

E-Word of Mouth and Buying Patterns of Consumers: A Thematic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of current study is to examine the factors influencing E-word of mouth and to examine the impact of E-word of mouth on buying patterns of consumers towards the product “Samsung 7 in 1 (32cm) HD LED Smart TV”.

Methodology: This study is qualitative in nature. Inductive reasoning method is used with 148 data points from Amazon and Flipkart for the product “Samsung 7 in 1 (32cm) HD LED Smart TV”. This is based on customer reviews and a content and thematic analysis has been made created on these reviews to understand the factors influencing E-word of mouth and its impact on buying pattern of consumers. Multiple reviews were observed using qualitative research to obtain a comprehensive description of the product.

Findings: Based on the content and thematic analysis seven attributes were considered vital factors for E-word of mouth. The factors of E-word of mouth are product, price, place, promotion, packaging, installation and warranty. As per the current study product, price, place, promotion, packaging, installation and warranty are factors influences consumers on their buying patter of proposed product in this study.

Managerial Implication: The 80:20 rules of marketing projects that 20% of your existing customers are happy and satisfied with your product and services, they will create 80% of your future business. This can be positive when customers have positive experience with products and services provided by Marketer. Hence more focus as to be given for the factors mentioned by customers regarding products and services as it will have impact on buying pattern of consumers.

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Originality of Value: More focus should be given to the reviews which has negative influence towards product proposed. Hence marketers can work on these factors and can improvise their product and brand. It also has various impacts on productivity, revenues and brand image of the organization.

Keywords: *E-word of Mouth, Buying Pattern, Consumers, Content Analysis, Thematic Analysis*

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The continuous interconnection between business and customers in global environment becoming essential for sustainability and development. And this interconnection is associated by using various online platforms that helps customers to understand and operate easily and make their decisions on the products (Bogdan Anastasiei, 2019). The E-word of mouth is exchange of marketing information between consumers and influencing their behavior and attitude towards the products and services (Katz, 1966). The exchanges of messages and information on products and services indirectly influences individual in decision making (Brown, 2007). Now with introduction of technology and e-commerce, there is shift from traditional word of mouth to E-word of mouth (Daugherty, 2014). E-commerce has become a convenience platform, which has now replaced the traditional word of mouth communication with eWOM. Today, eWOM has emerged as a way of customers to engage in non-commercial advertising, share and discuss direct expenses about the specific brand and product (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004). The eWOM is recognized as an effective tool for building brands awareness, creating hype in the marketplace, influencing purchase decisions and development of brand loyalty (Kala, 2018). As more involvement of consumers in internet and sharing information and experience about goods and services hence marketers are focusing on the tactics and strategies for social Marketing (Kaplan, 2010). eWOM is considered as of the essential tool in influencing buying pattern of consumers and brand loyalty (Fergusson, 2008).

The current study is confined to examine the impact of eWOM on the buying pattern of consumers towards “Samsung 7 in 1 (32cm) HD LED Smart TV”. As per the (Kooistra, 2018) the number of smart phones user hit by 3.8 billion by 2021 and 28.5% smart phone penetration, India is the world’s second largest market as of May 2018. India is becoming home to

a growing middle class population. Increasing disposable income has led to increase consumer demand for electronics products specially advanced TV's, Mobile Phones and computers. This surge in demand is huge which shows a positive outlook for the industry. Electronic industry valued at USD 1.75 trillion is the largest and fastest growing industry in the world, highlighted the study. The demand of electronic products in India is expected to grow at a CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of 41% during 2017-2020 to reach USD 400 billion by 2020 (Assocham, 2017). In Asian regions e-commerce sector has been a boom and approximately 71% of internet users in the region will have purchased products online for the mentioned time period (Statista, Sep 23, 2019). There is paucity of research in the field of eWOM from Indian perspective relating with qualitative aspects of the study. Previous literatures are relating eWOM with various constructs such as brand loyalty, brand image, sales revenue and other outcomes to consumers and Marketers. Hence, there is need to explore the study from qualitative aspects relating eWOM with buying pattern of consumers.

The initiative taken by government of India on Digital India also acts as a catalyst for the growth of electronic communication in India. Therefore, the results of this qualitative study will be beneficial to marketer in designing suitable promotional and social media strategies, which will create impact on the buying pattern of consumers and decision making process of consumers in this emerging economy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Electronic Word of Mouth

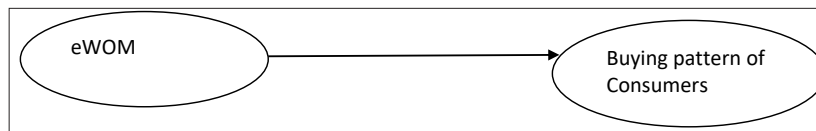
The electronic word of mouth is considered as one of the widely accepted and trust worthy information which has massive influence on consumer behavior in influencing their purchasing pattern and decision making (Chevalier, 2006). eWOM facilitates the information on brand experiences and consumers reviews on various products and services consumed, this kind of information is not available from controlled organization sources (Park, 2008). eWOM acts as informant and recommend tool as users will be sharing their experiences and reviews on the different brands and it also influences the brand image of the products in the minds of consumers (Park, 2007). As sender has right to post or gives reviews based on his experience, eWOM is trustworthy (Brown, 2007) and effective than

traditional marketing (Trusov, 2009). The consumers feel convenient, comfortable to see the reviews online when they plan to purchase products online and offline (Adjei, 2009). A positive eWOM helps in creating brand image of products and their by helps in intention to buy the products and services (Zhu, 2010). Hence eWOM is catalyst for the increasing sales revenue, brand image, brand loyalty with behavioral intentions of consumers.

Buying Pattern of Consumers

The buying pattern of consumers always associated with benefits and extra services provided by marketers (Tsimonis, 2014) and reviews online posted by sender towards the products and services of Marketer. The negative reviews of products online will have impact on decision making and purchasing decision of consumers (Lee, 2011). The focused observation should be considered from marketer towards negative EWOM. As it has direct influence on sales revenue, brand image, brand loyalty of the Marketer. The review online and through digital modes helps the consumers to develop their trust towards particular brand and it is beneficial for consumer decisions making (Torlak, 2014). Earlier literature on buying pattern of consumers showed the relationship between eWOM and buying pattern of consumers (Berger, 2010). The buying pattern of consumers through purchase intention is one of vital attribute of cognitive behavior of consumers and it will affect the buying habits, behavioral intentions of consumers towards particular brand (Spears, 2004). Based on the literature, author is proposing the relationship between eWOM and buying pattern of consumers.

Propositions Showing the Relationship between EWOM and Buying Pattern of Consumers



Source: Literature Review

METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative in nature. Inductive reasoning method is used with 148 data points from Amazon and Flipkart for the product “Samsung

7 in 1 (32cm) HD LED Smart TV”. This is based on customer reviews and a content and thematic analysis has been made created on these reviews to understand the factors influencing E-word of mouth and its impact on buying pattern of consumers. Multiple reviews were observed using qualitative research to obtain a comprehensive description of the product. Initially authors have done coding for the reviews taken from data points using MS EXCEL. The study has covered the attributes influencing eWOM on an e-commerce platform. The study has been done for a product “Samsung 7 in 1 (32cm) HD LED Smart TV” on the famous e-commerce sites Amazon and Flipkart based on customer reviews. The 148 attributes were sorted into 7 factors/themes, based on the characteristics of the each attributes found through data points. The seven themes found are product, price, place, promotion, packaging, installation and warranty. As per the current study product, price, place, promotion, packaging, installation and warranty are factors influences consumers on their buying patter of proposed product in this study.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

The 80:20 rules of marketing projects that 20% of your existing customers are happy and satisfied with your product and services, they will create 80% of your future business. This can be positive when customers have positive experience with products and services provided by Marketer. Hence more focus as to be given for the factors mentioned by customers regarding products and services as it will have impact on buying pattern of consumers. More focus should be given to the reviews which has negative influence towards product proposed. Hence marketers can work on these factors and can improvise their product and brand. It also has various impacts on productivity, revenues and brand image of the organization.

FUTURE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to the data point of 148 attributes influencing eWOM and its influence on buying pattern of consumers towards the proposed products in this study. As consumption experience of consumers may vary, we may not generalize that only these seven factors influencing eWOM towards the product proposed and they might be other factors also influencing the consumers in buying pattern of consumers. Hence, these factors cannot be generalized to entire population of the country.

The present study is more focused on the qualitative aspects of research, future researches can consider this as gap and consider quantitative, meta analysis and sentiment analysis for future study.

CONCLUSION

The eWOM is catalyst for the marketers in taking call on various brands and understanding consumer preferences, behaviors and decision making towards products online and offline. This study helped us to understand the factors influencing eWOM and its impact on the buying pattern of consumers. The eWOM helps us to understand the consumer's preferences, their prior experience towards particular product and eWOM is considered at one of the vital attribute for brand image of the marketer (Krishnamurthy, 2018). This qualitative study offered some new insights for marketers to use the digitalization of WOM as a strategy in their marketing programs in attracting new consumers, retaining the existing ones and creating the favorable image of brands. As we are in the cognitive era, where much of importance is given to customers feeling, emotions and experience rather than rational attributes of the products. Hence Marketers can induce satisfied and loyal customers to register their positive experiences and write online reviews about the features and functions of products with the aim of maximizing brand acceptance that consequently would influence consumer intention during the purchase.

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