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

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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 cam-

paigns 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 email marketing messages they had received. The results of in-depth interviews showed that the most common motivations were fun, including enjoyment and entertainment, and social connection, such as helping others and to communicate caring.

The earliest studies on viral marketing focused on the demographic, psychographic, and behavioral characteristics of mobile phone users engaged in viral marketing behavior (e.g., Chiu, Lee, & Chen, 2006; Dobele, Lindgreen, Beverland, Vanhamme, & van Wijk, 2007; Phelps, *et al*., 2004; Wiedemann, 2007; Wiedemann, *et al*., 2008). As pioneers who addressed this gap, Dr. Ho at Simon Fraser University and Dr. Dempsey at Ryerson University (Ho & Dempsey, 2008) identified four motives involved in forwarding online content (the need to belong, individuation, altruism, and personal growth) based on the FIRO (fundamental interpersonal relations orientation) theory (Schutz, 1966), which identified three motives—inclusion, affection, and control. They proposed a causal model describing that these four motives, as well as the amount of online content consumed due to curiosity, affect the frequency of forwarding online content (Fig.1). The results of structural equation modeling showed that three of five direct motives—individuation, altruism, and the amount of online content consumed—had significant and positive impacts on the frequency of forwarding online content. However, the need to belong and curiosity were insignificant factors. Moreover, contrary to the proposed hypothesis, the impact of personal growth on the frequency of forwarding was negative.

Consumer Intention to Participate in Mobile Viral Marketing

The pioneering studies of consumer intention to participate in mobile viral marketing were conducted by Dr. Okazaki (Okazaki, 2008) at the Autonomous University of Madrid. He modeled causal relationships among user characteristics, perceived values, attitudes, intentions, and consumer behaviors in those who send mWOM messages and participate in mobile viral marketing. He modeled three exogenous variables (commitment to promoted brand, relationship with mobile devices, and group-person connectivity) as indirect determinants of the attitude-intention-behavior

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