

SELF-ENHANCEMENT AND NEGATIVE WORD-OF-MOUTH INTENTION: MEDIATING ROLE OF VENGEANCE AND MODERATED MEDIATION MODEL OF HELPING OTHER CONSUMERS AND GENDER

Emrah TOKGÖZ¹

Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey
 ORCID: 0000-0003-3761-9934

Onur ŞAYLAN

Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey
 ORCID: 0000-0001-7013-0415

ABSTRACT

The aims of this study were (a) to investigate the mediating role of vengeance in the relationship between self-enhancement and negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) intention, (b) to examine the moderated mediation role of helping other consumers, and (c) to test moderated moderation role of gender. The study employs Process Macro software to achieve research aims with the sample of 767 consumers. The results show that (a) vengeance has a partial mediating role in the relationship between self-enhancement and NWOM intention, (b) helping other consumers has a moderated mediation role in this indirect relationship, and (c) the moderated mediation role of helping other consumers is moderated by gender (difference for females) only in the effect of self-enhancement on vengeance. Research is important to understand the antecedents of NWOM.

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INTRODUCTION

Word-of-mouth (WOM), whether positive or negative, has a strong influence on consumer behavior. In comparison, consumers are twice as likely to spread negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) than positive word-of-mouth (PWOM) (East et al., 2007), and people are more likely to show interest in NWOM than PWOM (Martin, 2017). According to Jeon et al. (2020), satisfied customers share their experiences with eight people via PWOM and dissatisfied customers share their experiences with twenty-five people via NWOM. NWOM can harm the company's reputation and

¹ Address correspondence to Emrah Tokgöz (Assoc. Prof.), Department of International Trade and Business, Çan Faculty of Applied Sciences, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey. E-mail: emrahtokgoz@yahoo.com

financial position because it can discourage consumers from buying a particular product or brand (Williams & Buttle, 2014). Although NWOM is a major threat to the success of firms, what causes consumers to spread it has rarely been studied (Fu et al., 2015; Seo & Jang, 2021).

If NWOM is so important, the most important question at this point is: Why do consumers spread NWOM? According to one viewpoint, consumers spread NWOM simply to talk about the negative consumption experiences of others (Richins, 1984). The literature discusses that this logic is problematic and that individual antecedents should be further explored (Richins, 1984; Sundaram et al., 1998; Berger & Milkman, 2012; De Angelis et al., 2012). Recent research on this topic suggests that there may be an individual antecedent, such as self-enhancement (Wien & Olsen, 2014; Berger, 2014; Philp et al., 2018; Krishna & Kim, 2020). For individuals, self-enhancement leads as the basic human motivation to have a positive self-concept (Valenzuela et al., 2018). People who want to enhance themselves may experience more emotional fluctuation when faced with negative events (Brown, 2010). Under the influence of emotional fluctuation (Abdel-Khalek, 2016), consumers may act with a sense of vengeance (revenge, retaliation) against the company that provides them with a poor service or product (Vargo et al., 2019). For customers, vengeance can become an action aimed at punishing a company for the harm it has caused (Obeidat et al., 2017). According to an evaluation, 85% of customers intend to seek vengeance on the company after receiving poor service (Gregoire et al., 2018). Thus, the consumer who receives an unsatisfied service or product may have the attitude toward NWOM intention with the feeling of vengeance (Boo & Kim, 2013). From this perspective, the first question of the study is: does vengeance have a mediating role in the relationship between self-enhancement and NWOM intention?

Consumers share information with other consumers about everything daily (Bastos & Moore, 2021). Social interaction triggers social motives, such as helping other consumers (Alexandrov et al., 2013). Therefore, it may be useful to consider the satisfaction of social needs when conducting NWOM research (Cheng et al., 2006). Consumers may spread NWOM in the hope that other consumers will become aware of the company's product failures in order to avoid similar situations (Chelminski & Coulter, 2011). In other words, consumers' feelings of vengeance against the company may be expressed as NWOM that they share with others (Gregoire et al., 2010). Consumers who want to enhance themselves may intend to engage in NWOM with the idea of helping other consumers (preventing others from experiencing the problem they face) (Ribeiro et al.,

2018). Self-enhancement combined with vengeance becomes a predictor of NWOM intentions, and this path may lead not only themselves but also other consumers to want to punish the company (Krishna & Kim, 2020). From this perspective, the second research question is: Does helping other consumers have a moderated mediation role in the relationship between self-enhancement, vengeance, and NWOM intention?

Consumers' responses to their consumption experiences may be due to individual characteristics (such as gender) (Fan et al., 2018). Therefore, gender differences in consumer behavior have always been the subject of research (Meyers-Levy & Loken, 2015). Women's social orientation is one of the most important gender differences. According to this orientation, women are focused on others (Fan et al., 2018). On the other hand, since vengeance behaviors are stronger in males, they are known to vary by gender (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992; Cota-McKinley et al., 2001; Brown, 2004; Uzun, 2018). The literature has found that WOM changes according to consumer personality traits (Majali & Bohari, 2016) and demographic factors (Maric et al., 2020) and that women are more open to WOM (Kempf & Palan, 2006). Interpersonal factors are known to have a greater impact on NWOM (Sweeney et al., 2014). From this perspective, the third question of the study is: does the moderated mediation role of helping other consumers change according to gender?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Relationship between self-enhancement and NWOM intention and mediating role of vengeance

For companies, NWOM is an indicator of consumer dissatisfaction (Seo & Jang, 2021). The dissatisfied consumers may try to enhance themselves by verbally sharing this experience with others (Richins, 1984). But self-enhancement is one of the least studied antecedents for consumers to spread NWOM (De Angelis et al., 2012). Considering self-enhancement in terms of personality traits, people with high neuroticism tend to vent negative emotions. Therefore, highly neurotic people (with lower emotional stability) may be willing to release these negative emotions to feel better about themselves (to enhance themselves) (Swaminathan & Dokumaci, 2021). Negative emotions are associated with negative goals (e.g., revenge) and may influence the content of communication spread to others. Negative goals with negative emotions are more powerful than positive goals (Boo & Kim, 2013). Research from recent years has found that 77% of comments on the Internet contain NWOM (Vargo et al., 2019). This means that vengeance

is a pervasive behavior among consumers (Swaminathan & Dokumaci, 2021).

One of the causes of NWOM may be cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance occurs when people have dissatisfying experiences, and they try to reduce them. As a result of dissatisfying experiences, customers are likely to use vengeance as a means to rebalance (enhance) themselves (Wangenheim, 2005). Vengeful responses are guided by intrinsic motivations, such as self-enhancement (Elshout et al., 2015). Vengeance is satisfying and can provide psychological relief (self-enhancement) through the overt expression of strong emotions (Gregoire et al., 2018). Vindictive NWOM involves negative communication with other customers, often aimed at defaming a company or advising others not to use that company's products (Joireman et al., 2013). The intensity of these customers' anger can lead to a sense of revenge toward the product and the company. For a consumer, the opportunity to vent anger or compensate for rights violations can lead to NWOM intent (Gelbrich, 2010).

Philp and Ashworth (2020) found that consumers spread high levels of NWOM when they experience a failure caused by a company. Product and company failures can affect customers to the point that they reveal their feelings of vengeance (Chang et al., 2015). In a study conducted among consumers who made negative product reviews, NWOM was found to be directly driven by both positive and negative emotions, and this was a sender's intended behavior (Verhagen et al., 2013). Therefore, to enhance themselves, consumers may communicate their negative experiences to other consumers through a sense of vengeance (Sundaram et al., 1998; Wetzler et al., 2007; Gregoire et al., 2010; Sweeney et al., 2014). We propose that self-enhancement will influence NWOM intention and that this influence is mediated by vengeance. More specifically, we put forth the following hypothesis:

H1: *Self-enhancement is positively associated with NWOM intention, and this relationship is mediated by vengeance.*

Moderated mediation role of helping other consumers in the self-enhancement -vengeance - NWOM intention relationship

One of the reasons why consumers spread NWOM and PWOM is related to the satisfaction of social needs (Alexandrov et al., 2013). There appears to be overlap between the motivational factors (e.g., altruism) identified for PWOM and NWOM (Hu & Kim, 2018). For example, WOM has been

associated with the intention to help others (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017), and helping others is a form of altruism (Lay & Hoppmann, 2015). Altruistic people may want to help another consumer make an informed purchase decision (Kozinets et al., 2010; Philp & Ashworth, 2013; Packard et al., 2016). Helping others also differs across cultures. Interdependent are more altruistic than independents. This may also mean that helping others is seen as a social responsibility (Seo & Scammon, 2014).

In WOM, there is a relationship between the content of the message and the motivation of the consumer. In other words, consumers can transfer the goal they want to achieve through the communication to the content of the message (Wetzer et al., 2007). For example, if a consumer wants to take revenge on the company, he or she may express negativity. However, behind this negativity is a desire to help other consumers. Such consumers deliberately use the language of revenge so that their communication goals are achieved (Douglas & Sutton, 2003). NWOM is a form of indirect retaliation (a customer's attempt to discredit a company to other consumers) (Gregoire & Fisher, 2008). Verhagen et al. (2013) found that consumers generate NWOM with their emotions and that their motivation to help other consumers plays a moderating role in this relationship. According to the researchers, consumers may disclose their negative experiences to prevent others from having similar negative experiences.

While there is discussion in the literature about the need to further investigate the cultural characteristics that may contribute to the prevalence of NWOM (Valenzuela et al., 2018), there is evidence that helping others may differ across cultures. Societies from collective cultures are socially oriented and tend to respond to social expectations with their behavior. Consumers from collective cultures may prefer indirect approaches, such as NWOM intentions, rather than reacting confrontationally to an unsatisfactory product or service (Cheng et al., 2006). In societies with collective culture, people are willing to help those who help them and harm those who harm them. This perspective states that the idea of helping other consumers is pervasive, as people place a higher priority on achieving social goals than personal goals (Zourrig et al., 2009). Another example in a collective culture, when people have a dissatisfying experience, they simply spread NWOM to evoke feelings of vengeance toward companies. This behavior is considered a fatalistic thought (Cheung et al., 2007). Therefore, we propose that relationship between self-enhancement-vengeance-NWOM intention will be moderated by helping other consumers. More specifically, we put forth the following hypotheses:

H2: *Helping other consumers moderates the relationship of self-enhancement with vengeance.*

H3: *Helping other consumers moderates the relationship of vengeance with NWOM intention.*

H4: *Helping other consumers moderates the relationship of self-enhancement with NWOM intention.*

Moderated moderation role of gender in the moderated mediation role of helping other consumers

Consumers' responses to negative experiences are influenced by individual characteristics (e.g., gender). Women focus on process during social interactions. Therefore, female consumers are motivated to seek opportunities to interact with other consumers. In addition, women (compared to men) are more inclined to express negative emotions such as vengeance (Mattila et al., 2009). In NWOM, the difference between men and women stems from their relative concern for themselves versus others (Boo et al., 2013). Women are more inclined to express their complaints than male consumers. The reason is that women are more inclined to help others. In addition, female customers want to verbalize their negative feelings (e.g., NWOM) (Joe & Choi, 2019) and be involved in the service improvement (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2003).

Women tend to adopt the opinions of their peers and often rely on other people's impressions of products and companies. Women like to act in ways that benefit society (helping others) (Lay & Hoppmann, 2015). The relationship between group membership and WOM is strong in women. Women are more influenced by the relationships they have in groups, and they want to be influential (Maceli et al., 2015). Talwar et al. (2021) found that gender, which they used as a control variable, had a significant effect on NWOM but not PWOM. Fan et al. (2018) showed that women's motivation to help other consumers is an important antecedent behind complaint behavior. Zhang et al. (2014) further found that the likelihood of NWOM may vary among women. Maceli et al. (2015) supported that gender has an influence on NWOM, and women like to help other consumers. That is, women respond more positively to others' requests for help (Brunel & Nelson, 2000). Therefore, we propose that moderated mediation role of helping other consumers will be moderated by gender. More specifically, we put forth the following hypotheses:

H5: *The moderating role of helping other consumers is moderated by gender in the relationship between self-enhancement and vengeance.*

H6: *The moderating role of helping other consumers is moderated by gender in the relationship between vengeance and NWOM intention.*

H7: *The moderating role of helping other consumers is moderated by gender in the relationship between self-enhancement and NWOM intention.*

To test the hypotheses, the research model has been drawn as seen in Figure 1.

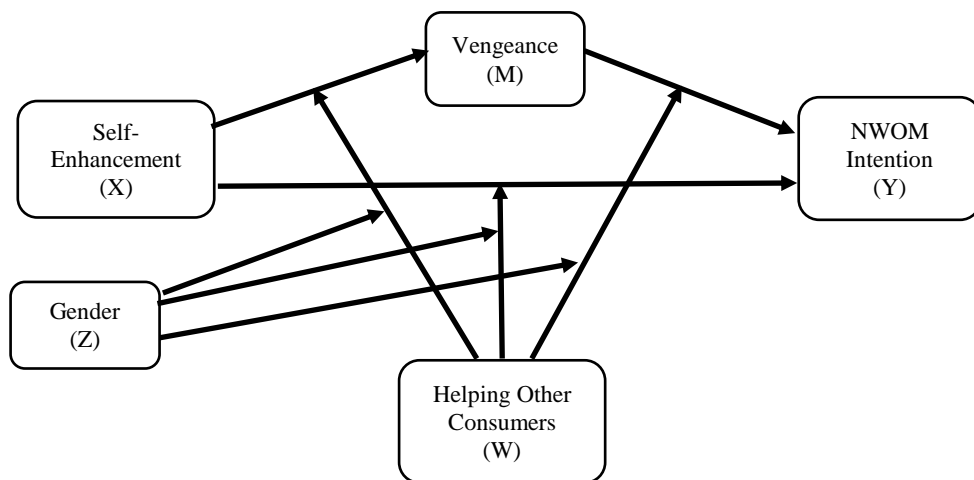


Figure 1. *Research Model*

METHODOLOGY

Data collection

After the approval from the Ethics Committee of the University on October 4, 2021, research data was collected from consumers older than 18 using an online questionnaire. The contact information of researchers and the purpose of the research were shared on the first page. All participants were informed that their data was kept confidential, their personal information was not requested, and they were asked to click an option stating that “participation was entirely voluntary”. Since the scales used in the study were in English, they were translated into Turkish (Munday, 2008). Turkish surveys were examined by marketing academicians who are experts in their fields. After a pre-test was conducted, convenience sampling method was adopted in the study. Following the research method, the survey link was shared starting with the nearest consumers using social media applications such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Linked In, and Instagram.

Measures

The questionnaire consists of 6 sections. In the first section, purpose of the research and communication information were shared to the participants and their approval was obtained. The second section categorized the participants demographically by gender, age, income, and education. The third section consists of 3-item scale measuring self-enhancement developed by Krishna and Kim (2020). The fourth section consists of 3-item scale measuring helping other consumers developed by Alexandrov et al. (2013). The fifth section consists of 5-item scale measuring vengeance developed by Fu et al. (2015) and the sixth section consists of 4-item scale measuring NWOM intention developed by Fu et al. (2015). Participants responded to all scales on a five-point from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Statistical Analysis

At first, variables were examined to detect the outliers. For all variables, to detect the outliers, we calculated Mahalanobis distance (D^2) and divided it by the number of items involved (D^2 / df). The result was compared with the t distribution values table (Laurencelle & Dupuis, 2002, p. 19) at 0.01 level. For self-enhancement and helping other consumers variables (both have 3 items), the t distribution value is 5.841, for the NWOM intention variable (4 items), the t distribution value is 4.604, and for the vengeance variable (5 items), the t distribution value is 4.032. Surveys greater than the value in the t distribution table have been deleted (Hair et al., 2010, p. 64). The final number of surveys was 767.

After the elimination of outliers, the demographic results of 767 respondents indicated that 53.5% of respondents (410) were female. There were six age groups: 18-21, 22-28, 29-35, 36-43, 44-50, and 51 and older (24.6%, 24.8%, 19.8%, 15.5%, 11.1%, and 4.2% respectively). There were three monthly income groups: 0-3000, 3001-6000, and over 6001TL (48.8%, 36.0%, and 15.3% respectively). There were three education groups: primary, college, and master/doctorate diploma (14.7%, 66.5%, and 18.8% respectively).

Using Lisrel 8.54 program, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to determine the factor loadings of the scale items. After CFA, standardized factor loadings of all items were greater than 0.70 (t values are significant) (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Factor loadings for self-enhancement are between 0.79 and 0.88. Factor loadings for helping other

consumers are between 0.78 and 0.87. Factor loadings for vengeance are between 0.75 and 0.87. Factor loadings for NWOM intention are between 0.82 and 0.92. The traditionally reported fit indexes are within the acceptable range. All measures proved reliable (Dimitrov, 2014). Table 1 presents descriptive statistics.

To evaluate the common method bias (CMB) among factors, Harman's single-factor test was used (Podsakoff et al., 2003, p. 889). We loaded all the items (15 pieces) into one factor and run the program. The single-factor model gave poor model fit: χ^2 : 4643; p : 0,000, df : 90, χ^2/df : 51.5, RMSEA: 0.257, NFI: 0.84; NNFI: 0.82; CFI: 0.85; GFI: 0.55; AGFI: 0.40; SRMR: 0.14, and standardized factor loadings of all 15 items were between 0.45 and 0.83. Since the single-factor model was rather worse, common method variance is not present compared with the CFA results in Table 1.

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics*

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	AVE	CR
1- SE	3.91	0.93	(0.88)				0.71	0.88
2- HOC	4.24	0.73	0.65 (12.56)	(0.87)			0.70	0.88
3- VEN	3.87	0.93	0.46 (19.70)	0.55 (11.11)	(0.91)		0.68	0.91
4- NWOM-I	3.50	1.09	0.41 (9.18)	0.50 (10.90)	0.77 (13.84)	(0.92)	0.76	0.93

$\chi^2 = 467$; $p = 0,000$; $df = 84$; $\chi^2 / df = 5,5$; NFI= 0.99; NNFI= 0.98; CFI= 0.98; GFI= 0.92; AGFI= 0.89; SRMR= 0.04; RMSEA= 0.07
 NWOM-I: NWOM Intention; VEN: Vengeance; HOC: Helping Other Consumers; SE: Self-Enhancement
 Cronbach's α is in parenthesis
 Correlations are significant at the 0,01 level (t -values in parentheses)

Using factor loadings and error variances of items, average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) values were calculated to assess convergent and discriminant validity. To assess convergent validity: (1) the CR value must be bigger than 0.70 ($CR > 0.70$), (2) the AVE value must be bigger than 0.50 ($AVE > 0.50$), and (3) CR must be bigger than AVE ($CR > AVE$) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981, p. 46). To assess the discriminant validity, the AVEs and CRs are both higher than the squared correlation between the constructs. This provides evidence that there is convergent and discriminant validity between the variables (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000, p. 92).

Tests of Hypotheses

To address H1, Process v3.5 Macro Model 4 (Hayes, 2013) was conducted (5000 bootstrap resamples and bootstrap confidence intervals BC= 95% CI).

In Figure 2, the diagram represents the statistical model of mediating role of vengeance in the relationship between self-enhancement and NWOM intention. Table 2 depicts statistical diagram analysis results in Figure 2. The results revealed that direct effect of self-enhancement (X) on NWOM intention (Y) is 0.121 as the 95% Bootstrap Confidence Intervals (Bootstrap CI = 0.056-0.187). Indirect effect of self-enhancement (X) on NWOM intention (Y) through vengeance (M) is 0.333 (Bootstrap CI = 0.269-0.400). The significance of both direct and indirect effects indicated a partial mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

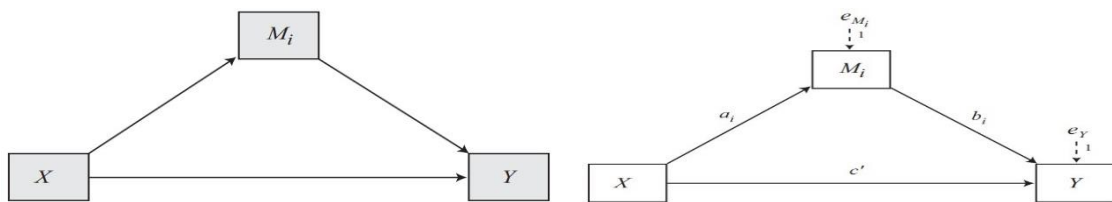


Figure 2. Conceptual and statistical diagram of the mediating role of vengeance

In the mediation models, as an alternative, the Sobel test is also performed (MacKinnon et al., 2002). According to Sobel test result, we can say that partial mediation is significant ($B = 0.333$, $S.E. = 0.028$, $Z = 11.543$, $p = 0.000$). Finally, results indicated that self-enhancement is positively associated with NWOM intention, and this relationship is partially mediated by vengeance. With this result, hypothesis 1 is supported.

Table 2. Statistical diagram analysis results in Figure 2

Antecedent	Consequent					
	M (Vengeance)			Y (NWOM intention)		
	Coefficient	S.E.	p	Coefficient	S.E.	p
Constant	2.164	0.131	0.000	0.065	0.140	0.643
X (Self-Enhancement)	0.437	0.032	0.000	0.121	0.033	0.000
M (Vengeance)	--	--	--	0.763	0.033	0.000
	$R^2 = 0.189$, $F = 178.558$			$R^2 = 0.498$, $F = 379.372$		
	X coefficient = 0.437, $t(765) = 13.362$, $p = 0.000$			M coefficient = 0.763, $t(764) = 23.000$, $p = 0.000$		

To address H2, H3 and H4, Model 59 (Hayes, 2013) was conducted (5000 bootstrap resamples and bootstrap confidence intervals BC= 95% CI). In Figure 3, the diagram represents the statistical model of moderated mediation role of helping other consumers. Table 3 depicts statistical diagram analysis results in Figure 3. The results of the moderated mediation model revealed that the interaction between the self-enhancement and helping other consumers (XW) is statistically significant ($B = 0.117$, $p = 0.001$, Bootstrap CI = 0.0012, 0.466). This means the effect of self-enhancement on

vengeance is dependent on helping other consumers. With this result, hypothesis 2 is supported.

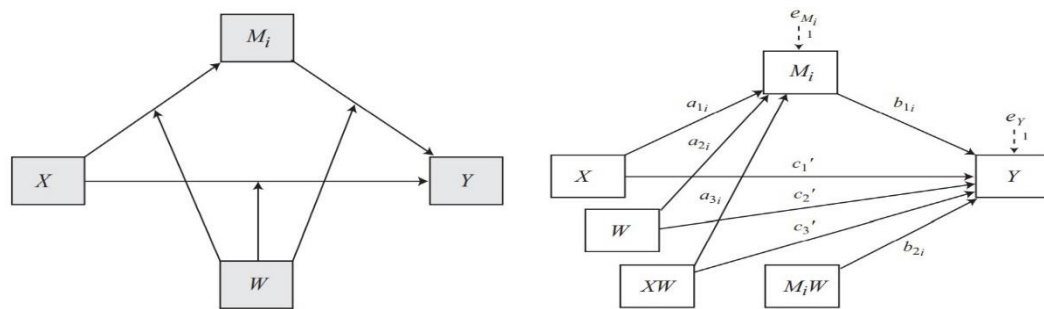


Figure 3. Conceptual and statistical diagram of the moderated mediation role of helping other consumers

The interaction between the vengeance and helping other consumers (MW) is statistically significant ($B = 0.115$, $p = 0.003$, Bootstrap CI = 0.0039, 0.0369) which shows that the effect of vengeance on NWOM intention is dependent on helping other consumers. Thus, hypothesis 3 is supported. On the other hand, the interaction between the self-enhancement and helping other consumers (XW) is not statistically significant ($B = 0.040$, $p = 0.322$, Bootstrap CI = 0.322, -0.0394). This means the effect of self-enhancement on NWOM intention is not dependent on helping other consumers. Based on this result, hypothesis 4 is not supported. Thus, the consumers' self-enhancement evaluation had different effects on their vengeance depending on their helping other consumers levels and the consumers' vengeance had different effects on their NWOM intention depending on their helping other consumers levels.

Table 3. Statistical diagram analysis results in Figure 3

Antecedent	Consequent					
	M (Vengeance)			Y (NWOM intention)		
	Coefficient	S.E.	p	Coefficient	S.E.	p
Constant	- 0.047	0.032	0.141	3.444	0.031	0.000
X (Self-Enhancement)	0.223	0.037	0.000	0.054	0.038	0.156
W (Helping Other Consumers)	0.534	0.050	0.000	0.232	0.053	0.000
M (Vengeance)	--	--	--	0.733	0.035	0.000
X*W	0.117	0.035	0.001	0.040	0.040	0.322
M*W	--	--	--	0.115	0.039	0.003
	$R^2 = 0.292$, $F = 104.883$			$R^2 = 0.515$, $F = 161.984$		
	XW coefficient = 0.117, $t(763) = 3.262$, $p = 0.001$			MW coefficient = 0.115, $t(761) = 2.891$, $p = 0.003$		

X*W: interaction between self-enhancement and helping other consumers,
M*W: interaction between vengeance and helping other consumers.

To address H5, H6 and H7, Model 73 (Hayes, 2013) was conducted (5000 bootstrap resamples and bootstrap confidence intervals BC= 95% CI). In Figure 4, the diagram represents the statistical model of moderated mediation role of helping other consumers which is moderated by gender. Table 4 depicts statistical diagram analysis results in Figure 4. As gender is a dichotomous moderator variable, the male was coded as "0" and the female was coded as "1" in the data file (Hayes, 2018).

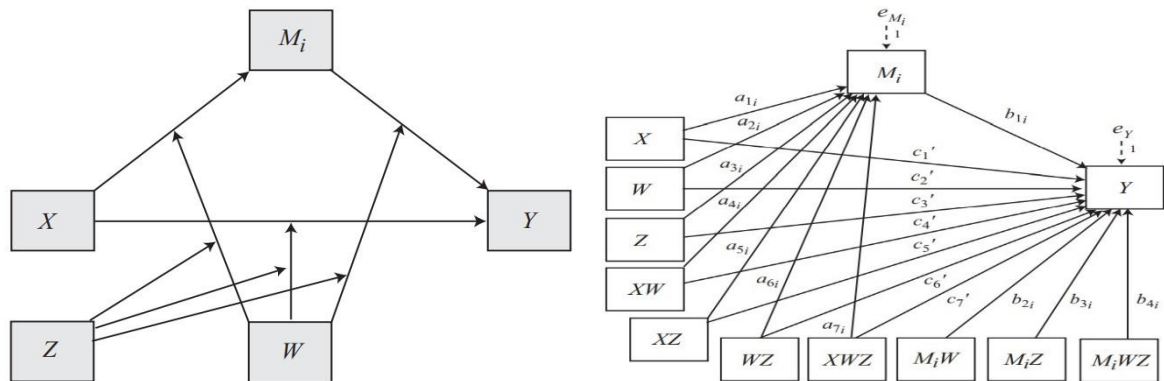


Figure 4. Conceptual and statistical diagram of the moderated moderation role of gender in the moderated mediation role of helping other consumers

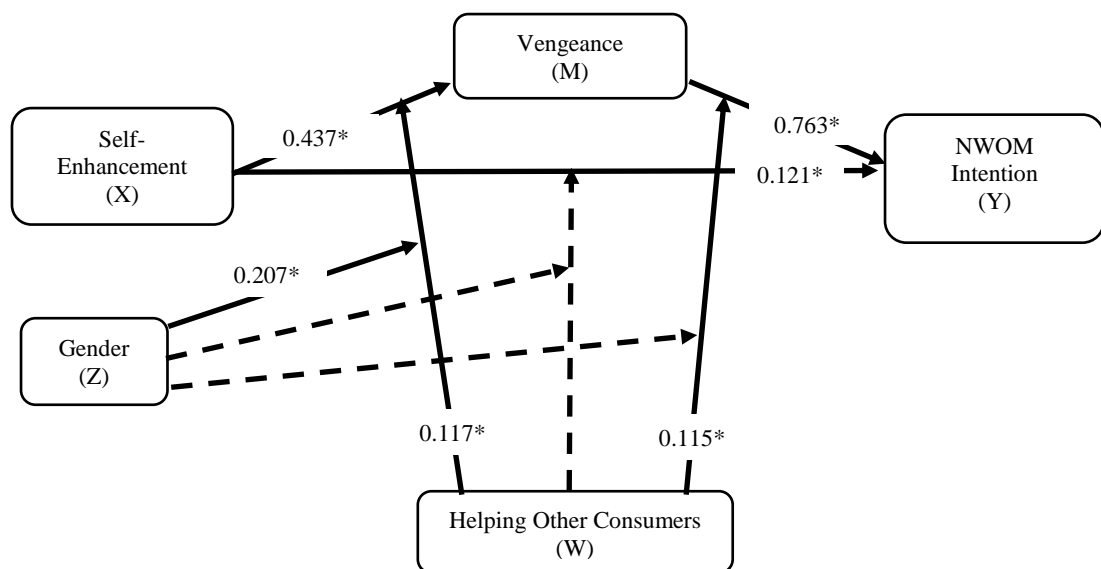
Table 4. Statistical diagram analysis results in Figure 4

Antecedent	Consequent					
	M (Vengeance)			Y (NWOM intention)		
	Coefficient	S.E.	p	Coefficient	S.E.	p
Constant	0.110	0.046	0.018	3.547	0.046	0.000
X (Self-Enhancement)	0.124	0.054	0.022	0.040	0.053	0.447
W (Helping Other Consumers)	0.505	0.073	0.000	0.296	0.077	0.000
Z (Gender) *	-0.296	0.063	0.000	-0.182	0.063	0.004
X*W	0.012	0.048	0.794	0.102	0.054	0.061
X*Z	0.204	0.074	0.006	0.026	0.076	0.726
W*Z	0.026	0.100	0.792	-0.114	0.106	0.281
X*W*Z	0.207	0.071	0.003	-0.146	0.082	0.073
M (Vengeance)	--	--	--	0.685	0.053	0.000
M*W	--	--	--	0.057	0.056	0.303
M*Z	--	--	--	0.068	0.072	0.347
M*W*Z	--	--	--	0.111	0.079	0.162
R ² = 0.318, F = 50.777			R ² = 0.527, F = 76.459			
XWZ coefficient = 0.207, t (759) = 2.91, p = 0.003			MWZ coefficient = 0.111, t (755) = 1.398, p = 0.162			

X*W: interaction between self-enhancement and helping other consumers, X*Z: interaction between self-enhancement and gender, W*Z: interaction between helping other consumers and gender, X*W*Z: interaction between self-enhancement, helping other consumers, and gender, M*W: interaction between vengeance and helping other consumers, M*Z: interaction between vengeance and gender, M*W*Z: interaction between vengeance, helping other consumers, and gender.

* Male was coded as "0" and the female was coded as "1".

The estimated results revealed that the interaction between self-enhancement, helping other consumers, and gender (XWZ) is statistically significant ($B = 0.207$, $p = 0.003$, Bootstrap CI = 0.067, 0.347) when it is checked for the relationship between self-enhancement and vengeance. The positive interaction variable (XWZ) reveals that there is a difference in helping other consumers behavior among females. This means moderated mediation role of helping other consumers is moderated by gender in the effect of self-enhancement on vengeance. With this result, hypothesis 5 is supported. However, the interaction between vengeance, helping other consumers, and gender (MWZ) is not statistically significant ($B = 0.111$, $p = 0.162$, Bootstrap CI = -0.045, 0.268). This means moderated mediation role of helping other consumers is not moderated by gender in the effect of vengeance on NWOM intention. Based on this result, hypothesis 6 is not supported. Lastly, the interaction between self-enhancement, helping other consumers, and gender (XWZ) is not statistically significant ($B = -0.146$, $p = 0.073$, Bootstrap CI = -0.308, 0.014) when it is checked for the relationship between self-enhancement and NWOM intention. This means moderated mediation role of helping other consumers is not moderated by gender in the effect of self-enhancement on NWOM intention. Thus, hypothesis 7 is not supported.



(Dashed line represents insignificant path.)

(* $p < 0.01$)

Figure 5. Results of Research Model

CONCLUSION

Although the negative impact of NWOM on firms is well known, its antecedent, mediator, and moderator mechanisms have hardly been studied. The literature does not accurately address this issue or is inconclusive. Recent studies in the literature show that NWOM can have individual antecedents, is influenced by emotions, and involves the satisfaction of social needs. In this study, we examined whether the factors that influence NWOM, such as self-enhancement (individual), vengeance (emotional), and helping other consumers (social need), are the same with respect to gender or whether there are differences. To better understand these mechanisms, three research aims were established. The first aim was to investigate the mediating role of vengeance in the relationship between self-enhancement and NWOM intention. The result of the analysis (Table 2) shows that self-enhancement is positively related to NWOM intention, and that this relationship is partially mediated by vengeance. The greater the extent of consumers' self-enhancement, the greater the effect on consumers' NWOM intention, both directly and indirectly (via vengeance). We can say that this is the first mechanism for understanding NWOM intention that involves both individual (self-enhancement) and emotional (vengeance) factors. This result is consistent with previous studies. Wien and Olsen (2014) pointed out that the relationship between individualism and WOM was explained with self-enhancement. The authors provided evidence for self-enhancement as a motivation for WOM. Berger (2014) also stated that one of the reasons people share WOM is impression management, and self-enhancement is one of the factors that facilitates impression management. Philp et al. (2018) showed that individuals who have high self-liking are more likely to share NWOM. According to the authors, self-liking customers is often characterized as being confident in their abilities and perceiving themselves to be competent and effective. Similarly, Boo and Kim (2013) found that consumers who have high self-confidence have higher NWOM intention. In addition, Vargo et al. (2019) found that vengeance is a motivating factor for WOM diffusion and Krishna and Kim (2020) showed the role of situational motivation in the effect of self-enhancement on NWOM behavior.

The second aim was to examine whether the association between self-enhancement, vengeance, and NWOM intention is moderated by helping other consumers. By examining the moderating role of helping other consumers, the present study provides a further understanding of the relationships between the variables. The result of the analysis (Table 3) shows that helping other consumers moderates self-enhancement →

vengeance relationship and vengeance \rightarrow NWOM intention relationship but does not moderate self-enhancement \rightarrow NWOM intention relationship. The result shows that this indirect effect (self-enhancement \rightarrow vengeance \rightarrow NWOM intention) is significantly different from the values for helping other consumers. Self-enhancement is a predictor of vengeance, and this result combined with intention to help other consumers suggests that customers use NWOM not only against a company to punish it, but also to make others punish it. We can say that this is the second mechanism for understanding NWOM intention, which includes individual (self-enhancement), emotional (vengeance), and social need (helping other consumers). Our result supports previous studies. Cheng et al. (2006) claimed that it may be helpful to study NWOM based on social norms and showed that the theory of planned behavior (subjective norm, attitude, and perceived behavioral control) is an antecedent of NWOM. Alexandrov et al. (2013) examined self and social motives as drivers of WOM and found that helping other consumers influences NWOM. Chelminski and Coulter (2011) found that consumer advocacy (helping others) was positively related to consumer complaints (consumer voicing and NWOM) and that the probability of NWOM was consistently greater than the probability of voicing. In another study, Verhagen et al. (2013) showed that NWOM is driven by negative emotions and that in this relationship, helping other consumers acts as a behavior moderator.

The third aim was to test whether the moderating role of helping other consumers is moderated by gender. The result of the analysis (Table 4) shows that the moderated mediation role of helping other consumers is moderated by gender (difference for females) in terms of the effect of self-enhancement on vengeance. Within this framework, we can conclude that there is evidence of a three-way interaction between self-enhancement, helping other consumers, and gender. In other words, the magnitude of the moderating effect of helping other consumers on the relationship between self-enhancement and vengeance depends on gender. It can be inferred that this is the third mechanism for understanding NWOM intention, which includes individual (self-enhancement), emotional (vengeance), social need (helping other consumers), and gender. This finding is consistent with previous studies. For example, McColl-Kennedy et al. (2003) examined the role of gender in responses to service failure and recovery and found that women were more likely to help other consumers. Similarly, Fan et al. (2018) investigated gender differences in intentions to voice complaints about different types of service failures and found that women are socially oriented and more willing to help others with service failures. Kempf and

Palan (2006) examined the impact of gender on the WOM process and found that women described themselves as more open to WOM. Mattila et al. (2009) also found that women were more likely to spread negative experiences to others.

Theoretical contributions

This study contributes to the literature on NWOM, which should benefit from learning more about the influence of self-enhancement, vengeance, helping other consumers, and gender. The main theoretical contribution of the study is that some researchers argue that consumers spread PWOM through their positive consumption experiences but spread NWOM through others' negative consumption experiences. According to this approach, consumers spread only PWOM to enhance their self. The literature argues that this logic is incorrect (Richins, 1984; Sundaram et al., 1998; Berger & Milkman, 2012), but there has been no empirical research to prove otherwise. To our knowledge, this is the first study to show that this logic is false. We can say that self-enhancement has an impact not only on PWOM, but also on NWOM. Moreover, a mediation model was created by adding a variable such as vengeance to the direct effect between self-enhancement and NWOM. According to this model, the existence of variables that can mediate the spreading of NWOM to enhance consumers' self opens the door to further theoretical discussion.

Another important contribution of the study is that it highlights differences in the moderating role of helping other consumers and gender in the relationship between self-enhancement and vengeance. Overall, by incorporating the variable of helping other consumers as a moderated mediation into the model, this study uncovered effects that might have been neglected. The moderated mediation model in this study strengthens the perspective in terms of theory development and contributes to more conceptual discussions than just the mediation model. In addition, testing whether there is a significant difference between genders in the moderated mediation model facilitates consumer segmentation and understanding of their behavior.

Managerial implications

To avoid the negative effects of NWOM, managers need to understand the mindset of their target customers. This study has implications for management because it provides some insights. Managers need to understand the key mechanisms that drive consumers to NWOM intention.

Understanding the behaviors that are likely to trigger NWOM intent is useful for managers interested in better customer relationships. Marketing management teams can use these insights to guide the development of customer service strategies to increase the number of customers who prefer to consult them before spreading NWOM. For companies, NWOM is considered an indicator of negative consumer experiences. The first mechanism for intentions of spreading NWOM is consumers' willingness to enhance their self after a negative experience. Once a customer leaves the company, he or she may be inclined to disparage the perceived blameworthy company to others. For this reason, ways must be found to compensate for consumers' negative experiences with products and companies. When consumers turn their negative experiences into vengeance, the intent to spread NWOM may be stronger. To reduce vengeance, employees should explain that the problem will be less severe in the future. This can help customers come to terms with the failure and view it as less negative, which can reduce vengeance. The second mechanism states that the intention to spread NWOM through vengeance may be reinforced by the thought of helping other consumers. Therefore, store managers should ensure that consumers leave the store without negative thoughts and experiences. One of the ways to do this is for marketers to create more environments (such as complaint boxes on websites and in stores) for customers who are likely to spread NWOM with feelings of vengeance before they want to help other consumers. According to the third mechanism, the second mechanism is even more important for female consumers because female consumers may be more willing to help other consumers and their feelings of self-enhancement are more likely to turn into vengeance than men. As Gregoire and Fisher (2008) explained, managers should look for ways to compensate or regulate customers' emotions before their negative thoughts and experiences make them enemies. In addition, female customers in particular can be asked verbally about their consumption experiences and satisfaction before they leave the company. If there is dissatisfaction, it should be resolved before female customers leave the company.

Future research directions

In the present study, self-enhancement, one of the individual antecedents that may have a direct influence on NWOM, was used. In future studies, self-related characteristic antecedents that may influence NWOM intention can be investigated, such as self-discrepancy, self-development, self-esteem, self-concept, self-aspects, social self, spiritual self, and ego. In

addition, we have investigated the mediating effect of an emotional state such as vengeance in this context. Future studies could investigate the mediating effect of different emotional states such as anxiety, emotional instability, anger, disappointment, and venting negative feelings.

In the study, we determined helping other consumers, which is one of the social factors, as the variable that moderated mediation role. In future studies, the presence of other social factors can be investigated, such as social transmission, community usefulness, helping the company, seeking advice, social benefits, and altruism. On the other hand, there are some important discussions in the literature that culture, individualistic-collectivist societies, or societies with strong/weak social ties are important factors that influence NWOM. These factors were ignored in this study. The other research question for future studies could be: What social factors play moderated mediation role in the NWOM process? Finally, we tested moderated moderation role of gender as a demographic factor. Future studies could test the moderated moderation role of other demographic factors such as education, income, and age. This will allow us to better segment consumers and understand their behavior.

Limitations

The limitations of the study are listed as follows. It was not stated whether there was an incident that was the subject of NWOM intent. We did not mention any products, companies, or brands when creating the questionnaire. Therefore, it may not be possible to generalize the results of this study. The results may only be valid for the region in which the study was conducted.

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