Inspirational Factors of Electronic Word of Mouth: A Case of Social Networking Sites

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Abstract

The aim of the current study is to examine the impact of perceived ease of use of eWOM, knowledge sharing motivation and perceived usefulness of eWOM on intention to use eWOM for making online purchases. Upon theory of reasoned action and technology acceptance model the study hypothesized that attitude towards eWOMfor online purchase mediates the relationshp between inspirational factors and intention to use eWOM. To test the hypothsized relationships data was collected from social network sites users conveniently. 272 valid respondents were analyzed via SPSS. Preacher and Hayes PROCESS macro was used for the purpose of testing mediation. Results showed that all inspirational factors had significant effect on intention to use eWOM. Moreover, attitude towardseWOM was also found to be a significant mediator between perceived ease of use of eWOM, knowledge sharing motivation and perceived usefulness of eWOM, and intention to use eWOM for making online purchases.

Keywords: eWOM, Inspirational Factors, TRA

Introduction

The manners of socio-business correspondence and discourse are quickly evolving because of vivacious modifications in financial and innovative conditions in the recent few decades. Organizations had a new path to natter staunchly, suitably and do-ably with their respective clients with the fire up of internet in 1991 and its usual use in business

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in mid 1990's (Ščeulovs&Gaile-Sarkane, 2010). To communicate between organizations, communities and individuals noticeable revisions had been initiated by web-based social network (Kietzmann, Hermkens, & Silvestre, 2011).

If we talk about the distinguished online networking plinths, electronic word-of-mouth takes a boom advantage and is swiftly fostering amid fanatics across the orb (Taylor, Lewin, &Strutton, 2011). An importunate effort is being done by electronic word-of- mouth to gather population at increasing rate by inviting them to share feature jiffies, matter inquiries, hot potatoes, and in the last but not the least whine about the climate (Vasalou, Joinson, & Courvoisier, 2010). Online advocacy may sway clients to buy services likewise traditional advertisers do (Neti, 2011).

The effect on performance and on conduct of humans because of undeniably hasty relocation of purchasers and organizations by virtue of shift from conformist advertisement to electronic word-of- mouth carted in the contemplation of various researchers and allows them to ponder distinctive view points about public created (eWOMs) and makers generated substance showing up on social network sites. In persuasion of this argument a spick and span purchaser point of view towards word-of-mouth is of least importance until and unless it had been accomplice with some sort of affirmative shopper behavior. Whether eWOM reaction acts as a stimulus for purchase behavior or not in the SNSs settings, among many other issues this is a question that remains unanswered and needs further probing. Garaham& Weiner (1996) and Kunda (1990) proved that inspirations, convictions and attitudes are linked to each other. Zhou and Bao (2002) proved this notion in the context of simple advertising however substantiation of eWOM in social settings still needs to be tested on a broader spectrum (Yang, 2017). The current study is based on addressing the above mentioned research gaps.

The study specifically investigate inspirational factors for the use of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) mentioned on social network sites in South Asian settings (i.e., Pakistan) by proposing and testing a new model based on theory of reasoned action (Ajzen&Fishbein, 1980) with an amalgamation of technology acceptance model (Davis, Bagozzi, &Warshaw, 1989).

Focus of the discussion also orbits the convictions, real worries for young purchaser dispositions because of eWOM of SNSs and on genuine practices as a result of use of eWOM of SNSs.

Conclusively, the study is to measure the impact of inspirational factors on intention to use eWOM for online purchases with a mediating role of attitude towards eWOM in context of social network sites. Mainly there are two main questions which are being explored i.e. i) what is the impact of inspirational factors on attitude towards eWOM and intention to use eWOM? ii) Is there any mediating role of attitude towards eWOM between the relationship of inspirational factors and intention to use eWOM?

Literature Review

Increase in use of internet has also affected use of social network websites. It has virtually become possible for people to connect to each other despite being geographically in proximate. Multinationals and small medium enterprises have used this global phenomenon to their advantage and companies promote their products via internet (Bressler& Grantham, 2000).

A major portion of this information sharing is done through social network websites because of its trickle effect (Kietzmann, Hermkens, & Silvestre, 2011). Social network websites support electronic word-of-mouth. Organizations also share information regarding their products on these social network websites (Edwards, 2011). Customers nowadays also access social network websites with the intention of seeking information regarding the products of their liking.

Online groups formed for the purpose of information sharing give a sense of belongingness to their members. Information sharing through electronic word-of-mouth appeals to the hidden needs of customers which ultimately is being fulfilled by being members of online information sharing. Online network websites provide opportunity for real time intuitive correspondence which serves as a platform for content creation (VanMeter, Grisaffe, &Chonko, 2015). In addition to this as anxiety is the root cause of eWOM so messages more or less in this state of mind may be probably going to strife with other people's online impression (Wakefield & Wakefield, 2018).

H1: Knowledge sharing motivation positively related intention to use eWOM for online purchases.

Use of electronic word-of-mouth is connected to perception of benefit of its use. People are extrinsically motivated to use electronic word-of-mouth because of perceived usefulness. People feel that electronic word-of-mouth puts them in a better position to collect information regarding products of their interest (Taylor, Lewin, &Strutton, 2011). Users explore websites for planning personal recreational outings (Ayeh, Au, & Law, 2013) to improve hospitality management (Kim, Lee, & Law, 2008) or make purchase choices (Baier&Stüber, 2010). It helps them to absorb useful piece of information and apply it on their purchasing habits (Castañeda, Muñoz-Leiva, &Luque, 2007). Consequently, their intention to use electronic word-of-mouth before making any type of purchase is increased.

H 2: Perceived usefulness of eWOM positively related on intention to use eWOM for online purchases.

Vasalou, Joinson, & Courvoisier (2010) people intend to use electronic word-of-mouth mentioned on SNSs because of their positive perception regarding it. Customers believe that electronic word-of-mouths mentioned on SNSs is a pragmatic option for the purpose of collecting data regarding their purchase (Wilson, 2007). Davis, Bagozzi, &Warshaw(1989) established that perceived ease- of-use is the degree to which clients believe that use of electronic word of mouth is free of any hassle or complexity. Contrary to perceived usefulness of eWOM which is extrinsic motivation, easeof use of electronic word-of-mouth is intrinsic motivation. Customers feel more comfortable to use those electronic word-of- mouth that are more "user friendly" than those that are more difficult to use (Neti, 2011).

H 3: Perceived ease of use of eWOM positively related on intention to use eWOM for online purchases.

Customers are majorly affected by the simplicity, ease of navigation and smoothness of connection processes for use of electronic word- of-mouth. In addition to the ease of use attitude towards electronic word-of-mouth mentioned on SNSs also plays a very pivotal role (Mathur, Black, Cao, & Weinberg, 2012). No matter how motivated client is for knowledge sharing or how useful they feel electronic word-of-mouth is or how easy is it to use, attitude towards eWOM steer the intention of

using it. For some clients, seeing is believing. Until the time they have physically seen the product, they do not intend to make purchase no matter how positive opinion is floating through electronic word-of-mouth (Mathur, Black, Cao, & Weinberg, 2012).

Attitude towards electronic word-of-mouth serves as anunderlying determinant for its use. Electronic word-of-mouth in some cases acts as a deciding factor for the purpose of making purchase (Correa, Hinsley, & Zuniga, 2010).

In settings of human deportment, attitude has been the field of study for number of years. Attitude in literature defined as the extent of liking or disliking a specific object by the person (Ajzen&Fishbein, 1980). Combined cognitive beliefs and affective feelings originate the spell of attitude (Zanna&Rempel, 1988). In the specific context, attitude, not only facilitates us in making decision from multiple available options but also lend a hand in quality of decision making (Fazio, Ledbetter, &Towles-Schwen, 2000).

Number of theories regarding attitude exists in literature. Amongst one of them theory of reasoned action (TRA) proposed that conscious thinking is the foundation of choice of behaviour and is ultimately leading to most desirable outcome (Ajzen&Fishbein, 1980). Later on, Ajzen (1991) proposed theory of planned behaviour (TPB) which clearly takes the human attitude into consideration in formulation of intentions. These theories devise a close connection between attitude and behavioural intentions.

H4: Attitude towards eWOM (SNS) mediates the relationship between knowledge sharing motivation and intention to use eWOM for online purchases.
H5: Attitude towards eWOM (SNS) mediates the relationship between perceived usefulness of eWOM (SNS) and intention to use eWOM for online purchases.
H6: Attitude towards eWOM (SNS) mediates the relationship between perceived ease of use of eWOM (SNS) and intention to use eWOM for online purchases.

In our study we are going to use theory of reasoned action (TRA) which defines the links between beliefs, attitudes, norms, intentions, and behaviour of individuals, in the extension of technology acceptance model. Technology acceptance model is an information systems theory

which was proposed by (Davis, Bagozzi, &Warshaw, 1989) that deals with the acceptance and usage of technology.

In totality knowledge sharing motivation, perceived usefulness of electronic word-of- mouth and perceived ease of use of electronic word-of-mouth used as I.V's , attitude towards electronic word-of-mouth as mediator and intention to use electronic word-of- mouth for making online purchases constitute a model that requires further investigation as proposed by different researchers.
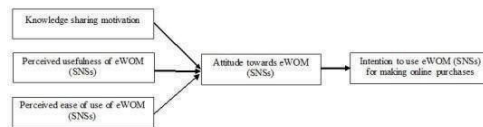

Fig 1: Theoretical Framework

Methodology
Sample

For data collection, the questionnaire was floated to 400 respondents. The data were collected from the individuals who have internet connections and they ever clicked on any ad on any website of social media or search the product online. Self-administered questionnaire was used for the said purpose. Collected data in our research were cross sectional.

Convenience sampling procedure was adopted for data collection purpose. Amongst the total of 400 respondents, the questionnaire was responded by 330 respondents, giving a response rate of 82%. 58 questionnaires were discarded because of incomplete response out of total 330 received questionnaires. So analysis was done on 272 available questionnaires. 5 point Likert scale was used for data collection of independent and dependent variables while the mediator was measured on 7 point Likert scale.

Instruments

KnowledgeSharingMotivation: For KSM, (Hennig-Thurau,Gwinner, Walsh, &Gremler, 2004) was used. It contained 7 items.For example "I feel good when I share electronic word-of-mouth onsocial media about my good experience". The reliability was 0.75. *Perceived Usefulness:* Perceived Usefulness was measured by (Heinrichs, Lim, & Lim, 2011).

It contained 4 items; for example, "Using eWOM   on   social network   websites   increase my learning/life/social interaction performance". The reliability of the scale was 0.81.

Perceived Ease of Use: Perceived Ease of Use was measured by (Davis, Bagozzi, &Warshaw, 1989). It contained 4 items; for example, "My interaction with eWOM on social network sites is clear and understandable. The reliability of the scale was .78.*Attitude towards eWOMs:* For measuring Attitude, (Crites, Fabrigar, & Petty, 1994) model with 6 items was used; for example "Using eWOM on social network websites make me feel....". The mediator in the study was measured on seven-point Likert scale. The reliability was .83.

Intention to use eWOMs: Intention was measured by (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Ha & Jang, 2010; Jeong& Jang, 2011). It contained 3 items; for example "If I have a similar experience, I will feel good when I can tell others about my great experience of eWOM on social network websites in the future". This dependent variable was measured on five-point Likert scale. The reliability was .77.Data analysis was done with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Correlation was used to analyse the strength and direction of relationship between variables. Preacher and Hayes method was used for testing mediation using process macros for SPSS.

Data Analysis

Table No. 1 shows demographics bifurcation. Out of 272 respondents 61 were under age of 25 with 22.4 percentage. 25 to 40 contributed 131 with 48.2 % of the total sample. 80 respondents were between ages of 41 to 55 with 29.4 %. Out of 272 respondents, 142 were male with 52.2 % and 130 were females with 47.8 %. For education, 10 had FSC degree with 3.7%. 172 had bachelor's degree with 63.2% and 90 had a master's degree with 33.1 %. 121 respondents had less than 3 years of experience that comprised 44.5%. 81 had experience between 3 to 5 years contributing 29.8 %.50 respondents had experience between 6 to 10 years and 20 had more than 10 years of experience with 18.4 and 7.4 % simultaneously.

Table 1: Demographics

		N	%	Gender	N	%	Education	N	%	Experience	N
Age											
25 or under	61	22.4	44.5	Male	142	52.2	FSC	10	3.7	< 3 yrs	121
25 to 40	131	48.2		Female	130	47.8	Bachelor	172	63.2	3 to 5 yrs	81 29.8s
41 to 55			50 18.4 yrs	80	29.4			Masters	90	33.1	6 to 10 yrs	20 7.4above
56 or above	0	0		> 10 yrs	20	7.4	Total	272	100	Total	272 100
Total	272	100	Total	272	100						

Table No. 2 shows correlation analysis. Results were accepted to be significant at P < 0.05. Cronbach alpha values are also provided in parenthesis. The value of α for all variables is above .70 which is in the acceptable range Results showed that knowledge sharing motivation was significantly positively correlated to intention to use eWOM for online purchases (r = .546 P < 0.01). This supported hypothesis No. 1.

Table 2: Correlation Bivariate correlation

	Age	Gender	Edu	Exp	KSMM	PerUseM	PerEUseM	ATEW OMM	IUWWO MOPM
Age	1								
Gender	.112	1							
Edu	.720**	.163**	1						
Exp	.770**	.114	.502**	1					
KSMM	-.043	-.011	-.002	-.028	1 (.75)				
PerUseM	-.064	-.047	.041	-.013	.149*	1 (.81)			
PerEUseM	.048	.031 -.031 .023		-.027 -.011	.246**	.376**	1 (.78) .488** 1 .342** .603**		
ATEWO MM	-2	.07	.000 .067	-.006 -.07	.522** .546**	.519**			
IUWWO MOPM	-9	.03				.395**		(.83) 1 (.77)	

* P < 0.05 ** P < 0.01

Table 3:

IV	Effect effect	Effect effect	Direct Results	Total for on M	Bootstrap on IV on M on DV	of indirect effect	M
							LL
95% 95% CICI							
Knowledge Sharing attitude	.8737	.3210	.3903	.7113	.1920	.3958	

Results showed significant positive correlation between perceived usefulness of eWOM and intention to use eWOM for making online purchases supporting hypothesis No. 2. Table No. 2 also shows that perceived ease of use had a significant positive correlation with intention to use eWOM for making online purchases. Results also show that attitude towards eWOM on social network websites was also positively correlated to intention to use eWOM for making online purchases. This supported hypothesis No. 3.

Table 4: Mediation, Effect of attitude towards eWOM (SNS) as mediator (M) between Knowledge sharing motivation (IV) and intention to use eWOM for online purchases (DV)

IV on IV on M	Effect	Effect of M on DV	Direct effect	Total effect	Bootstrap Results for indirect effect	
					LL 95% CI	UL 95% CI
Perceived	.5497	.3998 of eWOM	.0877	.4875	.1622	.2870usefulness

Table No. 3 give the direct, total and bootstrap results for indirect effect of knowledge sharing attitude on intention to use eWOM for online purchases and attitude towards eWOM (SNS) as a mediator. Results showed that the indirect effect via attitude towards eWOM on the relationship between knowledge sharing attitude and intention to use eWOM for online purchases fell between (.1920 and .3958) with 95% confidence interval. With zero not falling between the upper limit and lower limit, it showed that knowledge sharing attitude mediated the relationship between I.V and D.V. The results supported hypothesis No 4.

Table 5**:** Mediation, Effect of attitude towards eWOM (SNS) as mediator (M) between Perceived ease of use of eWOM (SNS) (IV) <u>and intention to use eWOM for online purchases (DV)</u>

EffectEffect Direct Total Bootstrap on IVof M effecteffectResultsfor on Mon indirect effect	
	DV
LL	UL
95% 95% CICI	
Perceived .6111 .4204 .0572 .4776 .1909 .3337ease ofuse of eWOM	

Table 5 give the direct, total and bootstrap results for indirect effect of perceived ease of use of eWOM on intention to use eWOM for online purchases and attitude towards e-WOM (SNS) as a mediator. Results showed that the indirect effect via attitude towards eWOM on the relationship between perceived ease of use of eWOM and intention to use eWOM for online purchases fell between (.1909 and.3337) with 95% confidence interval. Zero did not fall between the upper limit and lower limit for indirect effect which showing that attitude towards eWOM (SNS) mediated relationship between I.V and D.V. Consequently hypothesis No. 6 was supported.

Discussion
Impact of knowledge sharing motivation, perceived usefulness of eWOM and perceived ease of use of eWOM was evaluated on intention to use eWOM for making online purchases. Moreover, attitude towards eWOM was tested as a mediator. Results proved that knowledge sharing motivation has a significant impact on intention to use eWOM for online purchases. Online information sharing motivates individual to use that information for making online purchases. eWOM serves as one of the determinant for customers for making a purchase. Individuals that share information online also seek to use information provided by other online customers to make online purchases. The main source of information being shared is via social network sites.

Results also showed that perceived usefulness of eWOM also affects the intention to use eWOM for making online purchases. Information available on social network sites is based on the feedback

provided by customers that have already used those products. Consequently, it serves as a reliable source for the purpose of making online purchases. It was also proved that the ease withwhich eWOM can be used also affects the intention to use it for making online purchases. When it is easy for customers to obtain information through online websites, they use it to make online purchases.

Results have also proved that attitude towards eWOM affect the relationship between knowledge sharing and intention to use eWOM. Customers motivated to share information when have positive attitude towards eWOM, they also intend to use it for making online purchases. Moreover, attitude towards eWOM also mediated relationship between perceived usefulness of eWOM and intention to use eWOM for online purchases. Customers that believe that eWOM is useful coupled with positive attitude towards eWOM use it for making online purchases. Higher perception of usefulness with positive attitude towards eWOM increases the intention of customer to use it for making online purchases. Results have also proved that attitude towards eWOM also mediate relationship between perceived ease of use of eWOM and intention to use eWOM for making online purchases.

Results are in line with the findings of Bressler& Grantham (2000), Ščeulovs&Gaile-Sarkane (2010), Edwards (2011), Kietzmann, Hermkens, & Silvestre (2011) and Wakefield & Wakefield (2018).

Conclusion
Social network websites play a pivotal role in marketing strategy devised for the sake of promotion of products. Knowledge sharing motivation, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of eWOM are positively correlated to intention for use of eWOM for online purchases. In addition to that attitude towards eWOM also effects the motivation of individuals to use eWOM for making online purchases. Attitude towards eWOM mediate the relationship between I.V's and D.V's.

Managerial Implications and Future Directions
Manager of social network sites must focus on inspirational factors to enhance the attitude towards eWOM and its effect on intention to online purchases. Knowledge sharing motivation must be focused for the development and enhancement of eWOM towards the online retail purchases. Importance of ease of use cannot be ignored. Customers/users must feel ease while visiting social network sites. It will enhance the

usage and ultimately the purchases. If customer feels that the site is not of use, they may quit early without any purchase. SNS must be developed in a way that lead the customer and give him a feel that the site is offering him what he/she wants.In this study, only the favourable view points of using eWOM were discussed, whereas the negative ones were excluded, such as tocomplain or to vent negative feelings. It is accepted that online reviews not only vary in content but also in the valence of information presented and framed. Future study may also examine the ambiguity caused by negative eWOM and investigate the impact of valence on consumer generated media engagement. Secondly, we carried out the study in cross sectional environment so one can carry out the longitudinal study to present the long lasting findings of both negative and positive eWOM outcomes in order to ascertain the validity of this emerging advertisement plinth.

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