

ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH INFLUENCE ON CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTION

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ABSTRACT

Several factors apt to influence consumers on buying a product or service. But with the emerging e-marketing experiences and e-strategies of organizations, consumers inclined on electronic word of mouth which was more convenient due to its promptness and accessibility. This type of e-marketing affects consumer on its purchase intention of product or service. Purchasing experiences were found online and the consumers will be able to access at their own pace which would help them in buying decision. The study focused on the six factors: consumer reviews, characteristics of the reviewer, characteristics of the website presented the reviews, interpersonal influence, product review characteristics and environment influence and how these factors influence the buying decisions of consumers. A quantitative study and questionnaire was used to collect data. The data was collected from three hundred thirty seven college students of Surigao del Sur State University. Results revealed that there was an affirmative impact of the factors of electronic word of mouth on consumer purchase intention. Furthermore, consumer reviews was the most dominant factor that influence consumer purchase intention. This paper is expedient for marketers in creating effective promotional strategies which will lead to their greater sales and ultimately greater profits. In the innovative Internet era, consumers are more active and have the capability to direct business organizations to the market. The study comprises valuable data to appreciate consumers' behavior in online platforms which could be beneficial in e-marketing strategies

Keywords: Electronic word of mouth, Purchase intention, Consumer

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INTRODUCTION

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) is one of the comprehensive e-marketing strategy which transfer new ideas up to one's ears in numerous means such as; discussions, influential stories, interchanges, and common involvements of products and services through the use of electronic devices. These electronic devices such as radio, television, computer sets, cellphones, tablets and etc., opened the means of spreading the knowledge and information through social media sites and websites and its influence remained in anticipation of learning another story of experience, hence, electronic word of mouth helps consumers to identify about what is new, top and what is modern and is rightful to purchase a certain product or service.

Word of mouth is an imperative foundation of information to consumers. Literature in marketing has defined word of mouth, or "between –customer communication" as a credible driver of consumer decision making (Chevalier and Maysilin, 2004,).

Its counterpart in the cyberspace known as eWOM that applied on person-to-person exchanges that occurred on the internet. Electronic word of mouth could be positive or negative. The consumers who were contented will continue acquiring the product, and informing other consumers about these particular worthy products, while consumers who were not pleased will evoke only weaknesses of the product and they will convey to others about these downsides (Richins, 2009).

At hand is an extensive body of literature of marketing, which discussed the word of mouth as an operative marketing tool. (Sernovitz, et. al. 2009) Authors stressed out that individuals love to talk about products they have purchased, and services they have used, likewise they converse about the manufacturer of these products, and the supplier of these services.

Similarly, some people were delighted, because of the purchase of a particular product, conversely, some of them offer recommendations to others not to even think of purchasing a product. To that point, the electronic word of mouth marketing is approximately making that honest, direct, open and virtuous discussions. Other researchers have deliberated word of mouth as a strategic accomplishment for organizations (Lake, 2009).

There are many factors of eWOM that can influence the purchase decision and have been studied previously; however, only the following factors are considered in this study: consumer reviews, characteristics of the reviewer, characteristics of the website presented the reviews, interpersonal influence, product review characteristics and environment influence.

The study is anchored on the different researches and studies related to the factors focused. There were prior studies settled that consumers accord more importance to approvals by fellow consumers than to endorsements by professional reviewers. According to these studies, consumers identify fellow consumers' opinions to be less biased. They likewise discover fellow consumers' involvements easier to recount to (Bickart and Schindler, 2001). Similarly, several experiential studies (Dellarocas et al., 2006; Houser and Wooders, 2006; Menlik and Alm, 2002) demonstrate that buyers extremely contemplate online criticisms when making purchasing decisions.

Additionally, Goldenberg, et. al. (2001) revealed a consumer's decision-making process is strongly influenced by eWOM. On the other hand, some earlier studies conveyed that online user generated reviews are alleged as having inferior reliability than traditional WOM due to lack of base indications on the Internet (Smith et al., 2005). For this cause, the influence of online consumer reviews require more assessments in diverse circumstances.

Electronic word of mouth plays vital part in influencing consumers in positive or negative ways. (Almana, 2013) detailed that online remarks and criticisms are essential factors in creating purchase decision. The ratings and characteristics of reviews are important factors which influence to consumers' purchase decision. Consumers are progressively using social media channel in their purchase decisions. (Meuter, McCabe, & Curran, 2013) discovered the influence of interpersonal word of mouth and various form of electronic word of mouth.

Word of mouth is believed to have more influence on behavioral intentions, trust in WOM and attitude toward business compared to all electronic word mouth channels. Electronic word of mouth on independent source such as Facebook was found more influential compared to company controlled sources of electronic word of mouth such as customer testimonials on a firm website. (Nasirrudin and Hashim, 2015)

The extensive distribution of eWOM communications and the extraordinary level of recognition by consumers recommend that eWOM utilizes substantial influence on consumer buying and communication behavior, and, accordingly, on the achievement of products sale in the market (Sussman and Siegal, 2003).

In China, this is a vast transformation about internet shopping in the minds of their customers, hence, online firms should think about eWOM intensely to generate the profit in this new era (Wang, et.al., 2011).. Customer-to-customer know-how exchange, a specific form of eWOM, has a direct relationship with dependability intents, as well as an indirect relationship facilitated through the general value of the firm's offering. (Gruen, et.al. 2006). In

addition, as the market of Internet shopping growing up recently, eWOM takes a much more important role around the value chain of China's Internet shopping. (Wang, et.al, 2011).

Overall, consumers discover it essential to get the opinions of others while (or before) making purchase decisions. They converse and deliberate their purchase intentions with family members, relatives, friends, and on the Internet (Wang, et.al. 2011).

As a result, receivers are most likely influenced in their decision-making because they cooperate and connect with others. There are also research activities that investigated this process of interpersonal influence in the traditional context address, among other things, reference group influence (Bearden, et.al., 1989) and the effects of eWOM (Brown, et.al., 1987).

EWOM has been established to be an effective marketing tool by researchers (Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Kumar and Benbasat, 2006; Zhang et al., 2010). The Internet offers numerous applicable platforms for eWOM such as shopping websites, discussion forums, consumer review websites, blogs and recently social media websites (Cheung and Thadani, 2012).

Beforehand, the effects of eWOM on shopping websites (Li and Zhan, 2011; Park et al., 2007), discussion forums (Chiou and Cheng, 2003; Huang and Chen, 2006), consumer review websites (Cheung et al., 2008; Gauri et al., 2008) blogs (Chu and Kamal, 2008; Lin et al., 2012), have been studied by researchers. Also, these media have been associated in terms of their impacts on consumers' purchase intentions (Lee and Youn, 2009). Moreover, factors of eWOM concentrated on this study was provided not as much of attention.

This study will focus on the degree of influence of the six factors of electronic word of mouth in guiding the purchase intention of Surigao del Sur State University college students on purchasing products or services.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results provide information regarding the respondents' degree of consumers purchase intention influenced by eWOM factors: consumer reviews, characteristics of the reviewer, characteristics of the website presented the reviews, interpersonal influence, product review characteristics and environment influence.

Table 1. Gender of the Respondents

Category	FREQUENC Y	PERCENTAG E
Male	83	25%
Female	254	75%
Total	337	100%

Table 1 showed that out of 337 respondents, 83 were male students and 254 were female students. Among the college students, most enrolled were female.

Table 2 showed that the ages ranging from 21-30 years has the least number of respondents and the youngest range of below 20 years old has the most number of respondents. Usually, the students in college range from the youngest range because individuals who went to first year in college started with 16-17 years of age and least were those who went to college at the middle age because at that point, mostly, they have already finished their college degrees.

Table 2. Age of the Respondents

RANGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Below 20 years	229	68%
21-30 years	108	32%
Total	337	100%

Table 3 revealed that majority of the respondents were single because at an early age, in their culture, they were encouraged by their families to finish first their studies before getting married to give more emphasis and concentration with their ambitions in life in the future.

Table 3. Marital Status

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Single	331	98%
Married	6	2%
Total	337	100%

Table 4 showed the respondents' consumer purchase intention were influenced by eWom consumer reviews factors. They settled that reviews presented were helpful for their buying decision making and were considered all the time. In entirety, indicators in the consumer review factors were well-thought-out all the time.

Table 4. Consumer Reviews Factor

Indicator	weighted mean	Interpretation
1. The reviews presented on the website are helpful for my decision making.	3.36	all the time
2. The consistency of reviews presented on the website affect my purchase decision.	3.15	most of the time
3. The positive reviews of the product make me confident in purchasing the product.	3.48	all the time
4. Negative reviews affect my purchasing decision.	3.23	most of the time
5. The recency of the review is important to me.	3.29	all the time
6. High ratings of the product	3.34	all the time

affect my decision.		
7. I worry if I don't read the reviews before buying a product online.	3.27	all the time
FACTOR AVERAGE	3.30	all the time

Table 5 revealed the degree of the characteristics of the reviewer influence the purchase intention of the consumers. It exhibited that the rating of usefulness of the review was considered most of the time but the reviewers gender was sometimes considered in the buying decision of the consumer.

Table 5. Characteristics of the Reviewer Factor

Indicator	weighted mean	Interpretation
1. Other reviewers' rating of usefulness of the review affects my purchase decision.	3.20	most of the time
2. The nick name or the real name of the reviewers affects my buying decision.	2.65	most of the time
3. The reviewer's age	2.58	most of the

affects my buying decision.		time
4. The reviewer's residence or location affect my purchase decision.	2.79	most of the time
5. The reviewer's gender affects my buying decision.	2.43	sometimes considered
FACTOR AVERAGE	2.73	most of the time

Results also discovered the influence of characteristics of the website presented the reviews affects the purchase intention of the consumers. It disclosed that the popularity of the website that present the reviews was taken most of the time in purchasing decision but even though the internationality of the website that present the reviews was reflected as well thought of most of the time, yet it gathered the least consideration among the indicators of this particular factor of eWOM.

Additionally, the product review characteristics factor influenced consumers most of the time on their purchase intention. They were specific on the spelling and grammar mistakes on product reviews which affects their decision all the time. In contrary, independent blogs on product reviews was never considered at all before buying a product or service.

Table 6. Environment Influence Factor

Indicator	weighted mean	interpretation
1. Product Reviews on Facebook affects my purchasing decisions.	3.16	most of the time
2. Product Reviews on shopping sites affects my purchasing decisions.	3.09	most of the time
3. Product Reviews on instagram affects my purchasing decisions.	2.82	most of the time
4. Product Reviews on forums affects my purchasing decisions.	2.93	most of the time
5. I am not particular with the social media	2.79	most of the time

sites where the reviews are presented.		
FACTOR AVERAGE	2.96	most of the time

Furthermore, table 6 results revealed the environment influence factor and it influence consumers most of the time. Respondents deliberated that product reviews on Facebook affects them most of the time. But yet, they reflected that they were precise on what social media sites the reviews are presented.

Table 7 indicated how interpersonal influence affects the consumer purchase intention. It specified that consumers feel more comfortable all the time on buying something when they learned other’s judgement on it over the internet. Likewise, seeking advice from their friends regarding online purchase was reflected all the time.

Table 7. Interpersonal Influence

Indicator	weighted mean	Interpretation
1. I tend to seek advice of my friends regarding my online purchase.	3.39	all the time
2. I feel more comfortable buying something when I have gotten	3.42	all the time

other people's opinions on it over the internet.		
3. My friends think of me as a good online source of information when it comes to purchase decisions.	2.97	most of the time
4. My family and relatives' ideas are more likely to be asked by me about products/services over the internet.	3.10	most of the time
5. Over the internet, I tend to influence people's opinions about some purchases.	2.98	most of the time

FACTOR AVERAGE	3.17	most of the time
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Table 8 disclosed the degree of influence the factors of eWOM affects the purchase intention of the consumers. Consumer reviews gathered the highest contemplation and carefully well thought of all the time. On the other hand, the rest of the factors were pondered most of the time before the buying decision.

The reviewer and product review characteristics garnered the least weighted mean but yet acquired most of the time consideration. Commonly, grand mean illustrated that all of these factors were considered most of the time by the college students of Surigao del Sur State University on their purchase intention.

Table 8. Summary of the Degree of Influence of Factors

FACTOR	weighted mean	Interpretation
1. Consumer Reviews	3.30	all the time
2. Characteristics of the Reviewer	2.73	most of the time
3. Characteristics of the website presented the reviews	3.07	most of the time
4. Interpersonal Influence	3.17	most of the time
5. Product Review Characteristics	2.73	most of the time
6. Environment Influence	2.96	most of the time

GRAND MEAN	2.99	most of the time

CONCLUSIONS

With the rapid globalization and evolution of web nowadays, the importance of electronic word of mouth in e-marketing known to be the online exchange of opinions and online communication plays a vital role. This has become increasing source of information for consumers to aid them in their purchasing intention thus, influence their buying decisions. Business organizations should be aware of this occurrence because of its widespread and effects. The study unveiled the consumers' behavior towards the factors of electronic word of mouth, the order of consideration among these factors including how they were affected as to their purchase intention and indeed, consumers most of the time considered the six factors studied.

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