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Research on the Impact of Internet Word-of-Mouth on Film Consumption ingness of College Students

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Abstract: In the context of the information age, consumers obtain information on products or services through online channels. Internet word-of-mouth has quickly become an emerging hotspot in the field of marketing, and its role in the film industry has become more prominent than before. Based on the relevant research of scholars, this paper constructs a research model to study the influence of film online word-of-mouth on college students' consumption intention. Empirical research verified that source credibility, disseminator's professional knowledge, word-of-mouth quality, word-of-mouth quantity, word-of-mouth potency, perceived credibility, network involvement, and receiver's professional knowledge are positively correlated with college students' film consumption intention. Based on the results, this study proposes a series of suggestions, such as improving the content quality of online word-of-mouth and the popularity of movies on the Internet to help movie companies effectively use online word-of-mouth to implement marketing.

1. Introduction

With the continuous improvement of living standards, watching movies has become an important way of people's emotional entertainment that results in the expansion of the film market. Nowadays, more consumers obtain the information of movie evaluation from the Internet platform and then decide whether to watch the movie. College students are one of the groups with the highest Internet penetration rate, and they are also the main audience group of movies. Therefore, this paper studies the influence of online word-of-mouth on college students' film consumption intention to help film distributors understand how to effectively use online word-of-mouth for film marketing.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Internet Word-of-Mouth

Word-of-mouth is a traditional way of information dissemination. Since the 1950s and 1960s, word-of-mouth has been attracting modern academic research interest. Asch (1956) explained the social conformity psychology of three people become tigers based on oral communication for the first time through scientific experiments. Arndt (1967) was the first scholar to define the concept of word-of-mouth as non-commercial face-to-face communication about products and companies and began the early research on word-of-mouth. The research concluded that the promotion of new products is affected by many factors including word-of-mouth. Online word-of-mouth refers to the network information formed by Internet users discussing the information of goods through words, pictures, videos, and other channels. Word-of-mouth includes three elements: disseminator, content, and receiver. Word-of-mouth disseminators are people who spread word-of-mouth to other consumers. Traditional word-of-mouth communicators are mainly consumers, who exchange consumption experiences face to face. Online word-of-mouth disseminators are consumers who publish a product or service evaluation on the Internet. Word-of-mouth content refers to the information transmitted through word-of-mouth. Traditional word-of-mouth content includes the sender's language, facial expressions, and actions. Online word-of-mouth content is text, pictures, and others that are published online. Word-of-mouth recipients refer to consumers who actively or passively understand the information related to word-of-mouth

2.2. Research on the Influence of Online Word-of-Mouth on Movie Purchase Decision

The film or the movie is an experiential product. Consumers judge its overall quality only after watching the film. Due to the lack of understanding of movie-related information, many consumers are difficult to make decisions before watching movies. Therefore, they often obtain word-of-mouth information on movies through the Internet. Hovland *et al.* (1953) believed that information affects people's attitudes and behavior in the process of communication and divided the influencing factors of word-of-mouth communication into three categories: source, content, and receiver. Eagly and Chaiken (1998) believed that the higher the credibility of the sender, the more convincing the idea and pointed out that high credibility of sources is conducive to consumers' purchase decisions. Shankar and Sultan (2002) suggested that the information sender is an important factor affecting consumer trust.

The content and quantity of word-of-mouth significantly affect the communication effect of internet word-of-mouth. Consumers obtain information from internet word-of-mouth for decision-making. Park *et al.* (2007) stated that the quality of information contained in online word-of-mouth enables consumers to search for the useful information they need, which is conducive to the formation of consumers' purchase decisions. The amount of information of online word-of-mouth is related to the richness of information. When the amount of information is large, it becomes convenient for consumers to screen information, which affects consumers' purchase intention. Duan *et al.* (2008) explored the influencing factors of box office and claimed that the number of film reviews positively affects the box office revenue and the amount of information contained in online word-of-mouth is directly proportional to its number. Thus, consumers find the information they need based on useful information, which is conducive to the formation of consumers' purchase decisions.

The spread information on the film online word-of-mouth is mainly film rating and text evaluation. Major film forums, Microblog, and WeChat platforms usually provide film scoring, and commentators give ratings according to their personal preferences. At the same time, commentators usually use emotional words with personal preference to evaluate the film. Gershoff *et al.* (2003) thought that the process of the consumer purchase decision is affected by the collected online word-of-mouth information. Sun and Liu (2009) pointed out that the intensity of consumers' purchase intention is affected by the weight of positive word-of-mouth in reviews. Tan (2012) believes that consumers express their satisfaction with relevant products or services through rating or scoring as long as positive word-of-mouth is more concerned.

Dellarocas *et al.* (2007) studied the relationship between online movie reviews and forecast sales and pointed out that the internet involvement of movie consumers determines whether consumers frequently use the Internet and actively search for the information they need, thus affecting the movie viewing behavior of Internet users. Kim *et al.* (2013) stated that consumers' decision-making is affected by online word-of-mouth, and the impact of online word-of-mouth gradually decreases before and after the release of the film. Liu (2013) analyzed the five factors of internet word-of-mouth (word-of-mouth active search, relationship strength, perceived risk, communicator's professional knowledge, and receiver's professional knowledge) and concluded that internet word-of-mouth has a significant impact on young audience's willingness to consume movies.

3. Research Model and Hypotheses

3.1. Model Establishment

Based on previous research, this study constructs a research model of the impact of online word-of-mouth on college students' film consumption intention, as shown in Fig. 1.
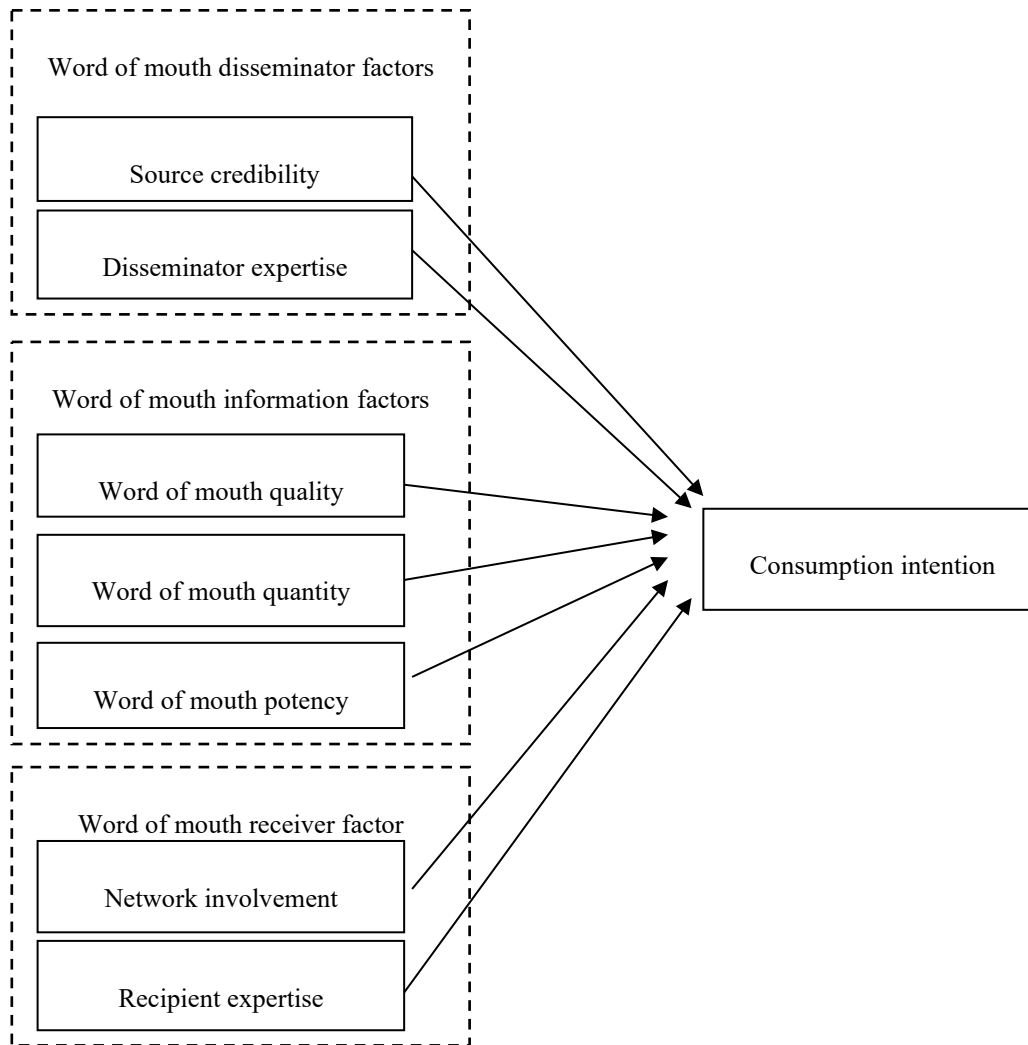
Fig. 1. Model of the influence of Internet word-of-mouth on college students' willingness to consume movies.

3.2. Variable Interpretation and Research Hypothesis

3.2.1. Source Credibility

Source credibility refers to the degree of consumers' trust in internet word-of-mouth communicators, that is, the degree of consumers' trust in a certain source of word-of-mouth information. Petty *et al.* (1997) pointed out that source credibility provides a basis for them in the process of information dissemination when consumers choose the edge path and affects consumers' purchase decisions. Fang *et al.* (2016) proposed that the higher the credibility of the information sender, the more confident the information receiver and the greater the possibility of making a purchase decision. Therefore, this study suggests the following hypothesis.

H1: Source credibility has a significant positive impact on consumption intention.

3.2.2. Disseminator Expertise

Word-of-mouth communicators with professional knowledge need to provide correct information. Buttle (1998) pointed out that the professional knowledge of word-of-mouth communicators has a certain impact on consumers' consumption intention, and consumers' consumption intentions are affected by the information provided by people with certain professional knowledge. In the word-of-mouth communication of film products, the professional knowledge of the disseminator affects the sales of film products. The disseminators include the producers of films, that is, the creators of film products. Shen (2008) proposed that the professional knowledge of the creators, the fame, and the reputation of the works impacts consumers' consumption intention. Tang (2006) pointed out that communicators also include audiences who have high-level film professional knowledge, such as film industry authorities

and professional film critics. Their evaluation of the film products affects other consumers' consumption of the film and the film box office owing to their high professional knowledge. Therefore, this study suggests the following hypothesis.

H2: Professional knowledge of communicators has a significant positive impact on consumption intention.

3.2.3. Word-of-Mouth Quality

The quality of word-of-mouth refers to the persuasive degree of expounding and demonstrating opinions in the spread of internet word-of-mouth. Petty *et al*. (1997) suggested that the objectivity, reliability, and authenticity of word-of-mouth need to be taken as the quality standards of word-of-mouth and proposed that these characteristics affect the communication of word-of-mouth. The research results of Fang et al. (2016) showed that online word-of-mouth has a significant effect on consumers' attitude and behavior and consumers' satisfaction increases with the improvement of comment quality, which results in higher purchase intention. In other words, the quality of word-of-mouth information affects consumers' consumption motivation. Therefore, this study suggests the following hypothesis.

H3: Word-of-mouth quality has a significant positive impact on consumption intention.

3.2.4. Word-of-Mouth Quantity

Word-of-mouth potency is the degree to which consumers feel positive or negative about the product opinions in the network evaluation information. The reviewer rate the movie based on his personal viewing experience and preferences. The higher the score, the higher the evaluation of the film. Gershoff *et al*. (2003) thought that consumers' consumption decisions were influenced by the positive and negative information of online word-of-mouth. Zhao and Liu (2016) concluded that the price of export affects the viewing decision of potential consumers. Sun and Liu (2009) pointed out that the proportion of positive word-of-mouth in word-of-mouth information affects consumers' purchase intention. Tan (2012) stated that consumers express their satisfaction with related products or services by rating or scoring, and people pay more attention to positive word-of-mouth information than without the rating. Therefore, this study suggests the following hypothesis.

H4: The quantity of word-of-mouth has a significant positive impact on consumption intention.

3.2.5. Word-of-Mouth Potency

Word-of-mouth potency is the degree to which consumers feel positive or negative about the product opinions in the network evaluation information. The reviewer rated the movie based on his personal viewing experience and preferences. Gershoff *et al*. (2003) thought that consumers' consumption decisions are influenced by the positive and negative information of online word-of-mouth. Zhao and Liu (2016) concluded that the potency of export word-of-mouth affects the viewing decision of potential consumers. Sun and Liu (2009) pointed out that the proportion of information of positive word-of-mouth affects consumers' purchase intention. Therefore, this study suggests the following hypothesis.

H5: Word-of-mouth potency has a significant positive impact on consumption intention.

3.2.6. Network Involvement

Network involvement refers to the degree of contact with the Internet in life. Rodgers and Chen (2005) pointed out that the degree of Internet participation affects consumers' familiarity with Internet applications and their understanding of network information. Therefore, the higher the degree of consumer network involvement, the better the effect of internet word-of-mouth communication. Dellarocas *et al*. (2007) studied the relationship between online movie reviews and predicted sales and found that movie consumers' online participation depends on their use of the Internet for searching for the information they need, which affects the viewing behavior of the Internet users. Therefore, this study suggests the following hypothesis.

H6: network involvement has a significant positive impact on consumption intention.

3.2.7. Recipient Expertise

The professional knowledge of the receiver represents in film production and film shooting, which affects word-of-mouth communication. The higher the professional knowledge the network word-of-mouth receiver has, the easier it is to think, judge, and make effective use of the information. Therefore, this study suggests the following hypothesis.

H7: The receiver's professional knowledge has a significant positive impact on consumption intention.

3.2.8. Consumption Intention

Consumption intention refers to the subjective tendency of consumers to buy the film.

3.3. Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was structured based on literature research and actual interviews. The questionnaire consisted of (1) the description of the questionnaire which explains the purpose of the survey to the respondents, (2) the main body of the questionnaire which first asks whether the respondents are college students, and (3) the analysis of demographic indicators of the research object.

The questionnaire included the source credibility, professional knowledge of the disseminator, quality, quantity, potency of information of online word-to-mouth, network involvement, and the receiver's expertise. There were 31 items in 7 independent variables on business knowledge, and 4 items in 1 dependent variable on consumption intention. Each item was created based on existing relevant literature and adjusted according to the operational definition of each variable. The subjects of this study were college students. The questionnaire was distributed in three ways: the paper questionnaire on campus, through the questionnaire star network channel, and through the WeChat circle of friends, QQ group, and Internet social platforms to collect as many questionnaires as possible to meet the needs of the research.

4. The Empirical Research

A total of 235 questionnaires were distributed and recovered. The actual recovery rate is 97.02% after removing 7 invalid questionnaires. SPSS20.0 software was used to analyze the valid questionnaires.

4.1. Descriptive Analysis of the Sample

99 males (43.4%) and 129 females (56.6%) responded to the survey. Though the proportion of females is slightly higher than that of males, there was little difference between men and women. 187 respondents (82.0%) were in the age of 18–25 years old as most of them were university students. There were 182 college students (79.8%), while the rest included graduate students. Most of respondents' living expense was below USD 230 and USD 230–380 which accounted for 42.1% and 32.0% of total respondents. respectively.

4.2. Reliability Analysis

The overall Cronbach's α coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.930, and the Cronbach's α of each variable was greater than 0.7, which indicates good reliability (Table 1).

Table 1. Reliability statistics.

	Cronbach's α	Cronbach's α based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
Source credibility	.801	.802	4
Disseminator expertise	.765	.765	5
Word-of-mouth quality	.761	.762	4
Word-of-mouth quantity	.818	.818	5
Word-of-mouth potency	.711	.718	4
Network involvement	.874	.874	5
Recipient expertise	.828	.828	4
Consumption intention	.844	.845	4
Overall questionnaire	.930	.930	35

4.3. Validity Analysis

This study analyzed the validity of seven independent variables: source credibility, disseminator's professional knowledge, word-of-mouth quality, word-of-mouth quantity, word-of-mouth potency, network involvement, and receiver's professional knowledge. There is one intermediate variable of perceived credibility and one dependent variable of consumption intention. The

analysis result is shown in Table 2. The KMO values of each variable are greater than 0.7, and the significance is less than 0.001, which indicates that the validity is acceptable for factor analysis.

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's test.

Variable		Independent variable	Dependent variable
KMO sample measurement		0.876	0.793
Bartlett Sphericity test	Approx. Chi-Square	3,431.612	375.758
	df	465	6
	Sig.	0.000	0.000

4.4. Factor Analysis

In this study, principal component analysis (PCA) was used to analyze the scale with factor rotation. After the factor load matrix was rotated, the items were retained and deleted based on the factor load of 0.5. Eight factors with a characteristic value greater than 1 were extracted: source credibility, disseminator's professional knowledge, word-of-mouth quality, word-of-mouth quantity, word-of-mouth potency, network involvement, receiver's professional knowledge, and consumption intention. The explained cumulative variance accounted for 65.982% of the total variance, which shows that the eight factors deliver most of the information.

4.5. Correlation Analysis

The results of the correlation analysis of each variable are shown in Table 3. The Pearson correlation coefficients of source credibility, disseminator's professional knowledge, word-of-mouth quality, word-of-mouth quantity, word-of-mouth valence, network involvement, receiver's professional knowledge, and consumption intention are all greater than 0, and the p values are significant at the level of 0.01. The seven independent variables are positively correlated with perceived credibility and consumption intention. At the same time, there is a significant positive correlation between perceived credibility and consumption intention ($p < 0.01$).

Table 3. Correlation analysis of each variable.

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8
Source credibility (V1)	1							
Disseminator expertise (V2)	0.355**	1						
W-of-mouth quality (V3)	0.499**	0.428**	1					
WOM quantity (V4)	0.456**	0.354**	0.537**	1				
WOM potency (V5)	0.434**	0.403**	0.455**	0.489**	1			
Network involvement (V6)	0.462**	0.354**	0.471**	0.476**	0.437**	1		
Recipient expertise (V7)	0.524**	0.298**	0.417**	0.440**	0.578**	0.523**	1	
Consumption intention (V8)	0.519**	0.364**	0464**	0.556**	0.598**	0.538**	0.617**	1

Note: $n = 228$; ***, $p < 0.01$, **, $p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

4.6. Regression Analysis

To study the impact of online word-of-mouth on consumption intention, this study uses linear regression analysis to transform the relationship between the variables into a statistical model. Table 4 shows that the R-square of the seven independent variables is 38.7%, indicating that the variables explain 38.7% of the variance in consumption intention. Table 5 presents that the F value is 19.874, and the significance probability is 0.000, which indicates that the overall fitting degree of the model is acceptable and there is a significant linear relationship between the seven independent variables and consumption intention. Table 6 shows that the significant level of the variables are all less than 0.05, which all pass the significance test. Thus, the variables have a positive effect on consumption intention, which supports the hypotheses of H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, and H7.

The standardized coefficients of source credibility, disseminator's professional knowledge, quality, quantity, potency, network involvement, and receiver's professional knowledge on consumption intention are 0.030, 0.008, 0.287, 0.173, 0.088, 0.021, and 0.277, respectively. The standardized coefficients indicate that the quality of word-of-mouth has the most significant impact on

consumption intention, and the receiver's professional knowledge has the most significant impact on consumption intention. Then, the number of word-of-mouth, word-of-mouth potency, source credibility, network involvement, and network involvement have significance in an order. Therefore, the standard regression equation of seven independent variables of movie online word-of-mouth on consumption intention is as follows.

$$\text{Consumption intention} = 0.030 \times \text{Source credibility} + 0.008 \times \text{Disseminator's professional knowledge} + 0.287 \times \text{Word-of-mouth quality} + 0.173 \times \text{Word-of-mouth quantity} + 0.088 \times \text{Word-of-mouth potency} + 0.021 \times \text{Internet involvement} + 0.277 \times \text{Receiver's professional knowledge}$$

(1)

Table 4. Overall regression results.

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.622[a]	.387	.368	.50052

[a] Predictors: (Constant), Source credibility, Disseminator expertise, Word-of-mouth quality, Word-of-mouth quantity, Word-of-mouth potency, Network involvement, Recipient expertise

Table 5. Analysis of variance (ANOVA)[a].

Model		Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	34.852	7	4.979	19.874	.000[b]
1	Residual	55.115	220	.251		
	Total	89.967	227			

[a] Dependent Variable: Consumption intention

[b] Predictors: (Constant), Source credibility, Disseminator expertise, Word-of-mouth quality, Word-of-mouth quantity, Word-of-mouth potency, Network involvement, Recipient expertise

Table 6. Regression matrix of each variable to consumption intention [a].

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Significant Level
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	1.082	.236		4.593	1.000
Source credibility	.026	.059	.030	.442	.009
Disseminator expertise	.008	.063	.008	.127	.005
Word-of-mouth quality	.270	.066	.287	4.105	.000
Word-of-mouth quantity	.153	.061	.173	2.514	.003
Word-of-mouth potency	.072	.058	.088	1.240	.000
Network involvement	.017	.058	.021	.301	.007
Recipient expertise	.188	.060	.227	3.117	.002

[a] Dependent variable: Consumption intention

5. Conclusions

From the relationship between online word-of-mouth and college students' movie consumption intention, movie companies establish appropriate sales performance through online word-of-mouth marketing. Film companies need to try to ensure the reliability, objectivity, and comprehensibility of online film reviews on the network platform. For example, when making movie reviews, commentators are required to set a minimum number of words according to the types of comments, set up a review regulatory body to browse and review movie reviews, and recommend high-quality comments on the Internet platform. At the same time, it is necessary to encourage the audience to express positive word-of-mouth for the film on the well-known film network platform. For consumers who release positive comments on high-quality movies, movie companies can provide appropriate reward feedback, guide them to make the next quality comments, and encourage them to maintain the previous level. For film producers or

distributors, to achieve the expected publicity effect of the film, a series of interesting topics related to movies is required to enhance the film's word-of-mouth effect and attract consumers as the large flow of resources on stars initiates the discussion of a film.

With the rapid development of the Internet, film websites and forums have become the main platforms for consumers to search for film-related information. First of all, the film business needs to actively invite consumers with professional review ability to experience the film, encourage them to publish film word-of-mouth on the platform, publicize their real and objective word-of-mouth information, and improve the credibility of the platform. Movie companies also have to establish incentive mechanisms. For example, movie companies provide awards for professionals who actively recommend films and write film reviews on the platform to improve the credibility of the film network platform.

College students are often keen to discuss the content of the film. Therefore, it is necessary to make full use of the interactive mode of college students' online word-of-mouth to promote the film. For example, uploading stories behind the scenes and trailers of the movie on social network platforms contributes to encouraging college students' discussion and raising the popularity of the movie.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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