CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

3.0   Introduction

The present chapter consists of the study conceptual framework based on the literature review in the previous chapter. The following sections cover the framework including independent, mediating and dependent variables and their relationships. In addition, each hypothesis is presented based on the rationale behind it. This framework will be basis for designing the study in the following chapter.

3.1   Conceptual Framework

Based on the extensive literature review presented in Chapter 2, this study proposes a conceptual framework as illustrated in Figure 3.1.
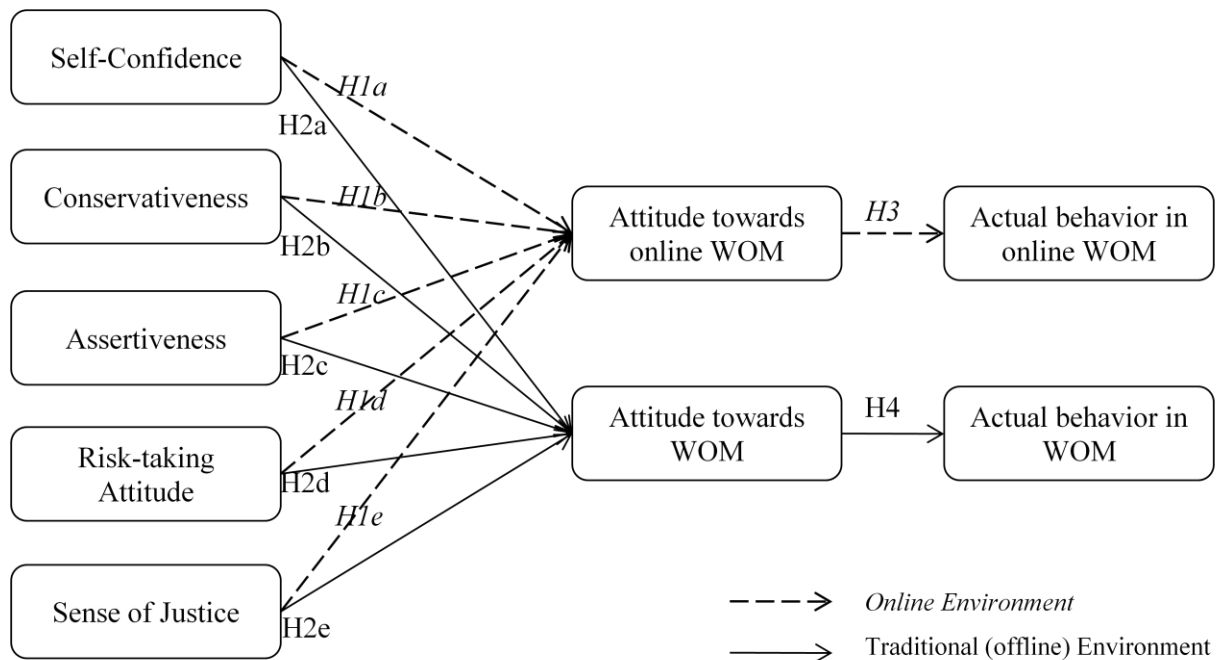

Figure 3.1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

This framework comprises of two fractions, one includes independent, mediating and dependent variables under online environment and the second consists of same variables except that they happen in conventional setting of spreading word of mouth.

The independent variables include personality characteristics which are adapted from Keng and Liu (1997) where the writers employed these characteristics to divide respondents into two groups of self and group oriented in order to examine their complaint behavior. However, for the purpose of this study, these characteristics are employed as independent variables. Independent variable of "self confidence" is also adapted from Lau and Ng (2001).

3.2　Development of Hypothesis

3.2.1　Independent Variables

Self-Confidence

Self-confidence which is defined as 'the extent to which a person believes himself to be capable, significant, successful and worthy' is proven to have significant influence on human behaviors such as negative word of mouth (Lau and Ng, 2001) and acquiring marketplace information (Loibl et al., 2009). Since self-confidence plays a significant role in human communications and persuasion skills [such as word of mouth] (Bell, 1967), therefore it can be hypothesized that:

H1a. There is a positive relationship between self-confidence of customer and their attitude towards online word of mouth.

H2a. There is a positive relationship between self-confidence of customer and their attitude towards conventional word of mouth.

Conservativeness

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, conservatism is defined as 'characterized by a tendency to preserve or keep intact or unchanged'. Moreover, Longman Dictionary describes conservative people by 'not to like or trust change and new ideas'. Just et al. (2003) in addition to resistance to change, characterizes conservatism with justification of and tolerance for inequality. Regarding to the literature, it can be concluded that conservative persons hesitate to share opinions (such as a comment in a website) in order to keep away from conflict of ideas. Furthermore, people with conservative tendencies do not trust in change and since one of the motives for spreading word of mouth could be bringing some kind of change, the following hypothesis are proposed:

H1b. There is a negative relationship between conservativeness and customer's attitude towards online WOM.

H2b. There is a negative relationship between conservativeness and customer's attitude towards conventional WOM

Assertiveness

Galassi et al. (1974) referring to Alberti and Emmons (1970) defines assertiveness as a 'behavior that enables a person to act in his own best interests, or stand up for himself without unnecessary anxiety, to articulate his rights without denying the rights of others'. Assertive people are concerned about their and others rights so they believe they should express their opinions and share their ideas. Hence the following can be hypothesized:

H1c. There is a positive relationship between customer's assertiveness and their attitude towards online word of mouth.

H2c. There is a positive relationship between customer's assertiveness and their attitude towards conventional word of mouth.

Risk-taking

According to Brockhaus (1982), risk perception is different among people and while taking a risk, they balance between greed (value) and fear (risk). While risk has two aspects of physical and psychological (Crust and Keegan, 2010), our focus will be on psychological aspect which reflects social approval and the judgments of others. Though, we may conclude the relationship between risk-taking attitudes and people's communications. Therefore, the following hypotheses are forwarded:

H1d. There is a positive relationship between customer's risk-taking attitude and their attitude towards online word of mouth.

H2d. There is a positive relationship between customer's risk-taking attitude and their attitude towards conventional word of mouth.

Sense of Justice

We apply a definition of Sense of Justice which is very close to the 'concern for other consumers'. According to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) many online communities are built to help consumers with their buying decisions. This Pro-social behavior is characteristic of people who consider a responsibility and duty in criticizing or praising a product. Therefore, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H1e. There is a positive relationship between customer's sense of justice and their attitude towards online word of mouth.

H2e. There is a positive relationship between customer's sense of justice and their attitude towards conventional word of mouth.

3.2.2 Mediating and Independent Variables

Attitude towards word of mouth and Behavior

There has been vast amount of study and support for the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985). This theory predicts behaviors through measuring variables including attitude towards behavior (behavioral attitudes) which consequently leads to intentions. According to Ajzen (1991), intention (trying to perform a behavior) is strongly correlated with the actual performance. Therefore, we may eliminate intention from this equation and forward the following hypothesis:

H3. Attitude towards online word of mouth is positively related with consumers' actual behavior of spreading online word of mouth.

H4. Attitude towards conventional word of mouth is positively related with consumers' actual behavior of spreading word of mouth.

3.3 Constructs to Variables

Variables are constructed through items as shown in Table 3.1.

3.4 Summary

Chapter three covered the conceptual framework of the study which is based on the literature review in chapter two. Five independent variables, two mediating and two independent variables are explained followed by twelve hypotheses that are proposed based on the framework. In addition, constructs to each variable are presented. Next chapter will discuss how these propositions will be test and verified.

Variable	Construct/ Item	Source
Self-Confidence	like to receive attention	Kau and Liu, 1997
	preference to be different	
	like different and unique products	
	avoid friends' disapprove	
	self-confidence level	
Conservativeness	listen to advice by elders	Kau and Liu, 1997
	stick to the usual ways of doing things	
	conform to social norms	
	do not like change	
	do not express ideas in public	
Assertiveness	stand up for beliefs	Kau and Liu, 1997
	assertive personality	
	express complaints	Deltsidou, 2009
	express opinions	
	follower or leader	
Risk-taking Attitude	feeling of taking risks	Franken et al., 1992
	let fear get in the way of doing things	
	importance of people' judgments	
	care about people' judgment	
	risk-taker personality	
Sense of Justice	complain as a duty	Kau and Liu, 1997
	bothered if do not complain	
	responsibility to inform the sellers	
	express good experiences of a product	-
	fairness to friends	
Attitude towards Online WOM	make improvement through online reviews	-
	time/effort needed for online review	
	complication of online websites	
	helpfulness of online reviews	
	trust independent online reviews	
Attitude towards conventional WOM	helpfulness of friends' information	-
	recommend travel service to friends	
	inform friends about bad travel services	
	trust family and friends' recommendations	
	like to share the information	
Actual behavior of Online WOM	check online reviews before traveling	-
	write positive review when satisfaction	
	write negative review when dissatisfaction	
Actual behavior of Conventional WOM	tell friends about bad experiences	-
	recommend good travel services	
	seek information from family and friends	

Table 3.1 Constructs of variables