiser, 1958) and together these factors explained 73.84 per cent of the variance.

Following the recommendation of Field (2013), the rotated factor loadings (varimax) were inspected to determine which items should be retained. The criteria for item retention was as follows: a factor loading cut-off point of 0.6 (MacCallum *et al.*, 2001), elimination of conceptually similar items (as we aimed to construct a brief scale) and elimination of factors that did not cluster with those that involved well-established social benefit to the sharer (impression management and social bonding).

Nine items clustered onto Factor 1, and these items indicated perceived social benefit related to gaining social approval, expressing self-identity (impression management) and benefiting relationships with others (social bonding; see Table II). Given that these items all met the inclusion criteria, they were retained.

A number of the items that clustered onto Factor 2 were similar to items that loaded onto Factor 1 (e.g. Item 14 vs Items 9 and 13). Of these similar items, only one met the chosen cut-off of 0.6 (Item 14; MacCallum *et al.*, 2001). However, considering the conceptual similarity of this item to Items 9 and 13, and the fact that Item 14 was also strongly correlated to Items 9 and 13 ($r = 0.73$, $p < 0.001$ and $r = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$, respectively), this item was not retained.

Items relating to sharing for enjoyment, comfort or the benefit of others also clustered onto Factor 2 (Items 15, 17 and 16) or did not load strongly onto either factor (Item 8). As previously outlined, these items were included in the preliminary measure to explore the potential benefit to the sharer related to the computer-mediated nature of eWOM and altruism. As these exploratory items did not cluster with the well-established components of perceived social benefit (i.e. impression management and social bonding) these items were not retained.

The final measure, the perceived social benefit of sharing scale (PSBSS), consisted of nine items (these are shaded in Table II). Participants' scores on these items were not significantly related to age ($r = 0.06$, $p = 0.54$) and did not differ depending on gender ($t(98) = -0.37$, $p = 0.71$).

Reliability and construct validity

Split-half reliability was established by examining the internal consistency of the final measure (Streiner, 2003). To obtain an indication of how the items of the PSBSS correlate, the

Table II Rotated factor loadings of the 17 preliminary items

	Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
10.	Sharing the story would improve my social status	0.826	
11.	Sharing the story would help me fit in	0.822	
9.	Sharing the story would benefit my relationships with others	0.801	0.345
7.	Sharing the story would help me define myself	0.768	0.376
2.	I feel I will gain approval if I share the story	0.750	
1.	I feel that sharing the story would benefit me	0.731	0.370
3.	Sharing the story will make me look good	0.677	0.367
5.	Sharing the story would help me communicate my self-identity	0.672	0.561
13.	Sharing the story would make me feel part of a community	0.629	0.515
15.	I would enjoy sharing the story	0.305	0.882
17.	I would feel comfortable sharing the story		0.820
16.	I would feel confident sharing the story		0.803
4.	Sharing the story would reflect the kind of person I see myself to be	0.469	0.699
12.	Sharing the story would make me feel as if I am contributing to a community	0.532	0.676
14.	Sharing the story would make me feel connected with others	0.606	0.630
6.	Sharing the story would help me to express myself	0.566	0.624
8.	Sharing the story would benefit others	0.444	0.560

Note: Loadings less than 0.2 have been suppressed. Items retained in the final perceived social benefit of sharing scale are shaded

coefficient alpha was calculated (Cronbach, 1951). The results of this analysis suggested that the final measure was highly internally consistent (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.95$); therefore, participants' responses on each of the items were strongly and positively correlated (Gregory, 2011).

To provide evidence of construct validity, that is, the appropriateness of the scale to measure the underlying construct (Cronbach and Meehl, 1955), participants' scores on the PSBSS were compared to their responses on the three-item perceived social risk measure. As perceived social benefit is both opposed to, and distinct from, perceived social risk, a negative correlation (or no correlation at all) between the PSBSS and the perceived social risk measure would demonstrate discriminant construct validity (Campbell and Fiske, 1959; Gregory, 2011). As expected, there was a negative and non-significant relationship between participants' mean scores on the PSBSS and their mean scores on the three perceived social risk items ($r = -0.02$, $p = 0.41$). These findings also demonstrate that perceived social benefit does not necessarily occur only when there is an absence of perceived social risk nor does perceived social risk imply that there is an absence of perceived social benefit.

Discussion
The factor analysis demonstrated that the perceived social benefit associated with WOM is related to impression management (e.g. sharing to communicate self-identity) and social bonding (e.g. sharing to benefit relationships with others or feel a part of a community). Items relating to altruistic sharing and sharing for comfort and enjoyment did not cluster with those related to the self or relationships. While altruism, comfort and enjoyment are positive outcomes associated with eWOM, these may not be perceived to be *social* benefits to the sharer. Comfort and enjoyment of WOM may be more closely tied to communication channel (e.g. face-to-face vs online), and altruism may be perceived to be a benefit to others rather than to the sharer (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004). This suggests that there is also scope to examine the broader benefits of sharing which, in addition to altruism and comfort, may include financial benefit such as that which is derived from incentivised sharing (Walsh and Elsner, 2012).

The final nine-item PSBSS measure was shown to be highly internally consistent, and there was a negative, non-significant relationship between scores on the PSBSS and perceived social risk. This supports the assertion that rather than opposite ends of a continuum, perceived social risk and benefit are conceptually distinct and provides evidence for the discriminant validity of the PSBSS (Eisingerich *et al.*, 2015; Gregory, 2011).

Study 2
Study 2 aimed to provide further evidence for the validity of the PSBSS. Specifically, the concurrent validity of the PSBSS was established by examining whether participants' scores on this measure could predict a related outcome: the likelihood to share (Berger, 2014; Gregory, 2011). To achieve this, the PSBSS was administered alongside a measure of the likelihood to share across a variety of face-to-face and online contexts. It was hypothesised that perceived social benefit would be positively related to the likelihood to share both face-to-face and online.

A further aim of Study 2 was to examine the influence of participants' need to self-enhance on their perceived social benefit. The need to self-enhance is an inherent motivation to improve the self-concept (Banaji and Prentice, 1994; Markus and Wurf, 1987). Previous research suggests that the need to self-enhance is implicated in the relationship between perceived social risk and the likelihood to share (De Angelis *et al.*, 2012; Eisingerich *et al.*, 2015). Individuals with a high need to self-enhance seek opportunities to improve their self-concept, and engaging in WOM may provide a salient opportunity to do so. Therefore, we aimed to examine whether perceived social benefit depended on an individual's need to self-enhance. It was hypothesised that the greater the need to self-enhance, the greater the perceived social benefit.

Method
Participants
The sample was recruited using AMT. An advertisement was placed on AMT which outlined the requirements of the study. Upon responding to the advertisement, participants were sent to an online survey. As per Study 1, participants were paid US$1.00 for taking part in the experiment and were required to have an active email and Facebook account. The final sample consisted of 103 North American participants, 59 per cent female, with an average age of 32 (ranging from 18 to 58 years).

Stimulus and manipulation
Participants were exposed to the fictional news story about an organic dog food company's partnership with an animal shelter that was used in Study 1.

Need to self-enhance was manipulated using an episodic priming method used in previous studies in this area (De Angelis *et al.*, 2012; Eisingerich *et al.*, 2015). Need to self-enhance was manipulated by requiring participants in the high need to self-enhance group to think about a time they performed poorly on a task and describe this experience in detail. Participants in the control group were required to describe their last trip to the supermarket. Recalling a time that they performed poorly on a task was expected to provide a blow to participants' self-esteem and subsequently increase need to self-enhance (De Angelis *et al.*, 2012).

Measures
Two items adapted from Eisingerich *et al.* (2015) were used to allow for a manipulation check ("*I like to hear that I am a great person*"; "*I want to discover that I have great qualities*"; measured using a 6-point scale).

Perceived social benefit was measured using the nine-item PSBSS scale. Participants responded to the items using a six-point scale (*strongly disagree – strongly agree*). Higher scores indicated greater perceived social benefit.

Likelihood to share the stimuli was measured using an eight-item scale adapted from an item used in Berger and Milkman (2012). Berger and Milkman asked participants "how likely would you be to share this [the stimulus] with others?", and participants indicated their response using a seven-point scale (*not at all likely – very likely*). The measure used in the current study used the same question stem ("How

likely would you be [. . .] ") and the same response scale but measured participants' likelihood to share across nine communication contexts (Table III).

These communication contexts varied across audience size (broadcasting to a large audience vs narrowcasting to a small audience; Brake, 2012), audience type (the strength of the social relationship between the sharer and the audience; Granovetter, 1973) and synchronicity. The synchronicity of the communication is determined by the modality of the conversation and can be synchronous or asynchronous. Synchronous communication occurs in real time (e.g. face-to-face WOM), whereas asynchronous communication involves a delay between a message being sent and a response being received (e.g. eWOM; Berger and Iyengar, 2013).

Procedure
The experiment was conducted online using Qualtrics Survey Development software. Upon responding to the recruitment advertisement, participants clicked on a link that directed them to an information page about the study. As the need to self-enhance manipulation relied on mild deception, participants were informed that the study would be examining the role of "past experiences" in sharing behaviour. After providing informed consent, participants were required to confirm that they had an active email and Facebook account before proceeding to the experiment.

Participants were randomly allocated to one of two groups: the high need to self-enhance group or the control group. After this allocation, participants completed the episodic priming task. Participants entered their responses to the recall prompts into a text box embedded in the online experiment.

Table III Likelihood to share items

How likely would you be to:	Context
1. Share publicly on your Facebook wall for all of your friends to see?	Broadcast; mixture of tie strength; asynchronous
2. Share this with a large group which consists of your close friends and acquaintances if they were sitting with you right now?	Broadcast, mixture of tie strength, synchronous
3. Share privately using email or Facebook Messenger with a close friend?	Narrowcast; strong tie; asynchronous
4. Share this with an acquaintance using email or Facebook Messenger?	Narrowcast; weak tie; asynchronous
5. Share this with a close friend if they were sitting with you right now?	Narrowcast; strong tie; synchronous
6. Share this with an acquaintance if they were sitting with you right now?	Narrowcast; weak tie; synchronous
7. Share this with a large group of acquaintances if they were sitting with you right now?	Broadcast, weak ties, synchronous
8. Share this with a large group of acquaintances online using Facebook or email?	Broadcast, weak ties, asynchronous
9. Share this with a large group of your close friends if they were sitting with you right now?	Broadcast; strong ties; synchronous

After completing the episodic priming task, participants were exposed to the fictional news story used in Study 1. Participants then completed the manipulation check and the questionnaire items measuring the need to self-enhance, likelihood to share, perceived social benefit and demographics. Upon completion of the procedure, participants were debriefed regarding the nature and purpose of the mild deception involved in the study.

Results
Need to self-enhance
Despite the demonstrated utility of the need to self-enhance manipulation in the previous literature, the manipulation was ineffective. Those in the high need to self-enhance group ($M = 5.23$; $SD = 0.11$) did not report a significantly higher need to self-enhance than those in the control group ($M = 5.40$; $SD = 0.08$), $t(101) = 1.26$, $p = 0.21$, 95 per cent CI $[-0.10-0.45]$.

Due to the inefficacy of the need to self-enhance manipulation, the impact of *manipulated* need to self-enhance on likelihood to share and perceived social benefit was not testable. However, we were able to examine the relationships between participants' scores on the need to self-enhance manipulation check items, their likelihood to share and perceived social benefit. There was no significant relationship between need to self-enhance and likelihood to share, $r = 0.08$, $p = 0.11$ or perceived social benefit, $r = 0.08$, $p = 0.21$. As expected due to the inefficacy of the manipulation, the high and low need to self-enhance groups did not differ in their likelihood to share, $t(101) = 0.64$, $p = 0.52$, 95 per cent CI $[-0.37-0.73]$ or perceived social risk, $t(101) = 1.17$, $p = 0.24$, 95 per cent CI $[-0.19-0.73]$.

Likelihood to share
The relationship between scores on the PSBSS and the likelihood to share was examined to establish the concurrent validity of the scale (Gregory, 2011). The elements of perceived social benefit (social approval, impression management and social bonding) have independently been shown to be positively related to various aspects of WOM behaviour (Berger, 2014). Due to this, the PSBSS should be able to predict individuals' likelihood to share. Accordingly, linear regression demonstrated that scores on the PSBSS significantly predicted overall likelihood to share, $R^2 = 0.23$, $F(1, 100) = 30.18$, $p = <0.001$. Moreover, there was a significant positive relationship between PSBSS scores and likelihood to share across each of the nine communication contexts embedded in the likelihood to share measure (Table IV).

Discussion
The results of Study 2 demonstrated the utility of the PSBSS in measuring perceived social benefit related to WOM. A positive relationship was observed between perceived social benefit and the likelihood to share across nine different communication contexts. The significance and direction of this relationship was stable regardless of the context. This suggests that as perceived social benefit increases, so too does the likelihood to share both face-to-face and online. This positive relationship between scores on the PSBSS and the likelihood to share was expected due to the fact that social approval, impression management and social bonding have

Table IV Correlations between perceived social benefit and likelihood to share by context

Likelihood to transmit item		Perceived social benefit
. . . publicly on your Facebook wall for all of your friends to see?	Pearson correlation	0.459*
. . . with a large group consisting of your close friends and acquaintances if they were sitting with you right now?	Pearson correlation	0.449*
. . . privately with a close friend using email or a private message on Facebook?	Pearson correlation	0.339*
. . . privately with an acquaintance using email or a private message on Facebook?	Pearson correlation	0.400*
. . . with a close friend if they were sitting with you right now?	Pearson correlation	0.418*
. . . with an acquaintance if they were sitting with you right now?	Pearson correlation	0.390*
. . . with a group of acquaintances if they were sitting with you right now?	Pearson correlation	0.435*
. . . with a group of acquaintances online using Facebook or email?	Pearson correlation	0.439*
. . . with a large group of your close friends if they were sitting with you right now?	Pearson correlation	0.427*

Note: *Indicates a significant correlation below 0.001, one-tailed

been shown to motivate WOM behaviour (Berger, 2014; Brown et al., 2007; Cheung and Lee, 2012; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Therefore, the positive association between scores on the PSBSS and the likelihood to share provides evidence for the concurrent validity of the scale (Gregory, 2011).

Despite establishing this relationship, Study 2 had some limitations. First, the influence of perceptions of social benefit on self-reported likelihood to share were measured, whereas the impact of different communication contexts on perceived social benefit were not. This means that no conclusions can be drawn regarding whether face-to-face and online sharing incur different levels of perceived social benefit. Further research is needed to understand the influence of the communication context on perceived social benefit. Second, the manipulation of the need to self-enhance was ineffective. There was no significant relationship between measured need to self-enhance and perceived social benefit, which is incongruent with the previous literature (Lovett et al., 2013; Sundaram, 1998). However, the ineffective manipulation constrains the ability to draw solid conclusions regarding this relationship. Further research is needed to clarify the relationship between the need to self-enhance and scores on the PSBSS.

Summary and future directions

The factor analysis conducted in Study 1 demonstrated that perceived social benefit associated with WOM involves social approval (e.g. sharing to gain approval from others), impression management (e.g. sharing to communicate self-identity) and social bonding (e.g. sharing to benefit relationships with others). These findings were consistent with previous research related to the social drivers of WOM behaviour (Berger, 2014) and resulted in the construction of a nine-item scale. The PSBSS was shown to be highly internally consistent and possess discriminant validity. Scores on the PSBSS were not related to perceived social risk, a construct that is both conceptually opposed to, and distinct from, perceived social benefit (Eisingerich et al., 2015). The results of Study 2 suggest that perceived social benefit is positively related to the likelihood to share both face-to-face and online. The utility of the PSBSS to predict the likelihood to share

demonstrates the concurrent validity of this scale (Gregory, 2011).

The introduction of perceived social benefit has theoretical and managerial implications. First, this research demonstrated that while perceived social risk may constrain the likelihood to share via online channels (Eisingerich et al., 2015), perceived social benefit can have highly desirable facilitative effects on sharing. Second, when consumers are deciding whether or not to share in socially risky environments (e.g. via social media), the potential for social benefit may mitigate the influence of perceived social risk. Marketers could potentially influence perceived social benefit, and offset perceived social risk, by creating and facilitating content that allows the online sharer to communicate their identity, enhance their self-concept and build or strengthen their relationships with others.

Future research should use the PSBSS to clarify how perceived social benefit interacts with perceived social risk to determine what people will share. For example, what would occur if perceived social risk and benefit were both high? Understanding how these potentially competing factors influence sharing behaviour will assist marketers to create shareable content that allows their audience to both manage the risk and capitalise on the benefit involved in sharing. Further work may also be carried out to clarify how different communication contexts influence perceived social benefit, as well as demonstrate the validity and reliability of the PSBSS to measure perceived social benefit associated with different types of WOM. For example, the studies reported in the current paper measured the sharing of a brand-relevant news article. Future research may examine the efficacy of these items to measure perceived social benefit related to sharing different types of brand-relevant content (e.g. advertisements) or actual consumption experiences (e.g. product reviews).

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