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Generating consumer resonance for purchase intention on social network sites

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ABSTRACT

Consumer resonance is powerful in affecting a user's image of products and, as this resonance expands with iterative enforcement, the user's buying intention can be strongly altered. In order to develop consumer resonance, product messages articulated on a social network site (SNS) must be designed with the proper content and delivered through the proper channels. Using uses and gratifications theory, this study built a model to explain user behavior of consumer resonance on SNSs in dimensions of content gratification, social-relation gratification, and self-presentation gratification to drive increased purchase intention. By presenting two selected product articulates on social websites, we collected 392 samples and used modeling with partial least square to analyze the usable data. Meanwhile, a two-step cluster analysis method was applied to partition the sample into two groups and develop managerial implications by comparing them. The study results show that utilitarian value, tie strength, normative influence, information influence, and self-presentation have significant effects on customer resonance, which in turn influences purchase intention for successful consumer-brand relationship. It is hoped that the research findings might enhance our understanding of user resonance behavior and provide insights into social participants' future purchase intentions.

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1. Introduction

Every minute, hundreds of messages are created on social network sites (SNSs). Organizations use SNSs to reach existing and potential customers and build psychological and social bonds (Bernoff & Li, 2008; Boyd & Ellison, 2007) with their products and services. Social articulates have been developed to stimulate resonance on the network and develop a resounding impact on user buying decisions. By articulating and posting messages, enterprises expect to trigger customer responses through various types of expression on the digitized platform. These interactive processes are developed to more fully understand customers' views, entice users into extended discussions, accelerate expanded sharing within the site's social circle, and affect users' perception of

products and services.

From an impression management view (Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Goffman, 1959; Leary & Kowalski, 1990), companies develop product articulations (introductions, stories, experiences, and promotions) on SNSs to create a desired impression of their products. This message impression is articulated to create a consumer resonance with open and positive responses and make the planned impression a reality (Laroche, Reza Habibi, Richard, & Sankaranarayanan, 2012; Lillqvist & Louhiala-Salminen, 2014) in customers' perceived views of the product. However, if users feel a dissonance, this particular articulation would not make the intended impression. Accordingly, product messages articulated on an SNS must be designed with the proper content and delivered through the proper channels.

The difference between word of mouth (WOM) and consumer resonance is that the former is the frequency and spread of key words by any users on a network platform (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007), which can be positive, neutral, or negative (Richins, 1983). Resonance, which involves viewers' reactions to a particular post, is conveyed mostly through supportive moves to the posters. Measuring WOM is an attempt to understand the strength

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of a message's expansion while measuring resonance is an attempt to understand the strength of a user's support (reaction) to a particular post.

Although studies on WOM have examined the antecedents (Brown et al., 2007; Cheung & Lee, 2012; Gruen, Osmonbekov, & Czaplewski, 2006; Ha & Im, 2012; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004; Munnukka, Karjaluoto, & Tikkanen, 2015) of the sharing intention on social networks and considered the sharing of words an important factor in marketing effects, these studies have not addressed the various responsive activities of customers to product articulations, including the slight gesture of clicking as well as the involvement of content discussion with posters.

Customers resonate on social media sites in different ways such as clicking, posting, discussing, and sharing. Clicking "like" is a subtle way of echoing support for the message; texting further echoes and elaborates the message with clarification, opinions, and sharing experiences; and sharing with peers is another way of referring to the articulated message. These responsive actions are constantly open to the entire virtual community and can ignite various paths of customer resonance among the linked community and can dynamically form a collective image of products and services in users' minds and perceptions.

Several threads of discussion on developing articulation to stimulate positive product portrait reactions currently exist. Some (Ha & Im, 2012; Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005; Nabi & Krcmar, 2004; Sherry, 2004) consider ingratiating customers with entertaining elements as a way to raise views while others (Hennig-Thurau & Walsh, 2003) consider providing educational experience as the best strategy. Additional studies (Park & Lee, 2009) consider platform characteristics in which customers interact as a key element for resonance. There are also studies (Racherla & Friske, 2012) that stress the importance of individual characteristics in affecting reactive motivation. These studies lead us to think that although triggering customer resonance on product articulations is critical, many points remain unclear such as the designed site content, the platform selected, and the participants' social platform needs. Furthermore, even if customers feel resonance, does this mean purchase intention will increase accordingly?

To address these concerns this study tries to explore the questions of (1) what creates consumer resonance on product articulation on SNSs, and (2) does high product resonance drive increased purchase intention?

Many scholars have applied Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory in order to realize users' motives for adopting new technologies (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2010; Katz, 1959; Magsamen-Conrad, Dowd, Abuljadail, Alsulaiman, & Shareefi, 2015; Ruggiero, 2000). Using U&G theory, we build a model to explain consumer behavior of resonance on product articulation in dimensions of content gratification, social-relation gratification, and self-presentation gratification. The association between consumer resonance on SNSs and user purchase intention is also examined.

The outline of the research is as follows. The first section provides a literature review of resonance with an emphasis on effects arising from resonance and customer online-purchase intention. We also hypothesize factors associated with consumer resonance on SNSs and the purchase intention. In the subsequent sections, we present the methodology, study results, and discuss the findings.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses

2.1. Consumer resonance

Online communities such as Facebook, YouTube, and Flickr offer

freely available user-created content that enables individuals to express their ideas and communicate opinions to many people (Riegner, 2007). When people are interested in a topic, they are more likely to discuss and share messages, thus creating resonance. The phenomenon of resonance is caused by massive responses that are triggered by an individual posting to which others react quickly. Solis (2010) states that there are three critical-path stages of social media to achieve social-media business goals: relevance, resonance, and significance. Businesses must first develop a relevant message concerning their products or services, which can then attain resonance with customers (Solis, 2010). The transition from relevance to resonance is motivated by individuals who are incentivized by thoughtfulness, values, and empathy on social media (Solis, 2010). From individuals' viewpoints, resonance is a cognitive engagement in which an audience participates in media (Russell, 2009).

Resonance is pre-conditional word-of-mouth (WOM) behavior. Word-of-mouth refers to a customer-to-customer interaction in online environments (Libai et al., 2010). Once a customer is aware and engaged, he or she will have a willingness to communicate with others (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). The difference between resonance and WOM is explained in Table 1. Word-of-mouth can be positive, negative, and mixed. Resonance is simply a behavior between a user and a post on the social network. Hence, resonance is focus on an individual level while WOM involves large-scale group interaction on SNSs.

In addition to viewing and clicking, Hoffman and Fodor (2010) have indicated that metrics such as the number of reposts/shares and number of responses could be seen as a performance evaluation of resonance on social networks. Replying is one form of multiple forms of communication. People add their opinion when they see content posted by others, which is a mutual communication between the posters and the readers. Sharing is one of the functional blocks in social media and a process that exchanges, distributes, and receives information (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). If a user finds interest in a post, he or she may share the message by copying it or adding comments (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). This sharing behavior may represent responding to a posting, agreeing with someone's view, or entertaining a specific audience (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013).

Consumers who have emotional and useful benefits tend to participate in online discussions (Riegner, 2007). Individuals that share information with their friends enhance the resonance on SNSs (Li & Shiu, 2012). Based on Kopp (2010), social resonance refers to the components of rapport as representing both the feelings of the participants during the experience of rapport and behaviors related to those feelings. The components have been identified in such a way as to enable us to use them in a harmonious or sympathetic connection that interlocutors have when they experience mutual attentiveness, positivity, and coordination. This rapport experience, defined by Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990), is expressed clearly when people say they "clicked" with each other, or felt the good interaction to be due to "chemistry". Moreover, Forr, Christensen, and DeRosia (2008) defined consumer resonance as that relevant consumers are likely to make with a firm's product or service. Accordingly, to understand the antecedents and effects of consumer resonance on SNSs, this study further identified it as the careful identification of foundational connections (both functional and emotional) serve as the extent to which a piece of content resonates with a consumer has with a firm's product or service and how well he or she can relate with it on SNSs.

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