

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

EFFECTS OF EWOM, BRAND IMAGE, AND BRAND ATTITUDE ON CONSUMER'S WILLINGNESS TO PAY MORE IN THE LOW-COST AIRLINE INDUSTRY IN THAILAND

Somcanae Yodpram, Ph.D.

International Academy of Aviation Industry, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology, Thailand
Email: somcanae.yo@kmitl.ac.th Tel. +66918797419

Nuchjarin Intalar, Ph.D.

International Academy of Aviation Industry, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology, Thailand
Email: nuchjarin.in@kmitl.ac.th

Somcanae Yodpram, Nuchjarin Intalar: Effects of eWOM, Brand Image, and Brand Attitude on Consumer's Willingness to Pay More in the Low-Cost Airline Industry in Thailand-- Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 17(7). ISSN 1567-214x

Keywords: Airline Brand, Airline Management, Airline Marketing, Brand Attitude, Brand Image, Ewom, Low-Cost Airline Market, Social Media, Willingness To Pay More

ABSTRACT

Stakeholders in airline market currently pay attention on the consumers' opinion and comments posted on the social media platform since it affects to the brand of airline, competitiveness, and their innovation direction. The aim of this study is to examine the influence of conversations in social media and information posting on various internet platforms on consumers' willingness to pay more in the context of low-cost airline market. The article also describes a study focusing on the moderating role of brand attitude and brand image toward customers' willingness to pay more on airfare. For this purpose, a conceptual model was developed and was validated through structural equation modeling (SEM) based on surveys of 246 experience low cost airline passengers who seek related information from websites and social medias. The results confirm that eWOM has a significant direct effect on brand image but not brand attitude nor willingness to pay more. In addition, the finding also reveals the fully mediating impacts of brand image and brand attitude on eWOM and willingness to pay more.

INTRODUCTION

In the current age, customer's willingness to purchase a certain product or service has become problematic and challenging since they can engage in

information posted on the internet. The expansion usage of the social media due to the affordable acquiring technologies such as internet network and smartphone has extended customers' options for gathering products and services information by including other customers' comments and opinions posted on the Internet. Customers have opportunities to share their experience, perception, and advice by engaging in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on their social media and websites that facilitate reviewing consumer's experiences, which can be reached by their friends and other potential customers. Many studies show a positive influence between information that customer receive and product brand aspects. Most of the research related to the effects of brand attributes or purchasing behavior has been focusing on products. However, service is playing a vital role in the developing economy. The stream of research on service has been undertaken in only a few areas comparing to product (Javalgi, Cutler, & Winans, 2011). In addition, the research that focuses on the service industry in developing economies is still limited. Sharifpour, Sukati, and Alikan (2016) cited that most of research that relevant to purchasing decision of consumer has been undertaken in the developed countries. The case for developing country remain scarce. Airline business is among the many types of service businesses that are focusing on building a strong brand since it can influence revenue stream to their business. Before COVID-19, with improvement in infrastructure, rules, and regulations, it was expected that the airline route will be increase 7.6% per year in Southeast East Asia (Lerrthairakul & Panjakajornsak, 2014). Various research regarding airline ticket purchasing behavior has been conducted on passengers who have experience from on well-known low-cost airline operating in Thailand including Thai Air Asia, Not Air, Orient Thai, Vietjet, etc. It is found that buying behavior can be impacted from many factors. This implies that lowest price is not only significant factor that influence decision making for passenger to purchase service form low cost airline. Even though, many low cost airline face the COVID-19 problems in 2020, however, with supported from government especially financial assistance such as loan guarantees or tax relief, it is expected that airline industry will be revived (Tantipidok, 2020). In addition, this research focus on low cost airline in Thailand in which travel restriction for domestic is expected to be abandoned faster than international flight. Domestic flight is expected to be operated before international flight. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic makes consumers engage more in online world. Therefore, the result from studying effect of eWOM and brand aspects remains applicable and greatly contribute to the business and industry since they are directly related to business value and airline revenue stream.

With regards to the mentioned research gap, Yodpram and Intalar (Yodpram & Intalar, 2020) proposed the conceptual model of the relationship between eWOM, brand aspects, and WTPM in the context of airline business. However, this study revise and modifies the previous study as well as extends the work by developing model and testing the formulated hypothesis. The modification need to be made since the revision of literature indicates the interplays between eWOM and interested factors as well as the significance of mediating role which was not elaborated in the previous mentioned study. The

objective of this research is to explore not only the impact of eWOM on customer's willingness to pay premium price but also the role of brand image and brand attitude interplay in the context of low-cost airline industry. The data will be collected from experienced travelers with low cost airlines that have aircrafts operated in Thailand. Research have encountered the change from traditional way to attract greater number of customers to online and social network drivers. Understanding the bond among eWOM, consumer perception toward brand aspects and behavioral aspect of purchasing decision making would contribute to the consumer and brand relevant theories and airline brand management strategies.

BACKGROUND

Airline industry especially low-cost airline in Thailand is facing many challenges. The industry before COVID-19 was already competitive. Post COVID-19 era require aviation firms to adjust themselves. Creating additional value and dispersing information is seen as important strategy for airlines. Firms try to create content on social media to create positive impact on their brand. Vinh, Phuong, Nga, and Nguyen (2019) found that firm-created content as well as user-generated content have positive impact on various brand aspects. Nadarajana, Bojeia, and Khalid (2017) indicated that 70% of consumers read consumer generated content about the brand of their preference product. Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) defines as any statements about products either positive or negative provided by future, present, or experienced customers, and can access such statements by anyone online (Henning-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). Jalivand, Esfahani, and Samiei (2010) added the direct experience perspective and stated that any review of product or service that consumer has experience and post online which available to potential consumers is considered to be eWOM.

This research is conducted on the basis of social network theory. Social network is the integration among people in the group that have similar interests (Radpour, R., & Honarvar, 2018). People involve in social network for benefits and that can influence people behavior and actions (Granovetter, 1983; Kim, Kandampully, & Bilfihan, 2018). WOM and eWOM become one of the main interests that many researchers study in regard to social network theory. The element of message in WOM and eWOM includes opinion-giving, opinion-passing, and opinion-seeking (Lee, Phua, & Wu, 2020). Husnain, Qureshi, Fatima, and Akhtar (2016) utilized social network theory as a basis to explain eWOM phenomenon and found direct effect on impulse buying behavior. Brown, Broderick, and Lee (2007) distinguished the different between the form of offline and online social network construct and the way WOM and eWOM impact on consumers. With the development of technology and e-commerce, consumers receive information through eWOM rather than traditional WOM. However, Henning-Thurau et al. (2004) concluded that both traditional word of mouth (WOM) and eWOM would have an impact on consumers' behavior and attitudes towards a brand. Frequent flyer who has experienced a negative eWOM will influence the brand attitude of frequent flyers. However, eWOM is different

from WOM in the way that it shares information on the online platform and not necessarily limited to only face to face experience sharing (Charo, Sharma, Sheikh, Hasen, & Sufya, 2015). eWOM is typically occurred in social media where users can generate content such as blogs, forums, ratings, etc. and exchange their personal information among their network, usually family, friends, and colleagues (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017).

This study integrates the concept of brand to the mentioned social network theory. Existing research presented the evidence supported the relationship between eWOM, brand, and consumer's buying decision. Fine, Gironda, and Petrescu (2017) cited that eWOM such as online review has been found to have direct effect on consumer's brand and purchasing decision. In addition, various research in airline industry recognize the branding study since it can provide airline competitive advantage and affected behavior of consumers such as purchasing intention (Chung & Feng, 2016). However, the mentioned interrelationships are ambiguous in the service sector. This research focus on the two main pillars of brand knowledge, namely brand image and brand attitude. The concepts and their relatedness to eWOM is elaborated in the subsequent part.

Brand image (BImage) is defined as the emotional perceptions that make consumers have favorable on a specific product or services' brand (Low & Lamb, 2000). Consumers are able to distinguish and prefer particular product brand according to the image attached to brand (Anwar, Gulzar, Sohail, & Akram, 2011). Consumers usually search for information related to brand of product online before they purchase. Firm needs to establish positive mindset of brand on consumer perception to make its product or service distinguish from their competitors (Farzin & Fattah, 2018). For the research related to low-cost carrier airline, Arif (2019) presented that eWOM and brand image significantly impact on airfare repurchase intentions. Brand attitude (BATT) is the summation of overall evaluation of particular brand that trigger consumer's behavior and expression such as their intension to pay higher price for the brand that can generate positive attitude (Augusto & Torres, 2018). The factor is commonly studied in the field of consumer behavior since it implies consumers' perception toward product or service (Jung & Seock, 2016). Consumers evaluate whether they have positive or negative feeling toward brand base on the incentive that link toward brand (Kudeshia & Mittal, 2016). Wu and Wang (2014) presented that the three components of brand attitude are cognitive, affective and conation. Brand attitude can be influenced from various factors. For example, the studies from Kempf and Smith (1998) and Krystallis and Chrysochou (2014) indicated that the initiation from product advertising can influence brand satisfaction and brand attitude. Therefore, it is interesting to study other factors that can possibly influence brand aspects such as eWOM. In addition, previous studies have presented brand image and brand attitude as the two main pillars for the mediating roles in the context of product brand assessment.

Many researchers use willingness to pay (WTP) and willingness to pay more (WTPM) for a certain product or service as the outcome to measure purchasing behavior of consumers. There is a slightly difference between WTP and WTPM. WTP measure "the maximum price a buyer is willing to pay"

(Barber, Kuo, Bishop, & Goodman, 2012). However, WTPM measure the additional amount of price that consumer is willing to pay for their products or services (Shin, Moon, Jung, & Severt, 2017). Netemeyar et al. (2004) described the situation that consumers are ready and willing to pay higher price relatively to other similar product brands as WTPM. Therefore, willingness to pay more is the relatively one. Business unit are able to propose a premium price if they can create perception of higher value. For example, some customers relatively perceived that environmentally friendly products have higher value comparing to the less environmentally friendly ones (Ayadi & Lapeyre, 2014; Toklu & Kucuk, 2017) Many researchers use WTPM as the dependent factor after consumers receive additional input of information attached to the product or service. Lee (2011) examine the behavior of consumers' WTPM toward environmentally friendly apparel products. There is a connection between WTPM and other mentioned variables in this research. Consumers' willingness to pay more for airline service is considered to be the subsequent variable resulted from eWOM, brand image, and brand attitude. Therefore, this study use WTPM as its aim is to assess if consumer would like to pay an additional price for a certain airline, after they have evaluate information, comparing to those that exist in the market with possible lower fares rather than the maximum amount that consumer is willing to purchase.

eWOM and brand image

Consumer eWOM can be a trigger factor in shaping process of purchasing decision. Online information between consumers are found to be reliable sources and influence perception of brand image. Elseidi and El-Baz (2016) found that eWOM has positive effect on brand image in the context of smartphone product, as well as purchasing intension. In the e-commerce fashion business, Pratiwi and Yasa (2019) presented that eWOM has a positive and significant influence brand image. When consumers perceive that there are many positive or negative review on the brand that they interest, they will tend to develop positive or negative image of that particular brand. Chiou and Cheng (2003) cited that unfavorable reviews can influence on product evaluation and attitudes in the negative way given that the brand image is not strong. eWOM can be antecedent and reinforcement of positive image for the brand. Research has been found not only the direct effect of eWOM on WTPM but brand image as the mediator factor between eWOM and WTPM. Tariq et al. (2017) indicated that brand image is the mediating factor between eWOM and consumer purchasing intension in smartphone product. With respect to the same product category, Semuel and Lianto (2014) also found similar result between eWOM and buying interest. Dwivedi, Nayeem, and Murshed (2018) cited the interplays of brand concepts as well as their mediating role in which willingness to pay the premium price is the final dependent variable. The discussion above implied that when consumers acquire more eWOM, they tend to be able to evaluate the brand that has more favorable image. Consistent with previous research, the study proposes the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis One: eWOM positively influences on brand image.

eWOM and brand attitude

Users are motivated to make comment and publish their experiences with product, service, and brand on virtual communities. Therefore, the spreading of eWOM toward a certain brand turn into an important factor in influence consumer attitude toward that brand. A research was recently done is 2019 by Sugiri, Supriyanto, Rumani. It was concluded that eWOM has positive relationship with brand image and brand attitude in the context of smartphone product as well as purchasing intention. Consumers have found interpersonal interaction in regard to brand aspect to be more reliable. Online reviews act as strong source of information that influence attitude toward brand. Kudeshia and Mittal (2016) presented that there is a positive influence of eWOM on brand attitude and purchasing intention in the context of consumer electronic products. People can express their eWOM on product or service by posting their comments which reflect their attitude toward brand on their favorite social network sites such as facebook. Lee et al. (2020) found that neutral comments about brand posted on social network sites such as facebook impacted on brand attitude in the context of health products. The judgement on brand result in positive or negative brand attitude outcome. However, the magnitude of eWOM in shaping brand attitude depends on the reliable of sources. Trustworthy among social network members plays critical role in determining the size of the effect. Wu and Wang (2014) separated eWOM into higher and lower source of credibility and found out in 2014 that eWOM with higher message source of credibility generate the better brand attitude comparing to the lower source one for notebooks and shampoo products. Base on this discussion, the research hypothesizes the following:

Hypothesis Two: eWOM positively influences brand attitude.

eWOM on WTPM

The spreading of online reviews on social media not only act as informants providing product or service information but also help persuade prospective customer to purchase the product or service brand. Existing research analyze the impact of eWOM on different aspect of consumers' purchasing behavior. Charo et al. (2015) pointed out that customer involved with eWOM in two stage. Consumer adopted information in stage one and influence brand image and purchasing decision in stage two. The result indicated that eWOM has significant impact on brand image and purchasing decision in the food industry. Positive and negative online satisfaction reviews thus can encourage or discourage consumers to pay additional price for their favorable product or service brand. Sharifpour et al. (2016) review that eWOM is one of the marketing tools and can influences consumer's purchasing decision in the

context of telecommunication industry. Consumer eWOM was found to have positive influence on willingness to pay premium price in which consumer-brand identification and consumer-based brand equity are the mediated factors in the retail banking industry (Augusto & Torres, 2018). Based on these discussions the study proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis Three: eWOM positively influences WTPM.

Brand image, brand attitude and WTPM

The brand can differentiate perception of product or service quality, thus, enable consumer willingness to offer more price for their favorable brand (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009). Existing research shows that the two pillars of branding concept, brand image and brand attitude can influence willingness to pay more price for many types of goods. Brakus et al. (2009), Chen (2010), and Yoo and Donthu (2011) as cited in Farzin and Fattahi (2018) stated that brand image has direct effect on willingness to pay extra price for product or service that company offer, thus, impact on income of firm. Brand image enhances competitiveness of firm which impact on consumer's choice of decision making. Kotler and Keller (2009) cited that brand help shape process when consumer must make choice. Anselmsson, Bondesson, and Johansson (2014) explained the three dimension of brand image including uniqueness, social image and home country origin plays an important role in determining customer's willingness to pay in the packaged food products.

For brand attitude, Wang, Kao, and Ngamsiriudom (2017) and Wu and Wang (2014) presented that brand attitude has a positive influence on customers' purchasing intention. As stated earlier that brand attitude reflect consumer's feeling toward product or service, applied to this study context, consumers might be willing to pay more price that commensurate with their attitude toward service brand. There is empirical evidence that the relationship between brand attitude and customer's willingness to pay premium price is mediated by consumer-brand identification and consumer-based brand equity in the study of retail bank customers' behavior (Augusto & Torres, 2018). Brand attitude is a good indicator to predict being willingness. Positive attitude toward brand can be an important platform to establish close feeling connection, resulting in tendency to pay price premium for that brand. This research hope to understand the brand dimensions effect on WTPM on airline service. Although the previous study focuses mainly on product market, this research hope to provide general contributions by adding perspective on airline service industry. Together, these arguments indicate that brand image and brand attitude will enhance consumer's likelihood to pay a higher price.

Furthermore, previous research cited that favorable brand image results in positive consequences including other brand aspects (Hyun & Kim, 2011). Image of store was used to examine the impact on brand attitude (Park, Park, & Dubinsky, 2011). Previous research studied various causes that influence brand attitude including other brand aspects. Liu, Wong, Tseng, Chang, and Phau

(2017) presented that brand image has significantly positive impact on brand attitude in the context of luxury hotel brand in Macau. Therefore, there is the motivation to examine the interplays between the two brand pillars. Hence, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis Four: Brand image positively influences brand attitude.

Hypothesis Five: Brand image positively influences WTPM.

Hypothesis Six: Brand attitude positively influences WTPM.

Hypothesis Seven: Brand image mediates the effect of eWOM on consumers' WTPM for airline services.

Hypothesis Eight: Brand attitude mediates the effect of eWOM on consumers' WTPM for airline services.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Base on the social network theory, since eWOM is the social network communication, therefore, this study proposes a conceptual model that measure the influence of eWOM on consumer actions namely brand image, brand attitude, and willingness to pay more on service. The relationships among eWOM, Brand Attitude, Brand Loyalty, Brand Image, and WTPM and research hypotheses are shown in Figure 1.

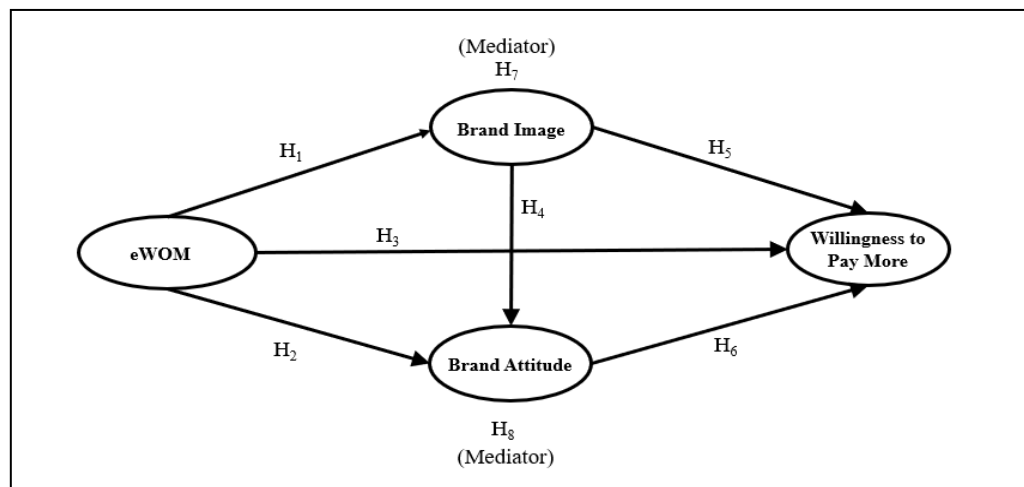


Figure 1. Research model

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample and Data Collection

The questionnaire was developed in five main parts which are (1) respondents' demographic, (2) electronic word-of-mouth, (3) brand image, (4) brand attitude, and (5) willingness to pay more price. The questionnaires used a 5-point Likert scale rating matrix with "5" indicating "strongly agree" and "1" indicating "strongly disagree". The questionnaires were distributed from June to

October 2019 via online channels. Of the 500 questionnaires distributed, a total of 293 questionnaires were collected. However, there were 246 valid questionnaires because 47 of them contained invalid data.

Measurement

The measurement of eWOM are adapted from Kudeshia and Kumar (2017) and adjusted to the context of airline business. The brand image scale are taken from Davis, Golicic, and Marquardt (2009) in which the measurements were designed for service business such as logistic industry. The brand attitude latents are from Augustoa and Torres (2018). WTPM is taken from Ong, Lee, and Ramayah (2018). The latents of the mentioned research work were adapted from WTPM in the context of restaurant industry by replacing restaurant brand with airline brand.

Table 1. Measurement items

Measures	Variables	References
eWOM	I often read online reviews from friends or other customers to ensure that I used service from the right low-cost airline brand.	Adapted from Kudeshia and Kumar (2017)
	I often read online reviews from friends or other customers to check whether an airline create a good impression on customers.	
	I often read online reviews from friends or other customers to gather information regarding service of this airline	
	I often read online reviews from friends or other customers to create confident for purchasing decision	
Brand image	The airline that I used is generally perceived as an airline that takes a good care of customers	Adapted from Davis, Golicic, and Marquardt (2009)
	Airline that I used is generally maintain a good service compared with other airlines	
	Airline that I used has a long history	
Brand attitude	The airline brand that I choose is good.	Adapted from Augustoa and Torres (2018)
	The airline brand that I choose is pleasant.	
	The airline brand that I choose is favorable.	
Willingness to Pay More	I am committed to this airline brand that I used	Adapted from Ong, Lee, and Ramayah (2018)
	I am willing to pay the extra price to this airline over other brands.	

Measures	Variables	References
	I would continue to use the service from this airline, even if its price increase.	

Demographic characteristics

A descriptive summary of the demographic characteristics of the respondents is shown in Table 1. About 54.88% of them were female and the rest were male. The majority of the respondent aged between 20-30 which accounted for 40.65% of the respondents. The respondents were also well-educated with 67.48% having a bachelor's degree and 21.54% having a master's degree. The respondents who had medium average income between 15,000 – 30,000 THB (\$500 - \$1,000) accounted for 43.50% and 38.63% of the respondents having average income greater than 30,000 THB (\$1,000). Most of the respondents work in private companies (39.02%). Most of the respondents used a low-cost airline 2 – 3 times per year (42.48%). Most of the respondents spent about 1,000 – 1,500 THB (\$33 - \$45) for a 1-way trip.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of respondents (n=246)

Characteristics		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	111	45.12
	Female	135	54.88
Age	< 20	5	2.03
	20 – 30	100	40.65
	31 - 40	92	37.40
	41 – 50	31	12.60
	> 51	18	7.32
Education	Below bachelor degree	13	5.28
	Bachelor degree	166	67.48
	Master degree	53	21.54
	Higher than master degree	14	5.69
Average income	< 15,000 THB	44	17.89
	15,000 – 30,000 THB	107	43.50
	30,001 – 45,000 THB	34	13.82

Characteristics		Frequency	%
	45,001 – 60,000 THB	30	12.20
	60,001 – 75,000 THB	10	4.07
	> 75,000 THB	21	8.54
Occupation	Student	45	18.29
	Government	59	23.98
	Private company	96	39.02
	Self-employed	41	16.67
	Retired	5	2.03
Frequency of using low-cost service airline	Less than 2 times/year	61	24.80
	2-3 times/year	104	42.28
	4-5 times/year	42	17.07
	More than 5 times/year	39	15.85
Average cost per trip (1-way)	Less than 1,000 THB	44	17.89
	1,000-1,500 THB	109	44.31
	1,501-2,000 THB	45	18.29
	2,001-2,500 THB	26	10.57
	More than 2,500 THB	22	8.94
Low-cost airline frequently used	Air Asia	118	47.97
	Nok Air	27	10.98
	Orient Thai Airlines	6	2.44
	Thai Lion Air	51	20.73
	Scoot	12	4.88
	Vietjet Airline	10	4.07
	Other	22	8.94

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation for each variable. The maximum value is 5 (strongly agree), and the minimum value is 1 (strongly disagree). The average of eWOM is 3.71, indicated the respondents agree that they read online review to gather information and increase their confidence in purchasing decision toward a low-cost airline. The average of

brand image, brand attitude, and willingness to pay more are 3.63, 3.62, and 2.93, respectively.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of variables

Variables		Mean	SD
eWOM	eWOM1	3.79	0.945
	eWOM2	3.52	1.131
	eWOM3	3.89	1.038
	eWOM4	3.63	1.060
Brand Image (BImage)	BImage1	3.70	0.938
	BImage3	3.63	0.866
	BImage5	3.56	0.974
Brand Attitude (BAtt)	BAtt2	3.61	0.962
	BImage2	3.66	0.924
	BImage4	3.59	0.916
Willingness to Pay More (WTPM)	WTPM1	3.11	1.064
	WTPM 2	2.96	1.184
	WTPM 3	2.72	1.219

RESULTS

Construct Validation

We conducted the CFA on the original measurement model. The results showed unfit indices because the values were not in acceptable ranges (CMIN/DF: 4.019, GFI: 0.859, RMSEA: 0.111, RMR: 0.067, NFI: 0.820, CFI: 0.856) (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). We improved the goodness-of-fit indices by adjusting the model using modification indices. The high value of the modification indices indicated that two items were highly correlated. After modifying the model, the results showed a good model fit (CMIN/DF: 2.925, GFI: 0.911, RMSEA: 0.089, RMR: 0.061, NFI: 0.880, CFI: 0.916).

Next, we conducted the discriminant validity and reliability. The results of Cronbach's alpha, average variance extract (AVE), and construct reliability (CR) suggested that the model was valid and reliable. The rules of thumb used to evaluate the values of Cronbach's alpha, CR, and AVE are 0.7, 0.6, and 0.5, respectively. Table 3 shows the factor loading, Cronbach's alpha, AVE, and CR

values for the constructs. The estimated value of Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.692 to 0.847, which exceeded 0.7. CR ranged from 0.833 to 0.899 which exceeded 0.6. The average variance extracted ranged from 0.627 to 0.690 which exceeded 0.5. These results indicated that the internal consistency of the measurement model was acceptable.

Table 4. Reliability and Validity Testing

Construct	Variable	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	CR
Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)	eWOM1	0.863	0.847	0.690	0.899
	eWOM2	0.792			
	eWOM3	0.801			
	eWOM4	0.863			
Brand Image (BImage)	BImage1	0.823	0.692	0.627	0.833
	BImage3	0.859			
	BImage5	0.682			
Brand Attitude (BAtt)	Batt2	0.739	0.712	0.637	0.840
	BImage2	0.840			
	BImage4	0.812			
Willingness to Pay More (WTPM)	WTPM1	0.783	0.773	0.688	0.869
	WTPM2	0.807			
	WTPM3	0.896			

Hypothesis Testing

This study used structural equation modeling (SEM) to test hypotheses. The results showed that the full model had acceptable goodness of fit index (CMIN/DF = 2.978, $p = 0.000$; GFI = 0.907; AGFI = 0.844; NFI = 0.877; IFI = 0.915; CFI = 0.913).

H1 examines the relationship between eWOM and brand image. The results show a significant positive association between eWOM and brand image ($\beta = 0.384$, $p \leq 0.01$). This finding consistent with Elseidi and El-Baz (2016) and Pratiwi and Yasa (2019) which suggested that the higher the eWOM, the better brand image. H2 examines the relationship between eWOM and brand attitude. The results show an insignificant positive association between eWOM and brand attitude ($\beta = 0.274$, $p > 0.05$). H3 examines the effect of eWOM on willingness to pay more. The results also show an insignificant relationship between these two variables ($\beta = 0.079$, $p > 0.05$). H4 tests the effect of brand image on brand

attitude. It shows a significant positive direct effect from brand image on brand attitude as well ($\beta = 0.442$, $p \leq 0.001$). The results confirm that the better brand image will be resulted in better attitude toward airline brand. H5 examines the effect of brand image on the willingness to pay more. While the effect of brand attitude on the willingness to pay more is tested in H6. The results show that both brand image and brand attitude have significant effects on the willingness to pay more.

Table 5. The results of the direct relationships among constructs

Hypothesized paths		β	S.E.	C.R.	P	Results
H1	eWOM → Brand Image	0.384	0.060	4.017	***	Supported
H2	eWOM → Brand Attitude	0.274	0.105	1.887	0.059	Not supported
H3	eWOM → Willingness to Pay More	0.079	0.064	0.882	0.378	Not Supported
H4	Brand Image → Brand Attitude	0.442	0.115	4.401	***	Supported
H5	Brand Image → Willingness to Pay More	0.460	0.140	3.733	***	Supported
H6	Brand Attitude → Willingness to Pay More	0.574	0.115	4.921	***	Supported

Note: *** Statistically significant at $p < 0.001$

The path analysis was conducted to test the mediating effects of brand image and brand attitude. Table 6 shows the results of the standardized regression of direct and indirect effects among constructs. Without the mediator latent construct, eWOM does not have direct effect toward the willingness to pay more. The results indicate that eWOM does not directly influences the passengers to willingly pay more price for airline. When including brand image and brand attitude as the mediator latent, the results shows that both brand image and brand attitude fully mediate the effect of eWOM on the willingness to pay more because the coefficients value of eWOM becomes insignificant. Thus, H5 and H6 are supported.

Table 6. The results of the indirect relationships among constructs

Hypothesized paths		Direct without mediator	Direct with mediator	Indirect effect	Results
H7	eWOM ® Brand Image ® WTPM	0.486**	0.151	0.317	Fully mediated

H8	eWOM ® Brand attitude ® WTPM	0.486**	0.028	0.327	Fully mediated
----	------------------------------	----------------	--------------	--------------	-----------------------

Note: *** Statistically significant at $p < 0.001$, ** Statistically significant at $p < 0.01$

DISCUSSION

In this study, we aimed to evaluate the effect of eWOM and relationship among brand aspect, proposed eight hypotheses, and examine these hypotheses by using an empirical data set collected from questionnaires. This research developed a model that was validated, supported, and tested. The present study suggested that, in case of the existence of eWOM effect, the purchasing behavior of low-cost airline consumers shall not be explained only with relatively lower cost. Within this framework, when eWOM is employed as influence factor in the sample of Thai consumers, the assessment of consumers has formed the main structure of this research.

Both eWOM and brand image together explain WTPM significantly. The research results prove that eWOM has significant impact on brand image. Consumers received information regarding brand from online WOM and that effect to image of low-cost airline services. Thus, the results are in line with prior studies which found eWOM to be the factor affecting brand image in physical product market (Elseidi & El-Baz, 2016; Pratiwi & Yasa, 2019). This indicates that online information can stimulate consumers to have favorable perception in of a particular low-cost airline brand. When passengers read more reviews about the airline, they will realize which brand has more favorable reviews, thus, lead to better brand image. In addition, our results show that brand image have a significant effect on brand attitude as well as WTPM. This result is also in line with the results of other studies e.g. Anselmsson et al. (2014) which cited the impact of brand image on buying decision.

The finding indicated that eWOM does not have effect on brand attitude. This result contradicts to the previous study conducted by Wu and Wang (2014), Kudeshia and Kumar (2017), and Sugiri, Supriyanto, and Rumani (2019). However, the previous work studied the effect of eWOM on physical products such as smartphone, notebook, and shampoo. It is verified in this study that the result service business can be different. On the other side, the effect of brand attitude on WTPM is similar to the effect of brand image on this outcome, indicating that brand attitude is relevant to influence WTPM. It shows that respondent is more willing to pay extra price if their attitude toward airline is favorable. The results also give the insight that brand attitude has slightly stronger affect to WTPM than brand image. Therefore, the airline should enable any activity that motivate positive feeling or attitude toward brand.

The results show the effect of eWOM does not significantly affect WTPM. This study subsequently tests partial or full mediating role of brand image and brand attitude. The results show that the effect eWOM on WTPM is fully mediated by both brand image and brand attitude. Therefore, this study concludes that eWOM is one of the not only trustable source of information about airline service but also yield the consequence to willingness of consumers to pay the extra price through the process of positive brand image and attitude

creation for this favorable low cost airline. These results contribute to more understanding of interaction among constructs. Therefore, airlines are advised to develop and maintain positive eWOM which will finally impact on WTPM through brand image and brand attitude.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The present study contributes significantly to social network theory in which it confirms that social network does influence people in the social network action. The findings expand the existing body of knowledge that such impact does not impact only in product but service industry. Although existing literature on eWOM have examine its relationship on brand aspects and consumer purchasing decision, a similar context remains undiscovered in the case of service industry. This study adds to this perspective by highlighting that brand image and brand attitude are direct drivers of WTPM. In addition, both of brand constructs mediates the effect of eWOM and WTPM.

Our theoretical contribution highlights to the finding that eWOM does not have direct impact on brand attitude and willingness of consumer to pay more price. This is contradicted to the previous research (e.g. Sugiri et al. (2019), Kudeshia and Mittal (2016)). This study further clarifies the previous research which indicated that the validation in the product market does not necessarily consistent in the category of service sector. By providing the empirical support the mediating role of brand image, this study highlights the process that eWOM influence WTPM. The interplay among eWOM, brand image, brand attitude, and WTPM also provide conceptual framework for future investigation.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This research makes various practical contribution to aviation management. Our study presents that consumers' engagement on social network platform plays vital role in building brand image and willingness of consumer to pay more price for airline services. Consumers are motivated to search for reviews of their product or service of interest before making decision. Conducting positive airline brand through eWOM is an effective tool in brand management strategies. Therefore, the results of the study encourage aviation manager to proper observe and manage user generated eWOM to build positive relationship with customers, thus, benefit to financial prospect of aviation firm. Users in social media such as Facebook who can publish their direct experiences with brands has increased to tremendously height recently (Farzin & Fattah, 2018). Managers should develop good relationship with social media influencers since they can make impact of eWOM to their social network followers. Management team of aviation company should enable online reviewers to post reliable, genuine, and high quality eWOM across social media platform such as Facebook, Instagram, reviewing websites, etc. Managers are encouraged to solve customers' problem in order to build customers' engagement with airline brand and maintain positive brand image and brand attitude among consumers. A company can also use its distinctive brand images to promote its competitiveness. Low cost airline companies, especially those who survive

through post COVID-19, should position their brand in accordance with customers' preferences in order to create ultimate sustainable favorable brand image and brand attitude, thus, improve airlines revenue stream.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE OF THE STUDY

This research has some restriction that make it possible for future investigation. Firstly, since the finding in this research conclude that eWOM does not have significant influence on brand attitude, it is possible to conduct similar research in different service business and/ or geographic region to attain another sample. It is also possible to discuss the effect of eWOM on other brand aspects beside brand image and attitude. Possible qualitative method is encouraged to pursue in order to find detail perspective of consumer perception toward airline brand.

CONCLUSIONS

This study bridges the gap between academics and practitioners by investigating eWOM, two important brand aspects, and willingness to pay more of low cost airline that operating in Thailand. Prevailing thoughts suggests that eWOM can impact brand image, brand attitude, and willingness to pay more. With this research, we aim to provide systematic conceptual and empirical integration on the extent to which eWOM, brand image and brand attitude are interplays and influence consumers to knowingly pay an additional price for their favorable airline brand. However, our results argue that such impacts are difference in service industry. Using sample of low-cost airline consumers, our analysis finds that eWOM does not significantly effect brand attitude, while reveal the fully mediating impacts of brand image and brand attitude on eWOM and willingness to pay more. Therefore, managing favorable eWOM, remains importance since it can influence firm's revenue through creating favorable brand image. In addition, the importance of developing positive brand attitude remains necessary for airline firms. Substantially, this study should give confidence to airline corporations to create supportive consumer eWOM communication to enhance revenue stream and profitability especially after COVID-19 situation as well as in the long run prospect.

Remark: On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- Javalgi, R.G., Cutler, B.D., & Winans, W.A. (2011). At your service! Does country of origin research apply to services?. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 15(7), 565-582. doi:10.1108/08876040110407491.
- Sharifpour, Y., Sukati, I., & Alikhan, M. (2016). The influence of electronic word of mouth on consumers' purchase intentions in Iranian telecommunication industry. *American Journal of Business, Economics, and Management*, 4(1), 1-6.

- Lerrthaitrakul, W., & Panjakajornsak, V. (2014). The impact of electronic word-of-mouth factors on consumers' buying decision-making processes in the low cost carriers: A conceptual framework. *International Journal of Trade, Economics and Finance*, 5(2), 142-146.
- Tantipidok, P. (2020). Business review of EIC on how the Thai airline industry direction under Covid-19 pandemic situation. *Economic Intelligence Center (EIC)*. <https://www.terrabkk.com/news/197915>
- Yodpram, S., & Intalar, N. (2020, January). Conceptualizing eWOM, brand image, and brand attitude on consumer's willingness to pay in the low-cost airline industry in Thailand. *Innovation Aviation & Aerospace Industry—International Conference 2020 (IAAI 2020)*, Chumphon, Thailand.
- Vinh, T.T., Phuong, T.T.M., Nga, V.T.Q., & Nguyen, N.N. (2019) The effect of social media communication on brand equity through facebook: evidence form CGV Cinemas, Vietnam. *International Journal of Electronic Customer Relationship Management*, 12(2), 143-166.
- Nadarajana, G., Bojeia, J., & Khalid, H. (2017). The study on negative eWOM and its relationship to consumer's intention to switch mobile service provider. *Procedia Computer Science*, 124, 388-396.
- Henning-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K.P., Walsh, G., & Gremler, D.D. (2004). Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the Internet?. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18(1), 38-52.
- Jalivand, M.R., Esfahani, S.S., & Samiei, N. (2010). Electronic word-of-mouth: challenges and opportunities. *Procedia Computer Science*, 3, 42-46.
- Radpour, R., & Honarvar, A. (2018). Impact of social networks on brand value based on customer behavior using structural equations. *International Journal of Customer Relationship Marketing and Management*, 9(3), 50-67.
- Granovetter, M. (1983). The strength of weak ties: A network theory revisited. *Sociological Theory*, 201-233. doi:10.2307/202051.
- Kim, S., Kandampully, J., & Bilfihan, A. (2018). The influence of eWOM communications: An application of online social network framework. *Computers in Human Behavior* 80, 243-254.
- Lee, Y., Phua, J., & Wu, T. (2020). Marketing a health brand on facebook: Effects of reaction icons and user comments on brand attitude, trust, purchase intention, and eWOM intention. *Health Marketing Quarterly*, 37(2), 138-154, doi:10.1080/07359683.2020.1754049.
- Husnain, M., Qureshi, I., Fatima, T., & Akhtar, W. (2016). The impact of electronic word of mouth on online impulse buying behavior: The moderating role of big 5 personality traits. *Journal of Accounting & Marketing*, 5(4), 1-9.

- Brown, J., Broderick, A.J., & Lee, N. (2007). Word of mouth communication within online communities: Conceptualizing the online social network. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 21(3), 2-20. doi:10.1002/dir.20082.
- Charo, N., Sharma, P., Sheikh, S., Hasen, A., & Sufya, Z. (2015). Determining the impact of eWOM on brand image and purchasing intention through adoption of online opinions. *International Journal of Humanities and Management Sciences (IJHMS)*, 3(1), 41-46.
- Kudeshia, C., & Kumar., A. (2017). Social eWOM: does it affect the brand attitude and purchase intention of brands?. *Management Research Review*, 40(3), 310-330.
- Fine, M.B., Gironda, J., & Petrescu M. (2017). Prosumer motivations for electronic word of mouth communication behaviors. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 8(2), 280-295.
- Chung, Y., & Feng, C. (2016). Brand relationship between global airline alliance and their member airlines. *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 55, 222-233.
- Low, G.S., & Lamb, C.W. (2000). The measurement and dimensionality of brand associations. *The Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 9(6), 350-62.
- Anwar, A., Gulzar, A., Sohail, F.B., & Akram, S.N. (2011). Impact of brand image, trust and affect on consumer brand extension attitude: The mediating role of brand loyalty. *International Journal of Economics and Management Sciences*, 1(5), 73-79.
- Farzin, M., & Fattah, M. (2018). eWOM through social networking sites and impact on purchase intention and brand image in Iran. *Journal of Advances in Management Research*, 15(2), 161-183. doi:10.1108/JAMR-05-2017-0062.
- Arif, M. (2019). The influence of electronic word of mouth (eWOM), brand image, and price on re-purchase intention of airline customers. *Journal of Applied Management*, 17(2), 345-356.
- Augusto, M., & Torres, P. (2018). Effects of brand attitude and eWOM on consumers' willingness to pay in the banking industry: Mediating role of consumer-brand identification and brand equity. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 42, 1-10.
- Jung, N., & Seock, Y. (2016). The impact of corporate reputation on brand attitude and purchase intention. *Fashion and Textile*, 3, 20.
- Kudeshia, C., & Mittal, A. (2016). The effect of eWOM on brand attitude and purchase intention of consumers: a cross-sectional study on consumer electronics. *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*, 10(3), 131-151.

- Wu, S., & Wang, W. (2014). Impact of CSR Perception on Brand Image, Brand Attitude and Buying Willingness: A Study of a Global Café. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 6(6), 43-56.
- Kempf, D.S., & Smith, R.E. (1998). Consumer processing of product trial and the influence of prior advertising: A structural modeling approach. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 35(3), 325-338. doi:10.2307/3152031.
- Krystallis, A., & Chrysochou, P. (2014). The effects of service brand dimensions on brand loyalty. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 21, 139–147.
- Barber, N., Kuo, P., Bishop, M., & Goodman, Jr R. (2012). Measuring psychographics to assess purchase intention and willingness to pay. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 29(4), 280 - 292.
- Shin, Y., Moon, H., Jung, S., & Severt, K. (2017). The effect of environmental values and attitudes on consumer willingness to pay more for organic menus: A value-attitude-behavior approach. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 33, 113-121. doi:10.1016/j.jhtm.2017.10.010.
- Netemeyer, R.G., Krishnan, B., Pullig, C., Wang, G., Yagci, M., Dean, D., Ricks, J., & Wirth F. (2004). Developing and validating measures of facets of customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Business Research*, 57(2), 209-24. doi:10.1016/S0148-2963(01)00303-4.
- Ayadi, N., & Lapeyre, A. (2014). Consumer purchase intentions for green products: Mediating role of WTP and moderating effects of framing. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 22(4), 367-384. doi: 10.1080/13527266.2014.888574.
- Toklu, I., & Kucuk, H. (2017). The impact of brand crisis on consumers green purchase intention and willingness to pay more. *International Business Research*, 10(1), 22-33.
- Lee, S. (2011). Consumers' value, environmental consciousness, and willingness to pay more toward green-apparel products. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 2(3), 161-169.
- Elseidi, R., & El-Baz, D. (2016). Electronic word of mouth effects on consumers' brand attitudes, brand image and purchase intention: an empirical study in Egypt. *The Business and Management Review*, 7(5), 514-522.
- Pratiwi, W.A., & Yasa, N. (2019). The role of brand image in mediating the effect of electronic word of mouth on brand attitude of shopee fashion e-commerce in Denpasar. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 11(18).
- Chiou, J., & Cheng, C. (2003). Should a company have message boards on its websites?. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 17(3), 50-61.

- Tariq, M., Abbas, T., Abrar, M., & Iqbal, A. (2017). EWOM and brand awareness impact on consumer purchase intention: mediating role of brand image. *Pakistan Administrative Review*, 1(1), 84-102.
- Semuel, H., & Lianto, A.S. (2014). Analisis eWOM, brand image, brand trust dan minat beli produk smartphone di Surabaya. *Jurnal manajemen pemasaran*, 8(2), 47-54.
- Dwivedi, A., Nayeem, T., & Murshed, F. (2018). Brand experience and consumers' willingness-to-pay (WTP) a price premium: Mediating role of brand credibility and perceived uniqueness. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 44, 100-107.
- Brakus, J.J., Schmitt, B.H., & Zarantonello, L. (2009). Brand experience: what is it? How is it measured? Does it affect loyalty?. *Journal of Marketing*, 73, 52-68.
- Chen, Y.S. (2010). The drivers of green brand equity: green brand image, green satisfaction, and green trust. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 93(2), 307-319.
- Yoo, B., & Donthu, N. (2011). Developing and validating a multidimensional consumer-based brand equity scale. *Journal of Business Research*, 52(1), 1-14.
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K.L. (2009) *Marketing management, 13th Edition*. Pearson Prentice Hall. Upper Saddle River
- Anselmsson, J., Bondesson, N.V., & Johansson, U. (2014). Brand image and customers' willingness to pay a price premium for food brands. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 23(2), 90-102.
- Wang, S., Kao, G., & Ngamsiriudom, W. (2017). Consumers' attitude of endorser credibility, brand and intention with respect to celebrity endorsement of the airline sector. *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 60, 10-17.
- Hyun, S., & Kim, W. (2011). Dimensions of Brand Equity in the Chain Restaurant Industry. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 52(4), 429-437. doi:10.1177/1938965510397533.
- Park, J.Y., Park, K., & Dubinsky, A.J. (2011). Impact of retailer image on private brand attitude: Halo effect and summary construct. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 63(3), 173-184. doi:10.1111/j.1742-9536.2011.00015.x.
- Liu, M.T., Wong, I.A., Tseng, T, Chang, A.W., & Phau, I. (2017). Applying consumer-based brand equity in luxury hotel branding. *Journal of Business Research*, 81, 192-202. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.06.014.
- Davis, D.F., Golicic, S.L., & Marquardt, A. (2009). Measuring brand equity for logistic services. *The International Journal of Logistics Management*, 20(2), 201-212.
- Augustoa, M., & Torres, P. (2018). Effects of brand attitude and eWOM on consumers' willingness to pay in the banking industry: Mediating role of

- consumer-brand identification and brand equity. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 42, 1–10.
- Ong, C., Lee, H., & Ramayah, T. (2018, March). Impact of brand experience on loyalty. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*. doi: 10.1080/19368623.2018.1445055.
- Hair, J., Black, J.W., Babin, B.J., & Anderson, E.R. (2010) *Multivariate data analysis*. United State of America: Pearson Printice Hall.
- Sugari, H., & Supriyanto, Rumani, D. (2019). The influence of electronic word of mouth, brand attitude, and brand image and impact of purchasing intention, Xiaomi smartphone product. *International Journal in Management and Social science*, 7(10), 1-8.