

E-WOM Receivers' Envy and its Consequences

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ABSTRACT

Recently it has been found that SNS (social networking sites) browsing decreases happiness due to the emotion of envy. Regarding the issue, some researchers emphasized that WOM receivers felt benignly envious and had higher WTP (willingness-to-pay) for the product when they were exposed to video messages in which a person told that he had had great effort to earn money and purchase the attractive product. In contrast, WOM (word-of-mouth) receivers feel maliciously envious and had higher WTP for other products when they were exposed to video messages in which an individual told that he had had no effort to earn money and purchase the attractive product.

The findings are valuable in terms of suggesting that positive WOM messages may have negative impacts on WOM receivers' WTP via the emotion of envy. However, there remains a serious problem—the authors have conducted their experiments using video messages sent by unknown others, which are different from e-WOM messages sent through SNS in terms of three aspects: (1) while video messages in the previous studies were of unknown persons, e-WOM messages are sometimes of “friends”. (2) While video message givers were always buyers of the product, e-WOM givers are sometime providers of the product who have permission to send the messages of buyers. And, (3) while video message receivers in the previous studies had no choice other than avoiding to purchase the envy-eliciting product, e-WOM receivers are able to choose not only avoid the product, but also other malicious behavior such as posing a negative comment and not pressing the “like it” bottom.

Thus, in this study, we conducted three empirical studies assuming e-WOM through SNS. The results of empirical test showed that: (1) e-WOM receivers were less likely to feel maliciously envious to friends and, in turn, to have higher WTP for other products rather than the recommended products; (2) e-WOM receivers messages were less likely to feel maliciously envious if they are exposed to marketing messages than personal messages; and (3) e-WOM receivers were less likely to avoid the recommended products even if they feel maliciously envious.

