The Effect of Online Supporter’s Review Directions on Consumers’ Brand Attitude and Purchase Intention: The Role of Brand Awareness

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Abstract

Online supporters are the group of people selected by companies for the online promotion of their products or services and focus on generating messages that are conducive to stimulating hands-on experiences with companies’ products and services to create advertising effects. This study examined how reviews offered by blogs operated by fashion brands’ online supporters influence consumer’s brand attitudes and purchase intentions. Specifically, this study examined how brand awareness and directions of review messages influences consumers’ brand attitudes and purchase intentions. This study employed a 2 (brand awareness: high awareness vs. low awareness) X 3 (review direction: one-sided positive, two-sided positive & negative, one-sided negative) between-subject factorial design. In total, 180 respondents participated, thus garnering 30 responses for each of the six conditions. The results of two-way ANOVA revealed the significant main effect supporters’ review message direction on consumers’ brand attitudes and purchase intentions. Two-sided messages were rated high for brand attitude and purchase intention compared to one-sided positive or negative or positive directions. The interactions between brand reputation and message direction were significant for brand attitude, but not for purchase intention.

Keywords: online supporter, online review, review direction, brand awareness, brand attitude

1. Introduction

Consumers collect information on products through various information sources and channels when making purchases. Recently, with the emergence of the Internet as an important communication channel, an ever increasing proportion of communication is conducted online by private companies, and consumers make increasingly frequent use of this. According to
Report on Korean Consumers’ Usage Patterns of Internet Shopping Mall (2010) published by Korea Internet Security Agency, 8 out of 10 consumers have purchased product(s) through the Internet and 74% responded that they are influenced by other consumers’ online reviews when they make decisions about purchases. In particular, the characteristics of online shopping that mean that consumers cannot see products or other purchasers in person, many consumers depend on previous purchasers’ evaluations or reviews for purchase decisions. That is, consumers actively search for other consumers’ usage experiences, and their reviews of products are reflected in their purchase decisions (Lee, Ahn, & Ha, 2012) and they use online reviews of products as important information to rationalize purchase decisions. In particular, as electronic word of mouth has come to be considered as a channel through which to spread mass information promptly (Chatterjee, 2001), the importance of electronic word of mouth has increased as an alternative to existing commercial advertisements and mass media marketing (Park, 2006). With online–based social activities becoming more active, consumers expand their influence by spreading their experiences of products on the Internet and proactively form opinions by presenting their opinions on specific areas or delivering the information they possess (Hong, 2012; Kim & Ko, 2010).

Many fashion brands recruit brand supporters and induce consumers to participate in online marketing activities such as posting product reviews or related information on their blogs and via SNS. Online supporters are those who have experience of products or services and deliver their opinions via various channels after being provided with the product or service by a company. These messages are mainly delivered through blogs, and such blog marketing that uses online supporters tends to be more favorably recognized by consumers than existing company blogs, since consumers can have useful opportunities to acquire more detailed information about products and services through reviews that are written after bloggers have experienced products and services in person (Ha & Lennon, 2011; Han & Choi, 2014; Soh, 2012).

Although there have been several studies on the effect of corporate or personal blogs on consumer attitudes (Nam, 2010; Park, 2008; Park, 2009; Yoo, 2009), there have been few studies of online supporters’ messages on consumer attitude and purchase intention. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine how brand awareness (well-known vs. unknown) and the directions of the review message (positive vs. two-sided vs. negative) offered by blogs that are operated by a fashion brands’ online supporters would influence consumer’s brand attitudes and purchase intentions.

II. Literature Review

1. Characteristics of Blogs

The term “blog” refers to a discussion or information website published on the World Wide Web that consists of discrete, often informal, diary–style text entries (Wikipedia). The unique characteristics of a blog are the track back function, which links writing to any blog or homepage, and the permanent link function, which allows blog user of different networks to access it without limitation. The introduction of the track back function allows listing one’s writing on other blog sites. Moreover, if a reader