

Summary

Antecedents of WOM: Product Appraisal and Brand Relationship as Drivers of Customer Referral Dimensions

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Word of Mouth (WOM) is typically investigated as an exogeneous variable influencing consumers' future product purchases. Whereas drivers of positive and negative WOM are well investigated, antecedents of different types of positive WOM are hardly differentiated. This research investigates the multifaceted nature of consumers' product and brand encounters as antecedents of distinct WOM referral dimensions. A large-scale cross-sectional survey connects WOM incidents with consumers' a-priori product and brand interactions. Seemingly unrelated regressions are applied to disentangle the effects of product appraisal and brand relationship on different dimensions of customer referral. Whereas product appraisals evoke functional referral, brand relationships particularly foster prescriptive and emotional WOM. Researchers are thus encouraged to inspect ex ante experiences with products and brands to better explain and predict consumers' WOM behavior. Practitioners can use the derived insights to proactively steer desirable forms of WOM by designing supportive consumer experiences.