

THE ANTECEDENTS OF WORD-OF-MOUTH ATTITUDE IN MOBILE ADVERTISING: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY



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ABSTRACT

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The word-of-mouth attitude (WOM) as a powerful non-commercial marketing tool has aroused worldwide interest among scholars. The study aims to discover the potential impact of perceived value of mobile advertising in WOM. A survey method with a structured questionnaire was used for data collection including 415 valid respondents. The model was tested for reliability and validity by confirmatory factor analysis. Structural equation model has been used to determine the contribution of factors to WOM attitude. The results reveal that the perceived value has a significant positive effect on the consumer's WOM attitude in the context of mobile advertising. Informativeness, credibility, and entertainment are prerequisites of perceived value in advertising. In addition, we have measured credibility based on informativeness, non-irritativeness, and entertaining value of advertisement. The research findings provide useful managerial implications for marketers, advertisers, and practitioners in designing their successful advertising plans and business strategies.

Contribution/ Originality: This study contributes in the existing literature by examining a non-commercial and volunteer advertising as WOM attitude in mobile advertising which works as good reference and the driver of consumer intentions in the context. Therefore, the result of the study brings a number of academic and managerial contributions to improve WOM attitude in mobile advertising.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the widespread usage of smartphones as an advertising medium, a new-fangled mode of communication in the form of word-of-mouth has emerged. Through the continual improvement of mobile technologies and its impressive time and location benefits, marketers have a tremendous opportunity to use this tool as their marketing activities. The growth of mobile communication technologies has resulted in a wide range of mobile services being widely used (Zhou, 2011; Liu *et al.*, 2014). Nowadays, marketers, social activists, individuals, institutional leaders or

even the government officials use it to communicate with targeted people to send their messages or advertisements via SMS, MMS or direct calls.

The location-based application feature makes the mobile device unique and convenient to subscribers and marketers. Subscribers often use mobile applications to quickly search for location-based information, such as next-door renowned restaurant (Grewal and Levy, 2016). At the same time, companies are trying to provide relevant advertising through an indoor positioning system based on simple transmitters that draw attention to the particular customer. Recently, this form of advertising referred as one of the best advertising tools to interact with the customer. Since, a mobile device is a personal space of subscribers, they need to control over the use of this device. Based on the personal observations and experiences, consumers tend to share their opinions in the form of WOM attitude, which add value for the marketers.

Although all consumers are not positive about mobile advertising, they cannot ignore the importance of advertising (Le and Nguyen, 2014). When marketers are able to create credibility and entertainment, consumers are willing to accept the advertising message that influences the consumer attitudes (Hossain *et al.*, 2017). Zhang *et al.* (2011) has observed that business engagement is the degree to which consumers take part in online WOM messaging. The continuance behavior of consumer is significantly exaggerated by the advertising value and consumer satisfaction. Consumer will continue to use the same product or service and will keep continuing to recommend others if they find adequate value of those services (Zhou, 2011). Chang *et al.* (2013) and Dar *et al.* (2014) have noted that the perceived value is the important determinant for the buyback. Furthermore, modeling the attitudinal development towards electronic WOM on electronic media is imperative and may contribute to our understanding of the behavioral response (Saadeghvaziri *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, marketing professionals should be aware of the attitude of subscribers WOM as well as privacy and security issues when designing the marketing plan. However, mobile marketing studies in general have little clarification as to why and how the WOM approach has evolved through advertising.

Moreover, successful commercial organizations should also be aware of WOM attitude towards mobile advertising. This study provides a compact understanding in this area, yet research in this emerging field remains few. The study demonstrates the psychological literature and the mobile marketing relationships and aims to clarify the model of consumer participation in referral. The key premise guiding our model is that commitment of perceived advertising value, relationship with the mobile device and WOM attitude are the primary gratification. In this study, we measure the positive attitude of WOM, its origin and its implications in marketing.

The remaining of this paper is ordered as follows: Next section illustrates the historical review and hypotheses. Section 3 and 4 present empirical results and discussions consecutively. Finally, model conclusions and future research guidelines are presented in section 5.

2. HISTORICAL REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Attitude is a long-lasting state towards objects of an individual. Solomon (2013) has pointed that advertising attitude is a personal evaluation of people toward the advertisement value. It is a psychological state of human being used to decorate the way they perceive things and direct the way they respond about that things (Tsang *et al.*, 2004).

WOM approach talks about the willingness of consumers to take participate in interpersonal representation based on their consuming experiences. According to Walsh and Mitchell (2010), WOM attitude is an interpersonal interaction between consumers. It is an informal and interpersonal approach between noncommercial communicator and receiver towards a product, service, brand or even organization (Harrison-Walker, 2001). WOM attitude is determined by the necessity to share and receive information, mean of social interactions and expressing emotions (Berger, 2014). Moreover, WOM attitude has huge influence on commercial business. Zhang *et al.* (2011) advocated that WOM attitude is directly engage with the commercial business. WOM attitude is more attractive than another

direct personal selling or advertisement (Trusov *et al.*, 2009). It is considered to be more flexible and credible in particular cases (Steffes and Burgee, 2009). It can create more than twice the sales of compensated advertisement for some especial featured products (Bughin *et al.*, 2010).

2.1. Antecedents of WOM Attitude

Informativeness is the ability of advertising to notify consumers about product offerings and alternatives so that purchases yielding the highest degree of satisfaction (Ducoffe, 1996). It is an ability to give relevant information successfully. The more relevant information is provided, the more positive satisfaction may arise. Literatures show that there is a significant positive relationship exists between informativeness and mobile advertisement (Xu, 2007; Saadeghvaziri and Sosseini, 2011; Zabadi *et al.*, 2012). Marketers can provide extensive information in a timely manner with the help of digital communication technology and internet (Tucker, 2012). Perceived advertising value is positively influence by informativeness (Dao *et al.*, 2014; Kim and Han, 2014). On the strength of such extant observation, we therefore propose that information content in advertising has a significant positive impact on credibility (*H1*) and perceived value (*H2*).

Strategy to fulfill consumer needs for diversion, escapism, aesthetic enjoyment or mental enjoyment is entertainment (Ducoffe, 1996). To attract consumer attention, entertainment value is really a big issue. Research has portrayed that entertainment value of advertising information can interact and favorably relate to the consumer purchasing intention (Scharl *et al.*, 2005). Advertising messages with fun and entertaining meanings can make a meaningful contribution to familiarizing customer with the intended products or services and making them more thoughtful (Zabadi *et al.*, 2012; Salem, 2016). Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) have found that the existence of entertaining value in advertisement increases the sharing tendency of individuals. As the key indicator of digital marketing, entertainment was found to be positively correlate with perceived value of advertisement (Tsang *et al.*, 2004; Xu, 2007). Therefore, we suggested in this study that the entertaining value is one of the important sources of credibility and perceived value, and propose hypotheses (*H3*) and (*H4*) respectively.

Consumers usually like relevant information and entertainment through the advertisement, also have a positive impression, but the opposite effect has been shown in case of irritation. Irritation is a matter of reactance in where customer tends to deny the advertising facts. These ideologies were addressed by Tsang *et al.* (2004) and Ducoffe (1996). The authors stated that insulting, annoying, and excessively manipulative strategy been taken by the advertisers are the sources of irritation. Additionally, confusing and over exercising messages pushed through mobile advertisement are the causes of customer annoyance which generate significantly negative impression toward advertisement (Dar *et al.*, 2014; Salem, 2016). In this study, we consider this irritation issue in our model as an opposite manner. That is, we use non-irritative factors to predict positive WOM attitude through advertising credibility. A credible advertisement would be a good foundation for perceived value that ultimately results in WOM attitude, and therefore we hypothesized that non-irritativeness has direct positive effect on advertising credibility (*H5*). In the diverse competitive environment where trust is diminishing, perceived credibility appears to affect consumer attitudes. The credibility of advertising is consumer perception of the trustworthiness and believability of advertising content (Xu, 2007). It is one of the uninterrupted dimensions of advertisement. Choi *et al.* (2008) considered the USA and Korean customers and stated that customers in both countries believe that credibility has a positive impact on the perceived value of mobile advertising. If mobile advertisers are able to bring credibility and entertainment value into advertisement, customers are willing to see the advertisement and be influenced to buy the products or services (Le and Nguyen, 2014). Revolves around these assertions, we suggest that credibility has a significant positive impact on perceived value, thus hypothesis *H6* has emerged.

Perceived value is related to competitiveness, which is very important to any organization. Given the importance, many researchers have presented their understanding of perceived value. Modestly, it can stated that perceived value is the consumers personal judgments of the trade-off among perceived benefits from the product

and sacrifices made for it. Ducoffe (1996) defines advertising value as the reasoning judgment of the degree to which advertising brings consumers what they want. Author distinguishes the advertising value and attitude toward advertising which indicate the variability of consumer response. Mobile advertising should either provide consumers with appropriate information or way to save money and time in accordance with the consumers' situation, time, location or personalization (Watson *et al.*, 2013). Research suggests that advertising value is the outcome of informativeness, irritation, entertainment and credibility (Tsang *et al.*, 2004; Dao *et al.*, 2014) and positively affect the consumers attitude (Liu *et al.*, 2012; Persaud and Azhar, 2012). Accordingly, this study argues that WOM attitude in mobile advertisement is mostly influenced by perceived value of the mobile consumer, hence hypothesis *H7* is appeared.

3. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

This study explores a five-factor model including informativeness (info), non-irritativeness (irr), entertainment (ent), credibility (cred), and perceived value (val) as a prevailing factor explaining mobile user WOM attitude toward mobile advertisement. A structured questionnaire comprising of 16 statements fitted into five constructs was used as a survey instrument. A random sampling technique was used to data collection and the survey had been conducted during the month starting from 5 March 2017 in Bangladesh. 5-points Likert rating scale was used to measure the responses. Succeeding data cleaning and removal of invalid responses, 415 responses were taken for the final study. The respondent's demographic profile shows that most respondents fall into the 20-30 age group. Participants are almost equally split between males and females of different ages, 65% of the respondents have received a high school education or above.

3.1. Research Constructs

The proposed study comprises six latent constructs. A latent construct can be measured by one or more variables. An observed variable is a specific question or item that is obtained from respondents by questionnaire or some other measures. This study validates informativeness, non-irritation, entertainment, credibility, and perceived value as major constructs for mobile advertisement along with WOM attitude of mobile subscriber. The measurement scales used in this study for all constructs were adopted and modified from existing literature.

On the basis of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), two factors (info2 and info6) have been removed from the informativeness construct because they have insignificantly lower loadings. Thus, in the final measurement model, the informativeness construct represented by 4 variables. On the basis of same criteria, one item of non-irritativeness, one item of credibility and two items of perceived value were dropped.

3.2. Reliability and Validity Test

To assess the internal consistency of data, a reliability measure Cronbach's alpha was carried out before entering into structural modeling analysis. Reliability is the degree to which a measure is free from error and yield to consistent results (Cronbach, 1951). KMO measures of sampling adequacy were conducted to assess the data validity. Results of reliability and validity measure as 0.854 and 0.896 indicate that data collected from the survey are suitable and reliable for further study (Table 1).

Whether an operation correctly measures its targeted variables or not can be assessed by construct validity which involves the empirical examination of unidimensionality. CFA measure was conducted to assess the unidimensionality. All items were evaluated to be significantly load on their individual constructs with moderate standardized weights (Table 2). Confirmatory Factor Index (CFI) value (0.964) indicating a strong evidence of unidimensionality for the scale (Table 3). Based on the satisfaction of unidimensionality, validity and reliability parameters, the study was subject to estimate the model analysis.

Table-1. Reliability and validity test

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.854	0.854	16
KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.896
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1680.999
	df	120
	Sig.	0.000

Source: SPSS output

Table-2. Regression estimate of the construct items

Items	Path	Construct	Unstd. estimates	Std. estimates.	P
ent2	<---	Entertainment	1.000	0.729	
ent1	<---	Entertainment	0.848	0.660	***
info5	<---	Informativeness	0.991	0.576	***
info4	<---	Informativeness	1.000	0.594	
info3	<---	Informativeness	0.959	0.568	***
info1	<---	Informativeness	0.844	0.503	***
irr2	<---	Non-irritation	1.000	0.514	
irr1	<---	Non-irritation	0.879	0.463	***
cred4	<---	Credibility	0.887	0.519	***
cred3	<---	Credibility	1.000	0.607	
cred2	<---	Credibility	0.734	0.434	***
val2	<---	Perceived value	0.828	0.641	***
val1	<---	Perceived value	1.000	0.833	
wom3	<---	WOM	0.580	0.479	***
wom2	<---	WOM	0.970	0.628	***
wom1	<---	WOM	1.000	0.641	

Source: SEM (AMOS) output

3.3. Measurement Model Fitness

The relationships among the constructs were analyzed by structural equation modeling (SEM) to evaluate the immediate influence of the model constructs. The model fitness was verified by several commonly used fit indices. For models with good fit, the majority of recommendations concerning empirical analysis suggests that Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) and Average GFI (AGFI) between 0.80 to 0.89 (Doll *et al.*, 1994). Additionally, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) must be equal or less than to 0.80 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). The ratio of chi-square normalized to degrees of freedom (CMIN/df) should not exceed 3.0 (Carmines and McIver, 1981). In addition, Normalized Fit Index (NFI), CFI and Tucker-Lewis Intedex (TLI) are recommended to exceed 0.90 to attain the goodness of fit (Hair *et al.*, 2010). All the indices of model fit were found standardized, demonstrating the validity of the measurement model (Table 3).

Table-3. The recommended and actual values of indices

Indices	Recommended value	Model fit indices
CFI	≥ 0.95	0.964
CMIN/df	< 3	1.642
GFI	>0.90	0.959
AGFI	≥ 0.80	0.938
NFI	≥ 0.90	0.□14
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.951
IFI	≥ 0.90	0.965
RMSEA	≤ □0.05	0.039
p-close	≥ 0.05	0.957

Source: SEM (AMOS) output

3.4. Structural Model

On the basis of the reliability and validity measures, SEM was used to estimate parameters of the structural model (see Figure 1), and standardized solutions accounted by Amos-24 maximum likelihood method are indicated in table 4. We examine the path coefficient and the significance of each hypothesis. The hypothesized paths and their respective estimated value are presented on Figure 1, parameter estimate, critical ratios, *p*-values, and hypothesized results are shown in Table 4. From that it is evident that the *p* values for each construct are less than 0.05 thus it is proved that the relationships between constructs are significant. The path coefficients (β weights) outline the quality of association among the constructs.

Of the seven hypotheses, all were supported. From the factors influencing to WOM attitude in mobile advertising, the perceived value ($\beta=0.370$, $p<0.001$) had a direct positive effect and H7 was thus supported. Concerning the factors influencing to perceived value, entertainment ($\beta=0.190$, $p<0.001$) had direct positive effect and H5 was supported. Accordingly, hypotheses H2 and H6 also support their respective influence. However, informativeness and credibility show a little moderate ($p<0.05$) significant influence on perceived value, thus H2 and H6 were supported.

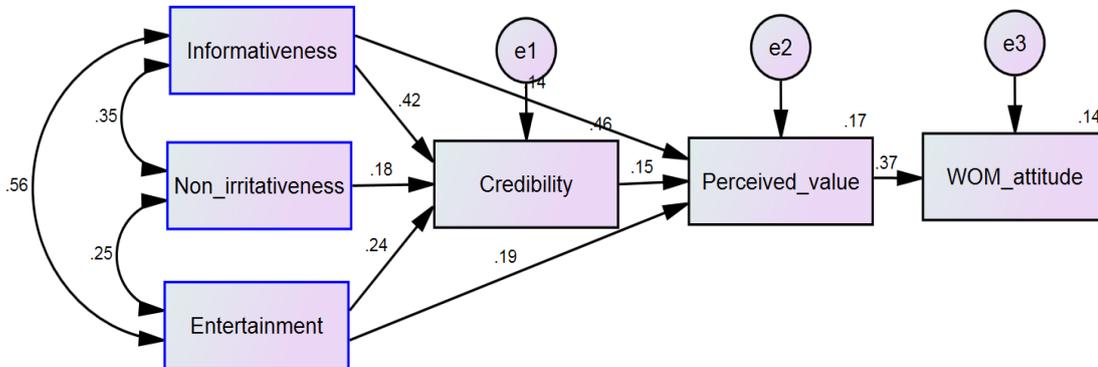


Figure-1. Research model and SEM results

Source: SEM (AMOS) output

Table-4. Results of hypotheses

Path proposed	Estimate	C.R.	P	Results
Informativeness ---> Credibility	0.422	9.499	***	Supported (H1)
Informativeness ---> Perceived value	0.143	2.387	**	Supported (H2)
Entertainment ---> Credibility	0.243	5.650	***	Supported (H3)
Entertainment ---> Perceived value	0.190	3.439	***	Supported (H4)
Non-irritativeness ---> Credibility	0.176	4.644	***	Supported (H5)
Credibility ---> Perceived value	0.154	2.646	**	Supported (H6)
Perceived value ---> WOM attitude	0.370	8.280	***	Supported (H7)
Variance explained:	R squared			
Credibility	46%			
Perceived value	17%			
WOM attitude	14%			

Note: ***Significance at the $p<0.001$, and ** $p<0.05$.

Table-5. Direct, indirect and total effects of variables to WOM attitude

Path proposed			Total effect	Direct effect	Indirect effect
Credibility	<---	Non irritativeness	0.176	0.176	0.000
Credibility	<---	Informativeness	0.422	0.422	0.000
Credibility	<---	Entertainment	0.243	0.243	0.000
Perceived value	<---	Credibility	0.154	0.154	0.000
Perceived value	<---	Informativeness	0.208	0.143	0.065
Perceived value	<---	Entertainment	0.227	0.190	0.037
WOM attitude	<---	Perceived value	0.370	0.370	0.000

Source: SEM (AMOS) output

Accordingly, factors influencing credibility of mobile advertising, non-irritation ($\beta=0.176$, $p<0.001$), informativeness ($\beta=0.422$, $p<0.001$), and entertainment ($\beta=0.243$, $p<0.001$) had a direct positive effect, and H1, H3, and H4 were confirmed.

The structural model explains 46% of variance in credibility, 17% of the variance in perceived value, and 14% of the variance in WOM attitude of the respondents. According to the path coefficients, perceived value has a significant positive influence on WOM attitude. Table 5 summarizes direct, indirect and total effects among the constructs in the proposed model.

4. DISCUSSIONS

From the viewpoint of perceived value and WOM attitudes, this study discovers the factors influence the perceived value and referral intentions of mobile advertisement. Based on the empirical data analysis, we found that, perceived value has a significant positive impact on WOM, supporting the arguments of previous studies (Tsang *et al.*, 2004; Liu *et al.*, 2012; Dao *et al.*, 2014). Perceived value is the major determinant of consumer behavioral intention. WOM is one of important behavioral intentions of the consumer in advertising. Therefore, improving the perceived value of mobile advertising can subsidize to refer others. Specifically, to improve the service value, location-based, customized, time, personalized marketing should be prioritized through mobile advertising.

The result reveals the positive effects of entertainment on perceived value. Thus, the message with entertaining and funny meaning can contribute to make the consumer intention positively. In order to increase the sharing attitude of customer, entertaining attributes have a significant impact that also supports the previous studies (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011; Salem, 2016). Therefore, to improve the value toward advertisement, marketers should emphasize the pleasant context of the message. In addition, this study also found the mild significant positive influence of informativeness and credibility on perceived value. Advertising communication is sensitive, spontaneous, and brief, which may require exact and relevant information. Yet, the short-lived nature of advertising reduces the irritation of mobile subscribers, which may affect advertising credibility. Credibility may be affected if the message is suspected too much positive or manipulated, which affect advertising value as well.

Regarding the credibility, study found significant influence of informativeness, non-irritation, and entertainment. If marketers perceived to increase WOM communication through advertising, they need to go beyond the typical advertising style. This study reveals to marketers that customers are unlikely to generate WOM attitude until they obtain sufficient knowledge about entertaining attributes, non-irritative manner, and proper information. Thus, if the marketers are able to offer advertising with appropriate information and pleasing or funny attributes in an appealing way, the consumer might not be irritated and there is great possibility to participate in referrals.

From the managerial perspective, this study portrayed some recommendations for practitioners. First, advertisers should take into consideration the antecedents of WOM attitude in their strategy making phase. WOM attitude is the powerful determinant of non-commercial advertising, thus referrals make a strong influence of

consumer attitude. In addition, marketers should focus on delivery time, place and validity of the message, to improve the referral behavior.

Second, for the sake of WOM attitude, advertisers should pay attention to the advertising value. The perceived advertising value is crucial to the consumer's referral behavior. In order to create customer value, marketers should emphasize on entertaining attributes of advertisement. Excessive information generates no customer value but irritation. Meanwhile, perceived informativeness has positive influence on behavioral intention, marketers should consider non-irritating aspects as well as entertaining message content.

Finally, this study suggests marketers to build marketing credibility and reliability of advertising content. Marketers should have control over the dissemination of information about their systems. The communication through WOM requires better control over information processing to achieve the credibility of advertising.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study examined non-commercial and volunteer advertising through mobile subscribers. The results of this study reveal that our research model is generally plausible to explain consumer's opinion about mobile advertising and referral behavior. As WOM attitude works as good reference for product or services, has a strong impact on consumer intentions toward that product or service, therefore, this study brings a number of academic and managerial contributions to improve WOM approach in mobile advertising.

The study can conclude that the WOM attitude of the consumers is generated by perceived value. Informativeness, non-irritativeness, and entertainment have a direct or indirect influence on WOM intention in the context of mobile advertising. Since then, the study has some noteworthy limitations, which in turn open up a new domain of future research. This study was restricted to data collection from only one country, thus the precautions are required to use these findings in any other country. There might have some other variables of interest and demographic attributes of respondents that have not been addressed in this study. Future studies should address transnational issues with demographic attributes. In addition, future trials could explore fresh users and their interactions as well as the antecedents of WOM attitude with a more quantitative study that could provide a better understanding of the current issue.

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