

Retweeting Service Experiences: Factors Influencing Receivers to Proliferate Brand Image Disruptions

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Abstract

The advent of customers sharing their positive and negative experiences of service encounters on social media sites such as Twitter, and the viral nature of these shared experiences, has received a tremendous amount of media coverage over the last few years. With regard to negative brand experiences, one of the most memorable events in recent history was a video of Dr. David Dao being forcibly removed from a United Airlines flight for refusing to give up his seat due to an overbooked flight. The event was initially filmed and shared on Twitter and subsequently sparked global outrage with over 100 million views of the video in China alone. Although this example is considered extreme in nature and garnered the media attention it deserved, little is known about the receivers of these shared service brand experiences, termed MeWOM brand image disruptions in this study, and the factors that motivate them to retweet them. MeWOM brand image disruptions are defined as eWOM in a microblog that either positively promotes the course, progress or transmission of a brand's image, or eWOM in a microblog that interrupts the course, progress, or transmission of a brand's image. Through the use of mobile technology such as smart phones and the platforms that host social network sites, consumers share their daily positive and negative experiences about airlines just as they would tell a close friend or next-door neighbor in the past. Only now, they tell the world about their service encounters and do so through the use of a range of formats including text, photographs and videos. There is however a stark dearth of empirical data to help support managers in their understanding of the factors that influence the proliferation of shared brand experiences in the brief moments after receivers are exposed to them on microblogs such as Twitter. This study seeks to fill this gap in knowledge by focusing on a seemingly overlooked important actor in the microblog domain, *receivers* of MeWOM brand image disruptions and their propensity to share them with others. 372 Twitter users in the United States were exposed to six positive and negative MeWOM brand image disruptions relating to airlines in an online experiment that replicated the Twitter environment. Two PLS Structural Equation Models were created to determine the factors that motivated receivers to retweet the MeWOM brand image disruptions. The results demonstrated that *corporate reputation after exposure*, *message relevance* and *issue involvement* were predictors in both the negative and positive valence models. One emotion, *surprise* was also a significant predictor in the positive valence model only.