

Impact of online social media on consumers' purchasing intention via social network sites

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ABSTRACT

With the continuous development of the internet and e-commerce in Vietnam recently, there is much research on online purchasing behaviors through retail websites. However, there are few studies on consumers' purchasing behavior via social network sites (SNS) despite a rapid increase in the use of such websites. This study, therefore, tries to build a research model describing (i) the impact of motivations of using SNSs on social e-WOM and (ii) the relationship among social e-WOM, consumers' trust, attitude and purchasing intention via SNSs. After adjusting the measurement scales by a focus group's discussion, a quantitative survey was executed using the data collected from 509 SNS users and by testing Cronbach's Alpha reliability, EFA, CFA, and SEM to comment seven proposed hypotheses. The results showed that motivations of social media usage (utilitarian and hedonic) had positively impacted on social e-WOM, social e-WOM influenced positively consumers' trust and attitude towards brands of goods/service on SNSs, and that both consumers' trust and attitude had positive impacts on their purchasing intention. Accordingly, the study suggested some practical implications for managers to adjust their social communication strategies in the digital era.

1. Introduction

The role of Social Network Sites is more and more important in human life since they support maintaining existing relationships and forming new relationships among internet users. Enterprises gradually realize the potentials of social network sites as online social media to observe, analyze, connect, provide knowledge and collect consumers' responses. Some previous research emphasized the importance of social media on consumers' behaviors (Diffley, Kearns, Bennett, & Kawalek, 2011; Ertemel & Ammoura, 2016; Forbes & Vespoli, 2013; Shaheen & Lodhi, 2016) and the effect of social e-word of mouth on consumers' purchasing intention (Kavoura & Stavrianeas, 2015; See-To & Ho, 2014; Seraj, 2011). However, these studies only focused on qualitative results and simple descriptive statistics but

failed to build up the research framework for describing the influence of social media dimensions on consumers' purchasing decision-making process. In Vietnam, social media and online consuming behaviors are emerging issues and there have been no specialized studies on this issue yet. Some previous research investigated the acceptance behavior of users of SNSs such as Facebook, Zalo, Viber and Youtube and pointed out several benefits made to the community by SNSs. In other words, motivations for consumers to use SNSs lie in the benefits made by themselves. Previous studies by Vietnamese researchers (Hoang & M. T. T. Nguyen, 2017; Hoang & Phan, 2017; T. T. Nguyen & Hoang, 2017) haven't demonstrated why such motivations lead to participation of e-word of mouth and online purchasing intention via social networking sites. Additionally, it is necessary to study the relationship between social media and consumers' purchasing behaviors because consumers' trust and attitude towards goods/services advertised on SNSs may play a positive role in directing consumers' purchasing intention. This paper, therefore, aims to determine: (i) the impact of motivations of using social media on social e-WOM, and (ii) the relationships among social e-WOM, consumers' trust, attitude and purchasing intention on SNSs. The research results may have a theoretical contribution to the social media role in consumers' purchasing decision-making process and reflect the social media role in the online buying environment in a developing country like Vietnam.

2. Literature review and research model

2.1. Main concepts

Social network sites (SNSs) are defined as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Amichai-Hamburger & Hayat, 2017).

Social media (SM) is a media channel on SNSs created for everyone to contact, exchange ideas, share information, emotion, picture and video, etc. With strong interaction capacity, social media is considered as an effective channel for digital marketing (APPNET, 2016).

Social media and *Social network sites* need to be differentiated in terms of two basic media elements: content production and content distribution. *Social network sites* referred to a group of members and their interaction whereas *Social media* referred to the form of content production and distribution. Therefore, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Zalo, Viber, or YouTube are not *Social media* by themselves because they do not produce nor distribute but they provide a platform for bloggers to create and convey information.

Motivations of social media usage

Based on the theory of Uses & Gratifications, previous researchers have discovered several issues about consumers' usage of social media. Such research has mentioned both utilitarian and hedonic dimensions to discover usage motivations (Hyllegard, Ogle, Yan, & Reitz, 2011). Utilitarian motivations depict the use of media channels for utilitarian, necessary and effective decision-making processes while hedonic motivations imply media using

behavior for fun, happiness, inspiration, emotion and comfort (Chin, Lu & Wu, 2015). The main benefits of hedonic motivations are experience and emotion and utilitarian motivations are completion of product purchase and its ownership.

Social electronic Word of Mouth (Social e-WOM)

WOM was defined as non-commercial word of mouth among acquaintances (Arndt, 1967). Nowadays, WOM takes a new communication form, electronic WOM. According to Henning-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, and Gremler (2004), e-WOM is positive or negative comments from old, existing and potential customers about a product or a company through the internet.

Social e-WOM is communication process among consumers via SNSs and become one of the most common digital media based on the existing e-WOM including webinars, social networks such as Myspace, Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, LinkedIn and so on, to provide consumers with relevant information through personal connection (Chu & Kim, 2011; Ellison & Boyd, 2013; Seraj, 2011).

SNSs act as an effective means for e-WOM among consumers and serve as sources of information and opinions about goods/services. SNSs have changed the way consumers making their decisions because consumers are easy and fast to exchange their information and opinions through personal address/account without limited time and place (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Considering the popularity of SNSs, social media marketing based on e-WOM become an important part of brand communication strategies for online firms (Chu & Kim, 2011).

Consumers' trust toward goods/service on SNSs

Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2001) defined trust as perception about security based on the belief of persons' behaviors so long as such behaviors come from the motivations bringing positive results for their partners. In the e-commerce context, consumers will rely on the brand of goods/services on social e-WOM to assess their perception level of safety when they are directed by e-WOM information on SNSs. Consumers' trust is really important in the virtual communication context because it helps reduce uncertainty and risk and brand trust influences positively purchasing intention toward this brand (Chang & Chen, 2008; Pavlou & Gefen, 2004; Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006).

Consumers' attitude and purchasing intention toward goods/service on SNSs

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) introduced by Ajzen (1991), human attitude toward behaviors, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control will direct personal intention to form behavior afterward. The attitude toward goods/services was defined as consumers' overall evaluation of a goods/service (Mitchell & Olson, 1981). The evaluation included a positive or negative response to the reliability of a brand. A positive attitude toward a brand of goods/service from this evaluation not only creates consumers' continuous likeliness but also impacts positively their purchasing intention (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017).

In the e-commerce context, behavioral intention is defined as consumers' willingness to develop some behaviors such as goods/ service recommendation, price sensitivity, appraisal or

complaint, purchase or repurchase, loyalty, positive or negative word of mouth through the internet (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014). If consumers' purchasing behavioral intention is positive then their thoughts and behavior toward goods/service purchases are also positive.

2.2. Hypotheses development and research model

The link between motivations of using social media and social e-WOM

SNSs provide the background for individuals with the same interest to share knowledge and ideas and boost the development of social e-WOM (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007). Consumers can read, click "Like" and comment on products and create positive or negative e-WOM. In the external information searching process, consumers make efforts to get product information to meet their needs. However, the needs and hobbies among consumers are not homogeneous, then the best source of information consumers can obtain is from other consumers with the same interests and hobbies. Getting product information from other consumers will help minimize the uncertainty of purchase (Prasad, Gupta, & Totala, 2017). Therefore, arousing positive word of mouth on the social network is one of the reasons for firms to sponsor the development of the social network community. SNSs' benefits motivate consumers to use and to be attracted to participate in e-WOM (T. T. Nguyen & Hoang, 2017). Some motivations of using social media, such as utilitarian and hedonic, may influence the 'LIKE' click in the social e-WOM (Chin et al., 2015). Thus, two hypotheses are proposed as follows:

H1a: The utilitarian motivation for using social media positively impacts social e-WOM

H1b: The hedonic motivation for using social media positively impacts social e-WOM

The link among social e-WOM, consumers' trust and attitude toward goods/service brands

Urban, Amyx, and Lorenzon (2009) concluded that online trust overpasses the fear of the invasion of privacy and safety in the virtual environment. Customers are learning from the experience of buying and using products, which leads to trust and raise positive attitude toward online shopping. Consequently, positively social e-WOM incurred the trust toward goods/services that consumers intend to buy. In their research, Panahi, Watson, and Partridge (2015) stated that building online trust was a challenge because the nature of the online community is open and incognito. However, online trust can be built up time due to personal relationships. Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) proved that social e-WOM was an important tool for customers to obtain information about goods/services and considerably reduce consumers' awareness of uncertainty and risk (Chatterjee, 2001). Moreover, the product information through e-WOM from a reliable person will make the receiver feel more trustworthy even the receiver has not yet used the product (Kavoura & Stavrianeas, 2015).

Ying and Chung (2007) indicated that positive e-WOM stimulated a positive attitude and influenced purchasing intention. Furthermore, a positive message of e-WOM from reliable reference sources leads to a better attitude toward a brand than those of unreliable sources (Wu & Wang, 2011). T. T. Nguyen and Hoang (2017) showed that the information adopted through

e-WOM *helped* enhance brand trust in Vietnam tourism. From arguments on the relationship between social e-WOM and consumers' trust, and social e-WOM and consumers' attitude toward a brand, the hypotheses H2 and H3 are suggested as follows:

H2: Positive social e-WOM positively influences consumers' trust toward brands of goods/services on SNSs

H3: Positive social e-WOM positively influences consumers' attitudes toward brands of goods/services on SNSs

The link among consumers' trust, attitude and purchasing intention on SNSs

Previous studies confirmed that attitude was a strong determinant of behavioral intention and played a very important role in forming behaviors (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005; Kang, Johnson, & Wu, 2014). Moreover, the evaluation based on experience and emotion in the virtual environment has very strong influences on consumers' purchasing decisions (Dabholkar, van Dolen, & de Ruyter, 2009; Y. Lee & Kozar, 2009). The marketing theory on the relationship between commitment and trust also stated that trust was an important mediator between determinants and behavioral results (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The increase of trust would come up to a favorable attitude toward online purchases as well as positively impact consumers' purchasing intention (Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006). Recent research also stated that online trust was the mediator website dimensions and consumers' purchasing intention (Benedicktus, Brady, Darke, & Voorhees, 2010; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Prasad et al., 2017).

Drossos, Giaglis, Lekakos, Kokkinaki, and Stavraki (2007) asserted that trust strongly influenced consumers' attitudes toward brands of goods/services and was an important predictor of consumers' purchasing intention. The trust of brands was likely to affect positively consumers' response toward the advertisement on SNSs (Prasad et al., 2017). Several scholars also considered trust as a contextual and conditional variable, playing a mediating role more than a direct factor affecting purchasing behavior (Alsad, Mohamad, & Ismail, 2017; Langfred, 2004; See-To & Ho, 2014). In addition, Hoang and Phan (2017) found that one of the main elements given by social network selling platforms affecting consumers' purchasing intention on SNSs is the reliability of sellers. From the above discussion, three hypotheses depicting the link among trust, attitude and behavioral intention toward brands of goods/service on SNSs are as follows:

H4: Consumers' trust positively impacts their attitude toward brands of goods/services on SNSs

H5: Consumers' trust positively impacts their purchasing intention toward brands of goods/services on SNSs

H6: Consumers' attitude positively impacts their purchasing intention toward brands of goods/service on SNSs

Figure 1 *shows* the proposed research model that represents the seven suggested hypotheses

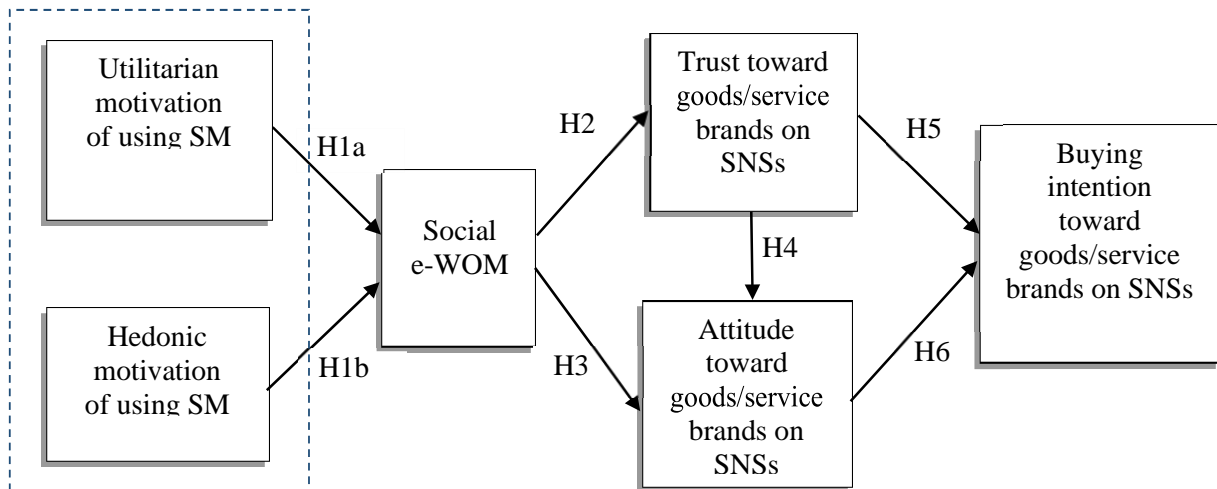


Figure 1. The proposed research model

3. Research methodology

The study used a mixed model of both qualitative and quantitative methods with the quantitative method as the key. The qualitative research used focus group (n=11 participants including 4 students, 3 office staff and 4 managers with ages ranging from 20 to 42, 4 males and 7 females and at least year experience of SNSs) to explore new indicators to adjust and complete the constructs in the research model. The quantitative research applied the survey of consumers who usually use SNSs with convenience sampling. A sample of 550 respondents was targeted and a total of 528 questionnaires were completed with a high return rate of 96%. Invalid and uncompleted questionnaires were rejected, resulting in 509 valid answer sheets.

Table 1 shows that the research sample was balanced with the gender (female: 48.3% and male: 51.7%). The age group of 18-25 years old accounted for the most with 53.2%, the next were 26-35 and 36-45 year-old groups with 21.4% and 20.0 % accordingly. This implied that the youth liked using social media to interact, connect or purchase things on SNSs. Almost 85% of respondents had a monthly income below VND15 million and were mainly college and university degree holders (59.1%). In sum, this sample represents the population of young users on SNSs.

Table 1

Respondents' profile

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent (%)	Accumulative percent (%)
Female	246	48,3	48,3
Male	263	51,7	100
Age			
18-25-year-old	271	53,2	53,2
26-35-year-old	109	21,4	74,7
36-45-year-old	102	20,0	94,7

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent (%)	Accumulative percent (%)
46-60-year-old	21	4,1	98,8
> 60-year-old	6	1,2	100,0
Family status			
Single	205	40,3	40,3
Dating	88	17,3	57,6
Married, no children	108	21,2	78,8
Married, some children	108	21,2	100,0
Monthly income (VND)			
< 5 mils.	215	42,2	42,2
5-10 mils.	158	31,0	73,3
10-15 mils.	59	11,6	84,9
15-20 mils.	18	3,5	88,4
20-25 mils.	13	2,6	91,0
25-30 mils.	22	4,3	95,3
> 30 mils.	24	4,7	100,0
Education			
High school - vocational school	67	13,2	13,2
College - University	301	59,1	72,3
Postgraduate school	141	27,7	100,0
Occupation			
Students	208	40,9	40,9
Non-government officers	96	18,9	59,7
Managers	48	9,4	69,2
Teachers	38	7,5	76,6
Government officials	47	9,2	85,9
Sellers	31	6,1	91,9
Workers	18	3,5	95,5
Common labors	17	3,3	98,8
Others	6	1,2	100,0
Total	509	100,0	

Source: The researcher's data analysis

The scale of Utilitarian Motivation (UMOT) has 5 items (from MOTI01 to MOTI05) and Hedonic Motivation (HMOT) has 3 items (from MOTI06 to MOTI08), inherited from the research of Chin et al. (2015), Prasad et al. (2017), and Rapp, Beitelspcher, Grewal, and Hughes (2013) and one new item from the result of focus group. Social e-WOM includes 4 items (from EWOM01 to EWOM04) adapted from the research of Goyette, Ricard, Bergeron, and

Marticotte (2010), Jalilvand, Esfahani, and Samiei (2011), and Mangold and Faulds (2009), and one new item (EWOM05) from the focus group discussion. Trust toward goods/service on SNSs (TRUS) has 4 items developed from Connolly and Bannister (2007), See-To and Ho (2014) and one new item was added. Attitude toward goods/service on SNSs (ATTI) has 3 items inherited from the previous studies of Abzari, Ghassemi, and Vosta (2014) and Wu and Wang (2011). Lastly, purchasing intention (INTE) has 4 items based on the definition of Kudeshia and Kumar (2017), Schivinski and Dabrowski (2014), and one new item was added.

4. Research results

4.1. Testing the scales of constructs by EFA and Cronbach's Alpha

The research results from exploratory factor analysis after eliminating two items with loading factors below 0.5 including EWOM01 (0,423) and TRUS05 (0,349) indicated that KMO index was 0.868 (above 0.50) and Barlett testing was statistically significant at the level of less than 0.05 to meet the requirement for EFA analysis. EFA result revealed that all the scales of constructs met the requirements of the number factors extracted (06 factors were extracted as per proposed research model), the cumulative extracted variance equaled to 70.204% (above 50%), eigenvalues were 7.289; 3.057; 2.180; 1.598; 1.477; and 1.249 (more than 1). The loading factors were very high (the highest was TRUS02 = 0.867 and the lowest was MOTI02 = 0.606) (see Table 2). Therefore, six constructs in the research model with 24 items were extracted to meet the requirement of convergent validity and discriminant validity (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). After EFA analysis, the research continued to test the reliability of construct scales by Cronbach alpha. The results asserted that the Cronbach alpha of six constructs was higher than 0.70 (the lowest was 0.798 and the highest was 0.917), total-item correlations were above 0.30. Thus, the reliability of constructs was obtained (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 2

EFA and Cronbach's Alpha results

No	Items	Constructs					
		1 Consumers' trust	2 Purchasing intention	3 Utilitarian motivation	4 E-WOM	5 Consumer' attitude	6 Hedonic motivation
1	TRUS02	0,867					
2	TRUS03	0,863					
3	TRUS01	0,859					
4	TRUS04	0,811					
5	INTE04		0,824				
6	INTE02		0,822				
7	INTE05		0,727				

No	Items	Constructs					
		1 Consumers' trust	2 Purchasing intention	3 Utilitarian motivation	4 E-WOM	5 Consumer' attitude	6 Hedonic motivation
8	INTE03		0,706				
9	INTE01		0,639				
10	MOTI03			0,781			
11	MOTI05			0,764			
12	MOTI04			0,756			
13	MOTI01			0,634			
14	MOTI02			0,606			
15	EWOM03				0,787		
16	EWOM02				0,755		
17	EWOM04				0,711		
18	EWOM05				0,685		
19	ATTI02					0,811	
20	ATTI01					0,810	
21	ATTI03					0,795	
22	MOTI07						0,813
23	MOTI08						0,808
24	MOTI06						0,794
Cronbach Alpha		0,917	0,798	0,838	0,800	0,844	0,849

Source: Data analysis result of the research

4.2. CFA analysis for full measurement model

Six first-order constructs including utilitarian motivation, hedonic motivation, social e-WOM, consumers' trust, consumers' attitude and purchasing intention on goods/service on SNSs were evaluated in full measurement model by confirmed factor analysis (CFA) with 137 degrees of freedom.

Unidimensionality: To improve the good fit for the model, some items with very high Modification Index were deleted one by one (MOTI01, MOTI03, EWOM05, TRUS02, and INTE01). The unidimensionality was then satisfied and CFA results proved the good fit model with: Chi-square $\chi^2/df = 532.366$; $d/f = 137$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000$; $CMIN/df = 3.886$ (within 2 to 5); $GFI = 0.902$; $TLI = 0.915$; $CFI = 0.915$ (above 0.9); $RMSEA = 0.075$ (below 0.08).

Convergent validity was acceptable when both loading factors (standardized estimate) and AVE were greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010). The analysis results showed that all the loading factors were higher than 0.50 (Lowest: MOTI02 = 0.55 and highest: TRUS03 = 0.92) and significant the level of 0.50. Therefore, all constructs obtained convergent validity (see Figure 2).

Composite reliability and variance extracted: Applying the formula calculating composite reliability ρ_c (Jöreskog, 1971, p. 111) and variance extracted ρ_{vc} (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) the results were showed in Table 3. Six constructs met the requirement of Composite reliability of greater than 0.7 and variance extracted greater than 0.5 (50%) (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 2010).

Table 3

Composite reliability and variance extracted

Constructs	Composite reliability (ρ_c)	Average Variance Extracted (ρ_{vc})
Utilitarian motivation	0.768	0.531
Hedonic motivation	0.856	0.668
Social e-WOM	0.772	0.536
Trust on SNSs	0.774	0.534
Attitude on SNSs	0.845	0.696
Purchasing intention on SNSs	0.824	0.541

Source: Data analysis result of the research

Discriminant validity: The model has discriminant validity when the correlation between two constructs is less than 1 ($r < 1$) or both AVEs of two constructs are higher than the square correlation between two constructs (Steenkamp & Van Trijp, 1991). Table 4 indicated that all AVEs were higher than the square correlation, the discriminant validity was established.

Table 4

Correlation matrix and AVE statistics

Constructs	AVE	UMOT	HMOT	EWOM	TRUST	ATTI	INTEN
Utilitarian motivation	0.531						
Hedonic motivation	0.668	0.306					
Social e-WOM	0.536	0.181	0.298				

Constructs	AVE	UMOT	HMOT	EWOM	TRUST	ATTI	INTEN
Consumers' trust	0.534	0.072	0.123	0.081			
Consumers' attitude	0.696	0.094	0.128	0.091	0.227		
Purchasing intention	0.541	0.098	0.075	0.068	0.171	0.203	

Source: Data analysis result of the research

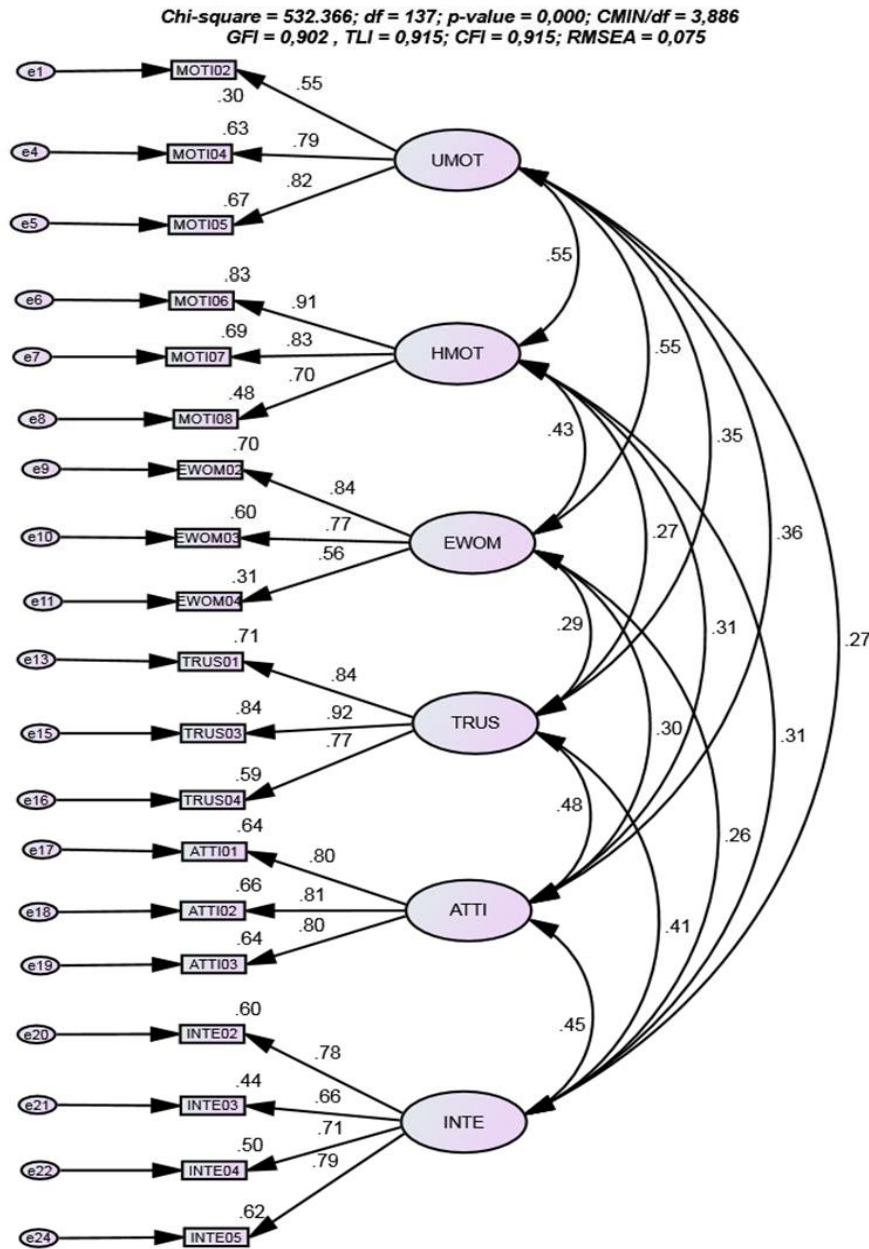


Figure 2. CFA result for full measurement model (Standardized estimate)

4.3. Hypotheses testing by SEM

The paper used a structural equation modeling (SEM) technique to test seven proposed hypotheses. The SEM results showed that the model achieved a good fit: Chi-square = 577.236; df = 144; p-value = 0.000; CMIN/df = 4.009; GFI = 0.894; TLI = 0.907; CFI = 0.907; RMSEA = 0.077 (see Figure 3). Estimated results in Table 5 indicated that seven hypotheses were statistically significant and supported with p-value < 0.05.

Chi-square = 577.236; df = 144; Probability level = .000, CMIN/DF = 4.009
GFI = 0.894; CFI = 0.907; TLI = 0.907; RMSEA = 0.077

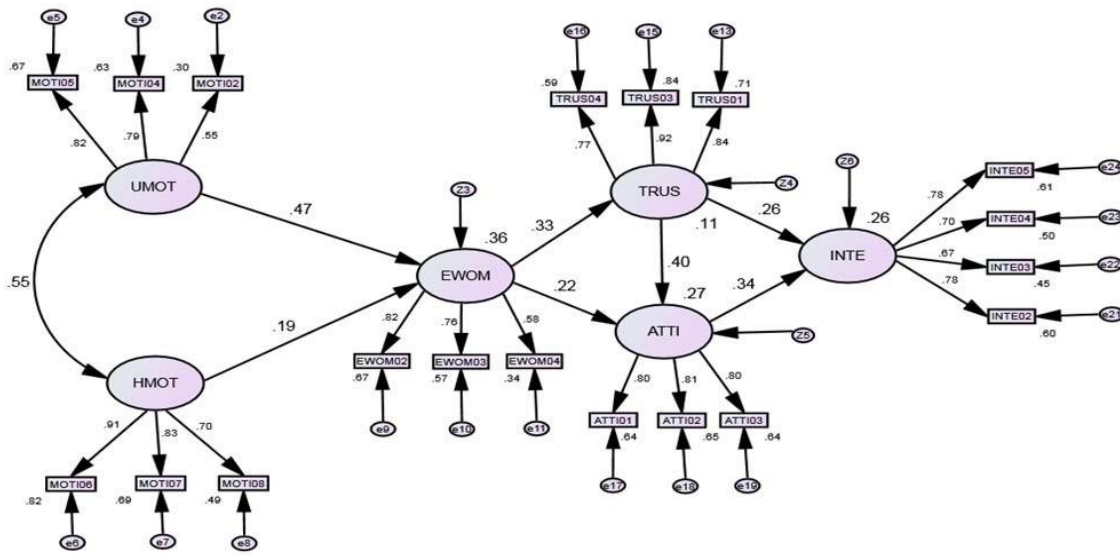


Figure 3. SEM analysis result (standardized)

Table 5

Results of hypotheses testing

Relationships	Est.	S. E	CR	P	Hypotheses
Social e-WOM \leftarrow Utilitarian motivation	0.366	0.056	6.539	***	H1a: Supported
Social e-WOM \leftarrow Hedonic motivation	0.185	0.059	3.155	.002	H1b: Supported
Consumers' trust \leftarrow Social e-WOM	0.447	0.075	5.940	***	H2: Supported
Consumers' attitude \leftarrow Social e-WOM	0.238	0.059	4.065	***	H3: Supported
Consumers' attitude \leftarrow Consumers' trust	0.326	0.043	7.632	***	H4: Supported
Buying intention \leftarrow Consumers' trust	0.245	0.053	4.582	***	H5: Supported
Buying intention \leftarrow Consumers' attitude	0.397	0.069	5.737	***	H6: Supported

Source: Data analysis result of the research

Furthermore, this research also conducted the durability and reliability of standardized estimates in the research model by bootstrapping with the repeated sample N = 1000. The results

stated that the bias existed but not so high and acceptable (from -0.003 to 0.001) and the CR less than 1.96. Thus, it could be concluded that the estimates were reliable.

5. Conclusion and managerial implications

The study has achieved two research objectives: (1) Investigating the impact of motivations of using social media on social e-WOM and (2) Examining the relationships among social e-WOM, trust, attitude and purchasing intention toward brands of goods/service on SNSs. The research model with 7 hypotheses on the relationships among constructs was tested and supported.

The primary purpose of social media marketing is to motivate consumers to buy products. One possible way to assess the effectiveness of social media marketing is the evaluation of consumers' purchasing decisions. The research results contribute a theoretical implication about the role of social media on consumers' purchasing decision-making process. Particularly, the motivations of using social media appear at the first stage of need recognition, social e-WOM often presents in the stage of information searching, consumers' trust and attitude toward a brand are at the evaluation step, and purchasing intention reflects purchasing action stage.

Based on the research findings, some practical implications are suggested for marketing managers as follows:

Implementing "Social care" for consumers in creating positive e-WOM for customer-brand relationship improvement: In the management point of view, firms should establish lively fan pages with attractive appearance and diversity content to motivate consumers (utilitarian and hedonic) to visit and get engagement with their product brands. Marketing practitioners are able to study consumers' comments on the public to comprehend consumers' insight.

Currently, Facebook, Youtube, Zalo and Viber are the most popular SNSs in Vietnam (We Are Social, 2017). Firms should use these platforms to conduct some promotion strategies such as online events, games, gold promotion, and so on to encourage consumers to participate, comment, and purchase. Marketers should focus on "social care" to resolve all questions to better support customers and create naturally positive e-WOM.

Social network sites are *double-edged sword* platforms as they haven't provided positive words at all times. Thus, when firms let their social platforms public and open, they should control information effectively as well as enhance brand engagement. It means they should take daily care of the form and content of fan pages to maintain and attract more visitors. Particularly, the advertisements in SNSs must be creative and entertaining.

To push sales volume, firms should focus on a timely response to any customer requests since these requests can help firms improve product quality, develop more new marketing tools, and ensure excellent customer service. When the customers are satisfied with offered products/services, they will share a positive experience with others via social e-WOM. Due to the extremely high speed of information spreading, social network sites are considered as a very important tool to maintain and motivate the existing customers as well as to attract more new

customers. Furthermore, marketing managers should be aware of the strong power of negative words from unsatisfactory customers to avoid spoiling a firm's reputation. Therefore, firms need to have quick actions towards unhappy customers and make efforts to turn them into loyal customers with sellers' goodwill and conscientious service.

Building consumers' trust toward the brands of goods/service leading positive attitude and purchasing willingness: The research results indicated that firm reputation would create consumers' trust toward their brands. In reality, the consumers are still worried about the risks of inexact information, dishonest comments or irresponsible sellers. As a result, they usually believe more in the WOM from their friends or family than those from strangers on SNSs. Therefore, firms can also use KOLs (Key Opinion Leader) to enhance consumers' trust or link their official websites to SNSs for visitors to evaluate authentically the goods/service. Accordingly, consumers can form a positive attitude and be willing to purchase.

Limitations and further research

This research, however, still has some limitations and thus, has the following directions to future research.

Firstly, the research only refers to general goods/service but the goods/service with high involvement or low involvement will direct to different consuming behaviors. Particularly, for low involvement-products, the purchasing process can be shorter and the participation of consumers in e-WOM can be lower. For intangible products such as tourism or cuisine, producing and consuming process may happen at the same time, this way, consumers can share their experience and emotion via SNSs. Therefore, the impact of social media on intangible products may be greater than tangible products. Future research should separate two types of products to get more specific findings.

Secondly, the research takes into account the impact of social media through e-WOM on the consumers' trust, attitude and leading purchasing intention toward goods/service but not actual purchasing behavior. Empirical future studies should include actual buying behaviors and post-sales behaviors so that the managers can justify accurately the impact of social media on actual sales volume to adjust their social media strategies accordingly.

Thirdly, the research context is mutual SNSs. However, different SNSs (e.g., Youtube versus Facebook) can have different features and the research on a specific SNS will be an interesting topic in the future.

Lastly, the research sampling was conducted by using the convenience method in which students account for nearly 50% and the representative for the total population is limited. Future research should overcome this limitation by quota sampling with an increasing number of the office staff.

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