



Online word-of-mouth antecedents, attitude and intention-to-purchase electronic products in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Online word-of-mouth communication, a phenomenon that has taken hold over the last decade, is bringing major change to the lives of individuals, and specifically to consumers. Considering the rapid growth in online communication with the advent of virtual mediums, and the lack of attention this receives in developing countries, this empirical research examines the impact of online communication on consumers' buying intentions. The study investigated the outcomes of online word-of-mouth communication on consumers' preferences, the variables influencing an individual in using positive word-of-mouth, and their effect on consumers' attitudes and intentions to buy electronic products. The theoretical foundation for this study, the heuristic–systematic model and attitude formation theory, laid a strong framework for collecting data from 251 internet users, which covers six measures: speaker's trustworthiness, speaker's expertise, speaker's experience, word-of-mouth use, attitude and purchase intentions. Data analysis used confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling to understand the effect of exogenous variables over endogenous variables, and the effect of a mediator variable between two constructs. The results show that the impact of online word-of-mouth communication, received from a trustworthy and experienced source, on receiver's purchase intentions is mediated by attitude.

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1. Introduction

Researchers and practitioners have long acknowledged the importance of face-to-face and word-of-mouth communication. Their strong influence on consumer decision-making has led many researchers to deeply explore the phenomenon (Frenzen and Nakamoto, 1993; Lam and Mizerski, 2005; Carl and Noland, 2008). In recent times, word-of-mouth communication has taken different forms: what once took place only face-to-face is now possible to project through many different online channels. One online channel experiencing immense growth is social networking, made up of websites with virtual communities of individuals who interact with each other (Steffes and Burgee, 2009).

Online word-of-mouth, as described by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), is any positive or negative statement made by a former, actual, or potential customer about a product or an organization to more than one person or institution via the internet. Researchers have carried out extensive study of this new medium (King et al., 2014) and, according to Cheung and Thadani

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