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Comparative Analysis of the Effects of Different Types of Word-of-Mouth Information on Consumer Purchase Intention

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the impact of different types of word-of-mouth (WOM) information and their dissemination channels on consumer purchase intentions. Through a questionnaire survey, 540 valid data samples were collected, covering consumers of various ages, consumption habits, technology usage habits, and geographic locations. Multiple regression analysis and cluster analysis methods were employed to thoroughly analyze the influence and dissemination effects of WOM information. The results indicate that positive WOM significantly enhances consumer purchase intention, while negative WOM has the opposite effect. Neutral WOM has no significant impact on purchase intention. Additionally, the dissemination channels of WOM information, such as social media, have a significant positive impact on consumer purchase intention. Based on these findings, specific market strategy recommendations are proposed to optimize brand management and enhance consumer engagement.

Keywords: Word-of-Mouth Information, Consumer Purchase Intention, Multiple Regression Analysis, Cluster Analysis, Market Strategy

1. Introduction

In contemporary society, consumer purchasing behavior is influenced by various factors. Among these, word-of-mouth (WOM) information plays a significant role in shaping consumer purchase decisions. With the rise of social media and online communication platforms, consumers have easier access to WOM information from diverse sources. Positive or negative information directly affects consumers' brand perception and purchasing behavior. In the coffee industry, one of the largest beverage markets globally, consumer purchase intention is particularly influenced by WOM information. [1] This study primarily explores how different types of WOM information, including positive and negative information, specifically impact consumer purchase intention, providing valuable insights for companies to formulate more effective brand management and marketing strategies.

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2. Methodology

2.1. Sample

This study aims to analyze the impact of different types of WOM information on consumer purchase intention. To ensure the sample adequately reflects consumer diversity, criteria such as age distribution, consumption habits, geographic location, and technology usage habits were used for sample selection. The age distribution covers consumers from various life stages, ranging from 18 to 65 years old. Consumption habits include both regular and non-regular coffee consumers, to analyze how consumption frequency influences responses to WOM information. Geographic locations include both urban and rural areas to consider the potential impact of geographical factors on purchasing behavior. Technology usage habits distinguish between high and low technology reliance users, studying the differences in responses to electronic WOM. A total of 600 questionnaires were planned to be distributed to ensure broad coverage and sufficient data collection. A total of 540 valid responses were collected, reflecting good participation and data reliability, with a response rate of 90%, indicating high engagement in the survey.

2.2. Definition of Variables

(1) Independent Variables

In this study, the different types of word-of-mouth (WOM) information and their dissemination channels are considered independent variables that may influence consumer purchase intention. Positive WOM typically stems from consumer satisfaction and includes positive feedback on product quality, service satisfaction, or brand image. Negative WOM involves consumers' unfavorable reviews and recommendations against a coffee brand or product. Neutral WOM encompasses consumer comments and feedback that are neither distinctly positive nor negative. The dissemination channels for WOM information include social media, online forums, blogs, and face-to-face interpersonal communication.

(2) Dependent Variable

Consumer purchase intention is defined as the dependent variable, directly reflecting the influence of WOM information and the effectiveness of marketing strategies. The questions are designed using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates "very unlikely" and 5 indicates "very likely." The questions ask consumers about their intention to purchase products from a coffee brand after encountering positive, negative, or neutral WOM. In the regression model, purchase intention is treated as the dependent variable to analyze the specific impact of different types of WOM information on consumer purchase decisions.

(3) Control Variables

The study controls for other variables that may influence the results, such as gender, age, income level, education level, and place of residence, when analyzing the impact of different types of WOM information on consumer purchase intention. Gender differences might affect how consumers perceive and respond to WOM information, so gender is controlled to ensure the fairness of the results. [2] Consumers of different ages might react differently to WOM information. For instance, younger consumers might encounter WOM information more frequently through social media, while older consumers might rely more on traditional media or interpersonal communication. Consumers' economic status might influence their purchase decisions; for example, higher-income groups may place more importance on product quality and brand image. Consumers with higher education levels might critically analyze and evaluate the information they receive, which could affect their acceptance of WOM information and purchase behavior. Urban and rural residents might differ in the channels and frequency of information exposure, potentially impacting the effectiveness of WOM information.

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2.3. Analysis Methods

(1) Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis is employed to explore the impact of different types of WOM information (positive, negative, neutral) and their dissemination channels on consumer purchase intention. Simultaneously, control variables such as gender, age, income level, education level, and place of residence are considered to ensure the accuracy of the results. A multiple regression model is constructed, where consumer purchase intention serves as the dependent variable (Y), and the types and channels of WOM information are the main independent variables (X). As shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Definition of Variables

Variable Type	Variable Name	Description	Range or Type
Dependent	Purchase Intention	Consumers' purchase intention (1-5, Likert scale)	1-5 (Continuous variable)
Independent	Positive WOM	Whether consumers received positive WOM	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Independent	Negative WOM	Whether consumers received negative WOM	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Independent	Neutral WOM	Whether consumers received neutral WOM	0 = No, 1 = Yes
Independent	WOM Dissemination Channel	The dissemination channels of WOM information	Categorical variable (1, 2, 3, 4)
Control	Gender	Consumers' gender	Male = 0, Female = 1
Control	Age	Consumers' age	Continuous variable
Control	Income Level	Consumers' income level	High, Medium, Low
Control	Education Level	Consumers' education level	High, Medium, Low
Control	Place of Residence	Consumers' place of residence	Urban = 1, Rural = 0

WOM dissemination channels indicate the means through which consumers receive WOM information. The coding is as follows: 1 represents social media, 2 represents online forums, 3 represents blogs, and 4 represents face-to-face communication. Additionally, gender, age, income level, education level, and place of residence are included in the model as covariates. For categorical variables such as WOM types and dissemination channels, dummy coding was used for quantification.

(2) Cluster Analysis

Cluster analysis is applied to identify different patterns of consumer behavior, particularly in the relationship between receiving WOM information and purchase intention, to better understand the response differences among various groups. [3] For example, clustering may reveal consumer groups that are more sensitive to negative WOM or more responsive to specific dissemination channels. The study uses the K-means clustering method, which minimizes the distance between data points and

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their nearest cluster center to form groups. The cluster analysis considers multiple dimensions, including WOM information types, dissemination channels, and control variables such as age, gender, and education level.

3. Results Analysis

3.1. Descriptive Statistics

(1) Sample Characteristics

The sample characteristics are shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Age Group	Actual Sample Size	Proportion (%)
18-25 years	150	27.8
26-35 years	140	25.9
36-50 years	130	24.1
51-65 years	120	22.2
Consumption Habits		
Daily Consumers	290	53.7
Non-Daily Consumers	250	46.3
Geographic Location		
Urban Residents	350	64.8
Rural Residents	190	35.2
Technology Usage Habits		
High Technology Users	280	51.9
Low Technology Users	260	48.1

Based on the data from Table 3-1, users aged 18-25 account for 27.8% of the sample. This group is generally younger and may be more sensitive to emerging and trendy coffee brands, influencing their consumption choices and reception of word-of-mouth (WOM) information. Users aged 26-35 account for 25.9%. Consumers in this age group are usually in the ascending phase of their careers and may pay more attention to the professional image and quality of brands. Users aged 36-50 make up 24.1% of the sample. This demographic is in a stable phase of family and career life, with higher demands for quality and service. Users aged 51-65 account for 22.2%, reflecting that older consumers may focus more on health and tradition, with reactions to WOM information potentially differing from younger groups.

Daily consumers account for 53.7%, indicating a focus on daily coffee consumption habits and brand loyalty. Non-daily consumers make up 46.3%, suggesting they might be more influenced by special events or promotions. Urban residents account for 64.8%, likely because urban consumers have greater access to diverse coffee brands and marketing activities, leading to faster WOM information dissemination. In contrast, rural residents account for 35.2%. Their consumption behavior is more influenced by traditional and physical store limitations, relying more on personal relationships and community influence for WOM information. High technology users make up 51.9%, frequently using social media and the internet, and their purchasing behavior is more easily influenced by online reviews and social media marketing. Low technology users account for 48.1%, relying more on traditional WOM or direct brand experiences.

(2) Variable Distribution

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Descriptive statistical analysis plays a role in illustrating the distribution of key variables in this study, including types of WOM information, dissemination channels, and consumer purchase intention. The data reveals the distribution of positive, negative, and neutral WOM within the sample. For example, if positive WOM occupies a large proportion, it may indicate that consumers tend to share their positive consumption experiences. In terms of WOM dissemination channels, the analysis examines the usage of social media, online forums, blogs, and direct interpersonal communication. Purchase intention, as the dependent variable, indicates the degree of consumer response after receiving different types of WOM information. Descriptive statistics present the levels of purchase intention influenced by various types of WOM, shown on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "very unlikely" to "very likely."

3.2. Multiple Regression Results

This study employed multiple regression analysis to explore the impact of different types of WOM information (positive, negative, neutral), dissemination channels, as well as control variables such as gender, age, education level, place of residence, and economic status on consumer purchase intention. The overall model fit well, and the significance test of the F-statistic confirmed the statistical significance of the model, indicating that the selected variables effectively explained the variations in purchase intention. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis Results

Variable	Description	Regression Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value	Explanation
Positive WOM	Positive WOM received by consumers	0.65	0.07	9.29	<0.001	Significantly positively correlated, increases purchase intention
Negative WOM	Negative WOM received by consumers	-0.55	0.08	-6.88	<0.001	Significantly negatively correlated, decreases purchase intention
Neutral WOM	Neutral WOM received by consumers	0.03	0.05	0.6	0.548	Not significant
WOM Dissemination Channel	WOM disseminated through social media, forums, etc.	0.4	0.1	4	<0.001	Significantly positively correlated
Gender	Consumer's gender (Male=0, Female=1)	0.15	0.06	2.5	0.012	Significantly positively correlated
Age	Consumer's age	0.01	0.01	1	0.317	Not significant

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Table 3: (continued).

Education Level	Consumer's education level	0.25	0.07	3.57	0.0004	Significantly positively correlated
Place of Residence	Consumer's place of residence (Urban=1, Rural=0)	0.2	0.08	2.5	0.013	Significantly positively correlated
Income Level	Consumer's income level	0.3	0.05	6	<0.001	Significantly positively correlated

The regression coefficient of positive WOM is positive and statistically significant, indicating that positive WOM can significantly enhance consumer purchase intention, consistent with the common understanding in the market that positive product or service reviews can boost consumer motivation to purchase. The regression coefficient of negative WOM is negative and statistically significant, suggesting that consumers' purchase intention significantly decreases after receiving negative WOM. The impact of neutral WOM on purchase intention is not statistically significant, implying that neutral information may not be sufficient to significantly influence consumer purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, compared to traditional face-to-face communication, WOM information disseminated through social media and online platforms has a greater positive impact on consumer purchase intention. The moderating effects of gender and age are significant, indicating differences in the response to WOM information among different gender and age groups. Education level and economic status also have a significant impact on purchase intention, with higher education levels and economic status being associated with higher purchase intention.

3.3. Clustering Results

Applying the K-means clustering method, based on consumer responses to various types of WOM information and key variables such as age, gender, and technological habits, the sample was divided into several distinct groups. [4] As shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Clustering Characteristics Distribution

Cluster No.	Group Characteristics	Age Range	Main Behavioral Traits	WOM Response Type	Purchase Intention
Cluster 1	Positive Responders	Young	Active social media users, strong response to positive WOM	Positive WOM	High
Cluster 2	Cautious Considerers	Varied	Neutral attitude towards WOM information, need more information to make purchase decisions	Neutral WOM	Medium
Cluster 3	Price-Sensitive	Any	Sensitive to negative WOM, purchase decisions greatly influenced by price	Negative WOM	Low

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Table 4: (continued).

Cluster 4	Loyal Conservatives	Older	Infrequent use of social media, loyal to familiar brands	Neutral/No response	Medium to High

In-depth analysis reveals that the differences in purchase intention among different clusters are mainly driven by variations in perception of word-of-mouth (WOM) information and differing levels of trust in information sources. For instance, the group of Positive Responders is more sensitive to positive WOM on social media, while Price-Sensitive consumers are more attentive to negative information.

4. Discussion

4.1. Key Findings Interpretation

Positive word-of-mouth significantly enhances consumer purchase intention, aligning with consumer behavior theory by reducing uncertainty and enhancing trust in products or services. Negative word-of-mouth exerts a significant negative impact on consumer purchase intention, sometimes outweighing the positive effects of positive information. The influence of neutral word-of-mouth on consumer purchase intention is not significant, indicating that information lacking clear emotional orientation may not be sufficient to affect consumer purchase decisions. Word-of-mouth information disseminated through social media and other digital platforms has a greater impact on consumer purchase intention, highlighting the importance of digital marketing strategies. Additionally, control variables such as gender, age, income, and education level also show potential influences on purchase intention. The differentiated impacts remind marketers to consider the diversity of consumer backgrounds when formulating strategies.

4.2. Marketing Strategy Recommendations

Actively promote positive consumer feedback through social media and other digital platforms. Encourage satisfied customers to share their experiences, especially those that attract visual attention, such as images and videos. [5] Implement incentive measures, such as offering small gifts or discounts, to reward customers who recommend and review the brand. Establish a rapid response system to address consumer complaints and negative reviews, ensuring that issues are addressed openly and transparently to mitigate the impact of negative word-of-mouth. Regularly monitor brand reputation and use professional tools to track and analyze consumer discussions and reviews on major platforms.

Based on the results of cluster analysis, develop customized marketing strategies for different consumer groups. For example, design social media interactive activities for “Positive Responders” and provide discount information for “Price-Sensitive” consumers. Analyze the purchasing behavior and preferences of different groups in depth to more accurately target advertising and promotional activities. Integrate online promotion with offline activities, such as promoting on social media while holding events in physical stores, to ensure widespread dissemination of information. Collaborate with well-known bloggers or opinion leaders to leverage their influence to enhance brand awareness and reputation.

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5. Conclusion

This study thoroughly examined the impact of various types of word-of-mouth information and their dissemination channels on consumer purchase intention through a questionnaire survey. The research found that positive word-of-mouth significantly enhances consumer purchase intention, while negative word-of-mouth significantly undermines it; meanwhile, neutral word-of-mouth does not have a significant impact on purchase intention. Digital communication channels, such as social media, play a significant facilitating role in the dissemination of word-of-mouth information, highlighting the central role of modern information technology in shaping consumer behavior. Word-of-mouth information disseminated through social media can quickly reach a wide audience, thereby enhancing the influence and efficiency of information dissemination. Therefore, companies should adopt proactive strategies to manage word-of-mouth, regularly monitor online reputation, and respond to consumer needs through personalized content to effectively utilize word-of-mouth information to promote consumer purchasing decisions, enhance brand loyalty, and market competitiveness.

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