Chapter 58
Consumer Adoption of PC-Based/Mobile-Based Electronic Word-of-Mouth

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ABSTRACT

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) on products and services is getting more important in consumer behavior as well as marketing communication. Regarding the issue, marketing and consumer scholars have conducted research on eWOM message senders and recipients. Focusing on eWOM receiving behavior, this chapter presents academic knowledge regarding how recipients evaluate mobile e-WOM messages and how he/she behaves as a consequence. There are two kinds of eWOM (i.e., PC-based eWOM and mobile-based eWOM [mWOM]). Moreover, two types of messages can be identified in each kind of eWOM—viral messages from marketers via friends and relatives, and eWOM reviews on products and services from anonymous senders. Prior studies on viral marketing can be further divided into two research streams; research that have constructed and tested causal models explaining why consumers participate in viral marketing, and research that have focused on illustrating comprehensively a multi-stage cognitive and behavioral customer journey towards receiving, using, and forwarding viral marketing messages.

INTRODUCTION

Word of mouth (WOM) is one of the most fascinating topics for marketing scholars and practitioners (cf. Ono and Kikumori, 2015). WOM is defined as oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, concerning a brand, a product or a service (Arndt, 1967, p.3). Previous studies on WOM have found that it can have a great impact on consumer attitude formation, purchase decisions, and even post-usage perceptions of a product or service (e.g., Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Brown & Reingen, 1987; Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991; Bone, 1995).

Since the advent of the internet in the early 1990s, electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has become extremely important (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Godes & Mayzlin, 2004). Consumers increasingly communicate product information with other consumers via new forms of communication, including e-mail, community sites, review sites, social networking sites, blogs, online discussion forums, and news groups (e.g., Goldsmith, 2006; Okazaki, 2008). Many scholars have found that eWOM messages about products and services can have a great impact on purchase decision-making (Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn, 2008; Park & Kim, 2008; Schlosser, 2011; Sen & Lerman, 2007).

Moreover, with the rapid growth of mobile phone ownership, an increasing number of consumers can communicate with others and send and receive product information through their mobile phones (cf. Shen, Wang, & Xiang, 2013). Communication via mobile phones in the form of e-mail, SMS, and text messages has the unique characteristic of ubiquitous connectivity, which enables consumers to exchange information anytime and anywhere (Lee, 2005; Okazaki, 2008). Therefore, mobile-based electronic word of mouth (mWOM) is now regarded as an important mobile marketing tool for offering consumers context-sensitive and time-critical recommendations (Okazaki, 2009).

Viral marketing campaigns, which are defined as distribution or communication that relies on consumers to transmit content via electronic communication techniques to other potential consumers in their social sphere and to animate these contacts to also transmit the content, have been a focus for pioneers of eWOM research (Wiedemann, 2007, p.53). Most research on PC-based viral marketing campaigns has qualitatively investigated how recipients of viral messages from marketers via friends and relatives adopt and send messages (Phelps, Lewis, Mobilio, Perry, & Raman, 2004). Several studies have also constructed and tested a causal model that explains why recipients adopt and send viral messages (Ho & Dempsey, 2008). In addition, some studies have focused on what determines consumers' intentions to participate in mobile viral marketing (Okazaki, 2008), and have tried to describe the entire consumer decision-making process for mobile viral marketing campaigns across multi stages (Wiedemann, Palka, & Pousttchi, 2008; Palka, Pousttchi, & Wiedemann, 2009; Pescher, 2014).

The determinants of eWOM adoption have also been investigated. Some eWOM studies have investigated what determines the intention to adopt eWOM messages on the Web (Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn, 2008), whereas more recent studies have focused on how recipients of mWOM reviews from anonymous message senders evaluate and adopt the reviews (Shen, *et al*., 2013; Wang, Shen, & Sun, 2013).

This chapter examines previous studies that have tried to answer why consumers adopt PC-based/mobile-based eWOM messages or participate in PC-based/mobile-based viral marketing campaigns. Our understanding can be enhanced by re-examining the findings of the current leading scholars.

BACKGROUND

Consumer Intention to Participate in PC-Based Viral Marketing

Viral Marketing is defined as marketing that 'infects' its customers with an advertising message, which passes from one customer to the next like a rampant flu virus (cf. Montgomery, 2001). Recently, marketing scholars have investigated various topics relating to viral marketing (e.g., Chiu, Hsieh, Kao, & Lee, 2007; Gangadharbatla & Lisa 2007; Hinz, Skiera, Barrot, & Becker, 2011; Huang, Lin, & Lin, 2009; Phelps, *et al*., 2004). As pioneers in these studies, Dr. Phelps at the University of Alabama and his colleagues (Phelps, *et al*., 2004) examined what the motives were that caused consumers to pass along the

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