

Influence of Negative eWOM on Switching Intention

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Abstract

Despite discussions on strong and growing influence of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on consumer decisions, there is insufficient effort to validate negative eWOM as a key source of causal data towards mobile consumer switching behaviour. Studies have indicated strong negative eWOM leads to high degree of influence on switching behaviour (Zhang et al., 2015). However, these studies are based on consumers' survey response on how the negative eWOM impacts their decisions with emphasis on the strength and valence of the negative eWOM. Limited studies explore the contents of negative eWOM itself and how the choice of words is reflective of consumer elements or contexts which are meaningful towards understanding the causality between negative eWOM and switching behaviour (Martins et al., 2013; Qahri et al., 2015). The content of the negative eWOM sheds light on consumer elements related to mobile consumer switching behaviour, described as issues and situations.

This study identifies and validates the causality of key consumer elements highlighted in the negative eWOM in association with mobile consumer switching phenomenon.

Keywords: Word-of-mouth, Electronic word-of- mouth, Ewom, Switching, Mobile

1. Introduction

Negative eWOM has strong impact on consumers' attitude towards a brand which in turn, influences brand switching behaviour, lowering consumer loyalty (Jalonen et al., 2016). This is attributed to the fact that negative eWOM are known to go viral thus, lead to greater influence on switching (Xiaoping, 2010). The degree of strength and negativity of the information in a negative eWOM has the ability to affect the cognition, reliability, and trust of consumers especially in industries such as telecommunications where consumers are known to adopt eWOM information for their mobile services and products purchase, consumption and switching decisions (Chowdhury, 2016; Sharifpour et al., 2016). The more useful and credible is the source of the negative eWOM, the higher is the adoption rate of the eWOM. Other studies of eWOM in telecommunication studies include the effect of negative eWOM on consumer switching. and consumption of a product or service from one brand to another. Consumers are increasingly placing high importance on eWOM in their evaluation of mobile phone purchases (Meuter et al, 2013). Studies indicate negative eWOM has varying influence on mobile consumer switching intentions. This is attributed to consumer's attitude towards negative eWOM primarily driven by their prior knowledge or experience (Gvili and Levy, 2016; Zainal et al., 2017). According to tripartite theory of attitudes, attitudinal responses towards an object is shown in the form of affective, cognitive, and behavioural responses (Shih and Chuang, 2016). Most studies emphasize only cognitive and affective attitudes towards negative eWOM in a single-dimensional scale. Single-dimensional scales provides for an overall "attitude" towards the negative eWOM thus, it is of limited view and does not clearly distinct between the three (3) key components of attitude of cognition, affection and behaviour (Wu and Wang, 2011; Beneke et al., 2015).

In this study, both affective and behavioural attitude towards negative eWOM are considered as important constructs to evaluate consumer's switching intentions. Consumer's behavioural attitude toward negative eWOM is able to account for large variation that arises in how the negative eWOM affects the consumer's switching intentions (Low and Lamb, 2000). This includes identifying the presence of switching intentions in the negative eWOM to support the study on the role of negative eWOM in mobile consumer switching. The research employed mixed-methods approach for its data collection. However, for the purpose of this paper, only quantitative study and its findings will be discussed.

2. Background Research

In Malaysian telecommunications industry, market competitiveness is stiff due to high market saturation where mobile penetration is more than 100% and the exit barrier being low with the implementation of Mobile Number Portability (MNP, 2018). MNP allows mobile consumers to switch service providers while retaining their existing mobile number. This market and regulatory situation is highly conducive for consumer to switch their mobile service operator with little switching cost. Analyzing eWOM provides a competitive edge in consumer understanding and supports proactive retention of subscriber base. Consumer switching denotes consumer's behaviour to terminate their current relationship with their

service provider and move on to a new service provider (Keaveney, 1995; Bansal et al. 2005; Pae and Hyun 2006). Voluntary consumer switching is synonymous to consumer switching to another mobile service provider either by cancellation of service through termination or mobile number portability (MNP). Previous studies state voluntary consumer switching behaviour is highly dependent on critical service encounters, price, economic, technological factors and switching costs, relevant products or better competitor products or services (Ahmed et al., 2015). However, there is limited consideration of the influence of negative eWOM on switching in the literature. Most studies on switching deliberate on the switching costs, price, network as key factors of switching (Quoquab et al., 2016; Calvo et al., 2015) but, many consumer switching is not only due to these reasons. There are many consumers who still switched despite satisfying experience of price, network, service and high switching cost.

3. Literature Review

Consumer switching is one of the main concerns of telecommunication service providers (Nikbin et al., 2012) as the negative effect of switching is reduction in market share as well as bottom-line profitability and service. At a stimulus of perceived negativity of eWOM on a brand coupled with a silent dissatisfaction, consumers may respond by switching or develop switching intentions (Zhang, et al, 2015). The strength of negative eWOM determines the frequency with which the reader encounters negative information. This encounter affects readers' cognition and evaluation of information and the possibility of their brand switching orientation. As mobile consumers are increasingly seeking eWOM for their mobile service needs, a negative eWOM is likely to attract more attention to a positive eWOM. In the literature of negative eWOM and mobile consumer switching phenomenon, studies have associated negative eWOM strength and valence to mobile consumer switching intention but, unable to affirm the existence of causal relationship between negative eWOM and switching (Chiosa et al., 2017). This is largely due to the fact that strength and valence of a negative eWOM is insufficient to determine the significance of the impact of negative eWOM on switching. Studies indicate negative eWOM has varying influence on mobile consumer switching intentions. This is attributed to factors of consumer's attitude towards negative eWOM primarily driven by consumer's prior knowledge or experience (Gvili and Levy, 2016; Zainal et al., 2017). According to tripartite theory of attitudes, attitudinal responses towards an object is shown in the form of affective, cognitive, and behavioural responses (Shih and Chuang, 2016). Comments and replies to the negative eWOM by fellow consumers will indicate if the behavioural and affective attitude towards the negative eWOM is positive or negative. Consumer's view of the negative eWOM affects their attitude towards the product or service highlighted in the negative eWOM (Shang et al., 2006). Affect towards negative eWOM is a measure of the likelihood a negative eWOM creates a positive or negative emotional reaction for fellow consumers who reads or encounters it. Positive emotions towards negative eWOM increases the level of influence negative eWOM has on switching intentions.

3.1 Consumer Behaviour towards Negative eWOM

Consumer behaviour towards the negative eWOM is associated with a degree of favour or disfavour and has influence on behavioural intentions (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). Degree of favour and disfavour towards the negative eWOM can be empirically measured with the elements of approach and avoidance behaviours towards the negative eWOM where positive evaluation is associated with approach behaviour, whereas negative evaluations are related to avoidance (Kaldewaij et al., 2016; Foxall and Wells, 2012). The concept of approach-avoidance is one of the conceptualizations of psychological coping. Psychological coping is a form of subtle defence people adopt to manage unpleasant and taxing situations which exceed the capacity of the individual. Psychological coping is complex because it can be either problem or emotion oriented, cognitive and behavioural or a motivational issue in the form of approach-avoidance (Sengupta et al., 2015). The behavioural measures of approach-avoidance dimensions include relating to others, staying in or escaping from the setting, the desire to explore and work in a situation and spending time there, desire to consume or spend more money in a setting (Mehrabian, 1996; Moreno et al., 2015).

3.2 Consumer Affect towards Negative eWOM

Affect towards negative eWOM has influence on switching intentions and significantly contributes to the overall assessment of consumer attitude towards the negative eWOM (Wu and Wang, 2011). Positive emotions towards negative eWOM increases the level of influence negative eWOM has on switching intentions. The higher is the pleasure consumer perceives to be gained, higher is the positive emotion triggered by the negative eWOM (Akturan, 2017). Switching intent increases when consumers have a positive attitude towards a negative eWOM (Pourabedin et al., 2016). Affect towards negative eWOM influences the level of word of mouth towards the product or service. The three (3) emotional dimensions which encapsulates affect towards an object or situation sufficiently are pleasure, arousal and dominance which describe individual's perception of their surrounding environments. Pleasure states whether the individual perceives the environment as enjoyable or not, while arousal reflects the extent to which the environment stimulates the individual (Hall et al., 2017). Dominance captures whether the individual feels in control or not in the environment. The measures of these three (3) emotional dimensions are factorially orthogonal and are independent from each other so that any level of dimensions can be accompanied by any level of the other two dimensions (Foxall and Soriano, 2011).

3.3 Consumer Situation (CS)

Consumer situations (CS) are circumstances related to the physical and social surroundings, task orientation, temporal perspective or antecedents of the consumer (Collier et al., 2015). Studies argue that individual constructs that influence behaviour is expected to either change or be consistent across situations (Mallat et al., 2006; Chocarro et al., 2013). This led to many studies examining the influence of situations in the contexts of retail environment, product choice, media choice, service moments and shopping patterns (Verhoef et al., 2015; Grace et

al., 2015). In each of these consumer context, situational factors had a significant influence on consumer actions, intentions and evaluations. In mobile switching phenomenon, consumers are likely to make switching decisions that decreases their temporal, psychological or economic cost of mobile consumption. Situational factors have the potential to increase or decrease these costs, therefore altering one's attitude toward switching. Considering situational factors lead to more holistic framework of predicting mobile switching than other non-situational factors alone. There are limited studies that address the impact situational factors have on mobile switching intentions (Aydin and Özer, 2005; Premkumar and Rajan, 2017). Interaction between behaviour setting with the consumer's accumulated previous experience define consumer situation. There are eight (8) consumer situations which are identified from the combinations of consumer reinforcements and settings i.e status consumption (CS1), fulfilment (CS2), inescapable entertainment (CS4), popular entertainment (CS3), token-based consumption (CS6), saving and collecting (CS5), mandatory consumption (CS8) and routine/regular purchases (CS7).

4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework diagram supports the hypothesis testing of the relationship between affect, behaviour and switching intention.

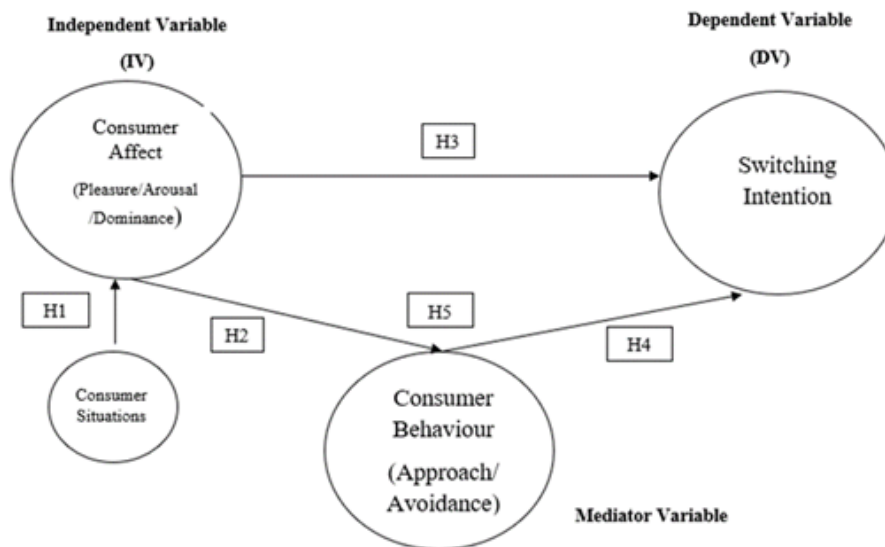


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Diagram

4.1 Consumer Affect towards the Negative eWOM Across Consumer Situations

Three (3) emotions i.e. pleasure-arousal-dominance (PAD) are core human emotional responses to any environmental stimuli. Pleasure was measured by verbal assessments of reaction towards the negative eWOM (e.g. happy - unhappy, pleased - annoyed, satisfied - dissatisfied, contented - gloomy, hopeful - pessimistic, and relaxed - bored). Arousal was verbally assessed as the extent to which respondent report feeling stimulated as opposed to relaxed, excited as opposed to calm, anxious as opposed to slow, tense as opposed to dull,

wide awake as opposed to sleepy, and aroused as opposed to calm in response to the negative eWOM. Dominant refers to the openness of the behaviour setting where the approach-avoidance is displayed given a negative eWOM (e.g. controlling-controlled, in control- cared for, influenced-influential, obedient-dominant, admirable-important, freedom-constrained) (Foxall, 2016; Emir et al., 2016).

H1: Consumer affect is significantly different across consumer situations in the negative eWOM

H1.1: Pleasure is significantly different across consumer situations in the negative eWOM

H1.2: Arousal is significantly different across consumer situations in the negative eWOM

H1.3: Dominance is significantly different across consumer situations in the negative eWOM

4.2 Consumer Affect and Consumer Behaviour towards the Negative eWOM Across Consumer Situations

Pleasure-arousal-dominance (PAD) facilitates consumer towards staying on or leaving a setting, affiliate with others in the setting, willing to consume more or less (Foxall and Yani, 2005). These emotions (pleasure, arousal and dominance) impact behavioural responses in the form of approach and avoidance (Bakker et al., 2014). Approach-avoidance is a concept of psychological coping used by individuals as a defence mechanism to manage unpleasant or negative situations. The behavioural measures of approach-avoidance dimensions include relating to others, staying in or escaping from the setting, the desire to explore a situation and spending time there, desire to consume or spend more money in a setting (Moreno et al., 2015).

H2: Consumer affect is significantly related to consumer behaviour to the negative eWOM across consumer situations

H2.1: Consumer affect is significantly related to consumer approach towards the negative eWOM

H2.2: Consumer affect is significantly related to consumer avoidance to the negative eWOM

4.3 Consumer Affect towards Negative eWOM and Switching Intentions

Consumers' unpleasant, negative or arousing emotions are likely to affect consumer's behaviour (Demirbag et al., 2015). The unpleasantness is likely to occur at three levels: (i) product level, where the consumers are dissatisfied with some characteristics of the product, (ii) user level, where the consumers associate the brand with an unfavourable stereotype and (iii) corporate level, where the consumers perceive the company as engaging in immoral and/or unfair behaviour (Dalli et al., 2012). Stimuli such as a negative eWOM could trigger a wave of strong emotions due to any of the three levels described above, thus, it is expected to have an impact on switching intention.

H3: Consumer affect is significantly related to switching intention.

4.4 Consumer Behaviour towards the Negative eWOM and Switching Intention

The more negative is the eWOM, the more it influences consumer behaviour as negative comments are perceived as objective and more trustworthy thus, more persuasive than positive eWOM (Pedersen et al., 2014). Brand related eWOM evoke affective, emotional and cognitive response in terms of brand awareness/ association; loyalty; perceived quality and brand attitude within consumers, and these internal states have strong influence on the consumer's responses in terms of intentions (Kim and Johnson 2016). In the event of a negative eWOM, mobile consumer may decide to either approach or avoid the negative eWOM and its related discussion balanced by their own emotional threshold, knowledge and experience of the product/service (Chiu et al., 2017).

H4: Consumer behaviour to the negative eWOM is significantly related to switching intention

4.5 Consumer Behaviour towards the Negative eWOM has a Mediating Effect on the Relationship between Consumer Affect towards Negative eWOM and Switching Intention

Research shows that negative word-of-mouth can have an even greater influence and impact consumer attitude and behaviour than a positive word-of-mouth (Fine and Petrescu, 2017). Consumers who take into consideration brand and product information from other consumers could be more inclined to pay attention to negative reviews and comments than positive ones (Robson et al., 2013). However, a consumer's behaviour towards the negative eWOM may differ to either approach or he/she may avoid it based on his/her individualistic level of satisfactions and perceptions (Wien and Olsen, 2014).

H5: Consumer behaviour has a significant mediating effect on the relationship between affect and switching intention

5. Research Methodology

This quantitative research leveraged on electronic survey (e-survey) method (Kozinets, 2016) to collect Malaysian mobile consumers response towards a viral, negative eWOM on mobile product or service and its related discussion thread in a telco discussion board in a local, popular online community forum. The consumer post which is cited as the negative eWOM in this study is titled 'Maxis giving unfair treatment to customers, Bye Maxis' dated 10th March 2016 and was viewed 601, 603 times and had 5,217 posts in its discussion thread in Telco Talk discussion board in online community forum, Lowyat.net between the period 10th March 2016 to January 2017. The unit of analysis for the quantitative study are respondents who are mobile consumers from three (3) groups i.e. postgraduates, alumni groups from University Malaya (UM) and University Putra Malaysia (UPM) and members of Lowyat.net. Only respondents who have completed and submitted the questionnaire successfully have been included into the study. Out of the 3,605 potential respondents, only 585 responses were collected online.

Data analysis involved both exploratory and inferential statistical techniques for each hypothesis outlined above using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software

version 24. Factor analysis was utilized to explore single dimensionality of the scales and is often associated with efforts to reduce large number of variables to a few factors based on the correlations of the underlying dimensions (Hair et al., 1998). Foxall (2013) used exploratory factor analysis to analyze the relationship between the affective and the behavioural variables. For the dependent variables, sources of variances were analyzed from pleasure, dominance and arousal as three-way interactions among these independent variables, 2) sources of variances were analyzed as main effects from approach and avoidance.

6. Findings

In this section, we explain findings from the data collected and analyzed. The respondents mainly comprise of Malaysian mobile consumers who are likely to be between 35-44 years old followed by 18-24-year-old. This is attributable since most survey respondents are probably either working in organizations or studying in tertiary educational institutions in Klang Valley i.e Selangor and Wilayah Persekutuan. They are college educated and are most likely to be Internet savvy consumers and are aware and updated on current developments in the Malaysian consumer scenes by following community forums such as Lowyat.net. Due to widespread of respondents from Klang Valley, there is equal distribution across all the three (3) main ethnicities in Malaysia i.e Malay, Chinese and Indian.

6.1 Factor Analysis

Towards evaluating the unidimensionality of the affective constructs, factor analysis was performed to determine the number of dimensions. Factor analysis produced three components with eigenvalues greater than 1, which explains 60% of total variance. In the varimax rotation, the constructs converged after 7 iterations and displayed underlying dimensions of pleasure (factor 1), arousal (factor 2) and dominance (factor 3). The factor loading for all the constructs on its' relevant dimensions are high i.e. above 0.600.

Similar to affective measures, the behavioural elements of three (3) approach items and three (3) avoidance items indicated two (2) underlying elements each with eigenvalues above 1 which account for 62% of the variance. As for the behavioural constructs on switching intentions, regret and switching intention produced a single component with an eigenvalue greater than 1, which accounts for 62% of the variance.

6.2 Correlation Analysis

In correlation analysis, all three affective dimensions correlated positively with approach and correlated negatively with the avoidance construct at significance level of 0.001. All correlations between the affective and behavioural variables were in the 0.400 to 0.600 range.

6.3 Regression Analysis

Multivariate regression analyzes were performed to test the relationship between the affective and behavioural constructs as shown in Table 1 below. All the five (5) models show high significance in relation to its dependent and independent variables.

Table 1. Multivariate Regression Analysis

Model	Dependent Variable	Predictors	Adjusted R-square	Standardized Coefficient	F Stats	Significance Value	T	VIF			
1	Approach		0.532		126.006	0.001		1.397			
		Pleasure		0.483					0.001	10.374	1.190
		Arousal		0.217					0.001	11.621	1.487
2	Avoidance	Dominance	0.559	0.096	104.851	0.001					
		Pleasure		-0.429					0.001	14.705	1.021
		Arousal		-0.269					0.001	10.712	1.133
3	Behaviour	Dominance	0.762	-0.192	98.221	0.001					
		Approach		0.433					0.001	10.521	1.083
		Avoidance		-0.451					0.001	10.442	1.191
4	Affect		0.688		104.213	0.001					
		Pleasure		0.824					0.001	11.733	1.412
		Arousal		0.225					0.001	11.654	1.365
5	Switching Intentions	Dominance	0.623	0.113	124.532	0.001					
		Affect		-0.615					0.001	11.661	1.033
		Behaviour		0.623					0.001	10.786	1.005

For the first regression model based on Approach, collectively pleasure, arousal and dominance account for 52.30% of the variation in Approach. Pleasure had the most influence in the prediction of Approach with a standardized coefficient of 0.483.

The second regression model where Avoidance is the dependent variable while the affective variables are the independent variables, the model is significant ($F=104.851$, $p=0.001$) and the affective constructs are able to account for 55.9% of the variation in the dependent variable.

The third model tests the strength of the combination of approach and avoidance as Behaviour. The model is significant ($F=98.221$, $p=0.001$) and both approach and avoidance constructs are able to account for 76.2% of the variation in behaviour towards negative eWOM.

The fourth model tests the strength of the combination of pleasure, arousal and dominance as Affect. The model is significant ($F=104.213$, $p=0.001$) and all three (3) pleasure, arousal and dominance constructs are able to account for 68.8% of the variation in Affect. All three (3) constructs have good contribution to the composite measure Affect with standardized coefficient of 0.824, 0.225 and 0.113 respectively.

As both consumer affect and attitude towards the negative eWOM is relevant to switching intention, attitude towards the negative eWOM is tested as a mediating variable in this final fifth (5) model, consistent with eWOM studies where consumer's attitude to the eWOM is an antecedent of a behavioural intention (Wang et al., 2015). The model results were significant ($F=124.532$, $p=0.001$).

6.4 ANOVA Analysis

ANOVA analysis shows that there are significant differences ($p \leq 0.001$) between the mean values of pleasure, arousal, dominance, approach, avoidance for each consumer situation.

This result is consistent with the BPM-Mehrabian model-based consumer studies however, post hoc analysis is required to appreciate between which consumer situation is the mean difference largest and smallest for each affective and behavioural construct. The model concluded that switching intention is significantly different for each consumer situation. Table 2 below provides the ANOVA results which displays the means and standard deviations of the affective and behavioural constructs for each consumer situation. Means of the affective constructs (pleasure-arousal-dominance) and behavioural constructs is significantly different across all the eight (8) consumer situations and is consistent with other BPM studies i.e. pleasure $F=70.606.12$, $p < 0.01$, arousal $F=81.749$, $p < 0.01$, dominance $F=103.320$, $p < 0.01$, approach $F=101.550$, $p < 0.01$ and switching intentions $F=19.234$, $p < 0.01$.

6.5 Summary

A summary of the results of the hypothesis testing is shown below.

No	Research Hypothesis	Analysis	Result	Conclusion
1	H1: Consumer affect is significantly different across consumer situations in the negative eWOM	One-Way ANOVA	$F=81.811$ $P=0.001$	Supported
1.1	H1.1: Pleasure is significantly different across consumer situations in the negative eWOM	One-Way ANOVA	$F=70.606$, $P=0.001$	Supported
1.2	H1.2: Arousal is significantly different across consumer situations in the negative eWOM	One-Way ANOVA	$F=81.749$, $P=0.001$	Supported
1.3	H1.3: Dominance is significantly different across consumer situations in the negative eWOM	One-Way ANOVA	$F=103.32$, $P=0.001$	Supported
2	H2: Consumer affect is significantly related to consumer behaviour to the negative eWOM	Correlation	Pearson's $Corr=0.793$ $P=0.001$	Supported
2.1	H2.1: Consumer affect is significantly related to consumer approach towards the negative eWOM	Regression	$F=126.006$, $P=0.001$	Supported
2.2	H2.2: Consumer affect is significantly related to consumer avoidance to the negative eWOM	Regression	$F=104.851$, $P=0.001$	Supported
3	H3: Consumer affect is significantly related to switching intention	Regression	$F=102.067$, $P=0.001$	Supported
4	H4: Consumer behaviour to the negative eWOM is significantly related to switching intention	Regression	$F=132.019$, $P=0.001$	Supported
5	H5: Consumer behaviour to the negative eWOM has a significant mediating effect on the relationship between affect and switching intention	Regression	$F=124.532$, $P=0.001$	Supported

7. Discussion

This study has empirically proven that consumer affects i.e. pleasure, arousal and dominance (PAD) from the contents of negative eWOM influences Malaysian mobile consumer behaviour towards the negative eWOM i.e. to approach or avoid the negative eWOM which

forms the basis of consumer motivation. Mehrabian and Russell's scales for measuring affect was utilized without any forms of modification where the contents of the negative eWOM was rated on the sub-items of pleasure, arousal and dominance while approach and avoidance behaviours towards the negative eWOM was measured using six (6) of Behavioural Perspective Model (BPM) behavioural measures involving three (3) items for approach and three (3) items for Avoidance. The lower is the element of pleasure in the relevance and information presented in the negative eWOM, the higher is the avoidance or disagreement with the negative eWOM. Further, this relationship was found to be true across all consumer situations indicating consumer's approach and avoidance to the negative eWOM is driven by their own priorities and bias in mobile consumption. Moon et al (2017) supported this finding and elaborated further by stating as negative eWOM are generally from dissatisfied consumers acceptance, of an information such as a negative eWOM is dependent on the the reader's level of susceptibility to informational influence. Davis et al (2015) also supported this by extending the possibility of highly negative eWOM being a bullying approach undertaken by highly dissatisfied consumers and may be disagreed and criticized by other consumers.

BPM-MR structure and the relationship among its affective and behavioural constructs provide clear associations of how affective and behavioural elements of the negative eWOM is important in the consumer switching framework. The framework provided for the exploration of clear pre-switching and post-switching elements that was applied to determine key indicators of switching basis. Alshurideh (2016) confirmed the usefulness and highly relevant affective and behavioural constructs from the framework towards studying mobile consumer retention. Flanagan and Metzger (2000) also supported the notion that past eWOM studies have only emphasized on the frequency and valence of eWOM as positive and negative and have attempted to weakly relate the influence of negative eWOM on switching. The higher the number of negative eWOM a consumer encounters, the higher is the impact of negative eWOM on the consumer's behaviour but, have not been able to empirically determine and explain the influence of the negative eWOM on specific behaviour. this study has added sophistication to the negative eWOM literature by empirically validating the presence and relationship between behavioural and affective constructs from the contents of negative eWOM beyond the regular elements of frequency and valence.

The relationship between affect arising from the negative eWOM and switching intention is mediated by consumer's behaviour towards the negative eWOM. These findings proved that negative eWOM has influence on switching intentions of Malaysian mobile consumers and the influence is attributed to both consumer emotions arising from the negative eWOM as well as consumer's behaviour towards the negative eWOM. Gvili et al (2016) corroborates this finding by stating behaviour of consumers to word-of-mouth (WOM) is a significant antecedent of people's response to the eWOM. The level of influence eWOM has on switching intention is dependent on both consumer's behaviour towards the eWOM (Jalonen and Jussila, 2016) as well as the affect arising from the negative eWOM. Although the emotion appeal of negative eWOM is high due to the frustration, dissatisfaction and other

negative emotions expressed by the sender, Wu and Wang (2011) support the notion that readers are likely to adopt the negative eWOM based on their individual agreement or disagreement with the negative eWOM. Thus, the impact of negative eWOM on switching cannot be generalized across all types of messages and product types (Keyzer et al., 2017).

In this study, Malaysian consumer's behavioural attitude towards negative eWOM was identified as an important construct to predict their mobile switching intentions. Low and Lamb (2000) supported this finding and stated that consumer's behavioural attitude toward negative eWOM is able to account for large variation that arises in how the negative eWOM affects the consumer's switching intentions. Based on the comments and replies to the negative eWOM by fellow Malaysian consumers, consumer's behaviour towards the negative eWOM can be determined as approach or agree or avoid as disagree. Shang (2006) confirmed that consumer's view of the negative eWOM affects their attitude towards the product or service highlighted in the negative eWOM and Beneke (2015) went to emphasize positive or negative attitudes towards the negative eWOM is a measure of influence negative eWOM has on the consumer. Consumer's attitude towards negative eWOM is measured on the basis of the difference between the extent of approach-oriented behaviours i.e. agreeable to the negative eWOM compared to avoidance-oriented behaviour i.e. disagreeable to the negative eWOM and how each influence switching intentions. This approach allows more flexibility and leads to higher accuracy in determining consumer attitude towards the negative eWOM as it considers both positive (agree) and negative (disagree) consumer bias with unique set of behaviour parameters.

This study also analyzed and proved that consumer affect arising from the negative eWOM significantly influences Malaysian mobile consumer's switching intentions. Porter (2017) supported this finding and stated in negative eWOM studies, affect is a common attitudinal response measured to determine the influence of the negative eWOM on the emotions of the receivers and Wu and Wang (2011) went to reiterate that affect is one of the three (3) attitudes towards negative eWOM that has influence on switching intentions and significantly contributes to the overall assessment of consumer attitude towards the negative eWOM. Switching intent increases when consumers have a positive attitude towards towards a negative eWOM (Pourabedin et al., 2016). Affect towards negative eWOM influences the level of word of mouth towards the product or service. However, most studies limit the discussions of affect to the valence of the eWOM i.e positive and negative eWOM. There are minimal number of studies which empirically assess the impact of a negative eWOM on consumer affect (Jeong and Koo, 2015). 73% of Malaysians are frequent mobile Internet users while only 33.4% are non-Internet users indicating Malaysian consumers are constantly exposed to information online as a rapid source of knowledge for decision making (Nasiruddin and Hashim, 2015; MCMC, 2016). With the widespread of user-generated contents such as negative eWOM, consumers regularly make choices in their approach of the eWOM based on the popularity and virality of the eWOM as an indicator of the trustworthiness of the information in the eWOM. Thus, the findings of the study have proven that consumer behaviour towards the negative eWOM mediates the relationship between

consumer affect arising from the negative eWOM to switching intentions.

Negative eWOM impacts consumer emotions by way of the affective constructs of pleasure, arousal and dominance. Consumer emotions of pleasure-arousal-dominance (PAD) in turn affect consumer approach-avoidance toward the negative eWOM and are significantly different across all the eight consumer situations. In open consumer settings, avoidance is higher than approach. It can be concluded that switching intentions is related to both affect and behaviour towards negative eWOM. Switching intention is significantly higher for open consumer settings than closed consumer settings. Further, consumer's behaviour towards the negative eWOM significantly mediates the relationship between affect and switching intention.

8. Conclusion

As there are limited number of empirical studies on how negative eWOM causes or influences mobile consumer switching, this study attempted to investigate the influence of negative eWOM from the perspective of Malaysian consumer affect and behaviour towards the negative eWOM as an influencing factor in switching. The study has made valuable contribution by proving that negative eWOM generated by a Malaysian mobile consumer and the discussion around the negative eWOM has a significant influence on Malaysian mobile consumers switching intentions.

Further, the study has provided strong evidence that Malaysian mobile consumers are aware of news and trends in the market and are capable of openly stating their frustration and benefits of switching from a mobile service provider on the basis of their situation, their past experience or knowledge, benefits to be gained or cost to be borne. They are able to express in the form of eWOM as to what is their expectations and perception of the negative eWOM and why they would agree or disagree with the negative eWOM. In addition, Malaysian consumer emotion is impacted from the negative eWOM when they are aware of preferential treatments are given to selective consumers. This is a typical response among thrifty Malaysian consumer communities who have high priorities towards saving money and collecting rewards. From the study, it was identified that consumer's affect from and behaviour towards the negative eWOM can predict Malaysian mobile consumers switching intentions regardless of any consumer situation.

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