

THE ROLE OF OPINION LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS AND BRAND COMMITMENT AS DRIVERS OF BRAND-RELATED ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH (EWOM) IN SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES (SNS)

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Abstract

Previous studies on the antecedents of Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM) have either focused on the opinion leadership characteristics of individuals, or on brand commitment. It is the aim of this study to combine these two separate streams of research by evaluating the impact of opinion leadership characteristics and brand commitment as possible drivers of EWOM on Social Networking Sites (SNS). It is found that brand commitment is indeed a strong driver of brand related EWOM. Brand commitment mediates the motivation to engage in EWOM by those who already exhibit opinion leadership characteristics. In addition, the findings show that those who have opinion leadership characteristics and those who do not have opinion leadership differ in the type of EWOM they engage in. This can be defined as Active EWOM (content creation) and Passive EWOM (forwarding information). Marketers can use this information to design strategies that appeal to the needs of those with opinion leadership characteristics by creating novel experiences, or to enhance commitment by rewarding users who share positive information about the brand.

Keywords: EWOM, Active EWOM, Passive EWOM, Brand Commitment, Opinion Leadership, Social Network Sites

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