

ABSTRACT

Mobile Word-of-Mouth (mWOM) is a way of communication between people regarding product and service performances through a mobile device. Most of the managerial literature suggests that the WOM communication process is one of the most powerful forces in the marketplace. One of the most widely accepted notions in consumer behavior is that WOM communication plays an important role in shaping consumers' attitude and behaviors. This research studies consumer behavior with this aspect in the mobile commerce (m-commerce) environment.

The primary objective of the research is to measure the significance of the factors which makes the consumer to pass the WOM in m-commerce environment. The researcher has identified seven mWOM motive factors as independent variables namely, social benefits, economic incentives, advice seeking, extraversion/positive self-enhancement, helping the company, venting negative feelings and concern for other consumers. As the study revolves around m-commerce considering two services, which from the dependent variable, which are Short Messaging Service (SMS) and Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS), these dependent variables were measured in terms of the frequency of sending the services. Hence, analysis for both SMS and MMS is done in this study, by measuring the relation between the independent variables and frequency of sending SMS and MMS messages respectively.

For this study, there are altogether fourteen hypothesis statements, seven of which were for SMS and the remaining seven for MMS. To test the hypothesis, survey research was conducted with convenience sampling where data was collected from 392 students each for SMS and MMS services, that is, a total of 784 students from Assumption University, Thailand. Two sets of questionnaires with identical contents were constructed to measure SMS and MMS which were identical but helped to measure the two different services separately. Data collection took a time period of two months from the mid month of May until the mid of July 2004. The respondents were questioned by the researcher herself to bring more accuracy into the answer and to assure that the meanings and terms would be completely understood by each respondent.

Statistical Package for Social Analysis (SPSS 11.5) was used to measure data. Pearson's Correlation was used to test the correlation between variables of each hypothesis statements.

Analysis revealed that the strongest impact on frequency of sending messages was by social benefits for both MMS and SMS and also extraversion/positive self-enhancement for SMS. The research findings indicate that social benefits and to a lesser extent extraversion/positive self-enhancement serve to motivate frequency of sending messages creating mWOM. Remaining motive factors as economic incentive, advice seeking, helping the company, venting negative feelings and concern for other consumers were found to have no relationship suggesting that consumers strongly driven by these motives tend to send message less often. On the other hand, it also suggests that these are not the motives which

contribute to mWOM and it can thus be noticed that such factors are not the reason for mWOM.

Moreover, it was quite evident that most of the messages sent by users went to their personal friends. This was seen for both SMS and MMS messaging. However, the number of messages being sent for SMS was found to be comparatively higher.

The researcher concluded with some theoretical and business related recommendations. Since such a study is one of the first of its kind in the m-commerce environment, the different motives that create mWOM have been defined. Marketers can generate communication strategies that encourage such behaviors that revolve around sending messages frequently to friends. Research results show how social benefits and psychological well being come into play when sending messages and creating mWOM by users. People in the business field can take advantages of such findings and implement them into their marketing strategies and build campaigns focusing on such points.

Researches like this one help future researchers in terms of enhancing future studies oriented towards similar objectives. The researcher, however, considers it essential that future researchers try to strengthen findings and implications by overcoming the limitations that this study has failed to cover.

