

**S-WOM in WeChat and KakaoTalk: Impacts of E-S-QUAL in Mobile Social Platforms**

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**S-WOM in Mobile Social Platforms:** With 50 million active users in each month, KakaoTalk has become a dominant mobile social media in South Korea based on a mobile messenger application in conjunction with the multilateral functions of game, free calls, shopping, and event scheduling. WeChat has developed one of China's leading mobile social network with more than 600 million users and innovative transaction apps of WeChat payment and Card Pack. By offering innovative transaction apps in conjunction with communication features, WeChat and KakaoTalk provide a new business platform for brands and retailers to expand their businesses.

While marketing communications managers are cautioned of the 'amplification' of consumer voice for the brands they manage, they rarely consider to take advantages of this amplification for consuming themselves. S-WOM refers to consumer electronic word-of-mouth on mobile social media sites (Eisingerich et al., 2015). S-WOM enables consumers to share information at a time and place that are convenient for them, notionally making consumers feel comfortable about sharing their experiences and opinions. Thus, we aim to explore how service quality of mobile apps facilitates the S-WOM in the two mobile social platforms, and to compare the disparity of its effects on S-WOM model between the WeChat and KakaoTalk.

**E-S-QUAL of Mobile Social Platforms:** Mobile commerce is not only an extension of e-commerce, but also an independent channel that delivers unique value to consumers and companies. To measure the value of service in digital platforms, many service quality scales are used such as WebQual and SITEQUAL, but they did not provide an overall value evaluation of mobile platform due to excluding business process and customer service factors or focusing on the technical quality. E-S-QUAL considers not only the services that marketers provide, but also the effect of technology on service quality by using four dimensions of (a) *efficiency* (the simplicity of using and the speed of accessing); (b) *fulfillment* (a promise about the delivery speed and item availability); (c) *system availability* (the correct technical function) and (d) *privacy* (safety and protection of customer information) (Parasurament, et al., 2005). Thus, the following hypotheses are developed to examine impacts of E-S-QUAL on attitude and S-WOM.

H 1: E-S-QUAL (H1a: efficiency, H1b: fulfillment, H1c: system availability, and H1d: privacy) of mobile social apps is positively related with overall attitude toward the mobile social platform.

H 2: E-S-QUAL (H2a: efficiency, H2b: fulfillment, H2c: system availability, and H2d: privacy) of mobile social apps is positively related with S-WOM.

H 3: Consumer overall attitude toward the mobile social platform positively affects S-WOM.

H 4: Overall attitude toward the mobile social platform mediates the relationship between E-S-QUAL (H4a: efficiency, H4b: fulfillment, H4c: system availability, H4d: privacy) and S-WOM.

H 5: There are different effects of four E-S-QUAL dimensions on overall attitude toward the mobile social platform and S-WOM between WeChat and KakaoTalks.

**Methods:** The survey instruments modified existing scales drawn from the literature: E-S-QUAL (Parasurament, et al., 2005), overall attitude (Cheung, & Lee, 2010) and positive S-WOM

(De Vriesa et al., 2012). Consumer survey data from each country (China: n=191; Korea: n=333) were analyzed by employing multi group structural equation modeling. College students sample aged between 18~29, living in Beijing and Seoul, had some experiences of mobile shopping: having purchase experience through mobile apps (29% of Korean respondents, 70% of Chinese); subscription of shopping information from brands or retailers via mobile social media (73% of Korean and 90% of Chinese respondents); and spending time for mobile shopping activities (162 minutes per day of Korean and 174 minutes for Chinese respondents).

**Findings:** Each measurement model showed a good model fit to the data (KakaoTalk:  $\chi^2 = 535.187$ , CFI of .930, and RMSEA of .068, WeChat:  $\chi^2 = 466.861$ , CFI of .919, and RMSEA of .080). Measurement invariance test was conducted and determined there was not a significant difference among the models by examining chi-square difference test and model fits. The fit statistics of the structural model indicated a good fit (KakaoTalk:  $\chi^2 = 535.187$ , CFI of .930, and RMSEA of .068, WeChat:  $\chi^2 = 466.861$ , CFI of .919, and RMSEA of .080). The results of hypothesis test for KakaoTalk supported H1a ( $\Gamma = .495$ ), H1c ( $\Gamma = .245$ ), H2d ( $\Gamma = .136$ ), H3 ( $\beta = .557$ ), H4a ( $\beta = .276$ ), and H4c ( $\beta = .136$ ). The results of hypothesis test for WeChat supported H1a ( $\Gamma = .704$ ), H1c ( $\Gamma = .272$ ), H2b ( $\Gamma = .474$ ), H3 ( $\beta = .401$ ), H4a ( $\beta = .282$ ), and H4c ( $\beta = .109$ ). Chi-square difference tests for hypothesized paths from H1 a-d, H2 a-d, and H3 between the two social mobile platforms were conducted, indicating that significant difference of the effect of fulfillment dimension on S-WOM in the two platforms ( $\chi^2 = 17.845$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The result supported that the effect of fulfillment service quality dimension on S-WOM was stronger for WeChat users ( $\Gamma = .474$ ) than KakaoTalk users ( $\Gamma = -.007$ ). The findings suggested that efficiency and system availability service quality dimensions increase positive attitude toward the two mobile platforms. Interestingly, privacy service quality of KakaoTalk increased the S-WOM among users in the platform while fulfillment service quality of WeChat increased S-WOM for the social mobile platform. The attitude toward the social mobile platforms mediated the relationships between efficiency and system availability, and S-WOM.

**Conclusion:** In contrast to conventional WOM where one-to-one oral communication takes place, S-WOM is written and broadcast, one-to-many, to an individual's social network. KakaoTalk and WeChat users are willing to distribute S-WOM in their social media platforms based on the facilitation of efficiency and system availability of mobile apps. Interestingly, privacy is of interest in KakaoTalk users while fulfillment for WeChat users. It suggests the practical and theoretical implication of S-WOM model by using E-S-QUAL perceptives.

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