

AN EFFECT OF WORD OF MOUTH IN MOBILE PURCHASE INTENTION: A CASES FROM KATHMANDU

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ABSTRACT

Word-of-mouth is the sound of new ideas reaching our ears through discussion, information sharing, radio, storytelling, etc. When people hear another story, its impact is felt in their brains. It is a free type of advertising brought by consumers' perceptions, sentiments, and ideas. The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of rapport, source similarity, source attractiveness, trust, and physical evidence on mobile phone purchasing intention. The research design was analytical for this study. The population of mobile phone users was targeted to survey. The study was conducted among 199 respondents within Kathmandu Valley. The respondents were chosen at the mobile shop using a convenience sampling technique. Quantitative data was used in nature, and the main source of information for the study was primary data. A questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale has been made to collect the needed data and information. Respondents were given 250 questionnaires, but only 210 were sent back. 199 of them were valid and were put into the SPSS spread sheet. Data was analyzed and interpreted using statistical methods like descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and inferential statistics as independent sample t test, correlation, and regression. According to the study's findings, rapport, source similarity, source attractiveness, trust, and physical evidence all had an impact on mobile purchasing intention. The findings also revealed that trust and physical evidence had an impact on mobile phone purchase intentions. However, rapport, source similarity, and source attractiveness did not significantly affect the purchase intentions. In addition, researchers can study the causative factors of the purchase decision and analyze the effect of demographic variables on word of mouth and purchase intention.

Keywords: *Purchase intention, Rapport, Source similarity, Source attractiveness Physical evidence, and Trust.*

1. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Referral marketing takes advantage of the social idea of word of mouth to capitalize personal connections. It is advantageous to examine social relationships by relying on social links to comprehend how recommendation flow functions (Brown & Reingen, 1987). Word of mouth, also known as "between-customer communication," has been identified in marketing literature as a potential influencer on consumer choice (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2004). The customer voice, or "word of mouth," is one of the most effective ways for generating sales and future revenue flows (Luo, 2009).

Consumers who are satisfied with the product will keep buying and recommending it to others. However, unsatisfied customers will only recall its drawbacks and will spread the word about them (Richins, 2009). George Silverman first conceived the concept of word-of-mouth marketing in 1970.

The term "eWOM" is used to characterize the phenomena that have emerged due to the Internet's role in the growth of word-of-mouth advertising. Because of this technological advancement, attendance is no longer necessary (Torlak, Ozkara, Tiltay, Cengiz, & Dulger, 2014). The connection of eWOM is also available in online (Erkan & Evans, 2016). According to Patel (2022), "word of mouth marketing" is a strategy that counts on customers' feedback and referrals to friends and family about particular brands. It's a form of advertising that doesn't cost anything, as it's generated entirely by customers' opinions and thoughts. How consumers interact with others to discuss the brand, goods, or services is called word-of-mouth marketing (WOM marketing). It also covers the company's steps to encourage customers to spread the word about the company and its products to others. Marketing by word of mouth is most effective when an out-of-the-ordinary, positive encounter inspires a product brand (Mosley, 2022). According to Daugherty and Hoffman (2014), word of mouth has the most powerful influence on customer behavior, notably on information research and buying decisions. It is the sound of new ideas reaching our ears through discussion, information sharing, radio, storytelling, etc. When people hear another story, its impact is felt in their brains. The spread of information has changed a lot since the invention of technology. For example, word of mouth is no longer the only way information gets around (Magalhaes & Musallam, 2014).

Purchase intention increases a consumer's willingness to buy a good (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2018). Studying consumers' intentions is one of the most common ways marketers learn about their behavior (Engel et al., 2006; Ghalandari & Norouzi, 2012). According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), the actual reason a consumer wants to purchase a particular product is the purchase intention. Purchase intention to purchase is still a crucial component of consumer behavior despite all these concerns (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). Many businesses have traditionally promoted their wares using mass media advertisements like television, print media, radio, the yellow pages, outdoor advertising, the World Wide Web, billboards, and posters. According to Kotler and Keller (2012), Businesses are increasingly favoring personal forms of communication with clients because to the drawbacks of several of the media types noted above, such as the expensive cost of television commercials, the transitory nature of radio presentations, and the ever-increasing clutter of the Internet. The smartphone has become an integral part of modern society, serving as the primary global communication tool. Today's ubiquitous smartphones are used for various tasks beyond making and receiving phone calls. The smartphone industry's rapid innovation is causing shifts in consumers' preferences, needs, and willingness to spend (Mokhlis & Yaakop, 2012).

A customer's positive experience with a product or service can go a long way toward influencing their choice to purchase, and word of mouth is one of the most trusted sources of information. The study has reviewed the latest research article to know the concept of word of mouth and identified the findings of the latest study in national and global contexts. There is study in international perspective, but not found in the Nepalese context. Considering this gap, the study was conducted to identify an effect of word of mouth in the mobile purchase intention of customers.

1.1 Research Question

What is the effect of source similarity in the purchase intention of mobile?

What is the effect of source attractiveness in the purchase intention of mobile?

What is the effect of Rapport in the purchase intention of mobile?

What is the effect of physical evidence in the purchase intention of mobile?

What is the effect of Trust in the purchase intention of mobile?

1.2 Research Objectives

To assess the effect of source similarity in the purchase intention of mobile.

To examine the effect of source attractiveness in the purchase intention of mobile.

To explore the effect of Rapport in the purchase intention of mobile.

To assess the effect of physical evidence in the purchase intention of mobile.

To identify the effect of Trust in the purchase intention of mobile.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

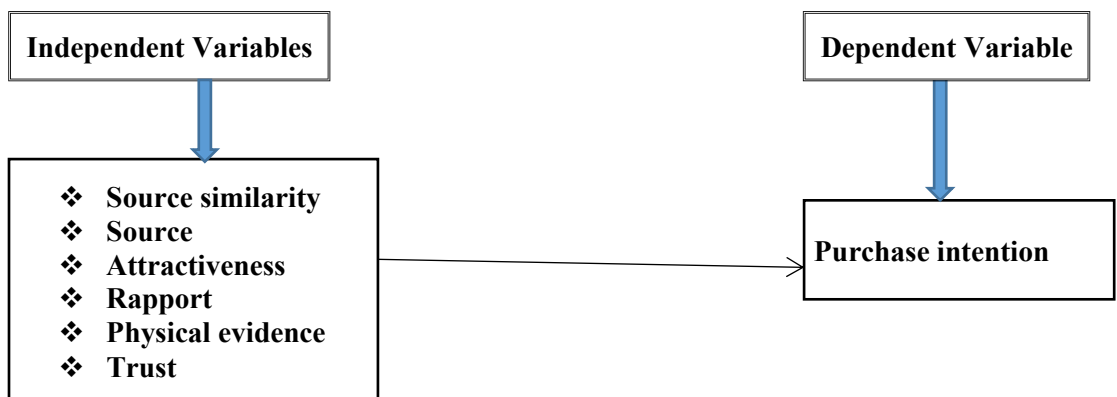


Figure 1: Theoretical framework

1.4 Research Hypothesis

H1: There is a significant effect of source similarity in purchase intention.

H2: There is a significant effect of source attractiveness in purchase intention.

H3: There is a significant effect of rapport in purchase intention.

H4: There is a significant effect of physical evidence in purchase intention.

H5: There is a significant effect of trust in purchase intention.

1.4 Defining the Variables

1.4.1 Source similarity: The term "source similarity" refers to the degree to which the sender of communication and each of its recipients share specific characteristics in common.

1.4.2 Source attractiveness: Source attractiveness refers to the marketing strategy of promoting products on a source that most buyers view positively impacting their purchasing decisions.

1.4.3 Rapport: Rapport exists when two people feel comfortable with one another and can express themselves freely and openly. Rapport is established when two individuals discover they share values, interests, experiences, and viewpoints on a topic.

1.4.4 Physical evidence: In a legal case, "physical evidence" refers to any tangible item relevant to the dispute and is introduced to establish a fact based on the item's physical properties.

1.4.5 Trust: To trust someone or something is to have the conviction that they are morally upstanding and trustworthy and will protect the company and its product from any harm they may cause.

1.4.6 Purchase intention: Consumers' plans to acquire a product or service at a given time are best described by the major component of consumer behavior known as purchase intention (Hosein, 2012). Buyers are likelier to purchase, forming a clear purchase intention (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2018).

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

According to Daugherty and Hoffman (2014), word of mouth has the most powerful influence on customer behavior, notably on information research and buying decisions. Electronic word of mouth emerged with the internet's value as a service research tool (Yang, 2017; Horrigan, 2008). eWOM is usually a favorable statement about a product or service that existing or potential customers creates online with their experienced through online (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Nieto et al., 2014 examined to get product or service information after consumers trust of WOM from reference groups through online comments.

Purchase intention is the primary component of consumer behavior that defines how a buyer plans to acquire a product or service at a specific time (Hosein, 2012). Purchase intention increases a consumer's willingness to buy goods (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2018). Studying consumers' intentions is one of the most common ways marketers learn about their behavior (Engel et al., 2006; Ghalandari & Norouzi,

2012). Engel et al. (1995) made the model of how consumers decide what to buy that is most widely accepted. This model has five steps: (1) figuring out what the problem is, (2) looking for information, (3) weighing the pros and cons of different options, (4) making a decision about what to buy, and (5) judging how well the decision worked. It looks like a case of buying something on the spot. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), the actual reason a consumer wants to purchase a particular product is the purchase intention. According to Warsaw and Davis (1985), a person's purchase intention is based on how they perceive a product, their ideas, and what they would do if they decided to purchase the same product brand. They had a strong propensity to make decisions based on past behavior. When discussing a purchase, people are more likely to say what they always do than what they decide to do. Purchase intention is still a crucial component of consumer behavior despite all these concerns (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010).

2.2 Empirical Review

According to Kala and Chaubey (2018), Pham and Ngo (2017), and Yunus et al. (2016), a brand image partially mediates WOM's effect in customers' purchase intentions. Customers' buying intentions are based on product and service evaluation (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2018). WOM boosts buying intention, according to Luong et al. (2017) Luong et al. (2017) evaluated eWOM beneficial effects on buying intention.

Kazmi and Mehmood (2016) found a positive correlation between eWOM and brand image and the desire to purchase, supporting the hypothesis that consumers have a preconceived notion of branded items and that eWOM might have a favorable impact on consumer behavior.

According to Torlak et al. (2014), eWOM has a beneficial effect on the public's perception of and interest in a given Turkish mobile phone's brand. According to Yunus et al. (2016), there is a moderating effect of brand image between eWOM and intent to buy.

According to research by Shahrinaz et al. (2016), consumers' perceptions of brands can influence their decisions to buy. It was demonstrated by Elseidi & El-Baz (2016) that eWOM boosted intent to purchase.

Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) conducted that eWOM effects the brand image and purchase intention of Iranian vehicle brands, according to their findings. Online product reviews on consumer web platforms were the subject of an empirical study by Bambauer and Mangold in 2011. In addition, Farzin and Fattahi (2018) demonstrated into how eWOM sites effect consumers' perceptions of brands and their buying decisions in social media.

This study reviewed word-of-mouth and purchase intention in Nepal to understand the subject better and identify information gaps. A prior study examined the fierce rivalry in mobile communication services. Businesses require integrated marketing strategies that use their customers to promote the brand for free to survive and compete. This research shows that all companies should value word-of-mouth

advertising. Businesses must build strong relationships with their customers to gain their loyalty and trust that they will spread the word about their products and services. Managers must know that pleased consumers provide recurring business and referrals (Zamil, 2011). It examines what influences online clothes and accessory suggestions.

The Hayes and Preacher (2014) empirically examined that clothing brand is significantly impacted when consumers see positive reviews from their friends and family members posted online.

The study's findings can help firms target factors influencing fashion product purchase intentions on social media like Facebook (Saleem & Ellahi, 2017). It has been found that word-of-mouth marketing and promotion is a significant source of information that influences customers' purchasing decisions, making it an important marketing and promotion technique. WOM is crucial in many industries because it lets customers evaluate a product or service before buying or using it. Therefore, WOM significantly impacts a consumer's happiness or discontent with a product or service. Thus, marketers and service providers must understand WOM and endeavor to build good WOM about their products and services (Wijewardene, 2017). This study provides a research model to investigate how message persuasiveness influences eWOM credibility and product purchase.

Reliability of eWOM and willingness to purchase search items are significantly impacted by the persuasiveness of the message (Malik & Rizwan, 2021). Perceived value and enjoyment's impact on purchase intention was also examined. The results supported all direct model links. The perceived value showed a more substantial effect of celebrity eWOM on purchase intentions. When people were having fun, these linkages were weaker. The research by Nofal, Bayram, Emeagwala, and Al-Mu'ani (2020) demonstrates the power of eWOM and social media on customers' willingness to make purchases.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is like a plan that guides the collection and analysis of the data. It includes the research design, the population and sample, data collection procedures, and analytical tools to solve the problem and reach the goals. This study adopted an analytical research design. It explained demographic variables and examined how and why dependent variables affect independent variables. The poll was explicitly directed toward users who had mobile phones. The study asked 199 mobile users within Kathmandu Valley to take part. A convenience sampling method was used at the mobile shop to choose the people who answered the survey. The primary data was one of the most important ways to find out about the results. However, secondary data has been used to set goals and develop hypotheses. The study used a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale to get the information and data it needed from respondents to answer the question about how word of mouth affects people's plans to buy mobile phones. The study used descriptive statistics, like mean and standard deviation, variance, and inferential statistics, like correlation and regression, to analyze and make sense of the data collected to meet the research goals.

3.1 Methods of Analysis

Tests of validity and reliability are required here. The reliability of the questionnaire is often evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. Between zero and one is its possible range. Cronbach's alpha is used to check the consistency and validity of any data set inquiry (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). The items' dependability is summarized in the table below.

Table 1: Reliability results of study variables

S.N.	Variables	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
1	Source similarity	0.768
2	Source attractiveness	0.753
3	Rapport	0.724
4	Physical evidence	0.835
5	Trust	0.863
6	Purchase Intention	0.701

Source: Field Survey, 2022

According to table 1, Cronbach's Alpha of Source similarity is 0.768, Source attractiveness is 0.753, Rapport is 0.724, Physical evidence is 0.835, Trust is 0.863, and Purchase Intention is 0.701. All values of Cronbach's Alpha are more significant than 0.75, except for rapport and purchase intention. That represented the consistency of the items in the study.

4 RESULT & DISCUSSION

Table 2: Respondent Profile

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	73
	Female	126
Total	199	100
Age	Below 20	24
	20 – 40	135
	40 and above	40
Total	199	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 2 shows the demographics and other details about the study participants. According to the results, the whole population comprised 126 females and 73 males. To break it down further, 12.06% of respondents are under 20, 68.14% are between 20 and 40, and 20.10% are 40 or older.

The study measured the effect of five independent variables of word of mouth such as source similarity, source attractiveness, rapport, physical evidence, and trust on the mobile purchase intention as dependent variable. The study used the correlation

among these independent and dependent variables to see the relationship between each other. The data presented in below Table 1 shows that there was a significant relationship between each variable except the relation between Trust and Rapport, and purchase intention and rapport, purchase intention and source similarity because the p-value of these two relations is higher than .05 significant levels.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis Table

	SS	SA	R	PE	T	PI
SS	1					
SA	.305**	1				
R	.286**	.527**	1			
PE	.234*	.568**	.547**	1		
T	.377**	.277**	0.168	.313**	1	
PI	0.089	.375**	0.178	.467**	.426**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
 * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Note: Source Similarity (SS), Source Attractiveness (SA), Rapport (R), Physical Evidence (PE), and Trust (T), Purchase Intention (PI).

Source: Field Survey, 2022

In table 3, the overall result shows that consumer purchase intention in mobile is highly significant relationship of source attractiveness, physical evidence, and trust in purchase intention of mobile phones. However, there is no significant relation of source similarity and rapport in purchase intention. The result indicates that if a 1-point change in P.I., it will change by .375 times in S.A., .467 times in P.E., and .426 times in Trust.

The study also runs the regression to check the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable. This analysis shows effect of independent variables on mobile purchase intention of mobile phones.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model Summary							
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error Estimate	of the	Durbin-Watson
1	.589 a	0.347	0.312		0.493		1.921
a Predictors: (Constant), SS, PE, T, R, SA							
b Dependent Variable: PI							

From Table 4, we can see that source attractiveness, physical evidence, trust, rapport, and source similarity explain 31.2% of the variance in purchasing intention. The remaining 68.8% of variance may be due to some other independent variables that

did not know and include in the model. The Durbin-Watson value is 1.921, which is very near to 2. Thus, it indicates that the model perfectly fits the data. To further support the model summary, ANOVA has been used to check the statistical significance of this study.

Table 5: ANOVA Table

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	d. f.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12.029	5	2.406	9.883	.000b
	Residual	22.641	93	0.243		
	Total	34.67	98			
a Dependent Variable: PI						
b Predictors: (Constant), SS, PE, T, R, S						

The data presented in table 5 shows that the F value is 9.883 with $p = .000$. Hence, we can conclude that the model perfectly fits. ANOVA table is for deciding whether independent variables can predict dependent variables with the model selected. The model is significant or provides an excellent fit to the data, based on the statistical analysis of p-value of 0.00 0.05. As a result, we can infer that these explanatory variables effectively predict the dependent variable purchase intention of mobile phones. The study also used a coefficient analysis to dissect the role of each independent variable in predicting a consumer's propensity to buy a mobile device.

Table 6: Coefficient Analysis Table

Model	Coefficient			T	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.73	0.524		1.394	0.167
SA	0.224	0.128	0.191	1.753	0.083
PE	0.344	0.106	0.361	3.249	0.002
R	-0.134	0.105	-0.136	-1.272	0.206
T	0.459	0.128	0.336	3.577	0.001
SS	-0.16	0.106	-0.142	-1.512	0.134
a Dependent Variable: PI					

Hence

$$Y = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + b_4x_4 + b_5x_5 + E$$

$$Y = 0.73 + 0.344x_2 + 0.459x_4 + E$$

Where, Y = dependent variable = Purchase intention and X= independent variable

a = Constant

X1 =Source Attractiveness X2=Physical Evidence

E= Error

0X3=Rapport

X4=Trust

X5= Source Similarity

The p-value for this experiment is 0.05, and the F-value is 9.883. The F value is statistically significant at the 5% level. The p-value of source attractiveness, physical evidence, rapport, trust, and source similarity are 0.167, 0.083, 0.002, 0.206, 0.001, and 0.134, respectively. The beta value of these variables is 0.224, 0.344, -0.134, 0.459, and -0.16, which indicate that a 1 unit change in source attractiveness leads to a 0.224 unit change in purchase intention. Similarly, there is a 0.344-unit shift in buying intentions for every one-unit shift in physical evidence. Likewise, increasing Rapport by one unit will make customers more likely to purchase. Furthermore, an increase in Trust in one unit increases the desire to buy by 0.459%. To the same extent, a one-unit shift in source similarity results in a 0.16-unit shift in the desire to buy. This research also reveals that Rapport, source similarity, and source attractiveness have little effect on mobile phone purchase intention. In contrast, Trust and physical evidence are the most critical elements that favor and significantly affect consumers' intent to buy over the phone.

Torlak, Ozkara, Tiltay, Cengiz, & Dulger, (2014) confirmed significance of the electronic word of mouth on brand perception. These results demonstrate the importance of a consumer's perception of a brand in their ultimate purchasing choice. This research seeks to understand how electronic word of mouth influences consumers' purchase propensity. One more study confirmed that an eWOM influences brand perception (= 0.491, $t = 2.458$, $p = 0.045$). As a result, an eWOM helps enhance a company's reputation. Examining the correlation between brand image and buying intention reveals a statistically significant positive relationship (= 0.917, $t = 6.697$, $p = 0.000$). In other words, consumers' perceptions of a product's brand strongly indicate whether or not they intend to buy a lifestyle product. An analysis of the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention indicated no significant effect (= 0.075, $t = 0.7888$, $p = 0.430$). That indicates that eWOM does not play a role in increasing consumer interest in lifestyle products (Kala & Chaubey, 2018). Word-of-mouth has a beneficial effect on customers' perceived value, according to another Malaysian study. Based on the data, it is clear that the independent variable "manner of delivery" significantly influences the value that Malaysian diners assign to restaurants (Oluwafemi & Dastane, 2016; Oluwafemi & Dastane, 2016; Oluwafemi & Dastane, 2016). These findings are compared to those of an earlier study. This investigation's results were consistent with those of a previous study by Nofal et al., who found the exact opposite.

According to Nofal, Bayram, Emeagwali, and Al-Mu'ani (Nofal, Bayram, Emeagwali, and Al-Mu'ani, 2022), there was no influence of the Strong-tie x Weak-tie interaction on perceived value, perceived enjoyment, or purchase intention. Every p-value was more than 0.05. Another study found that an eWOM significantly affects brand image = (0.491, $t = 2.458$, and $p = 0.045$), which is consistent with the first study's findings. Hence, we can conclude that consumers' perceptions of the brand

have a substantial impact on consumers purchasing intention = (0.917, $t = 6.697$, and $p = 0.000$), suggesting that eWOM aids in creating a positive brand image. That demonstrates that the consumers' perception of a brand is crucial in determining to purchase a lifestyle product. In this study, the effect of eWOM on intent to buy was shown to be small ($=0.075$, $t = 0.7888$, $p = 0.430$). EWOM does not affect the increasing demand for luxury products (Kala & Chaubey, 2018).

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it was seen that there was a significant relationship between source attractiveness, physical evidence, rapport, trust, and source similarity on consumer purchase intention of mobile phones from correlation. From the coefficient analysis, except for two variables: Trust and physical evidence, there was no significant effect of Rapport, source similarity, and source attractiveness on the purchase intention of mobile phones. It reduces marketing expenses to set a reasonable price for goods and services to attract new and retain existing customers. This research shows that companies need to recognize the value of word-of-mouth advertising. Therefore, business managers must realize that repeat business and referrals come from happy customers to expand the business. Further research can study the causative factors of the purchase decision and analyze demographic variables' effect in word of mouth and purchase intention.

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