

*Bogdan Anastasiei**, *Nicoleta Dospinescu***, *Octavian Dospinescu****

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA PEER COMMUNICATION ON CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR – EVIDENCE FROM ROMANIA

This paper investigates the effects of the type of appeal (emotional vs. rational) on the persuasiveness of social media messages related to products, services and brands. Previous research shows that electronic word-of-mouth spread through social media has a strong influence on customers' purchase decisions. This paper examines whether this influence depends on the type of appeal used in the message. The research method was based on a survey administered online to a sample of 369 students. The survey questionnaire contained 21 closed questions. The message credibility itself is slightly influenced by the type of appeal (rational or emotional): rational messages are more convincing than emotional ones. On the other hand, the type of appeal strongly influences both purchase intention and perceived purchase risk. While the perceived risk is lower for the rational messages, the intention to buy the product is higher for the emotional messages, due to the particular characteristics of the studied product (smartphone). The findings have practical importance for companies that promote their products through social media. They should use both the emotional and rational approach in their messages: the emotional posts use feelings to make customers buy, while the factual messages help customers reduce the perceived risk of making a wrong decision. The paper contributes to a more advanced understanding of how rational and emotional posts in the social media impact on the customer's behaviour.

Keywords: social media, word of mouth, emotional appeal, rational appeal, propensity to buy

JEL Classification: M31, D83, L86

DOI: 10.15611/aoe.2022.1.11

©2022 Bogdan Anastasiei, Nicoleta Dospinescu, Octavian Dospinescu

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

Quote as: Anastasiei, B., Dospinescu, N., Dospinescu, O. (2022). The impact of social media peer communication on customer behaviour – Evidence from Romania. *Argumenta Oeconomica*, 1(48).

* Department of Management, Marketing and Business Administration, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iasi, Romania. ORCID: 0000-0002-2622-8893.

** Department of Management, Marketing and Business Administration, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iasi, Romania. ORCID: 0000-0002-7097-7365.

*** Department of Accounting, Business Information Systems and Statistics, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iasi, Romania. ORCID: 0000-0002-5403-8050.

1. INTRODUCTION

Peer communication through social media has an important influence on customers' purchase decisions (Wang, Yu, Wei, 2012). Consumers are more likely to purchase based on electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) – recommendations or suggestions they read in the social networks. This is the reason why social media is nowadays a key element of companies' marketing strategy.

The impact of the eWOM messages ultimately depends on their credibility in the eyes of the customers. People will act upon trustworthy recommendations. Researchers have studied many factors that affect eWOM credibility. This paper investigates the role of two variables of influence less examined in the literature.

The first variable represents the consumer usage habits of social media. The Global Web Index social report for 2017 shows that the motivations of visiting the social platforms can be divided in two large categories: enjoyment (stay in touch with friends, fill up spare time, find funny content) and staying informed (keep up with current news and events, research and find products to buy). The study's objective was to test whether people who use social media mainly for informational purposes tend to perceive the eWOM messages in the social networks as more credible. Furthermore, the authors measured the impact of credibility on two important variables: perceived purchase risk and purchase behaviour (intention to buy the product).

The second considered variable is type of appeal. According to Voss et al. (2003), the messages shared by the consumers in the online environment can use either the *rational appeal* or the *emotional appeal*. The rational messages contain mainly utilitarian elements (related to product attributes and functions), while the emotional messages use predominantly hedonic elements (related to emotions and sentiments). The purpose was to study whether the type of appeal of the eWOM messages is an antecedent for perceived credibility, perceived purchase risk and intention to purchase.

An integrated conceptual framework was developed to estimate the magnitude of the relations between our variables of study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Rational and emotional appeal

According to Kotler and Keller (2008), message appeals can be classified into two groups: rational and emotional. The rational appeal uses logical arguments based on the product attributes and characteristics, while the emotional appeal attempts to provoke positive or negative emotions to augment the consumer's inclination to buy. Puto and Wells (1984) showed that rational advertising messages have the following traits: they present factual information, contain information that is of immediate interest for the audience and the information that the audience accepts as verifiable.

The influence of the type of appeal on the attitude towards the advert and the brand was studied in a large number of research papers. Taute et al. (2011) demonstrated that the response to emotional adverts (in other words, the attitude towards them) is influenced by the consumer's emotional information management, which comprises emotion recognition, emotion regulation and empathy. Furthermore, the attitude towards the advert determines the consumer behavioural intentions. According to MacKenzie et al. (1986), the attitude toward the advert is a mediator of advertising effectiveness and the results of their study suggest that a dual mediation hypothesis, which postulates that advert influences brand attitude both directly and indirectly through its effect on brand cognitions, is superior to other models under the particular set of conditions in the pre-test setting. Lee and Hong (2016) treated the emotional appeal as a component of the advert's effectiveness, along with informativeness and creativity; its effectiveness determines the intention to express empathy, which in turn influences the purchase intention. Geuens et al. (2011) showed that the attitude towards an advertised brand depends both on the type of appeal and type of product (utilitarian or hedonic). Wu and Wang (2011) established that brand attitude is determined by the message type of appeal, message credibility and level of involvement with the brand. Esmaeilpour and Aram (2016) reached a similar conclusion: the attitude towards the brand depends on message appeal and message credibility, with these relations being moderated by level of involvement and level of risk taking.

Zhang et al., (2014) studied the influence of appeal in services advertising and demonstrated that emotional appeal in the adverts for services lead to a more favourable attitude towards them. Hongxia et al., (2014) also studied the influence of appeal on the purchase intention for the service adverts and established that the emotional advertising messages led to a greater purchase intention for the services that could be tested, while the rational messages generated a stronger purchase intent based on trust. Yeh and Lin (2010) showed that the effectiveness of mobile phone adverts depends on the type of appeal, type of advertiser (domestic/foreign) and level of product involvement (low/high). Finally, the research by Noble et al. (2014) focused on the role of both gender and type of appeal in pro-environmental social advertising. According to these authors, the effect of rational advertising was the same for both male and female customers. As for the emotional messages, males responded more negatively to the negative messages, while females responded more positively to the positive messages.

2.2. Social media usage

As shown by Lin and Lu (2011), the majority of people use social networks to stay in contact with their peers and to find entertaining content. According to Casaló et al. (2013), individuals are inclined to participate in social media to share their stories, experience, and knowledge, since social interactions offer them a sense of

satisfaction to be a member of a community. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) assert that social media are supposed to provide not only social support but also informational support for users.

However, an important number of social media users also look for information about products and services. This is why the social network environment provides good opportunities for companies in marketing (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). These companies can encourage their customers and followers to send messages about their brands over the social networks. Actually, what is usually called ‘viral marketing’ is a combination of word-of-mouth and Internet social networks. High speed and low cost are the main features of viral marketing (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011). The social media messages must be designed to attract people and persuade them to resend this message to their family and friends. The success and effectiveness of viral marketing is affected by the context in which the message is sent as well as the quality of the message (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011).

Rapp et al. (2013) defined customer social media usage as the customers’ disposition to use social media for getting information about their favourite brands and staying in contact with these brands; this paper uses this term in the same sense. As Rapp’s research showed, there is a strong correlation between customers’ social media usage and their brand loyalty: a high usage level determines a higher loyalty. Furthermore, greater levels of loyalty lead to better sales performance for the brand supplier.

2.3. eWOM message credibility

Due to large amounts of user-generated content in social media today, the risk of misinformation is considerable (Viviani and Pasi, 2017). This is why assessing the credibility of both the information source and the information itself represents a central issue. According to Cheung et al. (2008), reliability is one of the three basic dimensions of quality information in viral marketing, along with understanding and usefulness.

Bosman et al. (2013) studied the review credibility of eWOM on e-commerce platforms and asserted that this credibility is influenced by seven factors: star rating, ex-star rating, positive sentiment rating, ex-sentiment rating, text length, time and platform. Teng et al. (2017) focused on the credibility of eWOM in social media and found five specific influencers: argument quality, source credibility, source attractiveness, source perception and source style. Lis (2013) identified four determinants of eWOM credibility: source expertise, source trustworthiness, homophily (perceived similarity with the reviewer) and aggregate rating. O’Reilly and Marx (2011) stated that young, technical-savvy consumers assess eWOM credibility based on the following factors: quantity of posts, polarity of posts (whether there are both positive and negative reviews), logic and articulation of posts, as well as capacity to find corroborating sources. According to Hsu et al. (2016) eWOM credibility on Facebook is affected by two big factors: social (or normative) influence and informative influence.

This research intended to investigate two further influences on eWOM credibility: social media usage and type of message appeal. It seemed that people who intensively use social media to follow brands and to keep current on promotions, events and trends are more likely to find eWOM messages in social media trustworthy. Thus the authors suggested the following hypotheses:

H1: There is a positive relation between level of social media usage and perceived eWOM credibility.

Yet, the authors expect that the message credibility is significantly influenced by the type of appeal; more precisely, eWOM messages that appeal to reason and logic tend to be more believable than messages that attempt to address emotions and sentiments. Hence the following research hypothesis:

H2: Rational messages have higher credibility than emotional messages.

Purchase intention

Purchase intention is the customer willingness to buy a product or a service. Usually it appears as a dependent variable, being determined by a number of factors. According to Gogoi (2013), the intention to buy is influenced by the following variables: stimulus (or trigger), outcome expectation, aspirational value, recommendation and emotional association. Other influences such as product perceptions, associated risks and costs may also occur.

Research showed that willingness to buy is influenced by brand image and attitude towards the brand. Arslan and Altuna (2010) asserted that there is a significant relation between brand image and intention to purchase. Zeeshan (2013) proved the effect of brand image on the purchase intention of male customers. Brand awareness and a positive attitude toward the brand also have a strong impact on purchase intention, as suggested by the results obtained by Tih and Lee (2013), Hernández and Küster (2012), Kawa et al. (2013).

A series of recent studies emphasized the effect of eWOM on the customers purchase intention. Lee et al. (2017) showed that word-of-mouth is one of the factors that influences purchase intention, along with product attributes, product quality, product involvement and price. Tsai et al. (2017) stated that word-of-mouth determines purchase intention, purchase probability, as well as the intention to recommend the product to others. Alkailani (2016) showed that eWOM effectiveness (understood as the receivers' intention to actually use the eWOM information when they take the buying decision) is determined by four variables: message content, message credibility, product involvement and homophily. Baber et al. (2016) asserted that word-of-mouth impacts the customer attitude towards brand, while the attitude determines the intention to purchase. Finally, Tsao and Hsieh (2015) reached the conclusion that the eWOM provided on independent platforms has a stronger effect on purchase intention compared to the eWOM delivered on corporate platforms.

Based on these research results, the authors suggested the following hypotheses:

H3: There is a positive relation between perceived message credibility and purchase intention.

H4: Rational appeal generates a stronger purchase intention than emotional appeal.

Perceived purchase risk

Many researchers have investigated the antecedents and the consequences of the perceived purchase risk. D'Alessandro et al. (2012) established that the determining factors of the perceived risk associated with online purchases are type of marketing strategy, privacy concern and security practices. Further, the perceived purchase risk negatively influences the online purchasing behaviour (intention to buy). According to Sun (2014), the antecedents of perceived buying risk are the company's characteristics (reputation, quality, price) and the customer's individual characteristics (risk aversion, face consciousness).

Kim et al. (2008) developed a trust-based decision-making model in electronic commerce, where the determinants of consumer trust and buying risk are of two types: cognition based (information quality, privacy protection, security protection) and affect based (presence of a third-party seal, seller reputation). In this model, the perceived buying risk is a mediator between trust and intention to buy: high levels of trust determine a lower perceived risk, which positively influences the willingness to buy. Mortimer et al. (2016) came to a similar conclusion: customer's trust influences the repurchase intention through the perceived purchase risk.

Martin et al. (2015) also investigated the antecedents of buying risk in the online environment and showed that it is influenced by two variables: trust and affective experiential state, including the perceived control of the website, aesthetics and perceived benefits. Mohseni et al. (2016) studied the perceived purchase risk associated with travel companies' websites and asserted that this risk is affected by three factors: website brand, customer's shopping experience and customer's personal value.

To reduce the perceived purchase risk, some customers become loyal to a brand, product or service; Bahrainzadeh and Ziaee (2012) stated that high loyalty may be proof of a low perceived risk. Other customers look for credible information sources, including word-of-mouth information in the social networks (Yang et al., 2012).

Based on the literature review, one can assert that a trustworthy eWOM message reduces the customer's perceived buying risk. Consequently, the authors proposed the following hypothesis:

H5: There is a negative relation between message credibility and perceived purchase risk.

The relation between type of appeal and perceived risk is not clearly documented in the literature, nevertheless one can expect that rational messages reduce perceived

risk to a greater extent than emotional messages, because they contain factual information that provides a clear idea of the product features and functions. These considerations led to the following hypothesis:

H6: The perceived risk associated to a rational message is lower than the perceived risk associated to an emotional message.

The relations expressed by these hypotheses are shown in Figure 1, and are investigated further on in this paper.

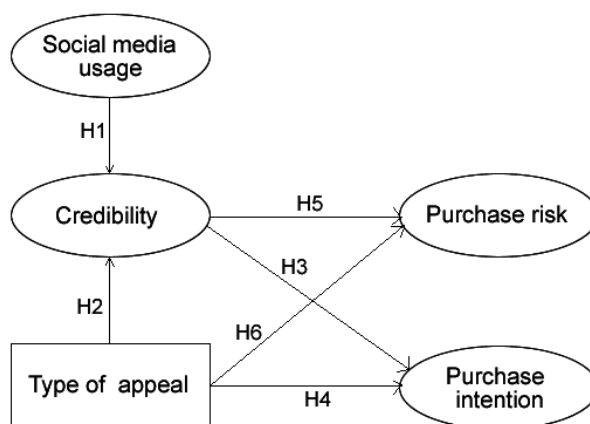


Fig. 1. Causal model

Source: authors' own processing.

3. INSTRUMENT AND METHODOLOGY

The data were collected online on a sample of 369 Romanian individuals, most of them students – about 60% of whom were female and 40% male, aged between 21 and 28, while their average age was 23.6.

The sample was split into two groups, at random, using a custom Web script. A different Facebook message was presented to each group. Each message was related to a fictitious smartphone brand; however, one of the messages was rational and the other one was emotional. The rational message stressed the technical features of the product (nano sim card, laser keypad, 8-core processor, camera of 4 megapixels etc.), and the emotional message emphasized the product benefits using impassioned words (freedom, adventure, intense living, speed, hot etc.). After reading the message, the individuals were invited to answer 21 questions, divided into four groups. Each group of questions referred to a separate concept, namely social media usage, credibility of message, perceived buying risk and purchase intention. The social media usage scale was adapted in line with Rapp et al. (2013). To assess the

message credibility, an adaptation of the scale created by Ohanian (1990) was used. For the perceived purchase risk, the list proposed by Kushwaha and Shankar (2013) was applied, while for the purchase intention the study employed the scale created by Maxham and Netemeyer (2003).

4. DATA ANALYSIS

In the first stage of the data analysis process, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was implemented to determine whether the initial items (questions) are associated with the dimensions (constructs) they represent. In the second stage, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed in order to build and test the measurement model. Finally, in the third stage the authors created and tested the causal model presented in Figure 1, using the path analysis technique. Besides the above mentioned constructs, the causal model contains one more variable: type of appeal. This is a dummy variable that was coded as follows: 0 for the emotional appeal and 1 for the rational appeal. Thus the set reference category of this variable consists of respondents who saw the emotional message.

The exploratory factor analysis was conducted using the IBM SPSS program (version 21). The goal of this analysis was to identify the items that were strongly correlated with one or more dimensions (i.e. the high cross-loadings) and the items that did not correlate well with any dimension. In the end, four items out of the 21 were removed because they represented either cross-loadings or poor loadings (one perceived risk item, one purchase intention item and two social media usage items). The Kaiser Meyer-Olkin indicator for the final EFA model was 0.919, indicating an excellent factor adequacy; Bartlett's sphericity test was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

The confirmatory factor analysis, performed in IBM Amos (version 20), tested the relations between these constructs and the related items; 17 items were retained for this stage of the analysis. The cut-off values used to estimate the goodness-of-fit of the measurement model were: for the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) – 0.08, for the comparative fit index (CFI) – 0.900, for the Tuckey-Lewis index (TLI) – 0.900, for the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) – 0.08, for the χ^2/df ratio – between 1 and 5. For this model, the values of these indicators were: $\chi^2(110) = 237.943$, $p < 0.01$, $\chi^2/df = 2.159$, RMSEA = 0.056, CFI = 0.952, TLI = 0.941, SRMR = 0.048. All the indicators meet their cut-off values. In conclusion, the measurement model is a very good fit.

The summary indicators for the measurement model are shown in Table 1. All the factor loadings are statistically significant ($t > 1.96$) and their standardized values are greater than 0.50. The average extracted values (AVE) are also greater than 0.50, indicating a good convergent validity for the model. Furthermore, all the constructs show a good reliability (the Cronbach's alpha values are greater than 0.70).

Table 1
Measurement model – summary indicators

Constructs and items	Beta	t-value	SE	Alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Social media usage	–	–	–	0.784	0.776	0.588
I use social media to follow my favourite brands.	0.640	–	–	–	–	–
I use social media to follow sales and promotions.	0.838	10.392	0.117	–	–	–
I use social media to monitor events.	0.530	8.872	0.074	–	–	–
I use social media to keep current on trends.	0.604	9.929	0.073	–	–	–
I use social media to improve my relations with different brands.	0.670	8.867	0.113	–	–	–
Message credibility	–	–	–	0.904	0.885	0.616
This post is reliable.	0.794	–	–	–	–	–
This post is sincere.	0.822	17.440	0.053	–	–	–
This post is a safe source of information.	0.752	15.505	0.056	–	–	–
This post is objective.	0.613	12.153	0.064	–	–	–
This post is authoritative.	0.721	14.715	0.059	–	–	–
This post is trustworthy.	0.846	18.093	0.055	–	–	–
This post is useful.	0.750	15.519	0.062	–	–	–
Perceived purchase risk	–	–	–	0.734	0.787	0.655
If I buy this phone I may lose money.	0.791	–	–	–	–	–
This phone may not fit in well with my self-image.	0.626	9.186	0.092	–	–	–
This phone may not work properly.	0.669	9.418	0.077	–	–	–
Purchase intention	–	–	–	0.732	0.718	0.773
I would like to have this phone.	0.608	–	–	–	–	–
I would probably buy this phone.	0.951	8.883	0.169	–	–	–

Source: authors' own processing.

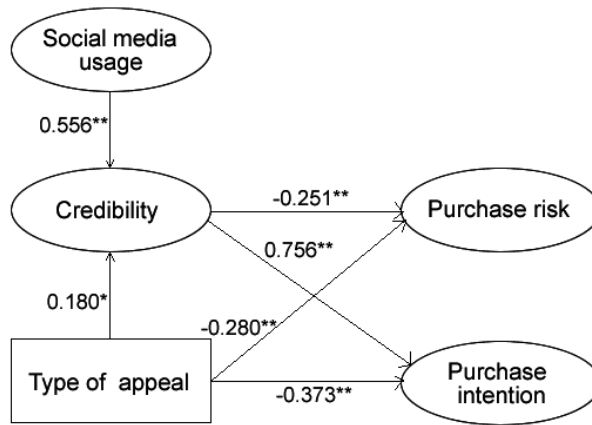
To estimate the discriminant validity of the model, the study compared the construct squared correlations with the average variance extracted; these figures are presented in Table 2. The average variance extracted can be found in the main diagonal (in bold), while the off-diagonal cells contain the squared correlations. All the AVE values are higher than the squared correlations, denoting a very good discriminant validity.

Table 2
Average variance extracted and squared correlations

	Social media usage	Message credibility	Purchase risk	Buying intention
Social media usage	0.588			
Message credibility	0.243	0.616		
Purchase risk	0.011	0.162	0.655	
Buying intention	0.145	0.491	0.064	0.773

Source: authors' own processing.

The goodness-of-fit indicators of the causal model in Figure 1 are as follows: $\chi^2(127)=279.906, p < 0.01, \chi^2/df = 2.204, RMSEA = 0.057, CFI = 0.944, TLI = 0.932, SRMR = 0.053$. These values suggest a very good fit for the research model; the regression coefficients can be found in both Figure 2 and Table 3. It should be noted that all the coefficients are statistically significant.



Note: * $p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01$

Fig. 2. Causal model – path coefficients

Source: authors' own processing.

Table 3
Causal model – path coefficients

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient	P	Result
1	2	3	4	5
H1	Facebook usage → Message credibility	0.556	<0.001	Confirmed
H2	Type of appeal → Message credibility	0.180	0.049	Confirmed

1	2	3	4	5
H3	Message credibility → Purchase intention	0.756	<0.001	Confirmed
H4	Type of appeal → Purchase intention	-0.373	<0.001	Not confirmed
H5	Message credibility → Purchase risk	-0.251	<0.001	Confirmed
H6	Type of appeal → Purchase risk	-0.280	<0.001	Confirmed

Source: authors' own processing.

The hypotheses H1-H3 and H5 are fully supported. As for hypothesis H6, the research shows a significant relation between the type of appeal and intention to buy, however, contrary to the hypothesis, this intention is stronger for the emotional messages (since the coefficient is negative). All these results are discussed in detail in the following section.

5. DISCUSSION

The research shows that social media messages about products and services do influence both the perceived purchase risk and the buying intention. The key variable that affects both is the credibility of the message, which largely depends on the social media usage behaviour. The model demonstrates that people who use social media to stay current with brands, promotions and retailers have the tendency to find the product-related social media messages reliable and trustworthy. In consequence, it is likely that they will be more receptive to their peers' recommendations and endorsements, considering them to be honest and sincere.

Message credibility is also influenced by the type of appeal, as the model proves. The rational messages seem to be a little more credible than the emotional messages (given that the regression coefficient of this path is positive and the reference category is represented by the respondents who saw the emotional message). However, the coefficient is small and marginally significant ($p = 0.49$), hence the effect of appeal on credibility is not conclusive. In conclusion, the main factor that influences credibility is social media usage habits; people with high scores for this factor will consider both emotional and rational messages trustworthy.

In turn, credibility influences both perceived risk and intention to buy. As expected, the relation between credibility and risk is negative: a highly credible message that promises the product quality and suitability reduces customer uncertainty and purchase anxiety. Furthermore, perceived buying risk is influenced by the type of appeal: the risk is lower for the rational message. This can be explained by the fact that the rational message contains specific facts and details (like technical characteristics, for example), so customers can form a true notion about the product and assess whether it is appropriate for them. Therefore, a social media recommendation that presents factual information in a sound manner will significantly diminish the customers' perceived purchase risk.

Credibility has also a strong positive influence on the purchase intention, thus people are more likely to buy products that were recommended by a reliable source. In this case, this source is a message posted by a social network peer. As for the relation between type of appeal and credibility, it is a negative one, meaning that purchase intention is lesser for the individuals who saw the rational message. This unexpected result may be due to the nature of the product selected for this research. Smartphones are high involvement products that are purchased after some careful consideration. According to Yang et al. (2012), the emotional appeal works better for high involvement products. Yeh and Lin (2010) reached a similar conclusion: the emotional appeal is more effective for the high involvement products because they are related to qualities like self-respect and achievement. Finally, it is worth mentioning the research by Geuens et al. (2011), who demonstrate that emotional messages are more successful in respect of hedonic products. One can plausibly maintain that smartphones are hedonic rather than utilitarian products because they are bought mostly for enjoyment (gaming, filming, surfing the Internet etc.), and not strictly for their core practical utility (making and receiving phone calls).

Consequently, at the same level of credibility, customers who read an emotional message would manifest a greater propensity to buy the product. Message credibility is nevertheless the main determinant of this propensity: a trustworthy message will convince customers to buy, irrespective what type of appeal is used. Since credibility is mostly influenced by social media usage behaviour, one can conclude that the model reveals the following chain of causation: a high level of social media usage determines a high perceived credibility of the peers' recommendations, which leads to a greater inclination to purchase the recommended products and services. For expensive, high-involvement products (like smartphones, in this case) the messages that use the emotional appeal may have a stronger influence on purchase intention.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has some limitations. First, the sample was only made up by Romanian respondents, most of them students. Second, the study used the convenience sampling technique to recruit the respondents. To some extent, these limitations could reduce the generalization of the results.

Further research could investigate the relation between type of appeal and buying intention for other categories of products (for example, convenience products and unsought products), and also for various categories of services. Another research direction could consist in examining the relations between the type of appeal used in the eWOM message and other message credibility antecedents such as perceived argument quality, source attractiveness, homophily, type of platform, etc.. These antecedents were thoroughly investigated by many authors: Cheung et al. (2008), Lis (2013), Bosman et al. (2013), Teng et al. (2017), but without taking into consideration the type of appeal – rational or emotional.

CONCLUSIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Social media have a strong impact on consumers, determining their buying decisions (Wang et al., 2012; Gunawan and Huarng, 2015). The findings show that people who use social networks to monitor their favourite brands and to keep up to date with the new trends are most influenced by their peers' recommendations: they are inclined to follow them and purchase the brands because they consider these recommendations trustworthy. The type of appeal used in the message – rational or emotional – plays an important role, influencing both perceived purchase risk and purchase intention. On the one hand, the rational appeal reduces the perceived risk, because it conveys objective information that helps customers make an informed decision. On the other hand, the emotional appeal can increase the purchase intention, because they trigger the consumers' desire to own the product. This occurs especially with high-involvement and hedonic products.

REFERENCES

- Alkailani, M., *Electronic word of mouth (ewom) and its effect on consumers' decisions to buy products and services in traditional stores in Jordan*, Journal of Competitiveness Studies, 24(4), 2016.
- Arslan, F., Altuna, O., *The effect of brand extensions on product brand image*, Journal of Product & Brand Management, 19(3), pp. 170-180, 2010.
- Baber, A., Thurasamy, R., Malik, M., Sadiq, B., Islam, S., Sajjad, M., *Online word-of-mouth antecedents, attitude and intention-to purchase electronic products in Pakistan*, Telematics and Informatics, 33, pp. 388-400, 2016.
- Bahrainizadeh, M., Ziaee, A., *Investigating the impact of risk aversion and the consumers' involvement with product on their loyalty and their oral advertising: The mediating role of attachment and trust in the brand*, New Marketing Research, 2(4), pp. 105-121, 2012.
- Bosman, D., Boshoff, C., van Rooyen, G.-J., *The review credibility of electronic word-of-mouth communication on e-commerce platforms*, Management Dynamics, 22(3), 2013.
- Casaló, L., Flavián, C., Guinalu, M., *New members' integration: Key factor of success in online travel communities*, Journal of Business Research, 66(6), pp. 706-710, 2013.
- Cheung, C., Lee, M., Rabjohn, N., *The impact of electronic word-of-mouth*, Internet Research, 18(3), pp. 229-247, 2008.
- D'Alessandro, S., Girardi, A., Tiangsoongnern, L., *Perceived risk and trust as antecedents of online purchasing behaviour in the USA gemstone industry*, Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics, 24(3), pp. 433-460, 2012.
- Esmailpour, M., Aram, F., *Investigating the impact of viral message appeal and message credibility on consumer attitude toward the brand*, Management & Marketing. Challenges for the Knowledge Society, 11(2), pp. 470-483, 2016.
- Geuens, M., De Pelsmacker, P., Fasseur, T., *Emotional advertising: Revisiting the role of product category*, Journal of Business Research, 64, pp. 418-426, 2011.
- Gogoi, B., *Study of antecedents of purchase intention and its effect on brand loyalty of private label brand of apparel*, International Journal of Sales & Marketing, 3(2), pp. 73-86, 2013.

- Gunawan, D., Huarng, K.-H., *Viral effects of social network and media on consumers' purchase intention*, Journal of Business Research, 68, pp. 2237-2241, 2015.
- Hernández, A., Küster, I., *Brand impact on purchasing intention. An approach in virtual social networks channels*, Economics and Business Letters, 1(2), pp. 1-9, 2012.
- Hongxia, Z., Jin, S., Fang, L., Knight, J., *Be rational or be emotional: advertising appeals, service types and consumer responses*, European Journal of Marketing, 48(11/12), pp. 2105-2126, 2014.
- Hsu, L.-C., Chih, W.-H., Liou, D.-K., *Investigating community members' eWOM effects in Facebook fan page*, Industrial Management & Data Systems, 116(5), pp. 978-1004, 2016.
- Kaplan, A., Haenlein, M., *Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media*, Business Horizons, 53(1), pp. 59-68, 2010.
- Kaplan, A., Haenlein, M., *Two hearts in three-quarter time: How to waltz the social media/viral marketing dance*, Business Horizons, 14(4), pp. 253-263, 2011.
- Kawa, L., Rahmadiani, S., Kumar, S., *Factors affecting consumer decision making: a survey of young adults on imported cosmetics in Jabodetabek, Indonesia*. The SIJ Transactions on Industrial, Financial & Business Management (IFBM), 1(5), 2013.
- Kim, D., Ferrin, D., Rao, R., *A trust-based consumer decision-making model in electronic commerce: the role of trust, perceived risk, and their antecedents*, Decision Support Systems, 44, pp. 544-564, 2008.
- Kotler, P., Keller, K., *Marketing management* (13th ed.), Prentice-Hall, New Jersey 2008.
- Kushwaha, T., Shankar, V., *Are multichannel customers really more valuable? The moderating role of product category characteristics*, Journal of Marketing, 77(4), pp. 67-85, 2013.
- Lee, J., Hong, I., *Predicting positive user responses to social media advertising: the roles of emotional appeal, informativeness, and creativity*, International Journal of Information Management, 36, pp. 360-373, 2016.
- Lee, W.-I., Cheng, S.-Y., Shih, Y.-T., *Effects among product attributes, involvement, word-of-mouth, and purchase intention in online shopping*, Asia Pacific Management Review, 2017.
- Lin, K.-Y., Lu, H.-P., *Intention to continue using Facebook fan pages from the perspective of social capital theory*, Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 14(10), 2011.
- Lis, B., *In eWOM we trust – A framework of factors that determine the eWOM credibility*, Business Information Systems & Engineering, 5(3), pp. 129-140, 2013.
- MacKenzie, S., Lutz, R., Belch, G., *The role of attitude toward the ad as a mediator of advertising effectiveness: A test of competing explanations*, Journal of Marketing Research, pp. 130-143, 1986.
- Martin, J., Mortimer, G., Andrews, L., *Re-examining online customer experience to include purchase frequency and perceived risk*, Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 25, pp. 81-95, 2015.
- Maxham, J., Netemeyer, R., *Firms reap what they sow: The effects of shared values and perceived organizational justice on customers' evaluations of complaint handling*, Journal of Marketing, 67(1), pp. 46-62, 2003.
- Mohseni, S., Jayashree, S., Rezaei, S., Kasim, A., Okumus, F., *Attracting tourists to travel companies' websites: The structural relationship between website brand, personal value, shopping experience, perceived risk and purchase intention*, Current Issues in Tourism, 21(6), pp. 614-645, 2016.
- Mortimer, G., Hasan, S., Andrews, L., Martin, J., *Online grocery shopping: The impact of shopping frequency on perceived risk*, The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research, 26(2), pp. 202-223, 2016.
- Noble, G., Pomeroy, A., Johnson, L., *Gender and message appeal: Their influence in a pro-environmental social advertising context*, Journal of Social Marketing, 4(1), pp. 4-21, 2014.
- O'Reilly, K., Marx, S., *How young, technical consumers assess online WOM credibility*, Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 14(4), pp. 330-359, 2011.

- Ohanian, R., *Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness*, Journal of Advertising, 19(3), pp. 39-52, 1990.
- Puto, C., & Wells, W., *Informational and transformational advertising: The differential effects of time*, Advances in Consumer Research, 11(1), pp. 638-643, 1984.
- Rapp, A., Beitelspacher, L., Grewal, D., Hughes, D., *Understanding social media effects across seller, retailer, and consumer interactions*, Journal of The Academy of Marketing Science, 41(5), pp. 547-566, 2013.
- Sun, J., *How risky are services? An empirical investigation on the antecedents and consequences of perceived risk for hotel service*, International Journal of Hospitality Management, 37, pp. 171-179, 2014.
- Taute, H., McQuitty, S., Sautter, E., *Emotional information management and responses to emotional appeals*, Journal of Advertising, 40(3), pp. 31-44, 2011.
- Teng, S., Khong, K., Chong, L., Lin, B., *Persuasive electronic Word-of-Mouth messages in social media*, Journal of Computer Information Systems, 57(1), pp. 76-88, 2017.
- Tih, S., Lee, K., *Perceptions and predictors of consumers' purchase intentions for store brands: Evidence from Malaysia*, Asian Journal of Business and Accounting, 6(2), 2013.
- Tsai, C.-H., Kuo, C.-C., Tan, M., *The cause and effects of word of mouth from consumer intention and behavior perspectives: A SEM model approach*, Economic and Social Thought, 4(2), 2017.
- Tsao, W.-C., Hsieh, M.-T., *eWOM persuasiveness: Do eWOM platforms and product type matter?*, Electronic Commerce Research, 15, pp. 509-541, 2015.
- Viviani, M., Pasi, G., *Credibility in social media: opinions, news, and health information – A survey*. WIREs Data Mining Knowledge Discovery, 7(5), pp. 1-25, 2017.
- Voss, K., Spangenberg, E., Grohmann, B., *Measuring the hedonic and utilitarian dimensions of consumer attitude*, Journal of Marketing Research, 40(3), pp. 310-320, 2003.
- Wang, X., Yu, C., Wei, Y., *Social media peer communication and impacts on purchase intentions: A consumer socialization framework*, Journal of Interactive Marketing, 26(4), pp. 198-208, 2012.
- Wu, P., Wang, Y.-C., *The influences of electronic word-of-mouth message appeal and message source credibility on brand attitude*, Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics, 23(4), pp. 448-472, 2011.
- Yang, H., Liu, H., Zhou, L., *Predicting young Chinese consumers mobile viral attitudes, intents and behavior*, Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics, 24(1), pp. 59-77, 2012.
- Yeh, J.-T., Lin, C.-L., *Measuring the effectiveness of advertisements sent via mobile phone: implications of the appeal, endorser and involvement model and purchasing behavior*, Social Behavior and Personality, 38(2), p. 249, 2010.
- Zeeshan, Z., *The impact of mobile service attributes on males' and females' purchase decision*, Management & Marketing Challenges for the Knowledge Society, 8(4), pp. 669-682, 2013.
- Zhang, H., Sun, J., Liu, F., Knight, J., *Be rational or be emotional: advertising appeals, service types and consumer responses*, European Journal of Marketing, 48(11/12), pp. 2105-2126, 2014.

Received: March 2020, revised: May 2021

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Let's suppose you want to buy a new smartphone, but you have not yet decided which brand to choose. While looking for information on the Internet, you see this *post* on your Facebook page.

Half of the respondents were presented with the post with the rational message, while the other half saw the post with the emotional message. The post texts can be found in Appendix B.

Please read the post carefully and answer the following questions as accurately as possible. The answers are confidential.

The post below is...

- ... reliable
- ... sincere
- ... a safe source of information
- ... objective
- ... authoritative
- ... trustworthy
- ... useful

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

- If I buy this phone I may lose money.
- This phone may not fit in well with my self-image.
- This phone may not work properly.
- This phone could affect my reputation if I bought it.
- I would like to have this phone.
- I would probably buy this phone.
- I would never buy this phone.

For each statement below, please indicate how much you agree with it.

- I use social media to follow my favourite brands.
- I use social media to follow sales and promotions.
- I use social media to monitor events.
- I use social media to keep up with current trends.
- I use social media to improve my relations with different brands.
- I use social media to communicate with companies.
- I use social media to follow tendencies.

APPENDIX B

PROMOTIONAL MESSAGES

Rational message

Do you want to buy a new phone? What about one with night vision, laser keypad, nano-SIM card, holographic display, high performance battery, 8-core processor, 4 GB RAM, 32 GB memory, Android operating system? Moreover, it has an HD 1080p 4-megapixel camera, facial detection and image stabilization. And the price is very affordable.

Emotional message

Let me tell you a secret... the smartphone that defines you is here. In a smartphone world, this is *your* phone. You can identify with it, you stay on it for hours, talking with your friends on social media. It's your world, your way, it's your freedom and adventure. It's the hottest and the slimmest device, but the strongest at the same time. Does it come in your colour? Does it have the astronomical speed you desire? Then you must have it!

APPENDIX C

SCALES

Social media usage

- I use social media to follow my favourite brands.
- I use social media to follow sales and promotions.
- I use social media to monitor events.
- I use social media to keep up with current trends.
- I use social media to improve my relations with different brands.
- I use social media to communicate with companies.*
- I use social media to follow tendencies.*

Message credibility

- This post is reliable.
- This post is sincere.
- This post is a safe source of information.
- This post is objective.
- This post is authoritative.
- This post is trustworthy.
- This post is useful.

Perceived purchase risk

- If I buy this phone I may lose money.

This phone may not fit in well with my self-image.
This phone may not work properly.
This phone could affect my reputation if I bought it.*

Purchase intention

I would like to have this phone.
I would probably buy this phone.
I would never buy this phone.*

* These items were removed during the scale purification process

APPENDIX D

ENCODINGS

To evaluate the items in the questionnaire, the 5-point Likert agreement scale was used. The scale options were coded as follows:

- 1 – strongly disagree
- 2 – disagree
- 3 – neither agree nor disagree
- 4 – agree
- 5 – strongly agree

The variable type of appeal from the SEM model was coded as follows:

- 0 – emotional appeal
- 1 – rational appeal