



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Asia Pacific Management Review

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/apmr

Examining the mediating effect of attitude towards electronic words-of-mouth (eWOM) on the relation between the trust in eWOM source and intention to follow eWOM among Malaysian travellers

Nur Thara Atikah Zainal ^a, Amran Harun ^b, Jaratin Lily ^{c,*}

^a Centre for Promotion and Language Learning, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Sabah, Malaysia

^b Faculty of Technology Management and Business, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM), Johor, Malaysia

^c Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Sabah, Malaysia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 17 August 2015

Received in revised form

28 May 2016

Accepted 27 October 2016

Available online 4 January 2017

Keywords:

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)

Mediating

Malaysia

Travellers

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the influence of trusting electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) sources available online and attitude on intention to follow eWOM among travellers in Malaysia. A total of 280 questionnaires were collected from respondents via an online survey. The findings indicate that trust in the honesty, competence and benevolence of eWOM sources has a significant impact on attitude towards eWOM as well as the intention to follow it. However, the results also indicate that attitude partially mediates the relationship between trust in eWOM source and intention to follow it. The findings of this study can have significant implications for the tourism industry.

© 2016 College of Management, National Cheng Kung University. Production and hosting by Elsevier Taiwan LLC. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

With the increase in the number of internet users, the use of social media has expanded over the past decade from an individual level to the level of being a useful marketing tool in the world of business. Nowadays, many organisations from various industries, including the tourism industry, make a proactive use of social media as a contrivance to reach their prospective and existing customers. They change their marketing strategies by preferring the use of this interactive tool over traditional marketing and public relations practices (Amersdorffer, Bauhuber, & Oellrich, 2012; Khan, 2012). Tourism companies use social media to promote their products and services while travellers use the same to provide feedback and subsequently, both of these are used by prospective travellers to make travel decisions (Wang, Yu, & Wei, 2012). In addition, social media is widely used by travellers to look for travel-related information as it is perceived to be a more reliable source of information in comparison to the promotional literature provided by the companies (Chu & Kim, 2011). Since the internet is important in a cost effective dissemination of information about products

and services instantly and globally, the importance of social media as a marketing tool to reach the target audience cannot be discounted. However, from the traveller's perspective, social media is a way of securing better deals through disintermediation (Heung, 2003). Therefore, social media plays an important role in helping travellers and consumers make an informed decision through peer feedback, which is constantly updated before, during and post travelling (Parra-López, Bulchand-Gidumal, Gutiérrez-Taño, & Díaz-Armas, 2011).

The content shared through the platform of social media is called user-generated content (UGC) or electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Burgess, Sellitto, Cox, & Buultjens, 2011; Ayeh, Au, & Law, 2013). eWOM is defined as statements, positive or negative, made by potential, actual or former travellers about tourism-related products or services, which are made available to other travellers via the internet (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004; Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn, 2008; Cheung, Lee, & Thadani, 2009; Chu & Choi, 2011; Jalilvand, Esfahani, & Samiei, 2011; O'Reilly & Marx, 2011; Pan & Chiou, 2011; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Jalilvand, Samiei, Dini, & Manzari, 2012; Lim, Chung, & Pedersen, 2012; Lin, Lu, & Wu, 2012). It is an important source of information for travellers seeking destination information and facilitates their decision-making process with regards to the

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: jaratin@ums.edu.my (J. Lily).

purchase of tourism products or services online (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008). Numerous studies have been conducted to identify its influence on the behavioural patterns, travel intentions (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Jalilvand et al., 2012; Pietro, Virgilio, & Pantano, 2012) and purchase intentions (Kim, Chung, & Lee, 2011; Sparks & Browning, 2011). However, there are only limited studies that deal with the intention of travellers to follow eWOM, and the trust on its source (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalíu, 2011). Trust is an important variable in the online environment, as there is an absence of identity, difficulty in evaluating intangible products prior to consumption and a lack of consumer protection (Bregman & Karimov, 2012). This is particularly the case for tourism products, which is why most travellers rely heavily on eWOM to make informed and final decisions.

Social media exists in many forms such as social networks (Facebook), blogs (Blogspot and Wordpress), content sharing sites (YouTube and Flickr), microblogs (Twitter), online travel communities (TripAdvisor and VirtualTourist) and reviews of service providers (hotels, travel agencies and airlines) In Malaysia, Facebook is the most popular platform, followed by Blogspot, Twitter and Wordpress respectively (Sin, Nor, & Al-Agaga, 2012). In the context of tourism, a study by Redshift Research (2012) found that travellers in Malaysia consider travel columns (34%) and websites with holiday maker reviews (38%) to be more trustworthy than professional travel guides (22%). This indicates that they place more trust in eWOM in comparison to commercial travel websites to obtain information for their initial trip planning. Mostly, Malaysian travellers search for travel destinations (51%), attractions (44%), vacation activities (44%), hotels (39%), and restaurants (36%) through social media (Dhillon, 2012).

There have been a lot of studies on eWOM in the West (Martin & Lueg, 2011), in the Middle East (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Jalilvand et al., 2012) as well in the Eastern countries such as China (Cheung et al., 2008, 2009; Fan & Miao, 2012; Wang et al., 2012), South Korea (Doh & Hwang, 2009) and Thailand (Olapiriyakul & Kangsirikul, 2012). However, very little research on the topic has been conducted in Malaysia. Therefore, the aim of the study is to examine the relationship among the influence of trusting the eWOM source, attitude towards it and the intention to follow it among travellers in Malaysia while also taking into consideration attitude towards eWOM as mediator.

2. Review of literature

2.1. Trust in eWOM source

Trusting belief represents the confidence in the belief-attitude-intention framework propounded by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) where an individual perceives that the eWOM source would benefit the individual and not take advantage of the situation (McKnight, Choudhury, & Kacmar, 2002; Wu & Tsang, 2008; Kamtarin, 2012). The trusting beliefs mentioned by Casaló et al. (2011) i.e. honesty, competence and benevolence are similar to the dimensions used in the studies by McKnight et al. (2002), Wu and Tsang (2008), Urban, Amyx, and Lorenzon (2009), and Bregman and Karimov (2012). However, these studies do not include predictability belief, which Wu and Tsang (2008) use, along with other three trust dimensions, to study the factors affecting trust belief and behaviour intention of members in virtual communities. They employ four dimensions to assess trust. Although all four trust dimensions can explain the source of trustworthiness, most researchers have consistently used honesty, competence and benevolence in their studies (Urban et al., 2009) and all three should be seen as components of overall trust (Yoo, Lee, Gretzel, & Fesenmaier, 2009).

Honesty is the belief that the source providing eWOM will keep their word, fulfil their promises, and be sincere (McKnight et al., 2002; Wang & Benbasat, 2005; Zhang & Zhang, 2005; Salo & Karjaluoto, 2007; Wu & Tsang, 2008; Hsiao, Lin, Wang, Lu, & Yu, 2010; Lu, Zhao, & Wang, 2010; Casaló et al., 2011; Bregman & Karimov, 2012). It is one of the dimensions of trust that Casaló et al. (2011) use in their research regarding the trust in online travel community and the intention to follow the advice. Bregman and Karimov (2012) state that honesty belief can be used synonymously with integrity or confidence belief. They further explain that honesty also involves fairness, credibility, consistency, predictability, reliability and dependability indicating that the fourth dimension included by Wu and Tsang (2008) is a part of the honesty dimension.

Competence is the perceived knowledge, skills and ability of the eWOM source to achieve the results expected by an individual (McKnight et al., 2002; Wang & Benbasat, 2005; Zhang & Zhang, 2005; Salo & Karjaluoto, 2007; Wu & Tsang, 2008; Hsiao et al., 2010; Lu et al., 2010; Casaló et al., 2011; Bregman & Karimov, 2012; Kamtarin, 2012). Competence belief has been used as ability belief in some previous studies. Benevolence is the belief that the eWOM source will act in the travellers' interests and will not behave opportunistically (McKnight et al., 2002; Wang & Benbasat, 2005; Zhang & Zhang, 2005; Salo & Karjaluoto, 2007; Wu & Tsang, 2008; Hsiao et al., 2010; Lu et al., 2010; Casaló et al., 2011; Bregman & Karimov, 2012; Kamtarin, 2012).

Tourism products and services are intangible in nature and can be categorised as experience goods where the attributes cannot be known until the use of the product (Pan & Chiou, 2011). There is uncertainty in the travellers which leads to a sense of risk or vulnerability (Casaló et al., 2011). Hence, to minimise the risks of online purchasing, most travellers often rely on online information, particularly the eWOM. Yoo et al. (2009) revealed that most travellers use eWOM extensively in their travel planning and that they have more trust in eWOM as compared to marketer-generated information. Burgess et al. (2011) found similar results in Australia and observed that the travellers have higher trust in eWOM available on specific travel websites than on social networking websites such as Facebook. Trust will eventually increase the confidence and reduce the fear of being exploited in the online environment (Awad & Ragowsky, 2008).

2.2. Attitude towards eWOM

Attitude, an element of the belief-attitude-intention framework propounded by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), is defined as a learned predisposition to respond towards an object in a positive or negative way (Casaló et al., 2011; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Jalilvand et al., 2012). Attitude towards eWOM is based upon an individual's trust in its source. Yang and Yoo (2004) identify two dimensions of attitude which are effective attitude and cognitive attitude. Affective attitude is the extent to which a person likes an object, and cognitive attitude is an individual's belief about it.

The element of attitude is used mostly by researchers to predict or explain the diverse behaviours of consumers (Casaló et al., 2011). Such studies include purchase intentions (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Wang et al., 2012), search intentions (Lee, Qu, & Kim, 2007), intention to use (Munoz-Leiva, Hernandez-Mendez, & Sanchez-Fernandez, 2012), travel intentions (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Jalilvand et al., 2012; Pietro et al., 2012), intention to participate in online travel community (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalíu, 2010), intention to go to festivals (Lee, Xiong, & Hu, 2012) and intention to follow online travel community advice (Casaló et al., 2011).

2.3. Intention to follow eWOM

Intention to follow eWOM is a consumer behavioural intention,

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5110607>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5110607>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)