

# THE EFFECTS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND WORD-OF-MOUTH ON CONSUMERS' PURCHASE DECISION IN SOCIAL NETWORK ONLINE PURCHASE TOWARD COSMETIC MARKET – A STUDY IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM

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## ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the effects of emotional intelligence, word-of-mouth, trust and perceived value as important psychological factors on customers' behavior through social network online purchase. A model has been constructed and based on the proposed relationships of emotional intelligence, word-of-mouth, trust, perceived value, purchase intention and purchase decision. A survey was carried out and collected 430 responses from people who used to buy cosmetics through social networks. By using quantitative approach and verification techniques, the findings indicate that consumers' buying behavior is predicted by word-of-mouth, trust and perceived value. Besides, word-of-mouth is also regarded as a factor that directly affects trust. In addition, there is a significant positive relationship between the perceived value and trust. A positive relationship has also been found between customers' purchase intention and their buying decision. However, there is no significant signal about the relationship between emotional intelligence and trust. The study also brings some strategic recommendations to cosmetic sellers and suppliers about how to attract more customers, and lead them to be loyal among multitude of choices in social network online purchase.

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence; Perceived value; Social networking online purchase; Trust; Word-of-mouth.

## 1. Introduction

"Social Networking Sites" indicate the networks where users (individual or groups) can interact with each other (Kempe et al., 2003). By doing many tasks and sharing videos, images, comments and thoughts and facilitating for communication (Kietzmann et al., 2011), many connections among users with others are greatly maintained through social networks such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (Ellison et al., 2007). With the great development of information technology today, social networks play a very important role in modern life. Besides helping users to easily interact with each other, the interesting thing is that social networking sites support users in several fields such as advertising, marketing, business and education (Hennig-

Thurau et al., 2010). In business, through social networking, consumers can find products and services that they want to buy by the direct interaction between sellers and consumers (Parson, 2013).

On the other hand, in the age of technological boom, the use of smartphones has become a necessity for everyone. Since then, accessing social networking seems to be a habit for most of people, especially for young people. In Vietnam, buying and selling through social network sites have become familiar because of its remarkable features, specifically in cosmetic market. The transactions of cosmetic purchases seem to be taken place daily through social network sites. But in fact, because of their viral features, these shopping sites are not trusted by

consumers. Hence, the customers' decision to join and use social commerce dealers is very exciting to be investigated. Because participating in online shopping through social networking sites concerns the willingness to take risks and uncertainties. In addition, the cosmetic market of Vietnam is now more vibrant than ever with thousands of cosmetic brands, not only domestic but also foreign brands. Cosmetic products are posted continuously through social network sites every day. Because of its diversity and abundance, consumers have to choose items carefully before deciding to buy them. In consumption circumstances, there are many factors are considered to explain consumer's decision. In many cases, emotion is considered an important factor to interpret how people act and make decisions (Kidwell, Hardesty and Childers, 2008). Consumer outcomes have been affected by the comprehension of the emotional processing capabilities (Kidwell et al., 2008). Besides, word-of-mouth is also play an important role in making decision because consumers often believe in each other more than they believe in information or communication from sellers (Ng et al., 2011). Moreover, to extend the lead consumers and change these lead consumers into real buyers, buyers can review and give their feedback (positive or negative feedbacks) after using purchased products among their friends through social networking sites (Parson, 2013). Based on the importance of these two premises, this research aims to investigate the effects of emotional intelligence and word-of-mouth as essential factors that predict buying decisions of consumers to take part in social networking online purchase.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

### *Emotional Intelligence, Word-of-mouth and Trust*

According to Goleman (1998), **Emotional Intelligence (EI)** is defined as the

capacity for organizing one's own feelings and those of others, for motivating oneself, and for managing emotions well in oneself and in relationships. According to the definition of Mayer and Salovey (1997), EI is the abilities to perceive emotions, to approach and express emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional meaning, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote both better emotions and thoughts. Because of the study's focus on the online purchase through social networks, it just concentrates on the ability to understand and regulate one's personal emotions to motivate oneself and to well-manage one's emotions in one's relationships and in communications.

**Word-of-mouth (WOM)** is defined as consumer to consumer communication about goods and services. It is a powerful persuasive force, particularly in the diffusion of information about new products (Dean and Lang, 2008). According to Harrison, WOM communication is "informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization or a service" (Harrison-Walker, 2001).

**Trust** is defined as one's belief that a party will deliver desirable resources in a predictable manner (Foa and Foa, 1976). In terms of business-to-business marketing, trust is considered an antecedent of engagement, and it is necessary for successful relationships (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

The level of emotional intelligence increase the amount of trust created (Cooper RK, 1997). Depending on the trust's level, people tend to have decision positively when they feel favorable while undesirable emotion results in negative decisions (Kidwell et al., 2008). According to Murray and Schlacter (1990), risks and uncertainties in purchase and consumption could be reduced by the crucial role of word-of-mouth and the reviews from

people experienced the products will gain the trust from customers. According to Alam and Yasin (2010), respondents in their research agreed that information about brands given by their relatives or friends are really trustworthy.

Therefore, the hypotheses are proposed:

*H1: Emotional intelligence has a positive relationship with trust.*

*H2: WOM has a positive relationship with trust.*

### **Word-of-mouth, Trust, Perceived Value and Purchase Intention**

**Perceived value** is seen as a strategic dictate for manufacturers and retailers in the 1990s, and it will continue to be important in the twenty-first century (Vantrappen, 1992; Woodruff, 1997; Forester, 1999). Hence, it's necessary for managers to understand the value of customer and where they should concentrate on gaining the market advantage (Woodruff, 1997).

**Purchase intention** is a behavior tendency of a consumer who intends to buy the product (Dodds and Monroe, 1985). Kotler (2000) thought that purchase intention is a common efficaciousness measure and it is often used to predict the response behavior. Li et al. (2002) also argued that purchase intention is a common effectual measurement and it is often used to revise a response behavior.

According to Kim et al. (2012), when consumers buy the products through the sellers' shopping sites, trust can decrease the non-monetary cost and increase the perceived value. In some cases, e-shoppers wish to give their reviews about the adopted product. According to Bone (1995), these activities allow customers to use both informational and regulatory influences on the evaluation of products and purchase intentions of similar customers. Previous research mentioned that organization's effectiveness has been profoundly impacted word-of-mouth communications. Purchase behavior is

affected when consumers are thinking about purchasing products or services (M. Williams and F. Buttle, 2011). The study of Yousef et al. (2016) suggested that the effect of WOM on purchase behavior is needed to be understood to emphasize the importance of communication and efficiency of the social media tools used in modern marketing communication. Besides, purchase intention is predicted by the factor of trust (Jarvenpaa and Tractinsky, 1999). Most other researchers demonstrated that trust is a key factor that has a great directly influence on purchase intention. The finding of Al-Swidi et al. (2012) showed that an important factor in the customers-suppliers relationships and online purchase intention is trust. In addition, per reasonable action theory, internet shopping activity could be described as a kind of intentional activity phenomenon impacted strongly by consumer belief as well (Jong and Lee, 2000). Trust and purchasing intention are believed to have a direct and significant relationship, this was figured out by several researchers (Jang et al., 2005; Yu &Choe, 2003; Yoon, 2000).

A model of consumer evaluation of price, perceived quality, and perceived value was propounded by Dodds and Monroe (1985). They suggested that perceived value impacts on consumer's willingness to buy (Dodds and Monroe, 1985). Because perceived value is the composition of transaction and acquisition utilities, it seems to be an important antecedent of consumer's purchase intention (Thaler, 1985). According to Chong, Yang and Wong (2003), the relationships among trust, perceived value and purchase intention, where customers trust will significantly lead to perceived value and subsequently perceived value will affect purchase intention.

**Buying decision** is noted as the purchase intention's result because consumers might have the intention to purchase before to deciding to buy products (Sri et al., 2014).

The Theory of Planned Behavior indicated that the actual use behavior is a result of intention, and therefore, purchase intention should precede the purchase decision.

Therefore, this study proposed:

H3: Trust has a positive relationship with perceived value.

H4: WOM has a positive relationship

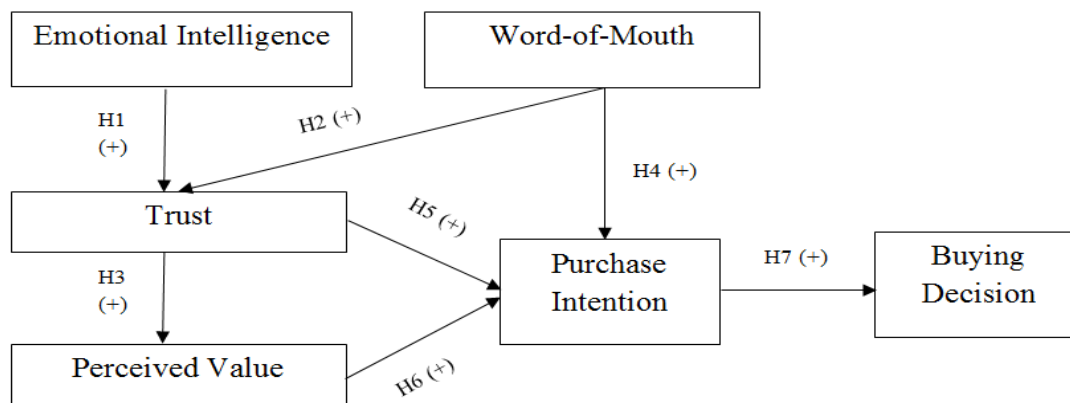
with purchase intention.

H5: Trust has a positive relationship with purchase intention.

H6: Perceived value has a positive relationship with purchase intention.

H7: Purchase intention has a positive relationship with buying decision.

### Research conceptual Model



**Figure 1.** Proposed Conceptual Model

Source: Modified from Sri et al., (2014)

### 3. Research Methodology

#### Research approach and Instrument

This study applies quantitative approach. Questionnaire as an instrument which contains brief description about the purpose and the significance of the study. The five-points Likert scale is applied to measure the strength of each factor. The five-points Likert scale, with reference to Cooper et al., (2006), is the most frequently used tool for generalized rating scale. Respondents are asked to rate their agreement among five statements ranged from 1 is “strongly

disagreed” to 5 is “strongly agreed”, which are: (1): Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly agree.

#### Data Collection

The questionnaires were distributed directly to respondents. Through this approach, researchers can help to explain which point participants do not clearly understand when doing surveys. In this study, 430 questionnaires are collected from customers who used to buy cosmetics through social network after eliminating unqualified ones. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of respondents.

**Table 1**

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Measures	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	140	32.6
	Female	290	67.4
<b>Age</b>	Below 18 years old	32	7.4
	18 - 25 years old	204	47.4
	26 - 30 years old	159	37
	31 - 35 years old	27	6.3
	36 - 40 years old	8	1.9
	Above 40 years old	0	0
<b>Occupation</b>	Student	32	7.4
	Officer	349	81.2
	Businessman/woman	9	2.1
	Worker	3	0.7
	Other	37	8.6
<b>Income</b>	Below 10 million VND	196	45.6
	From 10 to below 20 million VND	187	43.5
	From 20 to below 30 million VND	32	7.4
	From 30 million VND to more	15	3.5
<b>Frequency of social networking access</b>	Below 1 times/day	2	0.5
	2 - 3 times/day	37	8.6
	3 - 4 times/day	108	25.1
	above 4 times/day	283	65.8

Source: Data

**Data Analysis**

Collected data will be tested the reliability and validity by Cronbach's Alpha, Exploratory Factors Analyze (EFA), Confirmatory Factors Analyze (CFA), and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

**4. Results and Discussion****Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Test**

To examine the concepts of scale, Cronbach's Alpha is used to analyze the stability and consistency of scale. An acceptable score recommended is greater or

equal to 0.6 ( $\geq 0.6$ ) by some researchers (Nunnally, 1978; Peterson, 1994; Slater, 1995). Based on the results, all the variables with the values of the overall Cronbach's Alpha are greater than 0.6, which gratifies at the required value and proves the scale that has a very good reliability. Therefore, all items are remained. Besides, the value of mean score of each variable is at the good agreement ( $> 3.5$ ). It indicates that most respondents have the agreement with each dimension. Table 2 presents the results of descriptive statistics and reliability test.

**Table 2**

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Test

Factor	N	Scale items	Mean	Cronbach's Alpha
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	430	6	3.8	0.816
Word-of-Mouth (W)	430	3	3.86	0.808
Trust (T)	430	3	3.57	0.811
Perceived Value (PV)	430	5	3.58	0.890
Purchase Intention (PI)	430	5	3.64	0.852
Buying Decision (BD)	430	5	3.70	0.875

*Source: Data***Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)**

This step is used to reach the exploring the basic structure of a combination that includes related variables. This model is examined by “KMO and Bartlett’s test”, “Promax rotation” and “Principle axis factors”. After running Cronbach’s alpha without any item rejected, 27 items are used in this analysis.

***Independent & Mediator variables***

After the first-round testing, there are four items rejected because they are not satisfied of the criteria of EFA (items which have factor loading  $< 0.5$ ). Next round of EFA test is built to regroup the relevant variables.

Based on the results of last-round of EFA, the KMO value is 0.871 ( $> 0.5$ ), the signification value of Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity is 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ), the cumulative value of Variance Explained is 60.157% ( $> 50\%$ ) and Eigen-value of all factors are higher than 1. All values are acceptable. Besides, there is no item rejected because they satisfy the EFA criteria (all items have loading factor  $> 0.5$ ).

***Dependent variables***

The results show that the KMO value is 0.832 ( $> 0.5$ ), the signification value of Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity is 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ), the cumulative value of Variance Explained is

59.098% ( $> 50\%$ ) and Eigen-value of this factor is higher than 1. All values are acceptable. In addition, there is no item rejected because they satisfy the EFA criteria (all items have loading factor  $> 0.5$ ).

After running Exploratory Factor Analysis, 23 items are remained for further analysis.

**Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)**

After running CFA for the first time, for 6 variables and 23 indicators, the results of Fit Indices were not good enough. However, the poor measurement research model can be adjusted by using the Modification Indices or standard residual (Hair, et al, 1998).

After revising and running again, the model fit was better and Fit Indices were improved. In particular, the value of Chi-square = 503.864 ( $\neq 0$ ) and  $df = 213$ ; hence,  $CMIN/df = 2.366$  ( $< 5.0$ );  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$  ( $< 0.05$ );  $RMSEA = 0.064$  ( $< 0.08$ );  $GFI = 0.909$  ( $> 0.9$ );  $TLI = 0.932$  ( $> 0.9$ ), and  $CFI = 0.943$  ( $> 0.9$ ). In summary, the model fits well to the collected data. And it can be said that theoretical model of the research is in accordance with collected data from the market.

Following the CFA test, SEM is often used to assess unobservable latent constructs

for validating the measurement model because of its ability to impute relationships between unobserved constructs (latent variables) from observable variables. Similarly to the CFA test, the revised SEM model was run with covariance that set up for pairs of errors based on the Modification Indices. Based on the results, the value of Chi-square = 510.864

( $\neq 0$ ) and  $df = 217$ ; hence,  $CMIN/df = 2.354$  ( $< 5.0$ );  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$  ( $< 0.05$ );  $RMSEA = 0.064$  ( $< 0.08$ );  $GFI = 0.908$  ( $> 0.9$ );  $TLI = 0.933$  ( $> 0.9$ ), and  $CFI = 0.942$  ( $> 0.9$ ). With all those values, it means that good-of-fitness criteria are met and SEM model fits well to the collected data.

### Hypothesis testing

**Table 3**

The results of Hypothesis testing

No	Hypothesis	Standardized Regression Weight ( $\beta$ )	P-value (level of significance 0.05)	Conclusion
1	<b>H1</b> : Emotional intelligence has a positive relationship with trust.	-0.111	0.108	Not Supported
2	<b>H2</b> : WOM has a positive relationship with trust.	0.429	0	Supported
3	<b>H3</b> : Trust has a positive relationship with perceived value.	0.125	0.007	Supported
4	<b>H4</b> : WOM has a positive relationship with purchase intention.	0.232	0	Supported
5	<b>H5</b> : Trust has a positive relationship with purchase intention.	0.224	0	Supported
6	<b>H6</b> : Perceived value has a positive relationship with purchase intention.	0.390	0	Supported
7	<b>H7</b> : Purchase intention has a positive relationship with buying decision.	0.254	0	Supported

Source: Data

From the results of hypothesis testing, it can be seen that the six out of seven hypotheses of this study have the significant supports. All of those hypotheses have P-value  $< 0.05$  respective with each determinant, all six hypotheses are accepted at 5% level of significant, except **H1**: Emotional intelligence has a positive relationship with trust. With P-value = 0.108 ( $> 0.05$ ) and negative value of standardized regression weight ( $\beta = -0.111$ ), this finding shows that there is no impact of emotional intelligence on trust.

On the other hand, word-of-mouth has the strongly positive impact on trust ( $\beta = 0.429$ ,  $p = 0$ ). It proves that the more positive WOM a product has, the more credibility is generated. There is also a positive relationship between trust and perceived value. With the value of  $\beta$  is 0.125 ( $p = 0.007$ ), it means perceived value is predicted by trust.

Besides, among the determinants positively impact on purchase intention, perceived value has a positive relationship with purchase intention with the greatest

influence ( $\beta=0.390$ ,  $p=0$ ), following is word-of-mouth ( $\beta=0.232$ ,  $p=0$ ) and trust ( $\beta=0.224$ ,  $p=0$ ). It demonstrates that purchase intention is much constructed from perceived value.

Moreover, there is also an impact of purchase intention on buying decision with the p-value which is 0.254 of standardized regression weight ( $\beta=0.254$ ,  $p=0$ ).

### **Discussion**

The main objective of this study is to investigate the role that emotional intelligence, word-of-mouth, trust and perceived values as the elements in predicting consumers' behavior toward purchasing cosmetics on the social networking sites. The result shows that there is no relationship between EI and trust. This finding seems to contradict with previous researches' findings which have shown that how well people believed their emotions were being understood and controlled was predictive of their level of trust (Luke A. Downey et al., 2011). This result may come from many reasons such as the virtual nature of social networking, income levels of respondents, or convenience sampling technique so that the sample might not represent the population as a whole. However, this finding is in the line with what Wing Shing Lee & Marcus Selart (2015) examined that EI does not predict any of the perceptions of trust.

Besides, the result of this research presents that trust has the positive impact on perceived value. This finding confirms the work of Singh & Sirdeshmukh (2000) that there is an association emerged between perceived value and trust. Following this, this research concludes that WOM has a strongly positive effect on trust. It is consistent with the finding of Chen and Xie (2005) that consumers tend to base on others' experiences and opinions before purchasing a product or service. In addition, trust has a positive influence on purchase intention. Consistent of this finding is the work of Hoffman, Novak,

and Peralta (1999) that indicated trust helps reduce the fears of risks when people intend to buy products and helps the transaction taken better in online purchase. The study also demonstrates the positive relationship between perceived value and purchase intention in social network online purchase. This conclusion is consistent with the finding of Monroe and Krishnan (1985) examined how perceived value and perceived quality will impact on purchase intention, it means the higher the products' perceived value the customer has, the higher the purchase intention is. The significantly positive impact of WOM on purchase intention is also demonstrated through this research. This conclusion is in the line with what Yousef et al. (2016) examined for the effect of WOM on purchase intentions that need to be understood to emphasize the importance of communication and efficiency of the social media tools used in modern marketing communication. Finally, the result of this study concludes that buying decision is predicted by purchase intention. According to Sri et al., (2014), their research's finding has confirmed that consumers' trust is important to affect their perceived value and purchase intention. Then, purchase intention significantly predicts the consumers' making purchase.

### **5. Conclusions and practical implications**

The finding shows that customers highly appreciate the reviews of experienced customers when they want to buy cosmetics in social network sites. It means there is a positive relationship between word-of-mouth and purchase behavior. In other words, word-of-mouth is a good prediction about buying behavior in current context, especially in social network online purchase. However, the finding of this study indicates that there is no impact of emotional intelligence on customers' buying behavior. Because of the viral features of social network sites and the



features of the participants in this research, the level of emotional intelligence does not predict customer's decision. Besides, there are also relationships between trust, perceived value and buying behavior. In addition, among word-of-mouth, trust and perceived value, there are interrelated relationships including the positive relationship between word-of-mouth and trust in which word-of-mouth plays the role in predicting trust; and the positive impact of trust on perceived value. Moreover, this study also presents the positive relationship between purchase intention and buying decision. When customers trust the products, they will have significant perceived value, which will affect the purchase intention and lead them to take action.

The study also comes out with several practical implications for cosmetic sellers and suppliers to enhance their number of customers based on WOM, trust and perceived value then increase sales and achieve business objectives. In terms of WOM, it is recommended that cosmetic sellers and suppliers have to carry out some continuous research surveys so that they will fully understand what their customers' needs are at any given time. This will lessen the differences in sellers' misunderstanding of customer needs. Then, it makes the customer feel more satisfied and share positive word-of-mouth. Moreover, cosmetic sellers in social network sites should create and control a rating system that is evaluated by the customers' experiences and put as many as positive expert recommendations relating to their cosmetic products. To bring the high level of trust, cosmetic sellers and suppliers should increase the quality and the real information of products provided on their social network sites; provide updated and accurate information of products (e.g., availability, function, prices, uses, etc.) and

the clear transaction process. Besides, cosmetic sellers and suppliers also need to be ready to answer many questions from their customers. That will make customers trust them, appreciate them highly and they help customers recognize the clarity and their willingness. In addition, understanding of customer's value perception and the role of perceived value in the relationship between perceived value and purchase behavior are really important. There are many ways for cosmetic sellers and suppliers to increase their customers' perceived value including one of the most effective ways of enhancing perceived value is advertising. They should give their products to beauty bloggers (maybe their best selling's products or new products) so that beauty bloggers will share their views, their evaluations of the products as a way of product advertising; and the cosmetic sellers should also set the price of products based on what customers are willing to pay for it.

### **Limitations**

Besides some practical implications above, the study also has its own limitations. First, this study just focuses on cosmetic market, it is necessary to demonstrate the dimensions of these variables in different markets. Second, most of the participants in the survey are quite young and their income levels are in lower-middle class and the study just uses convenience technique as sampling method, so the effect of emotional intelligence is not available. So further researches should focus on other groups of age or focus on other classes of income and use another technique for sampling method such as random sampling technique to explore how the impact of emotional intelligence is. In addition, further research should also build a model of the factors that can affect a person's emotional intelligence in order to better understand its relationships■

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