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Are Senders of eWOM Biased? The Role of Personality and Collectivism

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ABSTRACT

The transmission of biased eWOM reduces the usefulness of online reviews to consumers and, if negative, is likely to affect a brand's image adversely. This research aims to investigate how traits, attention-seeking, and taking-the-lead make senders of eWOM subject to either the positivity or negativity bias, and how the cultural value of collectivism refines this relationship. A sample of 345 Chinese consumers was formed, and the data from an online survey was analysed using PLS-SEM. Results show that the attention-seeking trait makes Chinese people more susceptible to the negativity bias; however, a collectivistic culture weakens such a relationship. The taking-the-lead trait makes Chinese people more susceptible to the positivity bias, and a collectivistic culture strengthens this relationship. Our findings of the personality-culture nexus make a novel contribution to the eWOM literature.

1 | Introduction

Word-of-mouth has moved from the physical to the digital space, transforming into electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Verma and Yadav 2021). eWOM occurs when subjective views about products and services are expressed on e-commerce websites, social media platforms, and other networking sites (Donthu et al. 2021), influencing purchasing decisions (Rosario et al. 2016). (E)WOM is crucial for the experience-dominant hotel service, which is intangible and difficult to evaluate before consumption (Verma and Yadav 2021) and involves financial risk (Rosario et al. 2016). In addition, the hospitality industry is generally localised with very few global brands (Donthu et al. 2021). As a result, consumers are increasingly using review sites, such as TripAdvisor and Daddao.com (TripAdvisor's Chinese outlet), to seek and offer feedback on service providers (Xiang et al. 2017). Correspondingly, hotel owners and intermediaries, particularly those having limited marketing budgets, encourage customers to provide online reviews as a marketing tool (Jalilvand et al. 2017).

The eWOM generated by customers can be positive, negative, or neutral (Bu et al. 2021). Due to the subjective nature of eWOM, there could be a bias in the sources of eWOM. On the one hand, a positivity bias has been reported, where positive eWOM occurs much more frequently in the marketplace than negative eWOM (Bridges and Vásquez 2018; Naylor and Kleiser 2000) as a way of self-enhancement for the eWOM producers (Vargo et al. 2019). On the other hand, some studies highlight that humans have an inherent negativity bias, with negative information tending to invoke greater information processing and lasting longer in memory (Rozin and Royzman 2001). Correspondingly, people tend to disseminate more negative information than positive, in more detail, to more recipients and over longer periods (Hornik et al. 2015). Empirically, conflicting findings exist over the ratio of positive

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to negative eWOM, and academic researchers have called for additional research to resolve the debate (Vargo et al. 2019). Such a topic is also practically significant. For businesses, a bias, be it positive or negative, may reduce the value of eWOM and even result in customers' withdrawal behaviours. A deeper understanding of what drives bias in eWOM could help practitioners employ strategies to shape or mitigate such bias.

The academic literature on eWOM posting behaviour is extensive. eWOM posting could be explained by a cognitive-affective-behaviour sequence (Huang et al. 2015; Cheung et al. 2022, 2025), along which many antecedents have been identified. At the cognitive stage, an individual evaluates a product or service based on personal experience. In this process, satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the core attributes of the product or service leads customers to post eWOM (Jalilvand et al. 2017). Perception of opinion leadership and content quality are key predictors of eWOM among influencers' followers (Cheung et al. 2022, 2025). At the affective stage, evaluation leads to an emotional response such as joy, frustration, excitement, or anger. For example, focusing on the tourism industry, Cheung et al. (2021) found that a destination's social media community elicits tourists' emotions, such as joy, love and positive surprise, which in turn stimulates their eWOM. Similar findings were reported by Cheung et al. (2025) in the context of eWOM in sustainability communities. At the behavioural stage, the individual decides whether and how to post a review, rating, or comment. Research has highlighted multiple antecedents of the behaviour, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. Intrinsic motivations, such as self-enhancement, altruism and concern for other consumers, cognitive dissonance reduction, ego-defensive motives and the need for vengeance (Chan and Ngai 2011; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Mandal et al. 2021; Rasool and Pathania 2023), and extrinsic motivations such as economic incentives (e.g., Hussain et al. 2018; Chen et al. 2023) have been reported to predict eWOM posting behaviour.

Despite the richness of the literature, the link between senders' personality traits and eWOM posting behaviour has been understudied (Hu and Kim 2018; Moisescu et al. 2022). The impact of personality is situated in the third stage, the behavioural stage, of the eWOM posting mechanism. A small but growing number of eWOM researchers have examined relationships between personality traits (e.g., the "big five" personality traits, dark traits, self-construal, and promotion-focus versus prevention-focus) and eWOM posting behaviour (e.g., Anastasiei and Dospinescu 2018; Chen et al. 2024; Kapoor et al. 2021; Kitirattarkarn et al. 2021; Sameeni et al. 2024; Yan et al. 2023). From the lens of social exchange theory, an individual's personality traits serve as the foundation that shapes the personal evaluation of the costs, benefits and motivations of engaging in a specific type of behaviour. In this school of thought, personality plays a critical role in determining engagement in message transmission, including whether, why, how, and what they choose to communicate (Mahapatra and Mishra 2017). So the impact of personality on eWOM posting is worthy of further attention.

Furthermore, a growing number of studies link cultural values such as collectivism and individualism with eWOM (e.g., Gvili and Levy 2021; Rawal et al. 2024; Shen et al. 2021; Zhang and Lee 2012) and report differences in eWOM posting behaviours across countries. While the relationship between personality and culture is a central topic in cultural psychology (Lu et al. 2023), and psychologists recognise that culture can shape, modify or moderate traits (Allik et al. 2023), there is limited research investigating the interaction between cultural factors and personality in the context of eWOM. König et al. (2022, 89) observe that researchers have not systematically examined the potential interplay between personality and culture, and effects on eWOM consumption. In a similar vein, there is a lack of research examining how this interplay shapes eWOM posting behaviour. This gap is especially pertinent in virtual spaces, where individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds frequently interact and express their ideas openly (Pookulangara and Koesler 2011). In such an environment, individuals often face a tension between expressing their authentic personality and adapting to cultural expectations when contributing to eWOM.

Aiming to bridge the two gaps identified above, this study integrates social exchange theory (Homans 1958) with a cultural psychology perspective (Allik et al. 2023). This integrated theoretical approach is a robust means to examine the mechanisms through which traits and cultural background interact to produce biased eWOM. Specifically, this study answers two research questions:

1. Are the personal traits (attention-seeking and taking-the-lead) of eWOM senders associated with a positivity and/or negativity bias?
2. How are such relationships affected by the cultural value of collectivism?

Empirically, this study focuses on tourists from China, thereby responding to the call by Vargo et al. (2019) to study the factors contributing to bias in eWOM amongst different populations and geographic regions. China is an appropriate research context for this study as it is an important tourism market, and eWOM is accessible and influential in contemporary Chinese society (Chu et al. 2019). Theoretically, this study enriches the field of eWOM posting literature in two ways. First, we investigate an under-researched personality trait, which has not been studied by prior eWOM studies, individuation, and show that the two sub-dimensions, attention-seeking and taking-the-lead, predict a negativity bias and a positivity bias in eWOM posting, respectively. Second, our study is amongst the first to investigate the interaction between personality and culture in predicting a positivity or negativity bias in eWOM posting behaviour. Our results challenge simplistic notions about collectivists and their willingness to post eWOM, and show that eWOM behaviour is the result of a constant negotiation between personal authenticity and social conformity. Practically, our results provide personality-based and culture-specific guidelines for eWOM platforms.

In the following sections, the relevant literature on eWOM posting behaviour is reviewed, followed by hypotheses development. We then explain methods and results. We discuss the theoretical and practical contributions and close the article by outlining the limitations and future research directions.

2 | Literature Review

2.1 | Positivity Bias and Negativity Bias on Online Platforms

Existing literature has reported prevalent yet conflicting views about the bias towards negative or positive information when people post eWOM. Recent work has noted the positivity bias on online platforms (Vargo et al. 2019), where people like to brag about themselves and their personal experiences (Vargo et al. 2019). This bias is prevalent on private networks, such as Facebook (Reinecke and Trepte 2014), as well as on public networks, such as Twitter (Vargo et al. 2019) and peer-to-peer rental platforms like Airbnb (Bridges and Vásquez 2018).

Other scholars argue that human beings have an inherent negativity bias, and it affects memory, information processing and perceptions (Rozin and Royzman 2001; Baumeister et al. 2001). Individuals find negative information more persuasive than positive information (Yang and Mai 2010) since a potential loss is viewed as more threatening than a potential gain (Kahneman and Tversky 1984). Such a bias is evident on online platforms, shown by the spread of secondary eWOM that is largely negative (Hornik et al. 2015). Further, sharing negative eWOM anonymously relieves people from the social pressures and anxiety associated with face-to-face communication (Pourfakhimi et al. 2020).

2.2 | Literature on Antecedents of eWOM Posting Behaviour

As mentioned in the introduction, this study is situated in the third stage of the eWOM posting mechanism. While a range of antecedent events might explain eWOM posting behaviour, we draw on social exchange theory (SET) (Homans 1958) to examine how psychosocial factors shape engagement in eWOM behaviour (Shiau and Luo 2012). SET posits that social relationships are formed based on cost–benefit analysis, where individuals try to maximise benefits and minimise the costs or risks of social interaction (Blau 1964). In relation to the costs associated with editing eWOM, Krings (2001) identified three types of effort, that is, temporal effort (time spent), cognitive effort (mental processing) and technical effort (physical action). For instance, an individual needs to expend time and effort using a search engine or visiting websites, uploading photos and writing, and considering whether the information is valuable enough to satisfy a potential recipient's needs (Huang et al. 2011). Individuals perceive various benefits from posting eWOM, such as self-enhancement and community identity, as noted in a meta-analysis of the literature (Ismagilova et al. 2021). In a similar vein, Cheung et al. (2025) showed that consumers who follow social media influencers are motivated to engage in eWOM behaviours by a sense of togetherness. In addition, the perception of benefits and costs may be influenced by personality traits and cultural values. In line with this logic, there is extensive literature examining what drives individuals to post eWOM in the tourism and hospitality industries, as shown in Appendix A.

These studies could be categorized into three strands. The first and the largest group of literature has identified various benefits of posting eWOM, including intrinsic motivation such as self-enhancement and altruism (Hu and Kim 2018; Zhou et al. 2019), need for enjoyment (Fan et al. 2023), seeking justice (Fu et al. 2015), venting negative feelings (Yen and Tang 2015), and extrinsic motivation such as responding to economic incentives (Chen et al. 2024).

A second and smaller group of studies shows that individuals' motivation and engagement in eWOM are, to a large extent, shaped by their personality traits. Personality refers to the constructs that influence individuals' feelings, thoughts, intentions and behaviours across time (Mowen 2000). Personality traits are considered to be enduring, which means they result in stable and cross-situational individual differences (Allport 1937; Yoo and Gretzel 2011). Fundamentally, individuals tend to select and navigate situations that align with their unique personalities; consequently, their motivations vary according to their personality traits. In line with this thinking, the Five-Factor Model of Personality (e.g., Moisescu et al. 2022; Sameeni et al. 2024), promotion versus prevention focus (Shin et al. 2014; Yan et al. 2023), self-construal in terms of independence and interdependence (e.g., Kitirattarkarn et al. 2021; He et al. 2022) have been found to influence individuals' motivation and engagement in eWOM posting. For example, traits such as agreeableness and conscientiousness interact with motivational factors (i.e., self-enhancement, enjoyment, altruism) to influence eWOM behaviour (Hu and Kim 2018).

The third group of literature investigates how cultural values influence individuals' eWOM behaviours. Different from the personality construct, which refers to relatively innate dispositions (Olver and Mooradian 2003), cultural values are learned, socially endorsed beliefs that reflect the adaptation of one's needs to what is considered acceptable in society (Parks and Guay 2009). In eWOM behaviour research, a growing number of studies have compared the eWOM behaviour between countries (e.g., Barbro et al. 2020; Mariani et al. 2020), or have tested the impact of country-level cultural values such as Hofstede national value indices (e.g., Leon 2019; Chatterjee and Mandal 2020), and shown that the motivation, the valence and the phrasing of eWOM posting are regulated by national cultures (See Appendix A). For example, Nielsen and Zethsen (2022) gave evidence that Americans are more likely than Germans to post positive eWOM about the intangible features of the service (e.g., old-world charm, romance, physical comfort, personal service/relations, and problem-solving). Litvin (2019) showed that eWOM on TripAdvisor differs across different nations. Wen et al. (2018), using country-level Hofstede indices, showed that collectivism, indulgence and power distance have positive effects on pride, and that indulgence has a positive effect on pleasure, and pleasure and pride have significant impacts on eWOM creation intention. Noting that focusing on national differences in eWOM fails to capture within-country cultural variations (Lee and Choi 2019; Vargas and Kemmelmeier 2013), a small yet increasing number of scholars have examined cultural values at the individual level, for example, individualism/collectivism, and shown this cultural value is a significant predictor of the engagement and valance of eWOM posting (Gvili and Levy 2021; Lee et al. 2018; Zhang and Lee 2012).

As a result, an individual's eWOM behaviour could be an interplay of their personality and their cultural values. While

personality relates to what one naturally tends to do, cultural values relate to what one believes one ought to do (Parks and Guay 2009). The two may not always be aligned. From a cultural psychology perspective, Fulmer et al. (2010) present the concept of the "person-culture match hypothesis", which suggests that when an individual's personality aligns with culture, the culture functions as an enhancer, amplifying the favourable aspects of their personality; in the case of misalignment, an individual has to adapt their personalities to better assimilate into the culture in which they reside. While patterns of 'person-culture match' or discrepancy have been explored by social psychologists, such as implications for self-esteem (Fulmer et al. 2010), life satisfaction and well-being (Benet-Martínez and Karakitapoglu-Aygün 2003; Lu 2006), the eWOM literature is largely silent on this issue. Our study draws on this cultural psychology perspective and poses the question: Does a particular 'person-culture' profile lead a person to provide mostly positive eWOM or negative eWOM? In the following hypotheses, we focus on an under-researched personality trait, individuation, encompassing two aspects, that is, attention-seeking and taking-the-lead, and a cultural value, individualism–collectivism, and develop hypotheses to address the conflict over whether and why the negativity or positivity bias is present in online reviews. We present the conceptual framework in Figure 1.

3 | Hypotheses

3.1 | Personality Traits and eWOM

Social exchange theory (Blau 1964; Homans 1958) frames eWOM as a cost–benefit behaviour, where individuals share recommendations in anticipation of rewards, such as incentives, self-enhancement and social approval (Shiau and Luo 2012). Based on SET, people are likely to post travel reviews if they perceive that the benefits outweigh the costs (Bakshi et al. 2021). Perceived benefits and costs are often influenced by an individual's personality traits, which shape how they evaluate and respond to different situations. For example, Salem and Alanadoly (2021) find that agreeable and extroverted individuals see more benefits from interacting and sharing their knowledge of products (e.g., sustainable fashion) with others and hence are willing to do so.

One personality trait that has received little attention from scholars in the eWOM literature is individuation. Individuation refers to "people's reported willingness to engage in behaviours that would publicly differentiate themselves from others" (Maslach et al. 1985, 732). In China's context, the individuation scale has been broken down into two types of traits: attention-seeking and taking-the-lead (Kwan et al. 2002). Attention-seekers tend to be assertive and confrontational, e.g., challenge a speaker, give an opinion on a controversial issue, speak up about one's ideas without invitation, etc.

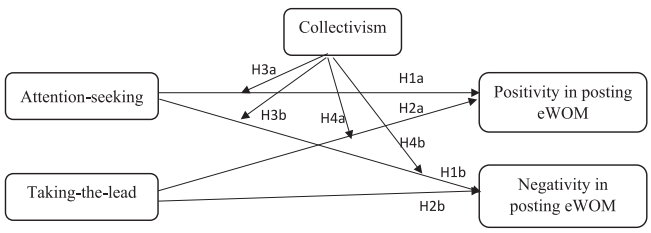

FIGURE 1 | Conceptual Framework.

We argue that such attention-seeking individuals will perceive more self-enhancement benefits (i.e., feeling good about oneself) from posting negative rather than positive eWOM (Donghee et al. 2015). From the neurology perspective, humans tend to pay greater attention to negative stimuli than positive or neutral ones (Ito et al. 1998). Research has shown that negative recommendations capture attention more readily than other types of information (Daugherty and Hoffman 2014) because negative information is considered more credible and useful in influencing consumers' purchase decisions than positive recommendations (Mudambi and Schuff 2010). One interpretation of these findings is that a negative message reduces the possibility that marketers or others post the information for personal gain (Cheung et al. 2009). Therefore, we hypothesise that attention-seeking individuals will be inclined to post more negative eWOM to gain attention and bolster the self, thus demonstrating a negativity bias:

H1a. *The stronger the attention-seeking orientations people have, the less likely they are to have a positivity bias.*

H1b. *The stronger the attention-seeking orientations people have, the more likely they are to have a negativity bias.*

The second component of the individuation scale is taking-the-lead (Kwan et al. 2002). People who engage in taking-the-lead behaviours are inclined to demonstrate their skills, talents and abilities to achieve goals, for example, by giving a lecture, heading a committee, accepting a nomination, performing on stage, etc. They are motivated to post eWOM due to altruistic motivations (Clark and Goldsmith 2005). A concept related to this aspect of personality and motivation is opinion leadership. Opinion leaders are perceived as credible and trustworthy, act as intermediaries between the mass media and the broader public, and drive eWOM (Cheung et al. 2022). These opinion leaders possess specific characteristics, such as public individuation (Chan and Misra 1990).

Being an opinion leader, taking-the-lead people, on the one hand, may wish to help customers by divulging the full details of their hotel stay, including both positive and negative aspects. On the other hand, they may want to self-enhance, "save face", and avoid divulging negative information that reflects poor decision-making or a lack of expertise. Wojnicki and Godes (2008) have found that expert consumers are more likely than non-experts to seek self-enhancement by informing others about their satisfying and positive consumption experiences. In other words, they demonstrate a positivity bias. Therefore, we hypothesise:

H2a. *The stronger the taking-the-lead orientations people have, the more likely they are to have a positivity bias.*

H2b. *The stronger the taking-the-lead orientations people have, the less likely they are to have a negativity bias.*

3.2 | Culture as a Fine-Tuner

From a cultural psychology perspective, culture and mind are mutually constitutive, meaning that culture shapes psychological processes and conditions the development and expression of personality (Shweder et al. 2008). In line with this perspective, we propose that an individual's cultural profile will regulate the influence of personality on eWOM behaviour. Hofstede's seminal work on culture presents five key cultural dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, and long-term/short-term orientation (Hofstede 2001). Individualism–collectivism has been used to explain the differences in eWOM and complaint behaviour between Western and Chinese consumers (Shen et al. 2021). Individualism refers to societies in which people are mainly concerned with and look after themselves and their immediate family, while collectivism represents a society where people feel they belong to larger in-groups or collectives (Hofstede et al. 2010). Evidence shows that members of Asian cultures (collectivistic) are less likely than Westerners (individualistic) to engage in behaviour that makes them appear distinctive (Boucher and Maslach 2009), and are more willing to compromise or not seek redress after a service failure, as a gesture of "giving face" to others (Chapa et al. 2014). Such practice even applies to the online environment despite the lack of face-to-face contact (Au et al. 2010).

Traditionally, China has been characterised as a collective society. In recent decades, driven by multiple factors such as economic development and globalisation (Kwon 2012; Ogihara 2017), it is suggested that younger generations in China have become more individualistic (Kwon 2012). Hence, individuals will vary in terms of their cultural profiles.

We, therefore, propose that collectivism is likely to conflict with the attention-seekers' intention to post negative eWOM, as such behaviour may be perceived as disruptive to group harmony and social cohesion—the core values in collectivist cultures. This cultural tension can suppress their willingness to engage in negative eWOM, despite their desire for visibility or recognition. Instead, attention-seekers may opt for more positive eWOM as a culturally acceptable means of attracting attention while aligning with collectivist norms that emphasise low conflict and interpersonal harmony. Consequently, their reduced engagement in negative eWOM and increased tendency to share positive eWOM are expected to weaken the influence of attention-seeking on both the amplification of the negativity bias and the suppression of the positivity bias. The hypotheses are hence proposed as follows:

H3a. *A collectivistic cultural orientation will weaken the negative relationship between attention-seeking and positivity bias.*

H3b. *A collectivistic cultural orientation will weaken the positive relationship between attention-seeking and negativity bias.*

We hypothesise that the association between taking-the-lead and the positivity bias could be reinforced by collective culture. Taking-the-lead could be associated with positive connotations, as in the case of "Kam Jo Kam Wai", which refers to the responsible and courageous qualities of a leader (Kwan et al. 2002). Hence, taking-the-lead people could be inclined to act as good citizens and serve the group's interests by contributing their insights on online platforms. Knowing their cultural norms or expectations, a taking-the-lead person will be more likely to share their positive experience, rather than their negative experience, to develop harmony within their community. Hence,

H4a. *A collectivistic cultural orientation will strengthen the relationship between taking-the-lead and the positivity bias.*

H4b. *A collectivistic cultural orientation will weaken the relationship between taking-the-lead and the negativity bias.*

4 | Methodology

4.1 | Research Context

China is an appropriate research context for this study for three reasons. First, China is an important tourism market. In 2024, China's domestic tourism experienced a significant surge, with a record 5.6 billion tourist trips (CEIC, n.d.). Chinese outbound tourism is also a driving force in the global travel industry, with Chinese people making a total of 145.9 million trips abroad in 2024 (CKGSB Knowledge 2025). In addition, eWOM is accessible and influential in contemporary Chinese society (Chu et al. 2019). Lastly, having experienced a profound cultural shift from collectivism to individualism due to rapid modernisation, globalisation, and government policies (Sun and Ryder 2016), China presents a natural testing bed to examine the impact of culture. In this study, we focus on Chinese tourists' eWOM posting behaviour in the context of hotel stays in either China or other countries.

4.2 | Sample and Recruitment

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the authors' university with the number H8132. This study deployed a non-probability, purposive sampling strategy. Purposive sampling allows researchers to select participants based on specific criteria or characteristics (Robinson 2014), which in this case were adults (at least 18 years old) in China who had stayed at a hotel and used the Internet to book hotels during the last 6 months at the time of data collection. Such purposive sampling helps ensure that the respondents could recall their experience of staying in the hotel and had the chance to use the Internet for travel arrangements and posting eWOM.

Survey participants were recruited from May to June 2020 in collaboration with the market research agency, Baidu, using their panel. Baidu's panel covers respondents coming from 34 provinces, municipal cities, and special zones in China. These responders were paid RMB 5.3 for completing the survey. To avoid the problems associated with "mischievous responders", a term which describes responders who deliberately falsify information (Ward and Pond III 2015), surveys were checked for random reporting and fake responses by analysing average duration time.

After removing the invalid responses, we obtained 345 usable responses. A total of 271 respondents indicated that they came

from 27 provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities, and special administrative regions in China, while 74 respondents did not indicate their provinces. In terms of gender, 55.36% of the sample were male and 44.34% were female, aligning with the sex ratio of Chinese Internet users in 2020 (Male to female = 51:49) (Statistica, n.d.). In our sample, 92% were aged between 18% and 45%, 71% had an undergraduate or postgraduate degree, and 86% were employed. About 71% classified themselves as above average in terms of economic status. Table 1 reports the demographic information.

4.3 | Questionnaire Design and Scales

The online questionnaire was developed in English and translated into Chinese by one of the authors, who is bilingual and a native Chinese speaker. The survey underwent a pilot test with 20 respondents and was revised to avoid confusion and ambiguity. A reverse translation was conducted by another bilingual researcher, translating the survey from Chinese back to English, to ensure the translated content aligns accurately with the original. The survey consisted of questions related to hotel bookings, willingness to post positive and negative eWOM, personality traits, collectivism, service experience, and demographic data. The scales of personality traits and collectivism were adapted from prior studies. Table 2 reports the scale items.

4.3.1 | Collectivism

The individualism/collectivism scale was taken from Fischer et al. (2009). This scale requires individuals to evaluate to what extent the cultural values they feel are characteristic of their society. It is designed to reflect a variation in individual cultural values, and collectivism is not assumed to be equated with a country as a whole. The scale consists of bipolar items along a 7-Likert scale. For example, one item is, "most people in my country...do what is enjoyable to them personally versus carry out their group obligations". A respondent choosing 6 indicates he/she perceives the culture he/she is in as more collectivistic.

4.3.2 | Attention-Seeking and Taking-the-Lead

The scales were taken from Maslach et al. (1985), with five-point Likert scales anchored by 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly disagree. Kwan et al. (2002) validated the two scales in China.

4.3.3 | Positivity Bias and Negativity Bias

Prior studies measured the positivity/negativity bias based on the difference between the percentage of positive eWOM and the percentage of negative eWOM. A positive difference represents a positivity bias, and a negative difference represents a negativity bias (Vargo et al. 2019). In this study, we asked the respondents to rate their willingness to post eWOM through four questions, each addressing different satisfaction and dissatisfaction scenarios, as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 1 | Sample distribution.

		N	%
Gender	Male	191	55.36
	Female	154	44.35
Age	18–25	65	18.84
	26–35	169	48.99
	36–45	90	26.09
	46–55	19	5.51
	56–65	2	0.58
Education	Primary school or below	1	0.29
	High school certificate	17	4.93
	Trade or vocational qualification	3	0.87
	Diploma or advanced diploma	78	22.61
	Undergraduate degree	182	52.75
	Postgraduate degree	63	18.26
	Other	1	0.29
Employment	Full-time employed	272	78.84
	Part-time job	20	5.80
	Self-employed	4	1.16
	Out of work	9	2.61
	Homemaker	6	1.74
	Retired	2	0.58
	Student	31	8.99
	Others	1	0.29
Subjective economic status	1. Worst economic status in the society	3	0.87
	2	3	0.87
	3	13	3.77
	4	18	5.22
	5	64	18.55
	6	80	23.19
	7	90	26.09
	8	54	15.65
	9	13	3.77
	10. Best economic status in the society	7	2.03

Note: The subjective economic status was measured following the MacArthur Scale of subjective social status (Adler et al. 2000) to reflect respondents' perceived economic status of their family.

Following the approach of Vargo et al. (2019), we compared the subjective rating of positive eWOM and negative eWOM and developed two sets of measures for the positivity and negativity

TABLE 2 | Factor loading and validity measures.

		Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Total variance explained
Taking-the-lead (Maslach et al. 1985)			0.772	0.83	14.45%
	Give a lecture to a large audience	0.717			
	Accept a nomination to be a leader of a group	0.708			
	Give an informal talk in front of a small group of classmates or colleagues	0.690			
	Volunteer to head a committee for a group of people you do not know very well	0.669			
	Raise your hand to ask a question at a meeting or lecture	0.668			
	Perform on stage before a large audience	0.568			
	Tell a person you like him or her	0.460			
Attention-seeking (Maslach et al. 1985)			0.726	0.827	8.27%
	Give your opinion on a controversial issue, even though no one has asked for it	0.817			
	Speak up about your ideas even though you are uncertain of whether you are correct.	0.657			
	Present a personal opinion, on a controversial issue, to a group of strangers	0.599			
	Publicly challenge a speaker whose position clashes with your own	0.582			
Collectivism (Fischer et al. 2009)			0.865	0.894	14.79%
	Most people in my country follow: Their group rules and norms (7), Their personal attitudes (1)	0.861			
	Most people in my country act in line with: Their group norms and duties (7), Their rights (1)	0.858			
	Most people in my country obey: Follow their group norms and duties, rather than personal contracts (7), Obey their personal contracts, rather than their group norms and duties (1)	0.851			
	Most people in my country: Carry out their group obligations (7), Do what is enjoyable to them personally (1)	0.837			
	If there is a conflict between personal values and the values of the group, most people follow: the values of the group (7), the personal values (1)	0.783			

(Continues)

TABLE 2 | (Continued)

		Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Total variance explained
Positive eWOM			0.577	0.805	8.03%
	Positive review 1: How willing are you to post an online review about a hotel when your experience is far better than your expectations (very good experience)	0.854			
	Positive review 2: How willing are you to post an online review about a hotel when your experience is better than your expectations (good experience)	0.804			
Negative eWOM			0.765	0.893	8.40%
	Negative review 1: How willing are you to post an online review about a hotel when your experience far worse than your expectations (very bad experience)	0.904			
	Negative review 2: How willing are you to post an online review about a hotel when your experience far worse than your expectations (bad experience)	0.841			

bias. First, we measured the magnitude of the positivity bias and the negativity bias by subtracting the negative eWOM rating from the positive eWOM rating when the (dis)satisfaction levels are similar:

Positivity bias 1 = positive review 1 − negative review 1,
if positive review 1 > negative review 1; 0 otherwise.
(when the experience is very good/very bad.)

Positivity bias 2 = positive review 2 − negative review 2,
if positive review 2 > negative review 2; 0 otherwise.
(when the experience is good/bad.)

Negativity bias 1 = | positive review 1 − negative review 1|,
if positive review 1 < negative review 1; 0 otherwise.
(when the experience is very good/very bad.)

Negativity bias 2 = | positive review 1 − negative review 1|,
if positive review 1 < negative review 1; 0 otherwise.
(when the experience is good/bad.)

Second, we developed two dummy variables to indicate the presence of positivity and negativity biases.

Positivity bias dummy = 1, if positive review 1
+ positive review 2 > negative review 1
+ negative review 2; 0 otherwise.

Negativity bias dummy = 1, if positive review 1
+ positive review 2 < negative review 1
+ negative review 2; 0 otherwise.

4.4 | Validity Test

The convergent validity of the constructs was assessed in two ways. First, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed in SPSS, and 21 items loaded significantly onto five corresponding factors: taking-the-lead, attention-seeking, collectivism, positive eWOM, and negative eWOM, as shown in Table 2. Second, the measures have satisfactory validity with Cronbach's Alpha above 0.5 and Composite Reliability higher than 0.8 (Fornell and Larcker 1981), indicating adequate convergent validity of the constructs.

We established discriminant validity using two approaches. First, we conducted Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) in IBM SPSS AMOS 25, a structural equation modelling software. The measurement model showed a good fit (Chi-square = 75.838, Probability level = 0.268; CFI = 0.994; TLI = 0.991; NFI = 0.938; RMSEA = 0.017), supporting the conclusion that the four latent factors were strong reflections of the associated observed variables. Second, we examined the Fornell and Larcker criterion (1981) and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) ratio (Henseler et al. 2015) reported in the software SmartPLS. In Table 3 Panel A, the average variance extracted for each factor was larger than the square of the correlation estimates of the factor with all other constructs, thus providing evidence of sufficient discriminant validity based on Fornell and Larcker's criteria (1981). The HTMT ratios in Table 3 Panel B were lower than

TABLE 3 | Discriminant analysis.

Panel A: Fornell and Larcker criterion					
	Positive review	**Negative review**	**Collectivism**	**Attention-seeking**	**Taking-the-lead**
Positive review	0.905				
Negative review	−0.422	0.820			
Collectivism	0.188	−0.050	0.793		
Attention-seeking	0.049	0.069	0.128	0.733	
Taking-the-lead	0.236	−0.153	0.236	0.585	0.639

Panel B: Heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT)				
	Positive review	**Negative review**	**Collectivism**	**Attention-seeking**
Negative review	0.643			
Collectivism	0.211	0.070		
Attention-seeking	0.082	0.104	0.175	
Taking-the-lead	0.250	0.195	0.323	0.824

the 0.85 cut-offs (Henseler et al. 2015), further establishing discriminant validity.

In addition, Hofstede and McCrae (2004) report moderate correlations between the Big Five personality traits and culture dimensions. It could lead to multicollinearity if the two personality traits in our study are highly correlated with collectivism. So we examined the correlation matrix in Table 4. The correlation was negligible with coefficients lower than 0.3, and multicollinearity was not a concern. Lastly, given that the data came from a single source, common method variance (CMV) could be an issue. To reduce the risk of CMV, procedural remedies were adopted, including hiding the names of constructs and assigning question items randomly (Podsakoff et al. 2024). Furthermore, Harman's one-factor test was used post hoc to examine the extent of the potential bias. After all items were entered into the EFA model, the first factor accounted for no more than 50% of the total variance, indicating that the data was free of the common method bias problem (Chang et al. 2010).

5 | Results

5.1 | Descriptive Analysis

Chinese customers were generally more willing to post positive reviews than negative reviews, as in Figure 2. The positivity and negativity bias data also revealed similar results: 43% of the respondents showed a positivity bias, 33% showed a negativity bias, and 23% showed no bias. Most respondents scored high for taking-the-lead and attention-seeking, while the majority of respondents leaned more towards collectivistic values (see Figure 3).

5.2 | PLS-SEM Analysis

PLS-SEM in SmartPLS was used since it makes no distribution assumptions, allows the inclusion of a single-item construct, and works efficiently with small sample sizes and complex models (Hair Jr et al. 2021). Our model is complex because it contains several moderation effects and a few single-item control variables.

Three sets of PLS-SEM analyses were run, as shown in Table 5. Model 1 included only the main and control variables. Collectivism was significantly and positively related to the positivity bias ($\beta = 0.14$, $p < 0.05$), but not the negativity bias. Attention-seeking was negatively related to the positivity bias but not significantly ($\beta = -0.14$, $p > 0.1$) and positively related to the negativity bias ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.1$). Such results supported hypothesis 1b but not hypothesis 1a. Taking-the-lead was positively related to the positivity bias ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.001$) and negatively related to the negativity bias ($\beta = -0.25$, $p < 0.01$). Such results supported hypotheses 2a and 2b.

In Model 2, the interaction term between attention-seeking and collectivism was added. The main effect of attention-seeking was negatively related to the positivity bias ($\beta = -0.15$, $p < 0.1$), but positively related to the negativity bias ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.05$). The interaction between attention-seeking and collectivism was positively related to the positivity bias ($\beta = 0.14$, $p < 0.1$) but not to the negativity bias ($\beta = -0.06$, $p > 0.1$). Such results supported hypothesis 3a but not hypothesis 3b.

In Model 3, the interaction term between taking-the-lead and collectivism was added. The main effect of taking-the-lead was positively related to the positivity bias ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$) and negatively related to the negativity bias ($\beta = -0.26$, $p < 0.01$). The interaction between taking-the-lead and collectivism was positively related to the positivity bias ($\beta = 0.12$, $p < 0.05$) but not to the negativity bias ($\beta = -0.03$, $p > 0.1$). Such results supported hypothesis 4a. However, hypothesis 4b, that collectivism weakens the relationship between the taking-the-lead trait and the negativity bias, was not supported. This could be attributed to the fact that "taking-the-lead" individuals in a collectivist culture may be expected to fulfil two

TABLE 4 | Correlation matrix.

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Positive bias	1										
2	Negative bias	0.40***	1									
3	Positive bias dummy	0.79***	0.50***	1								
4	Negative bias dummy	−0.49***	−0.82***	−0.62***	1							
5	Education	−0.15**	−0.06	−0.15**	0.13*	1						
6	Employment	−0.11*	−0.01	−0.11*	0.02	−0.01	1					
7	Gender	−0.06	0.03	−0.03	0.03	0.09	0.09	1				
8	Economic status	0.16**	0.16**	0.15**	−0.09	0.11*	−0.21***	0.02	1			
9	Collectivism	0.17**	0.05	0.19***	−0.06	0.02	−0.11*	0.06	0.12*	1		
10	Taking-the-lead	0.18***	0.12*	0.15**	−0.15**	0.02	−0.22***	−0.04	0.38***	0.26***	1	
11	Attention-seeking	0.03	−0.05	−0.01	0.01	0.00	−0.19***	−0.02	0.28***	0.14**	0.62***	1
	Mean	0.658	−0.313	0.435	0.330	4.786	1.817	1.449	6.287	5.061	3.372	3.279
	Std. Dev.	0.950	0.546	0.496	0.471	0.949	1.866	0.504	1.602	1.262	0.624	0.753
	Min	0	−3	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1.143	1
	Max	4	0	1	1	7	8	3	10	7	5	5

*$p < 0.05$.
**$p < 0.01$.
***$p < 0.001$.

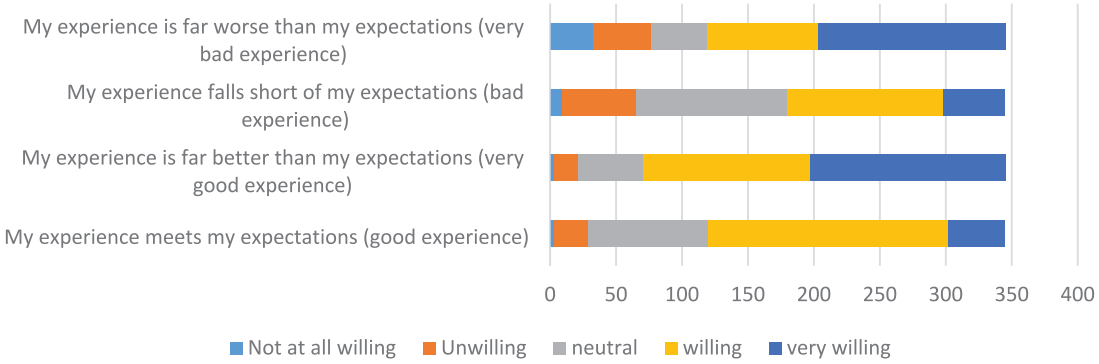

FIGURE 2 | How willing are you to post an online review about a hotel?

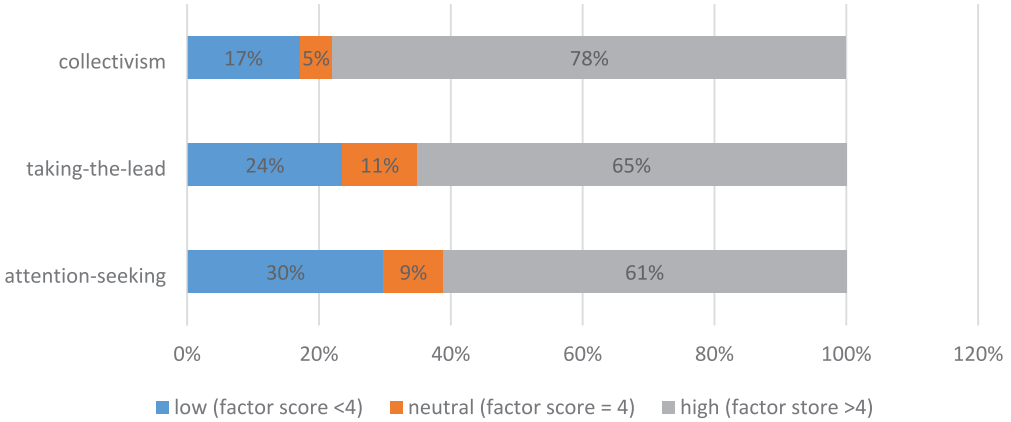

FIGURE 3 | Personal traits and value.

key obligations: serving the group's interests and preserving group harmony (Hofstede 2001). While posting fewer negative experiences may help maintain harmony and avoid conflict, it could also potentially compromise the group's interests by withholding important feedback. Therefore, a collectivist culture may not exert a clear dampening effect on the tendency of take-the-lead individuals to refrain from sharing negative experiences.

5.3 | Robustness Tests

We conducted two robustness tests to further validate the findings. In the first robustness test, we used the alternative measures for the positivity and the negativity bias, that is, the dummy variables, and employed the Probit regression model with STATA to confirm our main results. The results in Table 6 were highly consistent with those from PLS-SEM and supported hypotheses 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a and 4a. In Model 4, the main effect of attention-seeking was negatively related to the positivity bias ($\beta = -0.31$, $p < 0.001$), supporting hypothesis 1a. In Model 9, the main effect of attention-seeking was positively significant ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.01$), and the interaction between attention-seeking and collectivism was negatively significant ($\beta = -0.15$, $p < 0.05$). Such results supported hypothesis 3b.

In the second robustness test, we examined the influence of personality and cultural value on respondents' willingness to post positive and negative eWOM, using linear regression models with STATA. This helps us understand the mechanism behind the occurrence of the positivity bias and the negativity bias. The results are reported in Table 7.

The main effect of attention-seeking was not significantly related to posting positive reviews in Model 12, but was positively related to posting negative reviews in Model 16. The results indicated that posting more negative instead of less positive reviews resulted in attention-seekers' greater negativity bias.

The main effect of taking-the-lead was positively related to posting positive reviews, but not significantly related to posting negative reviews in Model 16. Such results suggested that posting more positive instead of fewer negative reviews caused the taking-the-lead's positivity bias.

The interaction between attention-seeking and collectivism was not significant in Model 13, but was negatively significant in Model 17. In Model 17, the main effect of attention-seeking was positively significant. Such results suggested that collectivism moderated the relationship between attention-seeking and the positivity and negativity biases mainly by refining attention-seekers' behaviour in posting negative eWOM, but not positive reviews. In essence, collectivist norms seem to act as a cultural brake on the expression of self-enhancing, but socially disruptive, online behaviours.

In Model 14, the interaction between taking-the-lead and collectivism was positively significant, with the main effect of

TABLE 5 | PLS-SEM results: positivity bias and negativity bias.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Positivity bias	**Negativity bias**	**Positivity bias**	**Negativity bias**	**Positivity bias**	**Negativity bias**
Attention-seeking × collectivism (H3a and H3b)			**0.14^{+} (0.07)**	−0.06 (0.07)		
Taking-the-lead × collectivism (H4a and H4b)					**0.12* (0.06)**	−0.03 (0.05)
Attention-seeking	−0.14	**0.25^{+}**	**−0.15^{+}**	**0.25***	−0.15	**0.25***
(H1a and H1b)	(0.09)	**(0.13)**	**(0.09)**	**(0.13)**	(0.10)	**(0.12)**
Taking-the-lead	**0.25*****	**−0.25****	**0.25*****	**−0.25****	**0.26*****	**−0.26****
(H2a and H2b)	**(0.07)**	**(0.08)**	**(0.07)**	**(0.08)**	**(0.07)**	**(0.08)**
Collectivism	0.14* (0.06)	−0.004 (0.06)	0.14** (0.05)	−0.004 (0.06)	0.14** (0.05)	−0.004 (0.06)
Education	−0.11^{+} (0.06)	0.09 (0.06)	−0.10^{+} (0.06)	0.08 (0.06)	−0.10^{+} (0.06)	0.08 (0.070)
Employed	−0.03 (0.05)	0.01 (0.06)	−0.01 (0.05)	0.004 (0.05)	−0.02 (0.05)	0.01 (0.05)
Gender	−0.07 (0.05)	−0.05 (0.05)	−0.08 (0.05)	−0.04 (0.05)	−0.08 (0.05)	−0.05 (0.06)
Income	0.14* (0.06)	−0.15^{+} (0.08)	0.12* (0.06)	−0.14^{+} (0.07)	0.13* (0.06)	−0.15^{+} (0.08)

Note: SRMR for the saturated model is 0.062. Numbers in parentheses indicate the standard deviations. Significant results related to the hypotheses are bolded.
*$p < 0.05$.
**$p < 0.01$.
***$p < 0.001$.
$^{+}p < 0.1$.

TABLE 6 | Robustness test 1: Probit regression results.

	DV: positivity bias dummy				DV: negativity bias dummy			
	Model 4	**Model 5**	**Model 6**	**Model 7**	**Model 8**	**Model 9**	**Model 10**	**Model 11**
Attention-seeking × collectivism (H3a and H3b)		**0.20** (0.07)**		**0.22* (0.11)**		**−0.15 (0.07)**		**−0.20^{+} (0.11)**
Taking-the-lead × collectivism (H4a and H4b)			**0.15 (0.07)**	−0.03 (0.11)			−0.06 (0.08)	0.09 (0.12)
Collectivism	0.17** (0.06)	0.18** (0.06)	0.18*** (0.03)	0.18** (0.06)	−0.02 (0.06)	−0.02 (0.06)	−0.02 (0.06)	−0.02 (0.06)
Attention-seeking (H1a and H1b)	**−0.31 (0.12)**	**−0.52 (0.14)**	**−0.32 (0.09)**	**−0.54 (0.16)**	**0.26 (0.13)**	**0.40 (0.14)**	**0.27 (0.13)**	**0.44 (0.16)**
Taking-the-lead (H2a and H2b)	**0.36 (0.16)**	**0.39 (0.16)**	**0.27 (0.08)**	**0.41 (0.18)**	**−0.48 (0.17)**	**−0.49 (0.17)**	**−0.45 (0.17)**	**−0.56 (0.19)**
Age	0.05 (0.09)	0.03 (0.09)	0.04 (0.05)	0.03 (0.09)	−0.12 (0.10)	−0.11 (0.10)	−0.12 (0.10)	−0.11 (0.10)
Economic Status	0.11* (0.05)	0.1* (0.05)	0.10* (0.04)	0.10* (0.05)	−0.06 (0.05)	−0.05 (0.05)	−0.06 (0.05)	−0.05 (0.05)
Male	0.04 (0.14)	0.06 (0.14)	0.05 (0.17)	0.06 (0.14)	−0.02 (0.15)	−0.04 (0.15)	−0.03 (0.15)	−0.04 (0.15)
Job	0.11 (0.23)	0.20 (0.23)	0.16 (0.15)	0.2 (0.23)	0.21 (0.22)	0.17 (0.23)	0.20 (0.23)	0.17 (0.23)
Higher Education	−0.3^{+} (0.16)	−0.26 (0.16)	−0.27^{+} (0.15)	−0.26 (0.16)	0.47** (0.17)	0.44** (0.17)	0.46** (0.17)	0.45** (0.17)
Constant	−1.01** (0.38)	−1.07** (0.38)	−1.02*** (0.29)	−1.07** (0.38)	−0.31 (0.38)	−0.31 (0.38)	−0.30 (0.38)	−0.32 (0.38)
Pseudo R^2	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.08	0.05	0.06	0.05	0.06

Note: Significant results related to the hypotheses are bolded.
*$p < 0.05$.
**$p < 0.01$.
***$p < 0.001$.
$^{+}p < 0.1$.

TABLE 7 | Robustness test 2: Linear regression model focusing on positive eWOM and negative eWOM ($N = 345$).

	Model 12	Model 13	Model 14	Model 15	Model 16	Model 17	Model 18	Model 19
Attention-seeking × collectivism		0.02 (0.01)		−0.04 (0.04)		**−0.15 (0.04)**		**−0.14 (0.03)**
Taking-the-lead × collectivism			**0.05 (0.02)**	0.08 (0.04)			**−0.12 (0.05)**	−0.01 (0.04)
Collectivism	0.03 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.04 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)	−0.06 (0.04)	−0.06 (0.04)	−0.07 (0.04)	−0.06 (0.04)
Attention-seeking	−0.06 (0.06)	−0.07 (0.06)	−0.06 (0.06)	−0.03 (0.07)	**0.24^{+} (0.10)**	**0.37 (0.08)**	**0.24 (0.1)**	**0.36 (0.08)**
Taking-the-lead	**0.30 (0.06)**	**0.30 (0.06)**	**0.27 (0.06)**	**0.25 (0.06)**	−0.14 (0.07)	−0.16 (0.08)	−0.07 (0.07)	−0.15^{+} (0.07)
Age	−0.03 (0.04)	−0.03 (0.04)	−0.04 (0.04)	−0.03 (0.04)	−0.09* (0.03)	−0.08* (0.03)	−0.08* (0.03)	−0.08* (0.03)
Economic status	0.04 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	−0.09^{+} (0.04)	−0.08^{+} (0.04)	−0.08 (0.04)	−0.08^{+} (0.04)
Male	−0.12 (0.11)	−0.12 (0.11)	−0.12 (0.11)	−0.12 (0.11)	−0.16 (0.18)	−0.18 (0.17)	−0.17 (0.17)	−0.18 (0.17)
Job	0.09 (0.06)	0.09 (0.07)	0.1 (0.07)	0.09 (0.08)	0.15 (0.11)	0.10 (0.11)	0.13 (0.11)	0.10 (0.11)
Higher education	−0.02 (0.07)	−0.01 (0.07)	0 (0.07)	−0.01 (0.07)	0.38** (0.08)	0.35** (0.08)	0.35** (0.09)	0.35** (0.08)
Constant	3.74*** (0.13)	3.74*** (0.13)	3.74*** (0.13)	3.74*** (0.14)	4.08*** (0.29)	4.09*** (0.29)	4.09*** (0.28)	4.09*** (0.29)
R-squared	0.09	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.07	0.09	0.08	0.09

Note: Significant results related to the hypotheses are bolded.
*$p < 0.05$.
**$p < 0.01$.
***$p < 0.001$.
$^{+}p < 0.1$.

taking-the-lead being positively related to posting a positive review. In Model 18, the interaction showed a significantly negative effect on posting negative reviews, though the main effect of taking-the-lead was insignificant. Such results suggested that collectivism moderated the relationship between taking-the-lead and positivity bias by refining their behaviour in posting both positive and negative eWOM.

6 | Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 | Discussion

Our descriptive results show that the majority of the respondents demonstrate some bias when posting eWOM (76%), confirming the prevalence of bias in eWOM generation reported by existing studies. For example, Hu et al. (2009) found that product ratings tend to have a bimodal distribution, with extreme reviews being overrepresented. Luca (2016) demonstrated that extreme reviews are disproportionately represented on platforms like Yelp, with most reviews being either 1 or 5-star. In addition, respondents in our study show a greater positivity bias than a negativity bias; that is, respondents are generally more inclined to share electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) following a positive experience at a hotel than after a negative one (Figure 2). This finding supports Vargo et al. (2019), who showed that people shared more positive eWOM but less negative eWOM; yet it contradicts the findings of Sparks and Browning (2011), who reported that in the hotel industry, dissatisfied customers are significantly more likely to leave negative reviews compared to satisfied customers. In social psychology, it is well documented that negative events are more influential than positive events for judgment and behaviour (Baumeister et al. 2001; Rozin and Royzman 2001). Yet, Ito and Cacioppo (2005) gave evidence of individual differences in relation to bias, and in line with this reasoning, our study shifts the conversation to personality and culture, showing why the positivity bias is more pronounced than the negativity bias.

Regarding the personality construct, we find an association between the attention-seeking personality and the negativity bias, explained by the perceived benefit of posting more negative than positive eWOM (Donghee et al. 2015). Attention-seeking is a personality trait associated with the propensity of an individual to seek and thrive on the attention, validation, and approval of others. Attention-seeking individuals may use various tactics, from overt displays of emotion to constant self-promotion (DeWall et al. 2011; Shafique et al. 2024), to capture the attention of those around them. Evidence has shown that people overshare on social media to seek attention (Shabahang et al. 2024). Since negative information is seen as surprising (Xia and Bechwati 2008) and thought-provoking (Ahluwalia and Shiv 1997), it should elicit more attention than positive information; hence, attention-seeking individuals are more likely to show a negativity bias when posting eWOM.

We find an association between the taking-the-lead personality and the positivity bias. Taking the lead is associated with conscientiousness (Kwan et al. 2002) and a sense of competence and mastery over the environment and consequences of events (Chen 2009). Telling others about satisfying consumption experiences thus demonstrates expertise and fulfills a need for self-enhancement (Wojnicki and Godes 2008).

The result that collectivism itself shows a significantly positive impact on the positivity bias aligns with previous studies. For example, Sann et al. (2020) showed that non-Asian guests characterised by lower collectivism frequently make complaints which are longer and more detailed than Asian customers characterised by higher collectivism. Kusawat and Teerakapibal (2024) reported in their literature review that customers scoring low for collectivism tend to complain more since they have higher expectations for service quality.

Lastly, our results reveal that collectivism regulates the impact of individuals' personalities on their eWOM behaviour. We hypothesised that a collectivistic orientation would weaken the relationship between attention-seeking and negativity bias, and the Probit regression confirms this hypothesis. Our results support the premise in cultural psychology that personality is "a malleable substance" which can be shaped and moulded by culture (Allik et al. 2023). This finding aligns with prior studies on Chinese culture, demonstrating the negative connotations of self-promotion and exhibitionistic tendencies (Kwan et al. 2002). Hence, attention-seekers are culturally conditioned to modify their desire to give negative eWOM. In addition, collectivism reinforces the positivity bias for taking-the-lead people and dampens their willingness to post negative eWOM. One explanation for this finding is that a positivity bias could minimise the threat of hotels losing "face" with negative feedback, a value strongly linked to Confucian cultures (Triandis 2001). Taking-the-lead individuals may be motivated by a desire to demonstrate their expertise and serve the group while conforming to cultural norms. Our results reveal specific "person-culture" profiles that lead a person to provide mostly positive or negative eWOM; that is, attention-seekers with low collectivism are most likely to give negative eWOM, while taking-the-lead types with high collectivism are most likely to post positive eWOM.

6.2 | Theoretical Contributions

Previous tourism marketing literature has highlighted the costs and benefits of posting eWOM, underpinned by social exchange theory (Shiau and Luo 2012). Motivations for posting positive or negative eWOM are explained by a range of cognitive, emotional and social constructs (Cheung et al. 2021, 2022, 2025). Yet existing studies overlook the interplay between personality and cultural background in shaping eWOM posting behaviour, particularly in relation to biased eWOM. Empirically, conflicting findings have been reported about the positivity bias and the negativity bias in eWOM. This study contributes to the tourism marketing literature by integrating social exchange theory and the cultural psychology perspective to address the theoretical void and empirical debate in past research. Specifically, the study looks into how personality traits and cultural values influence the bias in eWOM posting behaviour.

Our findings firstly provide more evidence that bias is prevalent in the eWOM posting, with respondents stating that they are more willing to give positive reviews than negative reviews. Such results help address the ongoing debate about whether

people tend to share more positive or negative content on online platforms.

Second, while prior studies have examined the impact of personality on tourists' behaviour, they have mostly focused on the Big 5 personality framework, promotion-focus versus prevention-focus, and self-construal. We have investigated an under-researched personality trait that has not been studied by prior eWOM studies, individuation. A novel finding is that particular personality traits predict a negativity or positivity bias. Specifically, the two sub-dimensions, attention-seeking and taking-the-lead, predict the negativity bias and the positivity bias in eWOM, respectively.

Third, while the role of culture in eWOM has been studied, cultural comparisons typically take place at the national level, which has its limitations (Kitirattarkarn et al. 2019). Multiple studies have empirically demonstrated the existence of within-country cultural variations, for example, in the United States (Vandello and Cohen 1999) and Japan (Yamawaki 2012). This study joins the small number of scholars who have started looking into how cultural values, measured at the individual level and not inferred, influence eWOM behaviours. Our results show that a country perceived to embody similar values, like China, does show a variation in collectivism, and this cultural value interacts with personality to predict a positivity bias in eWOM posting behaviour.

Lastly, our study is probably among the first to investigate the interaction between personality and culture in predicting a positive or a negative bias in eWOM posting behaviour and challenges the simplistic assumptions about collectivists and their willingness to share eWOM. A key debate in the literature is whether the influence of culture on human behaviour is general and all-encompassing, or whether it is heterogeneous and context-specific (Chan and Wan 2008; Kitirattarkarn et al. 2019). In the eWOM context, on the one hand, Chinese consumers may be unwilling to express negative or divergent opinions in the public sphere due to 'other-face' concern (Chan and Wan 2008; Wan 2013) and the desire to maintain harmony with others (Dang and Raska 2022), driven by their collectivism value. On the other hand, the drive to assert one's personality may lead people to express their opinions and stand out from the crowd. Furthermore, since personality is stable, it could be linked to a general tendency to express negative views (the negativity bias) or positive views (the positivity bias). Thus, generalisations about collectivists might not hold if personality and context are taken into consideration. Our results on the joint effect of personality and culture on eWOM behaviour engage with this debate, that is, does culture overrule personality? Our findings show that personality matters, but it is moderated by culture. Future researchers are encouraged to adopt a nuanced approach to studying eWOM by examining the factors that shape the degree to which the unique "individual" within every person emerges or the culture-bound part emerges.

6.3 | Practical Implications

Practically, our results provide personality-based and culture-specific guidelines for eWOM platforms and hoteliers. Personality has often been used as a basis for market segmentation purposes. For example, Plog's travel personality types based on an allocentrism–psychocentrism continuum (Plog 1974) have received substantial attention and have been used to segment travellers based on their political attitudes (Litvin et al. 2021). It may be worthwhile for hoteliers to segment the Chinese market based on the personality traits identified in this study (attention-seeking and taking-the-lead) and tailor marketing communications to each segment. This is feasible as research has demonstrated that users' personalities can be automatically inferred through social media reactions, such as likes, shares, and the language used in posts or comments (Farnadi et al. 2016). Furthermore, social media networks have continuously evolved and expanded their targeting capabilities. Mindful of privacy and ethical issues, social media developers could use a psychographic segmentation strategy by inferring users' personality traits from their digital footprints, using machine learning algorithms. User consent should be obtained with full disclosure provided in the privacy policy.

Based on our findings that Chinese consumers are influenced by collectivism and prone to a positivity bias, hotels could prioritise targeting this group by encouraging them to share positive eWOM across multiple platforms. Hotels may use group-oriented appeals such as "please post a review. Over 90% of our hotel patrons have chosen to provide comments online", or "most of our guests fill out a review form; please follow in their footsteps".

Practitioners can leverage the findings of this study to influence distinct 'person-culture' profiles. Given the time and effort involved in writing reviews, it can be difficult for business owners to motivate customers to post a review. Instead of sending out a standard email to all customers, framing emails in the right way could encourage customers to write online reviews. For instance, when sending invitation emails to attention-seeking guests, hoteliers could use tailored appeals such as "Your comments will draw attention to your satisfying experiences in this hotel and destination and will influence many other customers". Since attention-seekers thrive on recognition, hoteliers could further engage them by sharing the impact of their reviews, including the number of views, likes, and comments received. Given the interactive effect of attention-seeking and collectivism on the negativity bias, hoteliers could mitigate the likelihood of negative reviews from this group by providing guidelines on how to write reviews and subtly referencing collectivist cultural norms. Marketing communications could hint at values such as "face" and group harmony, using messages like, "Please post a genuine review while considering the needs of fellow travellers from your country."

Likewise, the taking-the-lead customers could be encouraged to share their experiences in a way that aligns with their personality traits. Since collectivism increases the take-the-lead people's tendency to post positive eWOM and reduces their inclination to post negative eWOM, hoteliers could emphasise pro-social motives, group duties and obligations when targeting these customers. For example, hotels could offer them enhanced social rewards, such as "Best Review of the Month", and highlight how their reviews have contributed to service improvements. Recognizing their competence and contributions to the community may encourage them to be proactive and share more positive eWOM.

6.4 | Limitations

We acknowledge several limitations. First, the data is based on self-reported eWOM activity, rather than observed or actual behaviour. Second, our sample has an overrepresentation of younger, highly educated individuals; the findings may not be directly applicable to older, less educated individuals living in rural settings. Therefore, the results should be interpreted and generalized with caution. Third, we used the collectivism/individualism scale by Fischer et al. (2009), which employs bipolar items (e.g., "personal enjoyment vs. group obligations") to assess cultural orientation. While effective in highlighting value preferences, this format may oversimplify cultural complexity by forcing choices between opposites. This can limit the expression of ambivalence or situational variability, especially in contexts where both collectivistic and individualistic values coexist. Future research could adopt the Triandis and Gelfand (1998) scale, which captures horizontal and vertical dimensions using a 9-point Likert format. Lastly, similar to much of the existing literature, this study is channel agnostic (Vargo et al. 2019). Future research could investigate differences across channels, as the nature of the platform may influence both the likelihood of consumers sharing eWOM and the tone of their feedback (Zhou et al. 2019; Vargo et al. 2019).

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Appendix A

Antecedents of eWOM in the Tourism and Hospitality industry: Motivation, Personality and Cultural Value

Antecedents	Main variables	Representative literature
Mechanism of eWOM posting	Cognitive-affective-behavior	Cheung et al. (2021) Huang et al. (2015)
Motivations		
Experience	Satisfactory experience, negative experience, acquaintance, positive emotional experience, brand hate	Fan et al. (2023) Rossmann et al. (2016) Serra-Cantallops et al. (2018) Sharma et al. (2022) Su et al. (2024)
Hotel attributes	Hotel attributes: Quality of service, product and atmosphere, price fairness, hotel attribute performance, service reliability	Fine et al. (2017) Jeong and Jang (2011) Su et al. (2024) Uslu (2020) Yen and Tang (2015)
Intrinsic motivations	Intrinsic motivation	Fine et al. (2017)
	Self-directed motivation	Bronner and De Hoog (2011)
	Self-enhancement, self-image, appraisal of self, conspicuous presentation and self-image congruity, self-presentation	Chu et al. (2019) Hanks et al. (2024) Hu and Kim (2018) Hussain et al. (2018) Donghee et al. (2015) Pasternak et al. (2017) Wien (2019) Yoo and Gretzel (2008) Zhou et al. (2019)
	Need for enjoyment	Fan et al. (2023) Hu and Kim (2018) Yoo and Gretzel (2008)
	Dissonance reduction, venting negative feelings, expressing emotions	Hu and Kim (2018) Yen and Tang (2015) Yoo and Gretzel (2008) Zhou et al. (2019)
	Social benefits, social interaction, sense of belonging, socializing, positive emotion	Cheung et al. (2021) Chu et al. (2019) Hussain et al. (2018) Yen and Tang (2015) Zhou et al. (2019)
	Recording life	Zhou et al. (2019)
	Other-directed motivation	Bronner and De Hoog (2011)
	Distributive justice, interactional and procedural justice	Fu et al. (2015)
	Altruism and platform assistance motivations, helping others, sharing experience	Chen et al. (2023) Fan et al. (2023) Hanks et al. (2024) Hu and Kim (2018) Reimer and Benkenstein (2016) Yen and Tang (2015) Yoo and Gretzel (2008) Zhou et al. (2019)
Extrinsic motivations	Extrinsic motivation	Fine et al. (2017)
	Economic incentives	Chen et al. (2023) Hu and Kim (2018) Hussain et al. (2018) Reimer and Benkenstein (2016) Yen and Tang (2015)
Personality		

Antecedents	Main variables	Representative literature
Big 5 personality with significant results	Neuroticism, and conscientiousness	Picazo-Vela et al. (2010).
	Materialism, extraversion, and narcissism	Moisescu et al. (2022).
	Openness to new experiences, agreeableness, and conscientiousness	Manner and Lane (2017)
	Openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness	Kordzadeh and Bozan (2024)
	Openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism	Fanea-Ivanovici et al. (2023).
Big 5 personality × motivation	Altruistic and enjoyment/self-enhancement motivations × extraversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, Neuroticism	Yoo and Gretzel (2011)
	Motivations self-enhancement, social benefits and venting negative feelings × neuroticism and openness	Rensink (2013)
	Self-enhancement and enjoyment, altruism × agreeableness and conscientiousness	Hu and Kim (2018)
	Need for social appreciation and Positive self-enhancement, concern for others and the desire to help good companies, Vent negative feelings, social benefits × extraversion, Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism.	Anastasiei and Dospinescu (2018)
	Self-presentation × grandiose narcissism	Hasan and Neela (2022)
	Brand hate × neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness	Sameeni et al. (2024)
Other personalities	Self-construal: independence vs. interdependence	He et al. (2022) Kitirattarkarn et al. (2021) Lee et al. (2012)
	Promotion focus, vs. prevention focus	Shin et al. (2014) Yan et al. (2023)
	Dark triad	Kapoor et al. (2021)
Cultural values		
Comparing multiple countries (using cultural value as argument)	US vs. China	Chiu et al. (2019) Fong and Burton (2008) Jia (2020) Wang et al. (2019)
	US and India	Madupu and Cooley (2010)
	US, South Korea, and China	Cheong and Mohammed-Baksh (2020)
	US and South Korea	Lee et al. (2019)
	Germany and India, based on high-low context	Pflug (2011)
	Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, South Africa, USA, and UK	Hodeghatta and Sahney (2016)
	Japan, USA, Canada, UK, and Germany	Nakayama and Wan (2018)
	US and Japan	Nakayama and Wan (2019)
	Northern Americas and European	Buzova et al. (2019)
	Italy and Russia	Mariani and Predvoditeleva (2019)
	UK, Italy and Russia	Mariani et al. (2020)
	Italy, China, USA	Francesco and Roberta (2019)
	US, UK, Germany, Japan, and France	Barbro et al. (2020)
	US and Germany	Nielsen and Zethsen (2022)

Antecedents	Main variables	Representative literature
Country-level cultural values	Individualism, power distance, muscularity, uncertainty avoidance	Tang (2017)
	Power distance	Gao et al. (2018)
	High- vs. low-uncertainty avoidance	Litvin (2019)
	Individualism/collectivism	Banerjee and Chai (2019) Hong et al. (2016) Kitirattarkarn et al. (2019) Kusawat and Teerakapibal (2021) Pezzuti and Leonhardt (2021) Zhang and Lee (2012)
	Individualism, power distance, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance	Leon (2019) Mariani and Predvoditeleva (2019)
	Uncertainty avoidance, individualism, masculinity, indulgence, power distance, short-term orientation	Stamolampros et al. (2019)
	Short-term orientation, individualism, uncertainty avoidance	Chatterjee and Mandal (2020)
	Cultural distance	Kusawat and Teerakapibal (2021) Levy et al. (2021) Zhang and Lee (2012)
Individual-level cultural value	Horizontal–vertical dimensions of individualism and collectivism	Lee et al. (2018)
	Individualism/collectivism	Choi and Kim (2019) Gvili and Levy (2021) Gvili and Levy (2023) Pezzuti and Leonhardt (2021) Rawal et al. (2024)
	Power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, long-term orientation, and masculinity	Lee and Choi (2019)
	Power distance (PD), individualist, and masculine cultures	Arora et al. (2019)