

“Quality versus Quantity: an investigation into Electronic Word of Mouth’s Influence on Consumer Buying Intention”

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ABSTRACT

Online consumer reviews play an increasingly crucial role in shaping purchasing intention. With the wide-spread reviews available around the world on sites like TripAdvisor or Yelp, companies’ reputation and hence survival are potentially at risk. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impacts of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on the individual’s attitudes towards the quantity and quality of online store reviews and consider how it impacts their behavior. We incorporate brand trust as a mediator in the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention. Using a vignette survey experiment centered on coffee shop reviews in Hanoi, Vietnam, we test our hypothesis with 223 respondents. Results showed that the number and quality of reviews does significantly affect purchase intention. Findings also show that brand trust has a mediating effect on the relationship between online reviews and buying intention. This study assists practitioners to develop user-oriented information review formats in order to manage online consumer reviews properly and effectively.

Keywords: Word-of-mouth, Electronic word-of-mouth, Brand trust, Purchase intention

INTRODUCTION

For businesses operating in the food and beverage industry, the impact of online reviews from other consumers is considered to be very important as consumers cannot interact with the products and services before consumption (Kim et al. 2013). Hence, consumers tend to perceive and rely on others' information to aid their decision-making (Mitchell and McGoldrick 1996, Zhang et al. 2010). Godes (2004) found 57% of customers would look through online consumer reviews before making purchasing decisions. Moreover, the online consumer reviews as a part of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) are valuable and reliable information because they are formed from their past experiences (Park and Lee 2007). The growth in the number of online platforms provides an opportunity not only for consumers to express their ideas and comments, but makes eWOM a powerful marketing tool. This implies that eWOM is an important source for customers to get information about the product (Xiaorong et al. 2011). For new local companies wanting to enter the highly competitive food and beverage industry that is dominated by multi-national chains, such as Starbucks, eWOM may be a low cost solution that can make survival possible.

In recent years, the food and beverage industry in Vietnam has experienced an explosion of takeaway coffee. Vietnamese brands like Highlands coffee, Trung Nguyen Coffee and Passio café are competing with big international names such as Starbucks, Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf and Gloria Jean's. It has been observed that because of the tough competition between different coffee shops, customers tend to switch from one coffee shop to another as a result of alluring promotional offers as well as marketing campaigns from competing brands (CoffeeTree 2015). The lack of brand loyalty poses a major threat to independent coffee shops and resulted in 70% of coffee businesses closing down within the first year of operation (CoffeeTree 2015). So despite the demand for coffee continually growing in

Vietnam, a large amount of coffee businesses have gone out of business. One reason may be due to the lack of high quality and quantity of eWOM reviews. To date, only a small number of scholars address the impact eWOM has on consumers' buying decision in Asia (especially Vietnam) (Cheung et al 2009, Hsu and Tran 2013). Therefore, this study looks at how coffee businesses in Vietnam can take advantage of using eWOM to have a positive influence on customer's behavior and strengthen their brand names as well as achieve more profit.

In order to investigate to what degree does eWOM quantity and quality influence consumer-buying intention in Vietnamese coffee businesses and if brand trust play mediating role, we incorporate ideas from Lavidge and Steiner's (1961) hierarchy of effects model which state audiences respond to messages in a sequence of cognitive, affective and conative (behavioral) (Wijaya 2012). Cognitive component is perceived as the product's knowledge which is obtained from information processing or integrating experience. Affective component links with the feeling and emotion of consumers toward the brand and product (Wang 2011). Conative behavior is known as the tendency of an individual's behavior towards the product. Hierarchy of effects model describes steps which potential consumers must undergo from being unawareness of a product to purchasing decision (Wijaya 2012). Given the hierarchy model of effects is considered as an appropriate framework for any communication process (Delgado-Ballester 2004), this study employed this model as the research theoretical framework. This paper seeks to contribute to academic debates on: cognition is interpreted as eWOM (Xiaorong et al. 2011,), affective reaction as brand trust (Xiaorong et al. 2011) and conation as purchase intention (Seyed 2014).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Electronic Word of Mouth

The advent and development of the digital age draws new ways in the exchange of opinions, writing reviews, sharing experiences about products and services on the online platform, which is referred to as electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Cheung and Thadani 2012). eWOM is known as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet” (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, p.39). Scholars believe it has begun to profoundly change the life style of consumers and bring opportunities as well as challenges for corporate marketing activity (Plummer 2007). Therefore, eWOM communication has begun to receive attention from both academics and practitioners (De Bruyn and Lilien 2008).

In order to understand how eWOM affects consumer-buying decision, Smith (2002) investigated the impact of consumers’ recommendations on consumer decision-making in a virtual community. Smith argued that trust mediates the relation between recommendations and purchase. Some scholars found evidence that trust is indeed positively associated to all consumer behavior (Hung and Li 2007; Chu and Kim 2011). More specifically, the trust formed in online service is found to be positively related to consumer purchase intention (e.g. Cheung and Lee 2006; Kim and Steinfield 2008; Pavlou and Gefen 2004; Suh and Han 2003). Park et al. (2007) viewed eWOM features from two dimensions: quantity and quality arguing that this dichotomy allows for initial categorization of eWOM.

The quality of online argument is described as the convincing strength of arguments, which is rooted in an informational message (Bhattacharjee and Sanford 2005). The quality of eWOM

is measured based on the information characteristics, such as relevance, timeliness, accuracy and comprehensiveness (Cheung and Thadani 2010). Given the often anonymous nature of comments online, people tend to not trust the random review easily if there is not enough necessary information (Ratchford 2001). According to Lin et al. (2013), online reviews, which are clear, understandable, and logical with sufficient reasons supporting the opinions, will have a positive impact on the purchase decision. A customer review, which is understandable and objective, has a stronger impact on attitude change than a message that is emotional and subjective (Petty et al. 1983). Similarly, a review with understandable and supported arguments is more credible than a review with emotional content (Cacioppo and Petty, 1984).

On the other hand, eWOM quantity is defined as the total number of comments (Cheung and Thadani 2010). The eWOM quantity can be computed as the review numbers available or the length of the reviews (Mayzlin and Mayzlin 2006, Duan et al. 2008). Chevalier and Mayzlin (2003) stated that an improvement in product reviews would result in increasing sales. This is supported by Lee et al.'s (2008) study that found the amount of information that customers received would influence customer's decisions on buying products as well as services. The number of reviews and discussions on online platforms aids them in becoming more observable (Cheung and Thadani 2010). Being considered as market performance's representation, the number of online-posted comments about product is often considered as a sign of how popular and trendy the product is (Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006, Lee and Lee 2009). The large amount of information being shared by individuals is a factor enhancing the confidence in making buying decisions and reducing the feeling of mistakes and risks exposure (Buttle 1998).

There is evidence that the quantity feature of eWOM has noteworthy influence on the consumer-perceived credibility of eWOM (Chunhua and Yezheng 2009) and affects positively on purchase intention (Lin et al. 2013, Park et al. 2007). Nevertheless, skepticism about the effectiveness of online reviews exists amongst some scholars. Sher and Lee (2009) argue that the number of online reviews and argument quality does not impact consumer-buying behavior. However, given the amount of studies mentioned above that does support reviews impact consumer behavior, eWOM quantity is expected to impact purchase intention and behaviors.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to the probability that a consumer would be willing to buy a specific product and could be considered as the most precise forecaster of the actual purchase behavior (Fishbein and Azjen 1975). It has been found that the higher the buying intention is, the greater the possibility that the consumer is going to purchase a product (Schiffman and Kanuk 2006; Hosein 2012). The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has been using popularly in clarifying and forecasting the behavioral intention of an individual (Hsu et al 2006). The theory was first proposed by Fishbein (1963) and focused on how perceiving behavioral control and intention can determine an individual's behavior and indicated that intentions can be identified by attitude, behavioral intention and subjective norms. The "subjective norms" concept is used to indicate the impact of other people in influencing consumer behavior (Ulrike et al. 2016). Customer purchase intention can be influenced by a numerous factors. Nguyen (2017) found that buying intention is impacted by cost considerations, performance and competition. Alternatively, buying intent behavior is enhanced by business ethics (Creyer and Ross 1997).

On the other hand, many studies pointed out the crucial importance of social media on consumers' buying intentions (Doh and Hwang 2009). Researchers have been showing increasing interest in how consumers engage with word-of-mouth and its effects on purchase decision of consumers (Almana and Mirza 2013; Lamba and Aggarwal 2014). eWOM, which is presented under the form of online review, plays two roles: including informant and recommender (Park et al. 2007). With the role of informant, online reviews provide product information; whereas, as being considered as a recommending provider, online reviews deliver recommendations and advices from consumers who had purchased products or experienced services before. Numerous studies find how important the content of eWOM review is in enhancing the credibility of the message. Results are found that consumers are more likely to trust the review if it is written in logical and persuasive manner. Furthermore, the higher number of reviews, which provide positive feedbacks and recommendations for products and services, the more favorable attitude consumers tend to have toward the products (Cacioppo and Petty 1984, Park et al. 2007). This leads us to hypothesis the following.

H1: eWOM positively influences purchase intention.

Effects of review quality on purchasing intention

As mentioned in the earlier section of eWOM quality, a review quality is determined based on the relevance, understandability, objectivity and sufficiency of the information content. Generally, there are two types of reviews. The first is a simple-recommendation review, which is emotional, subjective and comes up without any argument supportive information, for examples:

“I am a nightmare without my morning coffee hit. I think this is easily the best coffee in Hanoi. Ask for an extra shot if you like it strong”

(Tripadvisor 2015)

In contrast, the second type of online review provides a clear, concrete, objective information together with reasoned arguments based on the product and service facts (Park and Lee 2008), for example:

“My husband and I drank many a Vietnamese coffee on our 3 week holiday, however every now and then we just fancied a good 'ol latte. Unfortunately, we really struggled to find anywhere in Vietnam that made a great latte....until we stumbled across this place in Hanoi.

The coffees were excellent, the staff was very friendly and the cafe itself is very cute.

The prices are a little higher than other coffees we purchased in our trip, they are on a par with Aussie prices for coffee. However, the quality is definitely worth paying the extra for”

(Tripadvisor 2015)

Past literatures find that reviews with attribute-value are perceived as more informative than reviews with simple suggestion and resulted in higher buying intention (Park et al. 2007, Park and Lee 2008). This is supported by Lee's (2009) study that found that the quality of argument of online reviews affects positively on purchasing intention. Therefore, this study proposes that:

H1a: eWOM quality positively influences purchase intention.

Effects of review quantity on purchasing intention

Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) indicated that the quantity of online reviews could be used to measure the popularity of the product. Therefore, eWOM could be viewed as reinforcing the confidence of consumers while potentially reducing the worry of risk exposure. Perceiving a high number of reviews, consumers tend to convince themselves that the product was bought by many other consumers, hence, the product must be a popular one (Park and Lee 2007). Furthermore, review quantity factor is found to have impact on the sales of product. Therefore, buying intention should increase in accordance with eWOM quantity. Consequently, this study formulates a hypothesis as following.

H1b: eWOM quantity positively influences purchase intention.

Brand trust as a mediator

Brand plays a crucial role in the process of consumers' product choice. A well-established brand not only attract customers to buy its products or services, but also helps generate the repetitive purchasing behavior and reduce the negative behavior resulting from the unstable price (Cadogan and Foster 2000). Thus, the brand is one of the major factors which customer considers while executing purchase intention a product or service.

Recently, many researchers and practitioner are becoming interested in studying the brand trust (Ballester and Aleman 2001; Kim et al. 2008). Studies found brand trust plays a significant role in customer purchase decision and is a key mediating factor on the relationship of customer behaviors before and after an actual product purchasing action (Ballester and Aleman 2001). Brand trust can be illustrated as the willingness of a consumer

to rely on the brand ability to achieve its stated functions (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001). Likewise, Delgado-Ballester et al. (2003) defined brand trust as a security feeling in the interaction of consumer with a brand. This willingness is derived from a past buying experience and understanding with the other parties (Lee and Lau 1999).

The studies on brand trust can be classified into two main fields: First, those indicating the necessary conditions and factors for building trust (Xingyuan et al. 2010); and second, researchers studying the impacts of trust on the long-term relationship between the brand and consumer (Ballester and Aleman 2005). Rempel et al. (1985) specified three main components of brand trust: benevolence, trustworthiness/accuracy and credibility. Credibility is defined as the ability of the brand to meet the consumer expectations in terms of the functional performance. Trustworthiness refers to the brand honesty in its promises as well as its ability to keep its promises. In the benevolence dimension, the relation of brand with consumer benefits and even if brand lets consumer benefit prior is questioned. When trust is divided into the composite parts, it is important that none of the components are ignored, both in its establishment of trust and in its measurement.

The necessity for brand trust among consumers comes to the forefront in their purchasing decisions, especially when uncertainty and risk are perceived as high, as in these situations trust will have a directing characteristic that serves as a shortcut to a purchasing decision (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001). In this regard, the product groups with a high degree of perceived risk, the need for trust, as well as the value of the trust established for brands producing such products should be high.

In regarding to the factors influencing consumer perceptions of online brand trust, Ha (2004) found that brand trust is influenced by major factors including brand name, word-of-mouth, online experience and information quality. This could imply brand trust is built from consumers' own past experience and by third party recommendations. For example, if a consumer read negative online reviews about the coffee shop, they will have has a feeling of low expectation toward that shop. Hence, their overall feeling of trust towards the brand would be low. Consequently, the customers are less likely to choose the brand. Playing a key role in helping consumer overcoming uncertainty feeling (Pavlou and Gefen 2004), brand trust formed by eWOM influences consumer buying intention positively (Cheung and Lee 2006, Suh and Han 2003). Xiaorong (2011) concluded that trust could be considered as the most important mediating variable in the relationship between eWOM and buying intention. Therefore, the following is hypothesized.

H2: Brand trust mediates the relation between eWOM and purchase intention

Based on the literature review, the conceptual model is depicted in figure 1.

INSERT FIGURE

METHODS

To test our hypothesis, we distributed a web-based survey to coffee consumers in Hanoi, Vietnam through links on local coffee shop Facebook pages with permission of the owners. The survey uses a vignette survey experiment with a 2x2 factorial design. The experiment was designed to examine the differences in brand trust and purchase intention of consumer among those different groups.

1. High quantity review x high quality review
2. High quantity review x Low quality review
3. Low quantity review x high quality review
4. Low quantity review x low quality review

Participants were randomly allocated to one of four conditions in the experiment design through the automatic setting on the survey website. At the beginning of the experiment, participants read a vignette consisting of three reviews about a Vietnamese coffee shop. The reviews were different in terms of number and quality as outlined above. After scanning or reading the reviews, participants were asked to answer questions about the brand trust and purchase intention. There were 223 valid respondents received. The final population sample consisted of 72.2% female, primarily 24-28 (44.4%) years of age (Table 1). Furthermore, the majority of respondents consumed coffee from 2 to 4 times a week and 75.3% read reviews on websites that provide restaurant and Café recommendations when looking for information about coffee shops in Vietnam.

INSERT TABLE 1

Measure of main variables

All questions were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). eWOM was measured using Lin et al. (2013) six items to gauge quality (Cronbach's alpha is .892) and three items to measure quantity (Cronbach's alpha is .752). In order to measure brand trust, eight items were adapted from the study of Delgado-Ballester (2004) and resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of .937. In terms of purchase intention, five items were adapted from the research by Dodds et al. (1991) and resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of .919.

Measurement quality and data analysis

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted using maximum likelihood method with Promax rotation. EFA is indicated as a statistical approach with the purpose of defining the correlation among different variables (Hair et al. 2010). The factor analysis (table 2) presented a clean factor structure without any cross-loading. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.930, which was over the recommended minimum level of 0.50 and considered as marvelous statistics (Hair et al. 2010). Furthermore, the loadings were over 0.50 which was greater than the given sufficient factor loading of 0.40 (Hair et al. 2010). Consequently, these results proved the convergent valid which meant the variables within each tested factors were highly correlated.

INSERT TABLE 2

Brand trust and Purchase Intention are positively correlated with eWOM with the level 66% and 55.5% respectively (table 3).

INSERT TABLE 3

Manipulation checks were directed to assess whether review's quantity and quality were manipulated appropriately. A 5-point scale was used to measure the verification of respondents about the review which ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). As expected, the score of review quality in high quality x high quantity review condition (M=4.07, SD =0.636, N= 54) was slightly higher than in high quality x low quantity review condition (M=4.02, SD= 0.629, N= 63). The score of low quality message in low quality x high quantity review condition (M= 3.46, SD= 0.547, N= 51) was somewhat greater than when it is presented in low quality x low quantity review condition (M=3.40, SD= 0.634, N= 55). Hence, the review quality was successfully manipulated.

Regarding the review quantity, a high quantity review were perceived with greater perception in high quality x high quantity review condition (M=4.14, SD= 0.606, N= 54) than when it was put into high quality x low quantity review condition (M= 3.82, SD= 0.567, N= 51). The score of low quantity message in low quality x low quantity review condition (M=2.58, SD= 0.575, N= 55) was lower than in high quality x low quantity review condition (M=3.12, SD= 0.453, N= 63). Therefore, the figures of manipulation checks revealed that review quantity was employed appropriately.

FINDINGS

The analysis uses OLS regression analysis except for the hypothesis involving mediation where we used Hayes's (2013) PROCESS package for SPSS. Hypothesis 1 expects eWOM to positively affect purchase intention. It was found that eWOM is a good predictor of purchase intention ($\beta = .448, p < .001$) (Table 4, model 1). H1 findings explain 36.2% of the variance between eWOM and purchase intention. As a result, the findings support H1.

INSERT TABLE 4

When exploring if review quality alone impacts purchase intention, quality is a good predictor of purchase intention ($\beta = .334; p < 0.001$) (Table 4, model 2). It is seen that the relation of those variables is positive in terms of explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.315$). In other word, 31.5% of purchase intention can be explained by the variation of review quality. Thus, H1a is supported. On the other hand, Hypothesis 1b suggests quantity positively affects purchase intention. The result indicated that quality significantly influences purchase intention ($\beta = .289; p < 0.001$) (Table 4.7) albeit with a lower percentage (31.1%) of variance in purchase intention is significantly explained by eWOM quantity. The result also indicates

that the Internet Usage hours increases purchase intention level ($\beta = 0.08, p = 0.027 < 0.05$).

Therefore, H1b is supported.

Because there are varying forms of quantity and quality, we explored the combinations of the vignettes. Table 5 depicts that at the high quality and high quantity and low quality and low quantity are both significantly (although at different levels) related to purchase intention. This implies that other factors may be able to explain the differences. Hence, we explore the mediating relationship of brand trust.

INSERT TABLE 5

Hypothesis 2 indicates the result of regression analysis of the independent variable eWOM on purchase intention through brand trust, as a mediator. With the purpose of establishing total effect of eWOM on purchase intention, first Brand Trust fit was regressed on eWOM ($\beta = .7849, p < .001$) and was significant (table 6). Second, Purchase Intention was regressed on eWOM and brand trust. A positive relationship was found with eWOM ($\beta = .2227, p < .001$) and brand trust ($\beta = .4738, p < .001$). Lastly, total effect on eWOM ($\beta = .5946, p < .001$) was significant. The total effect (TE) was derived from the combination of direct and mediated effects (Hayes 2013). Bootstrap samples with 1000 interactions and 95% confidence intervals in output (CI) show the total effect of eWOM on purchase intention was significant (TE = 0.5946, $p < .001$; CI [.4758, .7134]), and the indirect effect (ID) of eWOM on purchase intention (ID = .3718, $p < .001$; CI [.2589, .5214]). The direct effect (DE) of eWOM on Purchase Intention (DE = .2227, $p < 0.05$; CI [.0827, .3628]) was significant, which means that brand trust plays a partial mediation on the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention. As an additional means of verification, the Sobel test with normal theory showed

Z= 6.7339, $p < .001$ which is in agreement with the conclusion made using the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval. Hence, Hypothesis 2 is accepted.

INSERT TABLE 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of eWOM characteristics that motivate the coffee buying behavior of Vietnamese consumers. Looking back at the descriptive statistics results, it is observed that a majority of the respondents was females, which accounted for 72.2%; whereas the IPSOS Consulting (2013) report indicated that there are more Vietnamese males consume coffee than female. This finding might execute a potential margin market for Vietnam Café businesses. Of all the respondents, the biggest age groups were 18-23 years old (33.6%) and 24-28 years old (44.4%), which are consistent with the average age of coffee consumers in Vietnam. Coffee consumption is not a daily habit for 79% respondents, meaning that drinking coffee in Vietnam is considered as a special treat. A quarter of the population have never read reviews about coffee shop, hence, what will inspire this group to read review should be investigated.

The findings illustrate that there is a significant and positive influence of eWOM on purchase intention of consumers in coffee businesses in Vietnam. This finding was consistent with previous literatures (Almana and Mirza 2013, Bataineh 2015, Hsu et al. 2014). As for the effect of eWOM's quality, the result indicated that the quality of review positively affects consumer purchase intention. A review which is clear and understandable with sufficient reasons supporting the opinion would lead to a high likelihood of purchasing from the brand. The willingness to buy coffee from one brand is subjected to be high when consumers think

of the review as credible and helpful. Scholars address that high quality reviews, which is perceived persuasively, would enhance the credibility of the information (Petty et al. 1983). This view was supported by Lee et al. (2008) and Cheung and Thdani (2010) that the number of reviews would positively influence consumer buying decision. In consequence, our findings are in line with previous study findings.

In the case of eWOM quantity, the results of laboratory experiment confirmed the author's expectation that consumer's buying intention is affected by the number of reviews. In other words, the larger the number of coffee shop reviews the higher extent of brand's purchase intention. Hence, this finding supports studies of Park and Lee (2007) and Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006). In online communication platforms, by sharing the same opinion, consumers not only influence each other, but also inspire people who are looking for product and brand information to try. In this sense, this study is support research by Chen et al. (2014) as they found that the more number of eWOM, the greater impact it is on consumer buying intention. Xiaorong et al. (2011) illustrated that eWOM's characteristics including timeliness and quantity influence consumer trust significantly, which then influences purchase intention positively. Nevertheless, they also argued that those influences are different when consumer purchases different products. In terms of control variables, having experience in visiting review website proved to have a significant influence. A large quantity of positive reviews, which are perceived as non-commercial recommendations, would help people to have a stronger confidence about the product and brand. Consequently, a positive attitude towards the coffee brand and greater buying intention are generated.

Data analysis revealed that consumer trust significantly mediates the relations between eWOM and purchasing intention. This is consistent with the finding of Donna (2006) which

also found that trust is closely associated to purchase intention. This result supported findings from previous studies (Smith 2002, Xiaorong et al. 2011) that trust played a mediating role, which helped to understand the influence of consumers' recommendations on consumer buying decision. With the large number of review that is logical and persuasive, the coffee brand is inferred as popular and trendy. As a result, the trust of consumer towards brand is enhanced by the thought that the brand would meet consumers' expectations.

This study makes an important theoretical contribution in the field of eWOM research. Firstly, there is an enormous amount of scholars who investigated the influence of eWOM, but almost none have focused on the food and beverage industry, especially in coffee businesses. Additionally, this research employed two characteristics of eWOM, including quantity and quality to evaluate their effects on consumer buying intention. This research executed the influence of eWOM on offline purchase intention; therefore, it can be considered as an important and meaningful contribution in extending the previous researches, which mostly focused on the impacts of eWOM on online purchasing decision. More importantly, based on the research theoretical foundation of hierarchy theory of reaction, this study not only confirm stages which customers tend to go through from being unawareness of a product and brand to purchasing intention but also enrich the theory by developing a model which can be applied for the offline purchasing intention: perceiving eWOM ---> Brand trust ---> purchase intention.

The finding of this research provides practitioners with insight into how quality and quantity of eWOM could influence the purchase intention of review's audiences. The results emerging from this study strengthen the opinion of the need for café marketers in managing online consumer reviews properly and effectively. With the dual role of informant and

recommender, practitioner should take advantage of eWOM and use it as a strategic communications channel with customers. In interpreting the findings of this study, practitioner needs to pay attention to the eWOM quantity to convince people that the café is popular and trendy. Coffee business marketers need to improve their marketing strategy to call for more reviews. For example, marketing and PR plans could be developed to encourage customers involving in memorable and satisfying services. As a result, the more satisfied customers are- the greater the number of reviews that are positive towards the brand formulated.

Although this study generated interesting findings and potential implications, there are some limitations that need to be taken into account. Firstly, this is a cross-sectional study which only gives a look at a certain point in time. This research only took into consideration of the influence of positive review. Negative reviews and mixed- quality reviews (a combination of positive and negative reviews) were not included. Nevertheless, previous researches argue that the impact of eWOM, which is negative, could not be ignored (Ivanova et al. 2013, Liu and Qiu 2013, Hennig- Thurau and Walsh 2003), therefore, findings of this research might not be sufficient. Secondly, while the authors chose an experimental approach, which is considered as a strong research design, some limitation might be occurred. In designing questionnaire, even though author has attempted to put three reviews and the number of reviews to make it visualized to respondents, it is undeniable that reviews in surveys may be perceived differently in a real Internet environment. Thus, this limitation would affect the respondents' answers. The future research could be enhanced by using a virtual website with product reviews in order to bring experiment's participants a real feeling of surfing website for review recommendations.

This study offers some directions and opportunities for future researches. Firstly, an interesting extension of this research could be to examine the impact of mix positive and negative eWOM into purchasing intention. Future research can also investigate other aspects relating to eWOM which bring an impact to brand trust such as eWOM providers, review website's reputation, and content of the message. Furthermore, people with different demographic characteristics would have different attitude towards online review, in both perceiving reviews and participating in online community activities (Wang and Fesenmaier 2004). Hence, variables related to consumers such as characteristics, ages and education level should be investigated to see whether there are any interactions with buying intention. Given the fact that social media has been becoming an important tool for marketers to deliver marketing messages, social networking such as Facebook and Zalo (a popular social web page for Vietnamese) could be potentially a trendy and interesting topic for researchers interesting in the food and beverage industry.

Having faith in the effectiveness of eWOM, marketers in Vietnam have slowly been developing eWOM campaigns as strategic plans of promoting products as well as enhancing brand's reputation. This study's findings establish evidences to emphasize the importance of eWOM and to support their belief.

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Figure 1: Conceptual Model

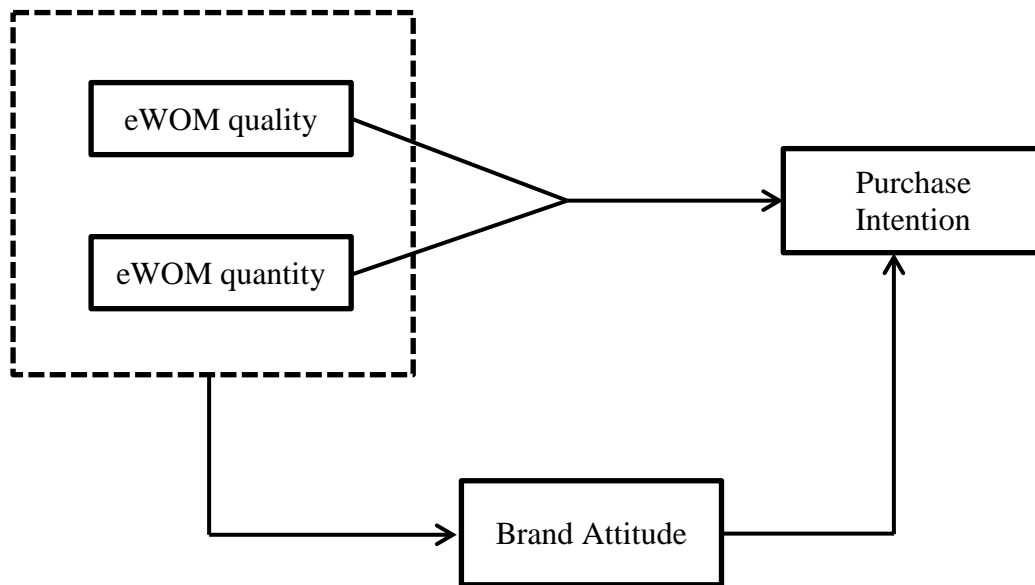


Table 1: Demographic Frequencies

Demographic Frequencies

N. 223	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	62	27.8
Female	161	72.2
Age		
Under 18	12	5.4
18-23	75	33.6
24-28	99	44.4
29-35	35	15.7
Over 35	2	0.9
Coffee Consumption		
Once a week or less	71	31.8
2-4 time/week	105	47.1
5-7 time/week	42	18.8
> 7 time/week	5	2.2
Read Online Reviews		
Yes	168	75.3
No	55	24.7

Table 2: Factor analysis

	Factor			
	1	2	3	4
quality1		.657		
quality2		.700		
quality3		.749		
quality4		.754		
quality5		.799		
quality6		.939		
quantity1				.853
quantity2				.759
quantity3				.688
Brand Trust 1	.626			
Brand Trust 2	.849			
Brand Trust 3	.933			
Brand Trust 4	.784			
Brand Trust 5	.933			
Brand Trust 6	.795			
Brand Trust 7	.532			
Brand Trust 8	.725			
Purchase Intention 1			.830	
Purchase Intention 2			.975	
Purchase Intention 3			.796	
Purchase Intention 4			.764	
Purchase Intention 5			.728	

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.^a

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Table 3: means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

Correlations

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 eWOM	3.63	0.617										
2 Quality	3.75	0.683	.916**									
3 Quantity	3.39	0.812	.739**	.407**								
4 Brand Trust	3.53	0.725	.660**	.576**	.537**							
5 Purchase Intention	3.82	0.665	.555**	.467**	.481**	.653**						
6 Gender	1.72	0.449	-.090	-.132*	.017	.013	.011					
7 Age	2.731	0.8216	.098	.126	.011	.019	.087	-.082				
8 Online	2.97	1.095	.062	.094	-.016	.010	.134*	-.044	.250*			
9 coffee consumption	1.61	0.769	.096	.116	.023	.088	.026	-.082	.199*	.079		
10 Read reviews	1.25	0.432	.052	.060	.018	.012	.165*	-.109	.188*	.145*	-.099	
11 Experiment	2.48	1.11	-.544**	-.419**	-.537**	-.342**	-.432**	.025	-.026	.057	.006	-.126

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 Regression model for eWOM

DV: Purchase Intention						
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error
(Constant)	1.748***	0.401	2.415***	0.378	2.581***	0.361
eWOM	0.488***	0.071				
Quality			0.334***	0.062		
Quantity					0.289***	0.055
Gender	0.107	0.082	0.117	0.085	0.048	0.085
Age	-0.002	0.047	-0.002	0.049	0.018	0.049
Internet Usage	0.063	0.035	0.066	0.036	0.08**	0.036
Coffee Consumption	-0.007	0.049	-0.003	0.051	0.015	0.051
Reads Reviews	0.171	0.088	0.157	0.091	0.171	0.092
Experiment	-0.107*	0.04	-0.17***	0.038	-0.142**	0.041
R-Squared	0.362		0.351		0.311	
Adjusted R-Squared	.341		.292		.289	
F-test	(7)17.426		(7)14.099		(7)13.863	

*** p <.001, ** p <.01, * p<.05, † p<.10

Table 5 Regression analysis for eWOM (vignette)

DV: Purchase Intention

	Model 1		Model 2	
	High Quality and High Quantity		Low Quality and Low Quantity	
	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error
(Constant)	2.396***	0.522	0.875	0.655
eWOM	.271**	0.096	0.396 *	0.166
Gender	-0.01	0.126	0.11	0.165
Age	-0.036	0.073	0.098	0.092
Internet Usage	0.09	0.065	0.063	0.066
Coffee Consumption	0.112	0.075	-0.006	0.099
Reads Reviews	0.221†	0.118	0.453*	0.193
R-Squared	0.319		0.403	
Adjusted R-Squared	.232		.328	
F-test	(7)3.668		(7)5.396	

*** p <.001, ** p <.01, * p<.05, † p<.10

Table 6: Regression model for eWOM and model coefficients for Brand Trust as a mediator

Variable	DV: PO-fit		DV: Intensity		Total Effect	
	coeff	s.e.	coeff	s.e.	coeff	s.e.
Constant	.548*	.324	.830*	0.288	1.09***	0.324
eWOM	.7849***	.060	.223*	0.071	.595***	0.06
Gender	.116	.083	0.06	0.074	0.115	0.083
Age	-.038	.048	0.014	0.042	-0.004	0.048
Internet Usage	-.014	.035	.059*	0.031	0.053	0.035
Coffee Consumption	.038	.050	-0.03	0.043	-0.012	0.05
Reads Reviews	.000	.089	.203**	0.078	.203**	0.089
Brand Trust			.474***	0.06		
R2	0.444		0.488		0.34	
F	(6)=28.81, p<.001		(7)=29.31, p<.001		(6)=18.55, p<.001	

Significance *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .10$