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경영학 석사학위논문

**The influence of word of mouth on
purchase intention and the moderating
role of commitment**

입소문이 구매 의도에 미치는 영향 및 충성심의 증재 역할

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**The influence of word of mouth on purchase intention
and the moderating role of commitment**

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Abstract

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Word-of-mouth marketing is one of the oldest and most successful methods of spreading information about the marketplace. Thanks to the development of technology, the importance of word of mouth is becoming more and more remarkable as it is a major factor that can affect customers' attitude. Based on previous literature about the influence of word of mouth on customers' attitude, this dissertation aimed to provide findings in a more behavioral context. The purpose of this research is to investigate the effects of word of mouth on customers' purchase intention. Furthermore, commitment was examined as a moderating factor in this relationship. The results showed that word of mouth significantly influences purchase intention. Especially, negative word of mouth has a greater impact compared to positive

word of mouth. As expected, the results revealed that prior commitment can mitigate the negativity effect of word of mouth on purchase intention. Customers with high level of commitment are found to be not affected by negative word of mouth when it comes to purchase intention. Overall, the findings consolidate and add to literature about word of mouth and commitment, thus hold implications for further research and the managements of word of mouth marketing and customer relationship.

Keywords: Word of mouth, commitment, customer relationship management, negativity effect, purchase intention

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INTRODUCTION

1. Word of mouth

Word of mouth (WOM) is probably the oldest means of exchanging opinions on products and services offered by various organizations (Goyette, Ricard, Bergeron, and Marticotte, 2010). Whenever a customer talks about a product or service they experienced, they intentionally or unintentionally spread word of mouth. In marketing, word of mouth is the act of customers providing information about goods, services, brands, or companies to other customers (Rosario, Sotgiu, Valck, and Bijmolt, 2016). Word of mouth is an important factor for a company because it will influence how customers perceive the products or services provided by a company (Litvin et al., 2008). A survey by Nielsen Global Trust In Advertising showed that 92% of people trust recommendations from friends. According to McKinsey and Company, word of mouth influences up to 50% of all purchasing decisions and generates more than two times the sales of paid advertising. Analyzing WOM at the conversation level is also important to brand managers because it provides more precise insights into which forms of WOM conversations are most strongly associated with managerially desired customer intention outcomes (Baker, Donthu, and V. Kumar, 2016)

Word of mouth are spread both face-to-face and online (Hennig Thurau et al., 2004). Especially, thanks to rapid innovation in technology

these days, the offline word of mouth is gradually extended into an electronic version. With the development of world-wide-web and various platforms of social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram..., people now can share their thoughts, opinions or reviews about a product or service to the whole world. Word of mouth consequently is presented in various forms like video, photos, audio files, texts..., other than oral words. While once customers trusted WOM from friends and family, today they look to online comments (e-WOM) for information about a product or service (Nieto et al., 2014).

Word of mouth can be both positive and negative for a company (Söderlund, 1998). A study by Hart et al. (1990) argues that customers with bad experiences spread negative word of mouth in a wider extent than customers with positive experiences. Narayana and Markin (1975) also mentioned negative word of mouth as an important reason for why the customer might not consider a brand or consider to buying a product or a service. This means that word of mouth is important for gaining new customers as well as to avoid negative messages about the company.

2. Commitment

Morgan and Hunt (1994) defined customer commitment as lasting or enduring intention to build and maintain an ongoing relationship, while Geyskens et al. (1996) defined the concept as a customer's conviction to

maintain (rather than terminate) a relationship that might produce functional and emotional benefits (Geyskens et al., 1996). Both definitions emphasize the need to maintain an already existing market relationship. In more details, two major components of relationship commitment includes affective commitment and calculative commitment (Fullerton, 2003; Hansen, Sandvik, and Selnes, 2003; Johnson et al., 2001). Calculative commitment is the colder, or more rational, economic-based dependence on product benefits due to a lack of choice or switching costs (Anderson and Weitz, 1992; Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh, 1987; Heide and John, 1992). Affective commitment is a hotter, or more emotional, factor that develops through the degree of reciprocity or personal involvement that a customer has with a company, which results in a higher level of trust (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Therefore, commitment develops both emotional and economical bonds between customers and company, thus it remains an important antecedent of customer loyalty - the cornerstone of customer relationship management.

Customer commitment as a driver of customer loyalty has also become a popular research topic since the seminal work of Morgan and Hunt (1994). A study by Evanschitzky et al. (2006) found a positive relationship between affective and calculative commitment and behavioral and attitudinal loyalty. In addition, in a study of telecommunication services, Gustafsson et al. (2005) found that calculative commitment predicted retention whereas affective commitment failed to predict retention. Considering a great number

of prior studies supporting the link between the two components of commitment and customer loyalty, it can be argued that commitment has a positive influence on customer loyalty. Therefore, I believe that when customers develop a certain level of commitment, it is difficult to change their attitude towards a brand, which means that depending on level of their commitment towards the brand, customers tend to rely more on their own emotional opinion and be less affected by negative information.

Previous literatures have also studied commitment as a moderator of negative information effect. Ditto and Lopez (1992) found that people with positive attitudes toward a target are likely to engage in biased assimilation, resisting counter-attitudinal information more than pro-attitudinal information. A strong attitude also implies a structural bias that favors the parsimonious processing of information (Holbrook, 1978). It means that consumers with a positive attitude toward a brand should discount negative publicity. In line with this literature, a study by Ahluwalia, Burnkrant and Unnava (2000) found that prior commitment to a brand may prevent consumers from fully accepting useful negative information about that brand.

Numerous research work has investigated the influence of word of mouth, while emphasizing the stronger influence of negative WOM, on customers' attitude towards a brand. At the same time, a wide range of literature shed light on the moderating role of commitment in negative information response. However, there were still few studies that investigated

these two factors in the same context. In addition, previous studies just provide findings on an attitudinal level. This research aims to examine both word of mouth and commitment in a behavioral context. In more detail, word of mouth is investigated to find out its influence on purchase intention. The effects of word of mouth are compared between negative WOM and positive WOM. Lastly, commitment is examined as a moderating factor, which reduces the negativity effect of negative WOM on purchase intention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

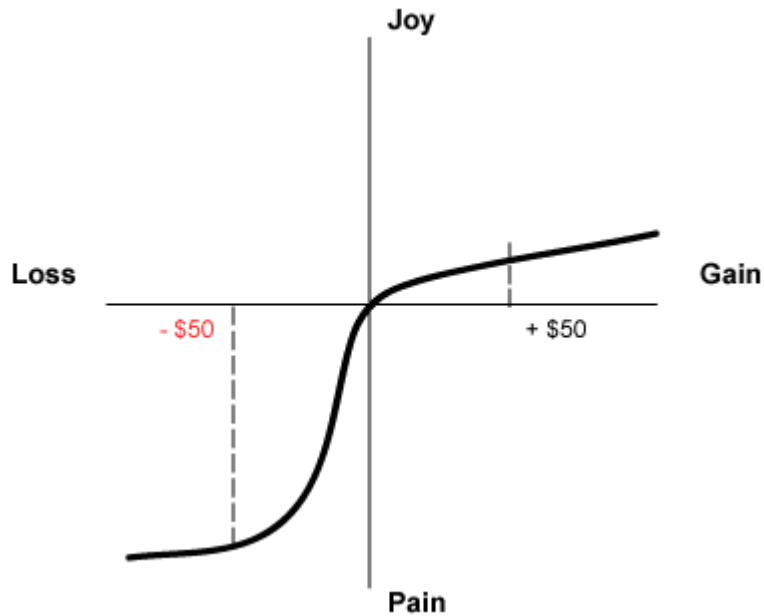
1. Word of mouth and purchase intention.

Word of mouth is proven to be an effective tool in order to promote products or services. It is said to be very important in any purchase decision (Gremler 29 et al., 2001, p.44). Previous studies showed that word of mouth could be the only source of information a customer needed in order to try a specific provider. It is because WOM is more influential than communication through other sources such as editorial recommendations or advertisements (e.g. Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Smith et al., 2005; Trusovet al., 2009) and it is perceived to provide comparatively reliable information (Gruen et al., 2006). Consequently, this type of communication is considered as having a great persuasiveness through higher perceived credibility and trustworthiness (Chatterjee, 2001; Godes and Mayzlin, 2004; Mayzlin, 2006). Similarly, a study by Kotler (2003) found that personal sources, as word of mouth, are the most influential on the customer's decision. Other studies also proved that word of mouth affects customer buying decisions by influencing customer choice (Arndt, 1967; Richins, 1983), it plays a key role at the moment of the purchase and that it is the most important source of information when customers are deciding whether to purchase or not (Litvin et al., 2008). Therefore, I argue that word of mouth will have significant effect on customers' purchasing intentions.

H1: Word of mouth significantly affects customers' purchasing intention.

As mentioned above, word of mouth can be both positive and negative. However, the influences of positive WOM and negative WOM on purchase are asymmetric. That is, relative to neutral WOM, negative WOM will typically have a larger effect than positive WOM because the negative WOM about the brand is framed as a loss. According to Prospect Theory (Tversky and Kahneman, 1991), when people make a series of decisions involving risk, unlike the model of traditional expectation utility theory, losses and gains are valued differently. Thus, even if the expected profit and loss are the same, the more the suffering of the loss is felt than the joy of the expected profit. In other words, as shown in the picture below, consumers tend to perceive negative attributes more positively than positive attributes, and this theory proved that positive and negative factors are not linear but nonlinear and asymmetric.

Figure 1. Prospect Theory Illustration (Source: Investopedia)



In line with this theory, various studies have found evidences about the negativity effect of word of mouth. East, Hammond, and Lomax (2008) found that negative WOM has a larger effect than positive WOM on a consumer's purchase probability when the pre-WOM purchase probability was greater than 50%. Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) found that negative e-WOM is detrimental and even more powerful in decreasing sales than positive e-WOM is in increasing it. Many other studies regarding negativity effects of word of mouth are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of key studies on negativity effects of word of mouth.

Authors	Article	Main Findings
East, Hammond and Lomax (2008)	Measuring the impact of positive and negative word of mouth on brand purchase probability	Negative WOM has a larger effect than positive WOM on a consumer's purchase probability when the pre-WOM purchase probability was greater than 50%.
Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006)	The effect of word of mouth on sales: Online book reviews	The impact of one-star reviews is greater than the impact of five-star reviews.
Lee, M., Rodgers, S. and Kim, M. (2009)	The effect of valence and extremity of e -WOM on attitude toward the brand and website.	Extremely negative review has a stronger negative impact on attitude toward the brand

		than either moderately negative reviews or extremely positive reviews.
Lee, J. , Park, D. , Han, I. (2008)	The effect of negative online consumer reviews on product attitude: an information processing view.	Participants who are exposed to reviews that are more negative are more likely to follow the review posters' opinion.
Park C., Lee T. M. (2009)	Information direction, website reputation and e-WOM effect: A moderating role of product type.	The e-WOM effect is greater for negative e-WOM than for positive e-WOM
Yang, J., Mai, E. (2010)	Experiential goods with network externalities effects: An empirical study of online rating system.	Consumers tend to pay more attention to negative e-WOM than positive e-WOM.

This negativity effect occurs since negative information is more informative and diagnostic than the positive one (Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy, 1990; Sknowronski and Carlston, 1989). For example, when customers are exposed to negative information about a product, they can categorize the product as low in quality. However, positive information is less useful in categorizing them, because such features are commonly possessed by high-, average-, and low-quality products (Herr, Kardes, and Kim, 1991). Therefore, I argue that negative WOM has a greater influence on purchase intention, compared to positive WOM.

H2: Negative WOM has a greater influence on purchase intention, compared to positive WOM.

2. The moderating role of commitment

2.1. Commitment and Attitude Strength

Eagly and Chaiken (1993) defined attitude as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor". This view of attitude as evaluative tendencies presumes that they endure as mental concepts long enough to potentially account for the relationship between perceptual and evaluative responses to attitude objects (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). Strong attitudes have been associated with

greater persistence over time, resistance to change, and the abilities to influence behavior and exert selective effects on cognition (Chaiken, Pomerantz and Giner-Sorolla, 1995; Eagly and Chaiken, 1993; Krosnick, Boninger, Chuang, Berent and Camot, 1993; Krosnick and Petty, 1995; Pomerantz, Chaiken and Tordesillas, 1995). Therefore, attitude can have a great influence on information processing.

Eagly and Chaiken (1993) found that resistance may occur as a consequence of the selective effects applied by attitudes at various phases of information processing. People with strong attitude may perform selective attention towards an information. That is, they are likely to perceive information that confirms their attitudes and to avoid information that disconfirms their attitudes. In line with this, cognitive dissonance theory by Leon Festinger (1957) suggested that attitude-disconfirming information triggers a state of psychological discomfort, or dissonance, which motivates people to eliminate or at least reduce in order to maintain the consistency in their attitude.

Attitude strength is considered the key attribute of attitude. There have been numerous studies about the distinct dimensions of attitude strength. Among that, a wide range of literature supports commitment as one of the major dimensions. Lastovicka and Gardner (1979) examined the dimensionality of involvement as it relates to advertising's ability to influence the structure of product attitudes. The results of their factor analysis revealed

three major dimensions: Normative Importance, Commitment and Familiarity. A study by Abelson (1988) also revealed three distinct dimensions underlying attitude strength: Ego Preoccupation, Emotional Commitment and Cognitive Elaboration. In line with this, Pomerantz et al. (1995) conducted a factor analysis of various indicators of attitude strength, which included certainty, importance, ego involvement, centrality, extremity and knowledge. Items relating to centrality, importance, knowledge and ego involvement loaded on a factor that the authors labeled “Embeddedness”. Certainty and extremity loaded on a second factor that they labeled “Commitment”.

In general, commitment as a major dimension of attitude strength implies that it can induce resistance to attitude change. Low-commitment consumers will exhibit a greater amount of attitude change in response to negative as compared with positive information, but high-commitment consumers are not expected to exhibit a negativity effect (Ahluwalia, Burnkrant, Unnava, 2000).

2.2. Commitment and Defense Motivation

Defense motivation is defined as the desire to hold attitudes and beliefs that are congruent with one’s perceived material interest or one’s current self-defining attitudes and beliefs (Chaiken et al., in press). Defense

motivation is assumed to occur in situations that are relevant to these concepts. Moreover, defense motivation can influence thoughts about an issue that has consequences for one's own self-defining concepts (Sears and Funk, 1991; Sear, Lau, Tyler and Allen, 1980). Under defense motivation, defensively biased systematic processing may occur. In that case, the implicit criterion "If this information is congruent with my core values or interest, then it is valid" may serve as bases for judgment (Liberian, dela Hoz and Chaiken, 1988). Consequently, biased processes such as finding fault with arguments that oppose a desired information may occur as well.

On the other hand, according to a study by Eagly and Chaiken (1995), commitment is expected to lead a person into a state of defense motivation. Thus, the defense motivation engendered by high level of commitment is expected to foster selective cognitive processing of information that is threatening to the person's attitude (Chaiken, Liberman and Eagly, 1989; Pomerantz, Chaiken and Tordesillas, 1995). Committed customers have been shown to perceive attitude-inconsistent negative information as lower in its perceived diagnosticity than attitude-consistent positive information (Ahluwalia, Burnkrant and Unnava, 2000).

Regarding our context, the negative word of mouth can be unfavorable information towards customers with high level of commitment. They will be under both attitude change resistance mode and defense motivation mode. Because commitment is deeply rooted within them, these

customers will be very reluctant to absorb negative information about their committed brand. Therefore, I argue that in case of high commitment, when it comes to purchasing intention, customers will tend to trust their own opinion rather than external sources of information, thus they are not affected by negative WOM. That is:

H3: Commitment can moderate the negative effect of negative WOM on purchase intention; customers with high commitment are not influenced by negative WOM unlike ones with low commitment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

To test the hypotheses, a 2 (commitment: high, low) x 3 (WOM: negative, none, positive) between subject research design was conducted. Subjects were assigned randomly to conditions described in below table.

Table 2. Experimental Design

Condition	Commitment	Word of mouth
1	High	Negative
2	High	Positive
3	High	None
4	Low	Negative
5	Low	Positive
6	Low	None

2. Procedure

2.1. Manipulation

This experiment used manipulation technique introduced in previous research (Ahluwalia 2000; Agrawal and Maheswaran, 2005; Raju, Unnava and Montgomery, 2009). Athletic shoes was chosen as the target product and camera as filler product. To make sure subjects have no prior commitment

with target brand as well as to prevent ethics issues, fake company name was used for athletic shoe product.

Subjects were introduced that they are participating in a market research survey conducted by a professor, information gathered will be studied for potential future launch of the brands in the local market. Firstly, they were provided with some brief information about the company and product features. After subjects finished reviewing those information, they were asked to share their general thoughts about the product, talk about positive qualities of product that may be used for future advertising and suggest a slogan or an endorsement for the product.

The manipulation for commitment was administered after subjects shared their thoughts. In high commitment condition, subjects were asked if the shoe company could use their shared thoughts about the brand in its advertising and publicity campaigns. Upon agreeing, they were also asked to provide their personal information such as name, age, occupation, phone number, email in case the company needs further contact. This induction follows procedure used in prior commitment studies, which have shown that public attachment of self to the target results in increased commitment toward it (Halverson and Pallak, 1978; Kiesler, 1971). This procedure is also based on the definition of commitment as “the pledging or binding of the individual to behavioral acts” (Kiesler, 1971), and stems from association between a

customer's attitudes and a public behavior supporting their stand (Ahluwalia, 2000).

Subjects in low commitment condition underwent the same procedure. However, they were asked to give permission to the camera company to use their thoughts in advertising and publicity campaigns. In short, subjects in both high and low commitment underwent the same procedure, the only difference was the company to which they agreed to release their thoughts. The use of a second product thus ensured equivalence in the types of tasks subject performed as they underwent the critical manipulation (Ahluwalia, Uvana and Burnkrant, 2001).

In order to investigate the effects of word of mouth and its interaction with commitment, subjects were then exposed to word of mouth, either negative or positive. They were told to read some reviews written by overseas customers that used to experience the shoe product. After reading these reviews, subjects were asked to fill out the dependent measure questionnaire.

2.2. Manipulation check

Control groups (high vs. low commitment) were used to assess the effectiveness of the commitment manipulation. The commitment-manipulation check was not administered to the experimental groups because of the potential for demand artifacts. Subjects in the control group performed

the same tasks as those in the experimental group but did confront with any word of mouth. That is, they did not read the reviews about the products.

Commitment is measured on a three-item scale used in previous research (Agrawal and Maheswaran, 2005; Ahluwalia, 2000; Ahluwalia, Unnava and Burnkrant, 2001). Subjects answered on a 9-point scale anchored by agree/disagree about 3 questions:

+ If Nazuno is not available at the store, it would make little difference to me if I had to choose another brand.

+ I do not find myself loyal to Nazuno.

+ I will be more likely to purchase another brand that is on sale other than Nazuno.

2.3. Dependent variable measurement

Dependent variable (purchase intention) is measured on a 9-point scale anchored by disagree/agree. Subjects expressed their opinion on purchasing intention by giving points to these following statements:

+ I would buy this product/brand rather than any other brands available.

+ I intend to purchase this product/brand in the future.

2.4 Data collection

Online survey was conducted to collect data. The survey was created as Google Form and posted in Tomorrow Marketer – a famous Facebook group for people majoring in Marketing in Vietnam. The questionnaires contained in the survey are provided in the Appendix. Totally 135 people participated in the survey, however, people that did not provide their personal information or provided invalid information were considered to not engage in the agreement. Therefore, they were not qualified for commitment manipulation and were excluded from the data sample. Eventually, there were 124 participants, mean age = 24.5 years.

RESULTS

1. Manipulation check

Manipulation check data reported a significantly higher level of commitment of subjects in high commitment condition compared to subjects in low commitment condition ($M_{\text{high}} = 5.33$; $SD = .89$ versus $M_{\text{low}} = 3.67$; $SD = .79$; $t(39) = 8.772$; $p < .001$).

2. Influence of word of mouth

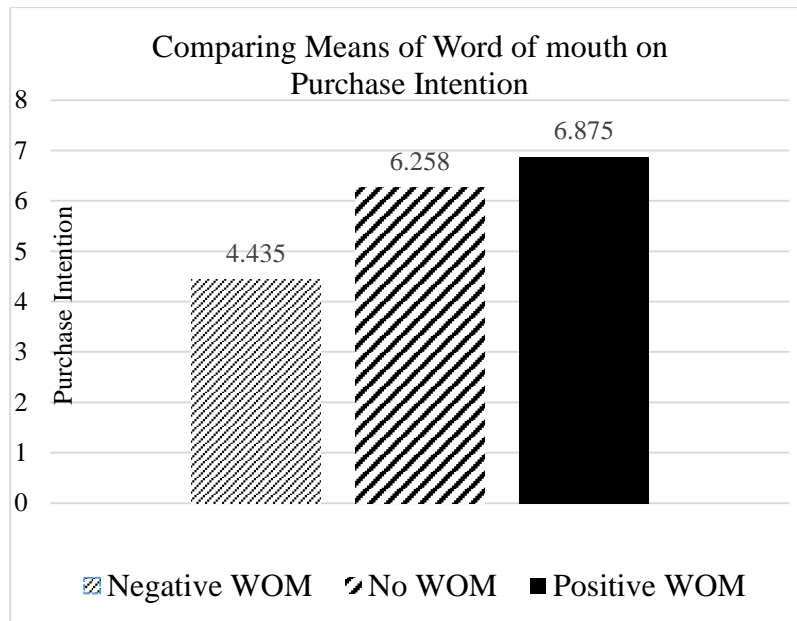
Supporting H1, an ANOVA of mean number of purchase intention with commitment level and word of mouth valence as independent factors revealed a significant main effect of word of mouth; $F(2,122) = 225.6$; $p < .001$. Subjects exposed to negative word of mouth has lower purchase intention than subjects exposed to no word of mouth, and subjects exposed to positive word of mouth reported highest purchase intention among three groups. This indicates that word of mouth has a significant effect on purchase intention. In addition, a main effect of commitment was also statistically significant; $F(1,122) = 72.8$; $p < .001$. Subjects in high commitment condition turned out to have higher purchase intention than subject in low commitment condition ($M_{\text{high}} = 7.208$; $M_{\text{low}} = 4.438$). ANOVA results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. ANOVA results

Source	Type III		Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Sums of squares	df			
Corrected model	477.162 ^a	5	95.432	293.071	.000
Intercept	4192.358	1	4192.358	12874.641	.000
Commitment	237.141	1	237.141	728.255	.000
WOM	146.956	2	73.478	225.649	.000
Commitment *WOM	93.627	2	46.813	143.763	.000
Error	38.424	118	.326		
Total	4667.250	124			
Corrected Total	515.587	123			

Discussion. Analysis result provided evidence that different valence of word of mouth can influence purchase intention differently. Compared to control group, negative WOM group has lower purchase intention and positive WOM group has higher purchase intention. (See figure 2). This implies that negative word of mouth decreases the probability a customer intend to buy a product while positive word of mouth can encourage them to purchase. This impact of word of mouth is consolidated by the analysis of negativity effect discussed in following section.

Figure 2: Comparing Means of Word of mouth on Purchase Intention



2. Negativity Effect

To test the negativity effect of word of mouth, a regression model was conducted with purchase intention as the dependent variable and valences of word of mouth as independent variables. Negative WOM and positive WOM were measured as dummy variables. The regression model is presented as follow:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{NEG}_i + \beta_2 \text{POS}_i + \varepsilon_i$$

in which,

β_0 is the intercept which corresponds to purchase intention of the baseline (no WOM).

NEG is the dummy variable whose value is 1 if observation $\{i\}$ belongs to negative WOM condition.

POS is the dummy variable whose value is 1 if observation $\{i\}$ belongs to positive WOM condition.

The variance-covariance matrix of $\hat{\beta}_0, \hat{\beta}_1, \hat{\beta}_2$ is given by:

$$\Sigma = \begin{bmatrix} \text{Var}(\hat{\beta}_0) & \text{Cov}(\hat{\beta}_0, \hat{\beta}_1) & \text{Cov}(\hat{\beta}_0, \hat{\beta}_2) \\ \text{Cov}(\hat{\beta}_0, \hat{\beta}_1) & \text{Var}(\hat{\beta}_1) & \text{Cov}(\hat{\beta}_1, \hat{\beta}_2) \\ \text{Cov}(\hat{\beta}_0, \hat{\beta}_2) & \text{Cov}(\hat{\beta}_1, \hat{\beta}_2) & \text{Var}(\hat{\beta}_2) \end{bmatrix}$$

T-statistic is calculated as follow:

$$t = \frac{\hat{\beta}_2 + \hat{\beta}_1}{\text{SE}(\hat{\beta}_2 + \hat{\beta}_1)} = \frac{\hat{\beta}_2 + \hat{\beta}_1}{\sqrt{\text{Var}(\hat{\beta}_2 + \hat{\beta}_1)}} = \frac{\hat{\beta}_2 + \hat{\beta}_1}{\sqrt{\text{Var}(\hat{\beta}_2) + \text{Var}(\hat{\beta}_1) + 2\text{Cov}(\hat{\beta}_1, \hat{\beta}_2)}}$$

The results of the regression indicated the two predictors explained 26.6% of the variance ($R^2 = .516$; $F(2,122) = 21.9$; $p < .001$). It was found that negative word of mouth significantly predicted purchase intention ($\beta_1 = -1,788$; $p < .001$), as did positive word of mouth ($\beta_2 = .692$; $p < .05$). The variance – covariance matrix of the beta-hats is shown as follow:

$$\Sigma = \begin{bmatrix} 4.192 & .354 & -.486 \\ .354 & .220 & -.113 \\ -.486 & -.113 & .228 \end{bmatrix}$$

Therefore, t-value is calculated as:

$$t = \frac{0.692 - 1.788}{\sqrt{0.228 + 0.22 - 2*0.113}} = - 3.102$$

As can be seen from the result, $|t| > 1.96$ and the absolute value of β_1 is greater than β_2 . This implies that the magnitude of negative word of mouth is significantly larger than one of positive word of mouth, which means that negative word of mouth has a greater impact on purchase intention compared to positive word of mouth. Accordingly, H2 is supported.

Discussion. In line with the finding in H1, regression analysis revealed that word of mouth significantly influences purchase intention. Different valences of word of mouth (negative versus positive) have different impacts on purchase intention. While negative word of mouth decreases customer's intention to buy a product, positive word of mouth will encourage customer to do so. In addition, the result also showed consistent finding with previous literature about negativity effect of word of mouth. That is, negative word of mouth decreases purchase intention in a wider extent than positive word of mouth increases one.

3. Moderating effect of Commitment

The word of mouth x commitment ANOVA on purchase intention resulted in a significant interaction between word of mouth and commitment; $F(2,122) = 143.7$; $p < .001$. A follow-up Scheffe test was conducted in order to examine the meaning of this interaction effect. Results for multiple comparison are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Multiple Comparison

Group I	Group J	Mean difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% confidence interval	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
High_NEG	High_NO	-.3804	.1787	.480	-.985	.225
Low_NEG	Low_NO	-3.4654*	.1741	.000	-4.055	-2.876
High_POS	High_NO	.1355	.1828	.990	-.483	.754
Low_POS	Low_NO	1.0977*	.1763	.000	.501	1.694

NOTE:

*The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level

High_NEG: Subject with high commitment exposed to negative word of mouth.

Low_NEG: Subject with low commitment exposed to negative word of mouth.

High_POS: Subject with high commitment exposed to positive word of mouth.

Low_POS: Subject with low commitment exposed to positive word of mouth.

High_NO: Subject with high commitment exposed to no word of mouth.

Low_NO: Subject with low commitment exposed to no word of mouth.

As expect in H3, Scheffe test revealed a significant difference in purchase intention between Low_NEG group and Low_NO group; MD = -3.4654, $p < 0.001$. No significant different was found in the purchase intention between High_NEG group and High_NO group; $p > .48$. The result also showed evidences about the moderating role of commitment on the influence of positive word of mouth towards purchase intention. Similarly, there was no significant different in purchase intention between High_POS group and

High_NO group; $p > .99$, while one between Low_POS group and Low_NO group was significantly different; $MD = 1.0977$; $p < .001$.

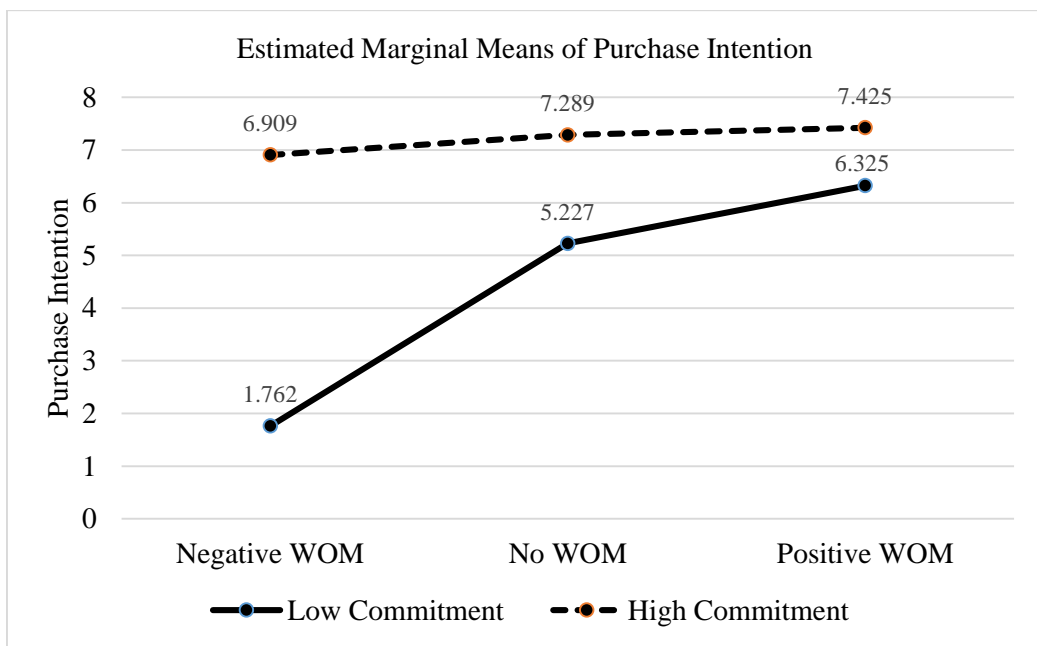
Discussion. With the presence of commitment, the influence of word of mouth differs between two levels - high versus low commitment, which accounts for the moderating effect of commitment towards word of mouth. The prediction in H3 that customers with high commitment will not be affected by negative word of mouth was proven to be significantly true. With high commitment, purchase intention remains similar between subjects exposed to no word of mouth and those exposed to negative word of mouth. Meanwhile, for subjects with low commitment, negative word of mouth still discourages them from choosing to buy a product.

Although it was not discussed in this research, the result revealed that the effect of positive word of mouth was significantly moderated by commitment as well. With high commitment, people do not change their purchase intention despite being exposed to positive word of mouth. The difference in purchase intention when coming up with positive word of mouth is only observed among objects with low commitment.

So in general, commitment can moderate the effect of word of mouth on purchase intention in both negative and positive way. Figure 3 demonstrates the change in purchase intention throughout three conditions:

negative, positive and no word of mouth of people with high and low commitment. It can be seen that purchase intention of high commitment group did not fluctuate much. There was little change in their intention to buy regardless of the valence of word of mouth. However, for low commitment people, the sloping line indicates that their purchase intention changes remarkably when they are exposed to word of mouth.

Figure 3. Estimated Marginal Means of Purchase Intention



The explanation for these findings may lie in the effect of commitment on information processing. Previous studies have found that people frequently hold inaccurate and systematically biased beliefs. In the context of beliefs about own attributes, skills and abilities, individuals are often found to be overly optimistic (Svenson, 1981). These belief patterns arise even though

individuals are often confronted with new information challenging their current views of themselves and the world, suggesting a pronounced immunity towards not only contradicting, but also new information. (Falk and Zimmermann, 2018). In addition, studies by Bénabou and Tirole (2005); Kahan (2013) showed that people tend to believe what they like to believe and interpret new information in a self-serving way. At some point people simply stop acquiring new information and settle on the beliefs they have built so far. That is why high commitment customers are not affected by word of mouth.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Numerous of prior studies have investigated the influence of word of mouth on customer's attitude as well as the moderating role of commitment towards negativity effect of information. However, literature on word of mouth and commitment has rarely examined these two factors in the same context. Also, previous findings about both factors are mostly on attitudinal level. This research aimed to investigate word of mouth and commitment together, in a more behavioral context.

With a 2x3 between subject design, people working and studying in Marketing related areas were asked to participate in a survey conducted online. Using manipulation techniques from previous studies, participants were assigned randomly to six different conditions divided by level of commitment (high and low) and valence of worth of mouth (positive, negative and none). The results provided evidences about the impacts of word of mouth on purchase intention as well as revealed the role of commitment in moderating those impacts. Combining various analyses, this research found that word of mouth has a significant impact on purchase intention. In addition, consistent with prior literature about the negativity effect of information, it was shown that negative word of mouth significantly influences purchase intention in a wider magnitude compared to positive word of mouth. Regarding the moderating role of commitment, H3 was supported as results

revealed that in case of high commitment, there was no significant difference in purchase intention between control group and negative word of mouth group. Meanwhile, this difference for low commitment subjects was statistically significant. This implies that negative word of mouth does not influence customers with high commitment.

Although the literature review of this research did not discuss the moderating role of commitment towards the influence of positive word of mouth, the result showed a significant similarity. That is, high commitment also makes customers not be affected by positive word of mouth while for low commitment customers, the positive effect on purchase intention is still significant. This significant similarity can be explained by some previous studies which show that commitment influences information processing in a manner that high level of commitment results in an immunity towards new information. When people are highly committed to a product or a brand, they are very reluctant to accept new information no matter it is negative or positive. Therefore, they are not affected by both negative and positive word of mouth.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This research consolidates previous literature review about commitment and word of mouth as well as draws some contributions. First of all, while there are still few studies that investigate both two factors in the same context, this research adds to the literature about the interaction between them. Secondly, the findings of this research provide a better understanding about both factors on a behavioral level, rather than just attitudinal level like previous studies. Lastly, besides providing evidences about the moderating role of commitment on negative word of mouth's influence, this research revealed a similar role on positive word of mouth's. While most previous studies focused on the interaction between commitment and negative word of mouth, this research found that the interaction between commitment and positive word of mouth is also significant and in the manner that commitment mitigates the positive effect of positive word of mouth on purchase intention. Although further research needs to be conducted for a solid conclusion, this finding shed light on an aspect that was not paid much attention before.

Besides the theoretical contributions, managerial implications for marketers can also be drawn. Nowadays the quantity of media, advertisers, and advertising space is increasing, thereby augmenting the amount of information available to consumers. The modern media are so overwhelmed

with advertising messages that customers are not able to process all of them, which means that advertising is becoming less effective (Elliott & Surgi Speck, 1998; Jancic, 2001; Yeshin, 2003). The increasing amount of information and media fragmentation are making it more difficult for the classical marketing tools, such as advertising and public relations, to reach their target audiences (Smith, 2004). That is when the rise of word of mouth takes place. Marketers can develop appropriate communication tools to make consumers more knowledgeable about a product and try to change some of the negative association. In this case, content seeding is a strategic approach to scatter content across the Internet. Seeds typically spread product-related information in the form of posts in online forums, on social media websites or as reviews on retail websites – and lots of these transmissions can be tracked by brands through online and social media monitoring. In addition, acknowledging the negativity effect of word of mouth, companies should pay more attention to negative information and be cautious when dealing with bad publicity. An appropriate publicity contingency plan is necessary for a company to improve its image and reputation.

However, there exists a moderating role of commitment on the influence of word of mouth, which implicates that content seeding marketing is not always an ideal strategy. For customers with already a high level of commitment, increasing the amount of word of mouth will not induce any

efficiency. If that is the case, various of customer relationship strategies should be considered to enhance positive attitude and purchase intention towards the brand. Rather than trying to expose more new information to high commitment customers, companies should focus more on consumer satisfaction, as it has been proven by numerous scholars that customer satisfaction has a great impact on purchase intention. It is a mission for companies to offer the best possible service to their customers in order to retain them and create positive purchase/repurchase intentions in the future. Other strategies like customer loyalty program, retention program will increase the level of commitment of customers, thus raise their intention to buy as well as reduce the negative effect and harms towards the company's profit when it has to face up with bad publicity.

Another implication for this research is that companies should carry out various research about customers. Customers should be segmented into high and low commitment groups, thus companies should have suitable strategies to handle each kind of group. Especially, for customers that are new to the product/brand or customers in a market that a new product of the company is launched, word of mouth is very important and should be taken into serious consideration.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research has several limitations and opens up opportunities for future research in the matter. First of all, the online survey was carried out without any incentives, which might account for half-heart and superficial responses. The commitment manipulation did not turned out in quite high efficiency as the mean for high commitment condition was still low and did not differ much from low commitment condition. Therefore, with incentives given to participants, future research would be promised with data of higher quality.

Secondly, even though this research found evidences that support H2, which consolidates many previous studies about negativity effect, there are still ambivalences in the literature about the effects of word of mouth. Most previous research showed that negative information generally has a stronger influence than either neutral or positive information (Herret al., 1991; Lee et al., 2009; Xue and Zhou, 2010; Yang and Mai, 2010). In contrast, another number of studies found evidences about the positivity effect of word of mouth (Clemonset al., 2006; Gershoff et al., 2003; Lee et al., 2009; Skowronski and Carlston, 1989), although they are less frequently studied. Gershoff et al. (2003) and Clemons et al. (2006) showed that positive reviews have a stronger influence than negative ones. According to a study by Skowronski and Carlston (1989), the positivity effect is more likely to occur when positive cues are more diagnostic than negative cues. Due to this

inconsistency, further research should be carried out adopting other constructs of word of mouth such as attribute (objective versus subjective). A research combining both two factors - valence and attribute - would be give a better understanding about the effect of word of mouth on purchase intention.

Last but not least, this research separately discussed the moderating role of commitment towards one valence of word of mouth – negative one. Little literature review about the other valence was the reason why it was not discussed in the hypothesis. However, the results also showed evidences that positive word of mouth is significantly moderated in the same manner. In other words, high level of commitment does not enhance the positive effect of positive word of mouth, but on the contrary, it will result in no effect of positive word of mouth towards purchase intention. In other word, customers with high level of commitment also show little change in their purchase intention even when they are exposed to positive word of mouth. To explain for this effect, some studies show that the impact of word of mouth is reduced when more diagnostic information, such as previous experience, is available (Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991). According to Wilson and Petersen (1989), customers tend to accept the information that is consistent with beliefs and expectations: “Once an individual assumes an evaluative position toward a product, he/she will begin to filter information about that product. To the extent the information ‘fits’ the evaluative position, it will be accepted” (p.27). Apparently, literature about the influence of commitment on information

processing and attitude change was almost used to support hypotheses about negativity effect. The finding of this research proved a potential that positivity effect can also be examined in the same way. Further intensive literature review is required to hypothesize the moderating role of commitment towards the influence of positive word of mouth on purchase intention as well as positivity effect. Accordingly, an opportunity to conduct a research about the interaction of commitment and valences of word of mouth in general is proposed.

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APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRES FOR ONLINE SURVEY

Step 1: We are conducting a market research for potential future launch of two newly developed products in local market. We hope for your cooperation in this survey. Here is some information about these two products.

1. First one is Wave Rider Phoenix – a sneaker collaboration of Mizano Corporation and Highsnobiety.

Mizano is a Japanese sports equipment and sportswear company, founded in Osaka in 1906 by Rihachi Mizano. Today, Mizano is a global corporation which makes a wide variety of sports equipment and sportswear. Highsnobiety is an online publication covering forthcoming trends and news in fashion, art, music, and culture, all on one platform.

Mizano rereleased the classic Wave Rider 1 in its original form as the Wave Rider 1 OG back in March, reminding the world of its once groundbreaking design and current relevance. The first shoe with the familiar Mizano Wave plate, the Wave Rider 1 debuted in 1998 and defined the brand for years to come. The collaboration, therefore, highlights one of the brand's most significant silhouettes as Highsnobiety becomes a part of this ongoing story.



Mizano's collaborations with mitsubishi sneakers and now *Highsnobiety* usher in a new era for the brand. While Mizano will continue working on performance technology, like it has for over 100 years, the Japanese label is merging its spirit of innovation with style-focused designs fit for the track and the streets. Mizano has dubbed this new footwear category, Sportstyle.

In launching Sportstyle, Mizano has also started the Kazoku community initiative. The Kazoku—a Japanese word meaning family—is a collective of like-minded leaders in the sneaker and streetwear game that will receive new and exclusive Mizano releases and work with the brand on one-off collaborations, like the Mizano Wave Rider Phoenix. Having worked with athletes at the top of their game for over a century, Mizano understands the value of expertise and the Kazoku brings together some of the industry's most well-respected brands and retailers to envision the brand's future.

As seen in the gallery above, the shoe's upper features a combination of materials: military nylon mesh, nubuck, suede, and full grain leather. The

color palette isn't restricted either, giving life to the Phoenix concept with various shades of grey, a bold red and, at closer inspection, a soft pastel blue that's used on the tongue, outsole, and toe box Runbird logo. Other subtle details include the reflective lace keeper and piping and the Highsnobiety branding located on the heel counter, tongue, and insole. The iconic Wave plate features in the same shade of red used on the upper and sits inside a white EVA midsole.

2. Second product is the Light L16 Camera. Light is pioneering the era of the software-defined camera. Powered by sophisticated computational processes, software-defined cameras deliver intelligent, high-quality imaging at cost-effective, global scale. Light's first product, the award-winning L16 Camera, has eliminated the quality or convenience dilemma that has plagued photographers for a century.



The L16 camera combines breakthrough optics with a sophisticated computational imaging engine to bring breathtaking photography anywhere. The L16 Camera delivers up to 52-megapixels of image resolution, 5x optical zoom, unparalleled low-light performance, creative control over focus and depth effects after capture - all in a small, intuitive, and connected experience.

Weighing just less than a pound, the L16 offers convenience without sacrificing quality. Now, photographers can take professional-quality photos wherever they go.

The L16's 5-inch, high-definition touchscreen displays a live preview of each photo before capture. An intuitive interface combined with real-time exposure adjustments allow photographers to set up the perfect shot on the go.

Built with a powerful 4120mAh lithium-ion battery, the L16 was designed to last for 8 hours of continuous use. That translates to ~400 back-to-back captures.

Step 2: After reading above information, please share your thoughts about these two products.

- Please point out the positive qualities of the product that you think our companies can use in advertising.

- Please suggest a potential slogan or endorsement for each product.

Step 3: Commitment Manipulation

- **High commitment condition:** Thank you for your sharing. We would like to ask you if Mizano Corporation can use your thoughts in its advertising and public campaign. If you agree with this offer, please provide us with your personal information for further contact (Name, Age, Occupation, Phone Number, e-mail)

- **Low commitment condition:** Thank you for your sharing. We would like to ask you if Light can use your thoughts in its advertising and public campaign. If you agree with this offer, please provide us with your personal information for further contact (Name, Age, Occupation, Phone Number, E-mail)

Step 4: Commitment manipulation check

Step 5: Word of mouth exposing

- **Negative word of mouth condition:** Here are some reviews of customers about Wave Rider Phoenix

1. The sole is too thin to run comfortably, especially for distances exceeding 5km.
2. I find the heel grip too tight so my feet feel uncomfortable. But maybe, my feet are too fleshy that it doesn't rightly grip for a good long run.
3. When I begin warming up at the pace of 6:30 per km, it feels sluggish and unresponsive. It feels like the shoes have zero cushioning and there's no shock absorption so the experience isn't that pleasant
4. I would like to see a little more refinement though and more detail to finishing. The shoes are not symmetrical on the outside due to sloppy cutting and stitching during manufacturing. I have only owned these shoes for a short time but I cannot see this product's internal synthetic lining wearing as well as a leather walking shoe. I think it is a little cheaply made. Really the retail price should reflect this but I think they are overpriced.
5. The mid-sole didn't sit well because it caused me calf pain and toe cramps. Also the heel area was a bit loose and that it tended to result in some accidental shoe removals.

- Positive word of mouth condition: Here are some reviews of customers about Wave Rider Phoenix.

1. I switched to Brooks from Mizano a few years ago just because I wanted a change. I forgot how well these shoes fit. My nagging foot pain has suddenly disappeared since lacing up the Mizano's again! Look great and feel amazing. I will not switch brands going forward. Sorry for the brief break-up Mizano. Highly recommend!

2. As a mid-foot striker that tends to revert back to my heel-striking ways on longer runs, the heel-to-toe transition is super smooth and great for tackling hills on the incline or rapid decline. Sweaty toes benefit from the breathable mesh, as did arches (nothing feels better than wind between your toes around mile 22), and the padded heel offers subtle comfort.

3. This shoe is absolutely amazing great color and perfect cushioning. Amazing shoe has a great grip and works like a charm in the rain, no more getting my socks wet unless I dunk my feet in a puddle. It's all good.

4. I swear by Mizanos, so I bought these for my husband so he'll stop using cheap shoes from the store that seem no better than flip flops for support. He was turned off by the sticker price, but once he put them on I haven't seen him use his old ones (hopefully now demoted to "lawn mowing" shoes only). Great support for running, walking, and every day wear. I'll be picking up him up another pair so he can have dedicated inside shoes for the home gym. Recommend buying a 1/2 size up for running - my physical therapist

recommended this to me and it gives your feet room to expand while exercising. Great quality, great fit, great shoes!

5. These are the best running shoes I currently have, they provide maximum cushioning and comfort for long distances (10k to half marathon distances), hopefully they last long as well. The fit is good- toe box is roomy but not too big and although i'm used to having more padding at the heel, the heel is locked in place and doesn't slip during runs. I'm especially fond of the laces that come with the shoes- they stretch a bit, easy to lace and doesn't untangle easily. Highly recommended, I'm definitely going to buy them again once they wear out.

Step 6: Dependent Variable measurement

국문 초록

입소문이 구매 의도에 미치는 영향 및

충성심의 중재 역할

Nguyen Ngoc Quyen

경영학과 마케팅 전공

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입소문 마케팅은 시장에서 가장 오래되고 성공적인 정보 홍보 방법중 하나이다. 기술 발전으로 입소문 마케팅은 고객 태도에 영향을 줄 수 있는 중요 요소로 점점 주목 받고 있다.

입소문과 고객 태도와 관련된 선행 연구에 근거하여 본 연구는 더욱더 소비자 행동적인 맥락을 고려 하였다. 본 연구는 입소문이 고객의 구매 의도에 미치는 영향을 조사하는데 목적이 있으며, 이 관계에서 브랜드에 대한 충성심을 중재 변수를 고려하였다. 연구 결과 입소문은 구매의도에 유의미한 영향을 미쳤으며, 특히 부정적인 입소문은 긍정적인 입소문에 비해 큰 영향을 미치는 것으로 밝혀졌다. 또한 예상

했던 결과 대로 이미 가지고 있던 헌신 정도 혹은 충성도는 입소문과 관련된 구매 의도와 음의 상관 관계인 것으로 나타났다. 즉, 높은 수준의 충성도를 가진 고객은 구매 의도와 관련하여 부정적인 입소문의 영향을 안 받는 것으로 나타났다.

마지막으로 본 연구는 입소문 및 헌신도 및 충성도와 관련된 ‘입소문 마케팅’ 및 ‘고객 관계 관리’에 대한 추가 연구를 제안하고 시사점을 제공한다.

주요어: 입소문, 구매 의도, 충성심, 부정적 효과, 고객 관계관리

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