

What Motivates a Consumer to Generate Word of Mouth through Social Networking Sites?: Hedonic vs. Utilitarian Shopping Experience

Young Ha, California State University-Long Beach, CA, USA
Hyunjoo Im, University of Minnesota, MN, USA

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Introduction: The effects of word of mouth (WOM) is found to be one of the most powerful factors affecting consumers' purchase decision, particularly in an online shopping context due to consumers' inability to directly examine products. Empowered by technology evolution, consumers today have various options to share their opinions about a brand, store, service and/or product with others. In particular, the emergence of online social media empowers consumers to easily create and share media content, and to interact with others online. Such consumer-generated contents shared through social networking services (SNS) have a critical impact on consumers' decision making (Chih et al., 2013) and brand image perception (Sandes & Urdan, 2013). Therefore, understanding what factors possibly affect online WOM generation through SNS seems important.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses: According to Eroglu et al's (2003) conceptual model, various online store attributes may influence consumers' affective (e.g., hedonic) and cognitive (e.g., utilitarian) responses, that in turn influences intentional behaviors (e.g., online WOM generation through SNS). Attractive website design and well-informed sites tend to positively influence both affective and cognitive experiential states and consequently affect consumer satisfaction and purchase intention (Rose et al., 2012). Previous research has emphasized satisfaction and brand loyalty as key determinants of positive online WOM (Sandes & Urdan, 2013) and numerous studies have examined how various online store attributes contribute to satisfaction and purchase intention of consumers with different shopping motivations (i.e., hedonic vs. utilitarian). However, little is known about how hedonic and utilitarian shopping experiences elicited by various online store attributes (e.g., website design, information quality, interactivity, etc.) affect consumers' intention to generate online WOM through SNS. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine 1) how different online store attributes influence hedonic and utilitarian shopping experiences and consumer satisfaction and 2) how hedonic and utilitarian shopping experiences affect online WOM generation through social networking services (SNS). Following hypotheses were proposed: 1) Various online store attributes (i.e., site credibility, product quality, site design, shipping/delivery efficiency, multi-media features) will positively influence hedonic (H1a) and utilitarian shopping experience (H1b), 2) Hedonic (H2a) and utilitarian (H2b) shopping experiences will positively influence consumer satisfaction, 3) Hedonic (H3a) and utilitarian (H3b) shopping experiences will positively influence consumer's intention to generate WOM through SNS, and 4) Satisfaction will positively influence consumer's intention to generate WOM through SNS.

Method: US adult online consumers (18-year-old or over) were recruited through a third-party survey sampling service provider and a total of 723 US online consumers completed an

online survey. Participants were asked to complete the survey based on their recent shopping experience in a favorite apparel website. The questionnaire was composed of items measuring various store attributes (i.e., site credibility, product quality, site design, shipping/delivery option, multi-media features), hedonic and utilitarian aspects of shopping experience, satisfaction, and online WOM intention through SNS. All items were adopted from previous research to ensure reliability and validity and used 7-point scales. Basic demographic information was collected as well.

Results: Hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analyses. Results showed that store attributes such as site credibility ($\beta=.19, t=2.78, p<.01$), product quality ($\beta=.31, t=5.60, p<.001$), shipping efficiency ($\beta=.27, t=4.62, p<.001$) positively influenced utilitarian shopping experience while site design ($\beta=.32, t=7.67, p<.001$) and multi-media features ($\beta=.52, t=17.63, p<.001$) positively influenced hedonic shopping experience. Interestingly, multi-media features negatively ($\beta= -.16, t= -4.73, p<.001$) influenced utilitarian shopping experience. Although multi-media features are entertaining while shopping, it may disturb consumers to achieve their utilitarian shopping goal. Therefore, H1 was partially supported. As expected, both hedonic (H2a: $\beta=.15, t=4.89, p<.001$) and utilitarian (H2b: $\beta=.57, t=19.17, p<.001$) shopping experiences positively influenced consumer satisfaction. Results also found that hedonic (H3a: $\beta=.47, t=14.23, p<.001$) shopping experience positively influenced consumer's intention to generate WOM through SNS. However, no direct effect of utilitarian shopping experience on online WOM intention through SNS (H3b) was found. This indicates that hedonic shopping experience rather than utilitarian experience may play a more important role in encouraging consumers to generate WOM through SNS. Expectedly, satisfaction induced by both hedonic and utilitarian shopping experiences positively affected consumer's intention to generate WOM through SNS ($\beta=.12, t=3.15, p<.005$). Thus, H4 was supported.

Discussion: This study demonstrated that site credibility, product quality, and shipping efficiency appeared to be important store attributes affecting utilitarian shopping experience while site design and multi-media features play more important role in encouraging hedonic shopping experience. Since multi-media features may interfere consumers' utilitarian shopping experiences, online retailers need to be cautious when incorporating entertaining activities using multi-media features into their websites. Results further emphasize that hedonic shopping experience plays more important role than utilitarian shopping experience in generating online WOM through SNS. Creating an aesthetically appealing and entertaining website would be essential.

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