

Does gender matter? Acceptance and forwarding of electronic word of mouth: A moderated mediation analysis

Odai Mansour^{a*} and Panteha Farmanesh^a

^a*Girne American University, Cyprus*

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ABSTRACT

Presently, online users usually tend to use the Internet to get some details information and forward their purchasing experience on social media platforms. This activity helps other users create their own purchasing plans simpler. However, there are not many studies on accepting and forwarding e-WOM. This paper examines the effect of EWOM elements containing tie strength, message credibility, and source credibility on acceptance of e-WOM (AEWOM). The study also investigates the effects of other EWOM elements including customers' mood on forwarding e-WOM (FEWOM). Moreover, this study examines the mediator effect of (AEWOM) between (tie strength, message credibility, and source credibility) and FEWOM together with the moderator effect of gender differences between AEWOM and FEWOM. In the current paper a sample of 381 students is selected at the Jordanian university. The findings show positive relationships among all variables. The research also offers recommendations to marketers in order to improve the value of content which is generated by online users.

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1. Introduction

Interindividual connection about products and trademarks is perceived to be believable than marketer created contentment, (Faulds & Mangold, 2009). Consumers are four times more likely to skip or make the judgment to purchase a product based on positive or negative review with special platforms, and the effect of internet recommendations is higher than the products interests (Hu et al., 2011). In fact, internet reviewers are not responsible with the outcomes of their advices, and might therefore forward unsupported information to others (Bickart & Schindler, 2001). So, forward electronic word of mouth unless checking by a receptor, especially when it attains a large range can harm the firms' image.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses development

Based on social exchange theory, people conduct different behaviors after they evaluate the potential benefit of different products and then will choose one of them (Blau, 1964). Centre to this theory is the principle of exchange in shape of rewards for information, that is drive interpersonal engage an action, accordingly members conduct activities and interchange useful resources with one another. Consequently, determining the purpose to forward details in virtual community is of big relevance, because it can support details forwarding attitude (Bordia et al., 2006). Many Internet consumers trust customer-review more than firms created promotions. In this regard, one form of the electronic word of mouth is read content on the web pages (Park & Lee, 2008). EWOM is defined as a structure of negative or positive details generated by online consumer in order to clarify the product, service or firm performance with online platforms (Hennig et al., 2004). Currently, online social platforms have

* Corresponding author. Tel.: + 9627471740
E-mail address: odai.mansour91@gmail.com (O. Mansour)

become one of the main tools to disseminate e-WOM for goods or services and even an enterprise's name (Christodoulides et al., 2012). As a case in point, there are many online reviews or posts established over social networks like, Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat, containing a review of former experiments. Due to the online technology-based nature of e-WOM, we cannot stop reviews on these platforms (Amron, 2018). In this study, acceptance of e-WOM means the range to which the receiver considers E-WOM information and details to be reliable, useful, and correct. Also, forward e-WOM means that the intention of online user to retransmit the incoming information over the Internet to other people (Gershoff et al., 2003).

2.1 EWOM Variables

Previous researches focused on the persuasive effect of EWOM into simple exploration of components that reason it. Elaboration likelihood model (ELM) is discussed as one of the main theoretical backgrounds for e-WOM (Chan & Ngai, 2011). In that context, individual could take EWOM using peripheral or central path, firstly through accepting the online review, then transferring it to others (Yi-Wen et al., 2013). Following to Sussman and Siegal (2003) the peripheral path is shown as tie strength and source credibility for processing information, whereas the central path is shown as message credibility in this research. Furthermore, informational effect could show up at any degree of recipients' elaboration, however as a result of extremely different effect processes; large scale of elaboration represents a central path to impact, whereas low scale result in a peripheral path (Mahapatra & Mishra, 2017).

2.2.1 Tie strength and AEWOM

The strength of tie shows to the strength of the link between online users via the social network (Mittal et al., 2008). Socially ties could be classified under weak or strong. Weak ties are common among shallower relations or little personal relations (Yan et al., 2018). On the other side, strong ties, like friends' members or family, establish close relations which are inside society set of an individual, and are edgy to give touching assist (Sohaib et al., 2019). Former researches find out that a strong tie plays an important role in peer communications on social platforms. Strong or weak ties might affect any customers' view. Strong ties influence people more than weak ties do (Sohaib et al., 2019). Thus, the proposed hypothesis of this study is stated as follow:

H₁: Tie strength has a positive significant relationship with AEWOM.

2.2.2 Message credibility and Acceptance EWOM

Message credibility shows the range in which an internet user considered the reviews contained in a message to be factual, credible, and truthful (Cheung et al., 2012). Online customers rate a review as trustworthy following to transferring over adopting and knowledge received (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). An internet user is expected to accept a review based on his or her understanding of a message credibility (Sweeney et al., 2012). Additionally, in social media conditions, info with the source is diverse from an e-WOM message due to EWOM messages are commonly established by unknown people who submit less details (Lim & Van Der Heide, 2014; Jensen et al., 2013). This increases the responsibility of the consumer to assess the reliability of the message separately from the credibility of its source (Jensen et al., 2013). Thus:

H₂: Message credibility has a positive significant relationship with AEWOM.

2.2.3 Source credibility and AEWOM

Source credibility is based on the faith of a receiver about the source of details (Ohanian, 1990). Additionally, source credibility (SC) is a component of the primary parts which established the online reviewer confidence, that's why buyers commonly use indications to assess the credibility of EWOM (Ballantine & Yeung, 2015). Source credibility implies to the extent to which a source is believed to be knowledgeable, credible, and trustworthy (Petty et al., 1981). Consequently, internet consumers, who consider the established information largely trustworthy, are surely happy with the society media websites create positive WOM (Ha & Im, 2012). Internet reviews refer to former experience of using the goods or services. There are no financial motives for the recommendations from the reviewers' perspective, so the reliability of the source of the message was not questioned (Hass, 1981). Accordingly, the study circulates the following hypothesis:

H₃: Source credibility has a positive significant relationship with AEWOM.

2.2.4 Customer mood and FEWOM

According to Polak et al. (2015) mood is a negative or positive emotional state of varying degrees intensity that changes in response to life conditions. Besides, mood is known as an affective state of mind which is elicited by the personal feeling (Smith & Kosslyn, 2007). Mood consists of a large amount of emotions and is a cognitive state and it influences one's perception and thinking (Robbins & Judge, 2007).

Ruyter and Bloemer (1999) think that individuals tend to breakout from the situations which get them in the negative mood and try to be in a positive mood. There are many emotions that affect a positive mood such as calmness, excitement, happiness

and meanwhile sadness, nervousness, boredom and depression emotions affect negative mood (De Ruyter & Judge 2007). FEWOM indicates to the user's (online customer) intention of resending the information received via internet when he/she is in a positive or negative situation (Gershoff et al., 2003). Accordingly, this study frames the following hypothesis:

H4: Customer's mood has a positive significant relationship with FEWOM.

2.3 Acceptance and Forwarding EWOM

In the context of the ELM, the process of convincing depends on user's elaboration level, and this elaboration scale can be applied to understand how audience transacts with persuasive messages. However, few researchers have evaluated how online consumers process the persuasive message in the online setting (Chen & Lee, 2008; Lee & Lin, 2005). According to Sussman and Siegal (2003) the central path is portrayed as message credibility in this paper, while tie strength and source credibility form the peripheral path for processing information. In addition to this, informational impact can occur at any level of receiver elaboration, but as the outcome of very different impact processes; high scale of elaboration represents a central path of influence, while low scale result in a peripheral path (Mahapatra & Mishra, 2017). It appears that forwarding happens only when online consumers find information worthy and develop a positive attitude (Phelps et al., 2004).

H5: AEWOM has a positive significant relationship with FEWOM.

H6: AEWOM has a mediating effect on the relationship between tie strength and FEWOM.

H7: AEWOM has a mediating effect on the relationship between message credibility and FEWOM.

H8: AEWOM has a mediating effect on the relationship between source credibility and FEWOM.

2.4 Moderating role of gender differences

Online reviews are considered of electronic word of mouth which are created and transferred by online users who use and purchase services or products (Park et al., 2007). Consumers attend to recognize that online reviews are more informational than product information from experts or sellers in terms of relevance and credibility. Therefore, an effective use of online reviews helps consumers decrease their perceived risk of online purchasing and encourage them to buy through internet. Females are more probable to depend and accept of reviews than males are, and this leads to activate their participation in electronic word of mouth (Kempf & Palan, 2006). Especially, that a review from peers about a certain product have a large effect on females than males decreasing perceived risk of online purchasing and rising a willingness to buy through internet (Garbarino & Strahilevitz, 2004). According to Bae and Lee (2011) females are more likely to be affected by reviews from others than males; we can suppose that the use of online reviews as online recommendations have stronger influence on females than on males. Thus:

H9: Gender differences moderates the relationship between AEWOM and FEWOM.

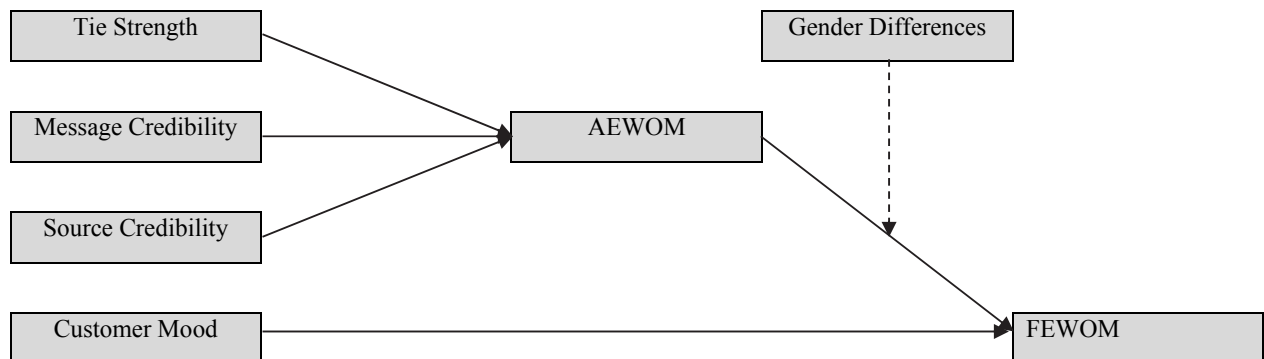


Fig. 1. The proposed study

3. Research Method

3.1 Methodology

The objective of this study is to examine the impacts of e-WOM factors, tie strength, source credibility, message credibility, and customer mood, on acceptance and forwarding e-WOM, as well as the moderate effect of gender differences on the relationship between AEWOM and FEWOM. Also, we examine the mediate effect of AEWOM on the relationship between EWOM factors and FEWOM. The study conducted a survey and invited 381 respondents filling a questionnaire only if they

had made some purchases, based on an online review, selected undergraduate and graduate students to complete the questionnaires. The study used convenience sample technique, and PLS software was used to the nature of model and its relations.

3.2 Data collection

A questionnaire was prepared and data were gathered. Respondents filling this questionnaire only if they had made some purchases, based on an online review. 381 questionnaires were collected, with response rate of 100%. In this paper, twelve questionnaires were missing values and 6 to the outliers. Consequently, eighteen questionnaires were deleted making the total questionnaires of 363.

4. Data analysis and results

4.1 Hypotheses Testing

This section summarizes the findings of hypotheses testing. The direct effect as well as the mediating and moderating hypotheses are given. In this study, there are 9 hypotheses. The first five hypotheses study the direct effect while from H₆ to H₈ are mediating hypotheses. The last hypothesis (H₉) is a moderating hypothesis. Based on the findings, all the hypotheses in this study were supported.

Table 1

The Result of direct and mediation effects

H	Path	β	St.D	T-values	P Values	Remark
H1	Tie Strength \rightarrow AEWOM	0.304	0.046	6.623	0.000	Supported
H2	Message Credibility \rightarrow AEWOM	0.321	0.045	7.183	0.000	Supported
H3	Source Credibility \rightarrow AEWOM	0.246	0.049	5.027	0.000	Supported
H4	Customer Mood \rightarrow FEWOM	0.290	0.045	6.474	0.000	Supported
H5	AEWOM \rightarrow FEWOM	0.199	0.043	4.667	0.000	Supported
H6	Tie Strength \rightarrow AEWOM \rightarrow FEWOM	0.037	0.014	2.654	0.008	Supported
H7	Message Credibility \rightarrow AEWOM \rightarrow FEWOM	0.040	0.015	2.586	0.010	Supported
H8	Source Credibility \rightarrow AEWOM \rightarrow FEWOM	0.030	0.012	2.452	0.014	Supported
H9	Gender \times AEWOM \rightarrow FEWOM	0.162			0.018	Supported

Table 2

Discriminant Validity

	AEWOM	CM	CS	FEWOM	MC	OT	SC	TS
AEWOM	0.852							
Customer Mood	0.634	0.862						
FEWOM	0.630	0.658	0.228	0.891				
Message Credibility	0.513	0.445	0.205	0.478	0.837			
Source Credibility	0.484	0.594	0.211	0.484	0.501	0.322	0.872	
Tie Strength	0.439	0.410	0.201	0.578	0.225	0.548	0.255	0.892

4.2 Moderating Effect of Gender differences

The third type of hypothesis is the moderating effect. The study is testing the moderating effect of gender differences. Accordingly, the data is divided into two datasets. First is the male with 216 responses and second is the female with 147 responses. Using multigroup analysis in Smart PLS, the relationship between AEWOM and FEWOM is tested using the data of male and female. The data are compared for significant differences to determine whether the differences in gender can affect the relationship of AEWOM and FEWOM. Table 1 shows that the relationship between AEWOM and FEWOM is significant in both gender; male and female. However, the coefficient is higher for female indicating that the AEWOM toward FEWOM among females is higher than male.

Table 3

Moderating effect of Gender between AEWOM and FEWOM

	β (Female)	β (Male)	STDEV (Female)	STDEV (Male)	t-Values (P-value) female	t-Values (p-value) Male
AEWOM \rightarrow FEWOM	0.312	0.149	0.071	0.051	4.401 (0.000)	2.921 (0.000)

5. Discussion

This research examined the relations between e-WOM factors, tie strength, message credibility and source credibility, on AEWOM and forwarding e-EWOM. It also investigated the significance of accepting e-WOM as a channel to FEWOM. In the structural model, from H1 to H9 are well supported. Tie strength leads to a high level of trust, consistent relations, and effective forwarding, which leads to increased AEWOM, this is in line with both results of Mazzarol et al. (2007) and Mahapatra and Mishra (2017). Source credibility extremely influences acceptance as customers faith and accepting information from someone who has the full experience. Also, this is in line with both results of Mahapatra and Mishra (2017) and Sweeney et al. (2012). According to the expected results, a positive relationship has also emerged between the message credibility and AEWOM, which means that online consumers care about the message's credibility and are searching for the tie strength and source credibility, as indicators so that the reviews are considered to be credible and accepted, that in line with (Qahri-Saremi & Montazemi, 2019). Also, according to our results, online users tend to redirect online reviews when the message comes from a trusted source and when there are strong links and finally, when the message is reliable and this is consistent with the results of both.

6. Future Research

While this paper was organized carefully, limitations must be marked out which may also be taken as suggestions for future research. First, the study might be expanded to contain other country, in order to comparing the findings. second, it could be exciting to add more factors which effect on acceptance e-WOM and tested through a whole model. Lastly, it would be better to distribute the questionnaire through an website to facilitate the distribution process when the sample size is large.

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