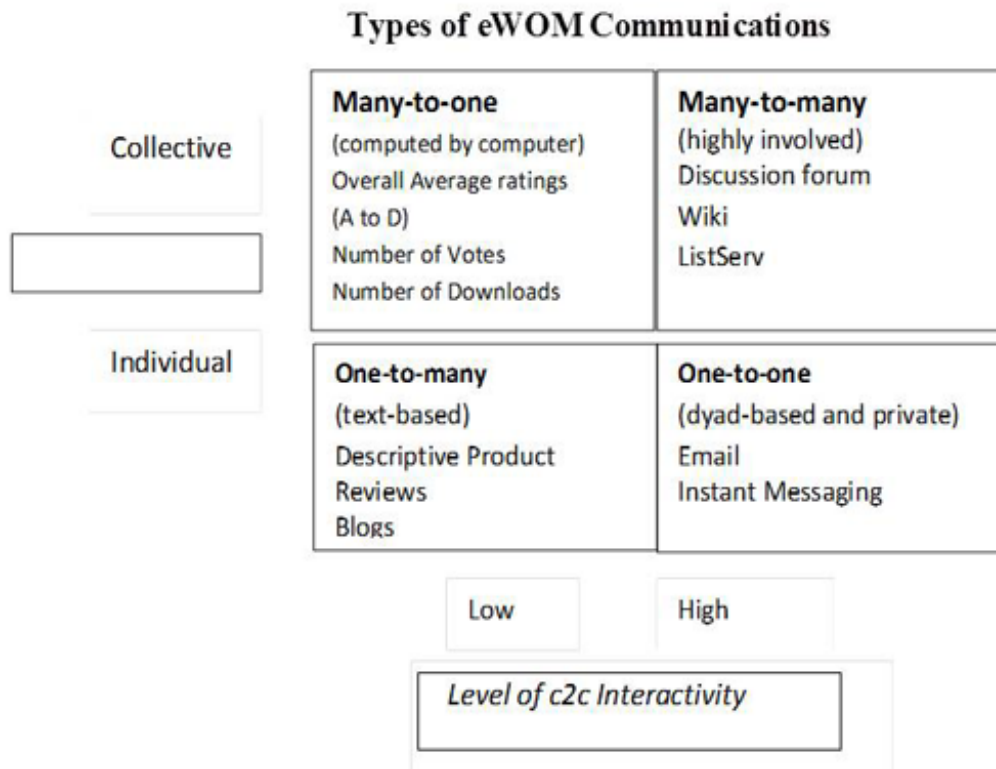# Types of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)

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## Types of eWOM Communications

| | Collective | Many-to-one | Many-to-many |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Collective** | | **Many-to-one**<br>(computed by computer)<br>Overall Average ratings<br>(A to D)<br>Number of Votes<br>Number of Downloads | **Many-to-many**<br>(highly involved)<br>Discussion forum<br>Wiki<br>ListServ |
| **Individual** | | **One-to-many**<br>(text-based)<br>Descriptive Product<br>Reviews<br>Blogs | **One-to-one**<br>(dyad-based and private)<br>Email<br>Instant Messaging |
| | | Low | High |

Level of c2c Interactivity

*Source: Adapted from Xia et al. 2009, 139*

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) is a rapidly growing, quickly evolving and increasingly important extension of traditional face-to-face word-of-mouth (WOM) in the marketing and consumer environment, and most recently, a very important outcome of activity on social media. Indeed, social media have greatly changed the way in which firms and their constituents are able to communicate electronically, extending the possibilities of eWOM from the traditional one-to-many and one-to-one marketing communications, to the new many-to-many and many-to-one communications.

Social network sites in their essence are built on eWOM in various forms and guises. While much literature has addressed some of the different types of eWOM and their differences, there has not been a consolidated conceptualization of such differences. We suggest a concise typology of eWOM communications based on the level of user interactivity and participation, and thus locate these forms in a 2 (communication: collective, individual) x 2 (C2C interactivity: low, high) framework below. Four distinct categories of eWOM emerge from our framework: many-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-many, and one-to-one.

Many-to-one eWOM (e.g., the number of votes) represents the trend or explicit preference of a crowd. One-to-many text-based eWOM (e.g., product reviews) is descriptive and requires the audience to use more cognitive effort to read the reviews. Many-to-many eWOM (e.g., online discussion groups) is a high involvement activity in which consumers continuously participate in the communication process. Finally, dyad-based one-to-one eWOM (e.g., instant messaging) is mostly private and non-transparent communications. The typology of eWOM presented in our figure not only depicts how different eWOM types are generated but also reflects how these different types are processed by users.

*What are your thoughts on our suggested framework of eWOM types?*

*Do you think they are equal in their degrees of persuasiveness on the users of these eWOM?*

*Which eWOM category do you use most?*

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