Paper Title

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Abstract

Many researches refer that brand image and word of mouth both influence customers’ perceived quality and perceived risk, and therefore further affects their purchase intention. However, seldom researches mention the interaction between brand image and word of mouth. Besides, …

*Keywords:* Brand image, online word-of-mouth, price discount, disposition to trust, impulsive traits, purchase intention

1. Introduction

With the growing prevalence of mobile phones, almost everyone has a mobile phone in Taiwan. According to National Communications Commission (NCC), the penetration rate of mobile phones reaches 104.6% by the third quarter of 2007. In other words, every 100 Taiwanese people own an average of 104 mobile phones. The number of mobile phone users is still on the increase. Mobile phones are higher-priced products. Because a higher financial risk is involved in the purchase of mobile phones, consumers also have a higher level of involvement. For this kind of products, consumers will be engaged at a higher level in collection of extrinsic information. They use some product cues as indicators of product quality to reduce risks of purchasing the product (Monore & Krishnan, 1985). Some studies have pointed out that word of mouth and brand image are extrinsic cues for consumers.

With the advancement of the Internet technology, spread of word of mouth is no longer confined to face-to-face communication. Online word of mouth is becoming more influential to consumer behaviors. Many previous studies indicated that brand image and online word of mouth are influential to the perceived risk and perceived quality of a product, which further affect consumer’s purchase intention. However, the interactive effects between brand image and online word of mouth have seldom been explored and discussed. Thus, this study aims to investigate these two extrinsic cues and understand their effects on consumer’s purchase intention.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Brand Image

Consumers usually develop a brand belief for each brand according to the attributes of its products. Such brand belief will later become a brand image (Kotler, 2000) which consumers associate with brand names. Biel (1992) described that brand image as an association with brand name. Advertisement, packaging, corporate identity, public relations, and information provided in promotional activities can all form certain brand associations on the mind of consumers after cognitive processing. According to Dobni and Zinkhan (1990), brand image is the reasoned or emotional perception that consumers attach to specific brands. Keller (1993) defined brand image as “perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory”. This definition is adopted in this study. Brand associations refer to any idea associated with a brand, including associations with the product, brand preference, brand strength, and brand uniqueness.

2.2 Online Word of Mouth

The study aims to explore the effects of word of mouth created by a large number of online visitors on consumer’s purchase intention. Thus, online forums and message boards are selected as the main media of word of mouth. Based on the definitions of positive and negative word of mouth proposed by previous researchers, we define positive word of mouth as “positive information which is actively and proactively spread on online forums or message boards by customers having positive feedbacks on the product and service of a company.” Negative word of mouth is defined as “negative information which is actively and proactively spread on online forums or message boards by customers having negative feedbacks on the product or service of a company”.

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