



Research on the Impact of Different Internet Word of Mouth to the Consumer Purchase Intention in the Catering Industry

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Abstract. This study explored and analyzed the impact of different internet word-of-mouth (IWOM) to the consumer purchase intention and then proposed several suggestions to the catering industry. This study first divides the IWON into three types: the short video IWON, the comment IWON, and the promotion advertorial IWON. Several assumptions regarding the IWON are proposed and then a hypothesis research model is inferred based on the proposed assumptions. This study adopts the questionnaire method to verify the hypothesis research model. A total of 255 valid questionnaires were collected. Reliability and validity test was conducted after data preprocessing. Cronbach alpha of the variables are between 0.808 and 0.909, validity test KMO of the variables are between 0.704 and 0.875, indicating that the variables are valid and reliable. This study then employed the IBM SPSS 23.0 and AMOS 24.0 to test the hypothesis research model and the test results removed three assumptions from the hypothesis research model. This study then proposed the revised research model for evaluating the IWOM marketing strategies for the catering industry.

Keywords: Internet Word of Mouth; Custom Purchase Intention; Catering Industry; Online Trust; Social Presence

1 Introduction

In the age of the Internet, people are more likely to learn the evaluations and feedbacks of the netizens on restaurants through the online channels such as social media or online comment websites. The evaluations and feedbacks can affect consumers' purchasing intentions. The social presence felt by consumers through IWOM and the level of trust they have in the internet can also greatly affect their purchasing intention. In a fiercely competitive market, restaurants need to actively shape a good IWOM system and strengthen its authenticity and accuracy management to enhance

consumers' trust in IWOM and social presence, thereby promoting their purchasing behavior.

The word-of-mouth (WOM) promotion has attracted the attention of many scholars. With the increasing influence of WOM, more and more people treat the WOM as an efficient promotion tool and medium, and its influence in society is increasing. Arnt regards WOM as an informal communication between disseminators and receivers who can perceive information and first memorize the product brand, which is a direct face-to-face and non-commercial behavior [1]. Westbrook believes that WOM refers to communication and exchange with others about the characteristics and feelings of the products and services they receive. With the rapid development of the Internet, Button believes that the WOM promotion can be achieved through electronic network means to communicate and exchange information on a larger scale. Additionally, he believes that the WOM includes both formal and informal communication, with formal communication falling within the scope of WOM, while informal communication is not fully included [2].

The IWOM is the extension and application of the traditional WOM in the Internet. In the age of Internet, the IWOM has gradually replaced traditional WOM as a new form of WOM communication. In the age of the Internet, the IWOM is an important channel to understand the content of catering enterprises' products. Consumers can obtain specific information, evaluate and judge it through the online comments. Therefore, the interpretation and understanding of online reviews are crucial to the customers. For service industries such as catering and hotels, it is difficult for consumers to accurately understand product quality before consumption. Compared to the searchable products, purchasing the experiential products is more susceptible to the influence of IWOM.

Various food social media have rapidly emerged in recent years. The new generation of the customers is willing to seek the self-identity in the Internet and show their lifestyle through consumption habits such as taking photos and sharing reviews. They usually upload photos of restaurants and dishes to the food review websites after meals, and evaluate the environment, atmosphere, service, taste, aesthetics, price, and other aspects of the restaurant based on personal subjective feelings, thereby forming a network reputation effect related to the restaurant, which provides a reference for the potential consumers to make decisions [3].

Comparing with the traditional newspapers, television, radio and other media, the emergence of social media release the characteristics of one-way information transmission. More and more consumers own the Internet media that can freely express and share experience. Based on the concept of social media, this study divides social media into three categories. The first one is the short video based social media such as the Tiktok, the Bilibili and the WeChat Channel. The second is the comment based social media apps and websites such as Dianping and Meituan. The third is the promotion advertorial based social networking software and websites such as the RED.

This study believes that trust is an important indicator for measuring the effectiveness of the IWOM. The IWOM trust refers to the level of trust that the recipient of the IWOM has in WOM information. The trust is influenced by many factors. Paul believes that as netizens increase their interaction frequency and experience on the in-

ternet, their trust in the internet will continue to be adjusted. Positive interaction experience enhances trust, while negative interaction experience weakens trust [4]. Morland and Surya Nepal divide online trust into direct trust and indirect trust, where direct trust is obtained from the interaction experiences directly generated by netizens when using online social media and indirect trust is obtained from feedback from other netizens' usage experiences [5].

Based on the observation to the food consumption decision making behavior of the internet users, this study assumes that their willingness to purchase and recommend food is directly related to their social presence and online trust obtained from relevant IWOM information, while social presence and online trust are related to the types of social media used to convey IWOM. To further understand the relationship between the social media types, the social presence, the online trust, and the netizens' consumption willingness in restaurant, this study proposes a set of assumptions in the Section 2, and establishes a hypothesis research model to describe the impact of IWOM of different types of social media on consumer behavior in the catering industry.

This study employs the questionnaire method to analyze and validate the hypothesis research model. The design of the questionnaire and the preliminary descriptive statistical results are presented in the Section 3. In the Section 4, this study applies the AMOS 24.0 to construct a corresponding structural equation modeling (SEM) inspection model for the hypothesis research model proposed in Section 3, and conducted preliminary verification work on the SEM inspection model. According to the test results, this study proposed a research model which describes the relationship between the social media types, the social presence, the online trust, and the netizens' consumption willingness in restaurant. Based on the proposed research model, several comments are proposed to the catering industry in Section 5. Conclusions and future works of this study are then presented in Section 6.

2 The Proposed Model for Purchase Intention Analysis to the Catering Industry

2.1 The Influence from Different IWON to the Social Presence and the Online Trust

With the rise of the Internet, consumers often observe others' daily behaviors and word-of-mouth comments through social media. The customers hope to meet their own needs and win Collective identity. They tend to adopt "Conformity" to maintain consistency with other members [6]. With the continuous progress of information technology, food evaluation websites and virtual social platforms become increasingly popular, which has also led to increasingly fierce competition in the market. Nowadays, many restaurant consumers obtain information through online searches and WOM evaluations, which are used as a basis for making decisions [7].

Below, this paper explores the impact of IWOM on social presence and online trust in different type of social media platforms.

The Short Video IWOM.

Currently, more and more food bloggers choose to share their food exploration history and food evaluation through short video platforms such as the Tiktok, the Bilibili and the WeChat Channel. In various short video platforms, the information related to catering is widely welcomed and regarded by many consumers as an important reference before making consumption decisions.

Through the help of the short videos, consumers can intuitively understand the restaurant's unique operations, dining environment, and promotional information in a short period of time. This not only provides consumers with a sense of on-site experience, but also makes food consumers trust bloggers more.

Therefore, this study makes the following assumptions:

- H_1 : The short video IWOM positively impacts the social presence.
- H_2 : The short video IWOM positively impacts the online trust.

The Comment IWOM.

In the Chinese market, consumers can freely give positive or negative evaluations regarding the food products, services, environment, and other aspects on comment apps and websites such as Dianping and Meituan. The consumers can also share their consumption experiences for reference by other consumers.

Since the comment app and websites provide consumers with feedback on their dining experience, they can provide other consumers with a more authentic experience and increase their trust in the IWOM. Because the comment IWOM comes from the positive and negative reviews of the customers and the reviews contains image and text descriptions, the comment IWOM is more authentic and reliable. This makes the consumers to feel a stronger sense of social presence and provide them with a more immersive experience.

Therefore, this study makes the following assumptions:

- H_3 : The comment IWOM positively impacts the social presence.
- H_4 : The comment IWOM positively impacts the online trust.

The Promotion Advertorial IWOM.

In the past, many word-of-mouth marketing, brand promotion, and product advertising were inseparable from the advertorial. After understanding the behavior of potential customers, enterprises design and publish targeted and universally applicable advertisements. After these advertisements are seen and forwarded by netizens, they can help more users understand the companies and their products and brands, thereby enhancing their recognition of the brand and products, enhancing their loyalty to the brand, and improving the effectiveness of marketing and promotion.

In the Internet Age, the Internet advertorials most appear in forums, post bars and the Q&A websites. With the continuous improvement of network technology and the rise of various apps, the current forms of the catering advertorial are more common in the e-commerce platform such as the RED, the Zhihu, and the Douban, etc. According to the characteristics of the catering industry, the selection of target groups and the

analysis from the big data technology, design appropriate advertorials that can attract consumers' attention and recommend them to the corresponding groups through the e-commerce platform for reading, so as to improve the product exposure and communication efficiency. The promotion advertorials IWOM usually combines with event marketing or social hot spots, which can better bring users into their situations. Or it can be presented in the form of storytelling articles to provide users with better online trust.

Therefore, this study makes the following assumptions:

- H_5 : The promotion advertorial IWOM positively impacts the social presence.
- H_6 : The promotion advertorial IWOM positively impacts the online trust.

2.2 The Influence from the Social Presence and the Online Trust to the Purchase Intention

The Influence from the Social Presence to the Purchase Intention.

In the Internet Age, even though it is difficult for consumers to have face-to-face offline conversations with businesses or other consumers, they can still communicate and interact with stores or other consumers through the Internet platform, so that they can understand the overall decoration, food categories, food environment, etc. of the catering stores, thus enhancing the social presence of food consumers and providing them with a more real feeling.

In the process of observing the consumer purchasing behaviors, this study learned that the social presence is a key factor affecting consumer purchasing intention. The social presence can bring the consumers a sense of "empathy" and "being with others", which can bring a sense of familiarity and closeness to the consumers, and also positively affect their purchasing intention.

Therefore, this study makes the following assumptions:

- H_7 : The social presence positively impacts the consumer purchase intention.

The Influence from the Online Trust to the Purchase Intention.

According to the literature [8], online trust has a significant impact on consumers' purchasing behavior. In the Internet Age, online trust is the prerequisite for better communication among netizens. If consumers can trust the IWOM and trust the information regarding the store exploration experiences provided by the netizens, then their purchasing intention would be stronger.

Therefore, this study makes the following assumptions:

- H_8 : The online trust positively impacts the consumer purchase intention.

The Influence from Different Social Media IWON to the Purchase Intention.

According to the previously introduction regarding the online word-of-mouth in different social media platforms mentioned, it can be understood that the dissemination of different types of online word-of-mouth can help consumers have a better

perception and cognition of the restaurants they want to know. Driven by the IWOM, the consumers engender stronger tendency to purchase or not to purchase. If the IWOM brings benefits to the consumers' consumption experience, the consumers would be more willing to recommend it to others.

Therefore, this study makes the following assumptions:

- H_9 : The short video IWOM positively impacts the consumer purchase intention.
- H_{10} : The comment IWOM positively impacts the consumer purchase intention.
- H_{11} : The promotion advertorial IWOM positively impacts the consumer purchase intention.

2.3 The Hypothetical Research Model

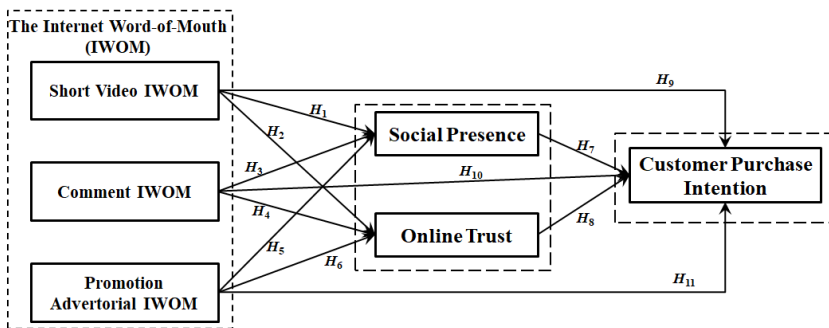


Fig. 1. The hypothetical research model

Based on the previous assumptions, this study assumes that the relationship between the IWOM, the social presence, the online trust and the customers purchase intention is shown in Fig. 1.

3 Questionnaire Survey and Preliminary Statistical Analysis

3.1 Questionnaire Valuables

Based on the assumptions in Section 2, this study designed corresponding study variable as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The Study Variables

Var. Index	Questions in the questionnaire
A1	I am familiar with the short video IWOM
A2	The short video IWOM helps me more familiar with restaurant's service.
A3	The short video IWOM helps me better understand product information
A4	The short video IWOM helps me better understand dining environment.
A5	The short video IWOM helps me better understand dining expenses
B1	I am familiar with the comment IWOM

B2	The comment IWOM helps me more familiar with restaurant's service.
B3	The comment IWOM helps me better understand product information
B4	The comment IWOM helps me better understand dining environment.
B5	The comment IWOM helps me better understand dining expenses
C1	I am familiar with the promotion advertorial IWOM
C2	The promotion advertorial IWOM helps me more familiar with restaurant's service.
C3	The promotion advertorial IWOM helps me better understands product information.
C4	The promotion advertorial IWOM helps me better understand dining environment.
C5	The promotion advertorial IWOM helps me better understand dining expenses
D1	Learning the restaurant services from the IWOM affects my consumption decision.
D2	The IWOM can provide me with reference opinions.
D3	Viewing the IWOM give me a feeling of face-to-face communication.
D4	I agree the price provided by the IWOM affect my consumption decision.
D5	Learn the restaurant products from the IWOM will affect my consumption decision.
D6	Learn the dining environment from the IWOM will affect my consumption decision.
E1	I agree that the prices provided by the IWOM are trustworthy.
E2	I agree that IWOM disseminators are trustworthy
E3	I refer to comments from other consumers in my purchasing decisions.
E4	I agree that the conformity between the images in the IWOM and the actual products will affect my purchase intention.
F1	The IWOM posted by other users is one of the factors I consider when consuming
F2	Short video IWOM has a great impact to my consuming behavior
F3	Comment IWOM has a great impact to my consuming behavior
F4	Promotion advertorial IWOM has a great impact to my consuming behavior

3.2 Data Description

In this study, the questionnaire was distributed online from March 5 to April 25, 2023. A total of 300 questionnaire samples were recovered, and those with overseas IP addresses and incomplete filling were deleted. A total of 255 valid data were obtained, with an effective rate of 92%. The data are described as follows:

- Gender data: 101 males and 154 females.
- Age: 178 between 18 and 25, 43 between 26 and 30, 29 between 31 and 40 and 5 between 41 and 50.
- Career: 134 students, 84 official of companies, 14 employees of state organs and institutions and 12 others.
- Salary (Unit: RMB): 104 less than 2000, 70 between 2000 and 4000, 61 between 4000 and 8000 and 20 more than 8000.

3.3 Reliability and Validity Test

This study employed the IBM SPSS23.0 software to make the reliability and validity analyses to the all the values of the variables in Table 1. The results are shown in Tables 2 and 3, respectively

Table 2. The reliability analysis results

<i>Variable Index</i>	<i>Cronbach's α</i>
A1 – A5	0.878
B1 – B5	0.895
C1 – C5	0.909
D1 – D6	0.867
E1 – E4	0.830
F1 – F4	0.808

The values of the Cronbach's α of all the variables are all greater than 0.8 in Table 2. This indicates that each variable has a high level of reliability on the scale and hence it shows that the reliability of the questions in the questionnaire corresponding to each variable in table 1 is high enough.

Table 3. The validity analysis results

<i>The Major Variables in the Hypothetical Research Model</i>	<i>KMO</i>	<i>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</i>		
		<i>Approx. Chi Square</i>	<i>df.</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Short Video IWOM	0.868	637.232	10	.000
Comment IWOM	0.875	720.134	10	.000
Promotion Advertorial IWOM	0.863	826.935	10	.000
Social Presence	0.872	691.566	15	.000
Online Trust	0.760	394.516	6	.000
Customer Purchase Intention	0.704	377.299	6	.000

In Table 3, the KMO values of each variable are all greater than 0.7 and the significance of them are close to 0. This indicates that the questionnaire has a high enough scale effect and its validity is acceptable.

4 Research Model Verification

This study applies the AMOS to construct and then analyze the structural equation model (SEM) of the hypothetical research model. The main steps include determining the variables and models, constructing the SEM, conducting reliability and validity analysis on the variable data, fitting, revising, and explaining the model.

Since the reliability and validity testing results regarding the hypothetical research model are presented in Section 3, this paper focus on the fitting, modification and explanation to the SEM model for the hypothetical research model in this section.

4.1 SEM Construction

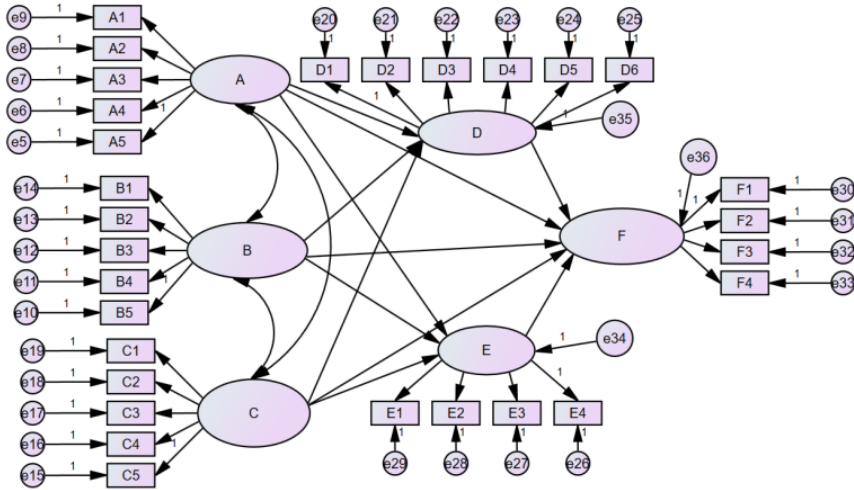


Fig. 2. The SEM of the hypothetical research model

Fig. 2 is the SEM of the hypothetical research model in Fig. 1. In Fig. 2, the oval shapes are the six major variables in the hypothetical research model, where the rectangles represent the variable indexes defined in Table 1. The symbols in the oval shapes are denoted as follow

- A: Short Video IWOM
- B: Comment IWOM
- C: Promotion Advertorial IWOM
- D: Social Presence
- E: Online Trust
- F: Customer Purchase Intention

The circular part represents the survey results of the questionnaire questions corresponding to these variable indexes.

4.2 SEM Fitting

The goodness of fit index (GFI) of the model will be used as the overall indicator to evaluate the fit of the model in fitting simulation. In addition, in order to measure the degree of fitting of the model, AMOS analysis needs to use indicators such as minimalist fitting, absolute fitting and value-added fitting. Table 4 shows the evaluation criteria, model values and the fitting for each evaluation indicator of the SEM in Fig. 2.

Table 4. Fitting Indicators of the SEM in Fig. 2

<i>Evaluation Indicator</i>	<i>Evaluation Criteria</i>	<i>Model Value</i>	<i>Fitting</i>
χ^2/df	< 3	2.688	Pass
GFI	> 0.9	0.916	Pass
RMSEA	< 0.1	0.041	Pass
IFI	> 0.9	0.973	Pass
CFI	> 0.9	0.970	Pass
NFI	> 0.9	0.918	Pass
RMR	< 0.05	0.049	Pass

The model values in Table 4 are all satisfy the evaluation criteria. This shows that the hypothetical research model is acceptable.

4.3 Path Analysis and SEM Revising

In this step, this study first conducted a preliminary test on the model path, and the test results are shown in Fig. 3. Then this study verified the standardized regression coefficient β , SE and the P Value P for the paths in Fig. 3.

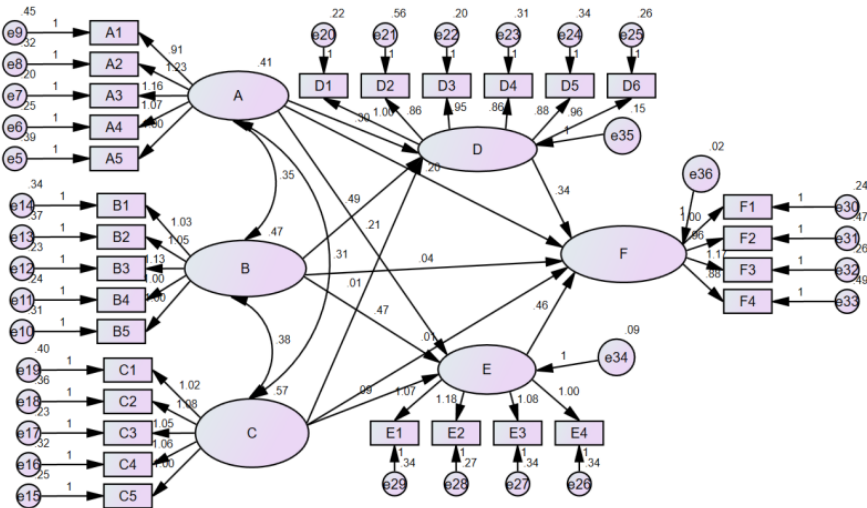


Fig. 3. The path analysis to the SEM in Fig. 2

The results of this verification are shown in Table 5. In Table 5, β is the standard regression coefficient and SE is the standard errors estimation of the SEM in the AMOS. When the P value P is less than 0.01, the relationship between the two corresponding variables in Table 5 is not significant. This reveals that the three assump-

tions H_3 , H_9 , and H_{11} in Fig. 1 may not be valid. After removing the inconspicuous relationships in Fig. 1, the revised research model is proposed in Fig. 4.

Table 5. The result of the significance analysis to the SEM in Fig. 3

<i>Assumptions</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Inference</i>
H_1	0.309	0.100	**	Significant
H_2	0.493	0.101	***	Significant
H_3	0.492	0.111	***	Significant
H_4	0.475	0.088	**	Significant
H_5	0.013	0.067	0.143	Not Significant
H_6	0.397	0.060	**	Significant
H_7	0.347	0.069	***	Significant
H_8	0.469	0.106	***	Significant
H_9	0.208	0.077	**	Significant
H_{10}	0.043	0.102	0.216	Not Significant
H_{11}	0.071	0.049	0.066	Not Significant

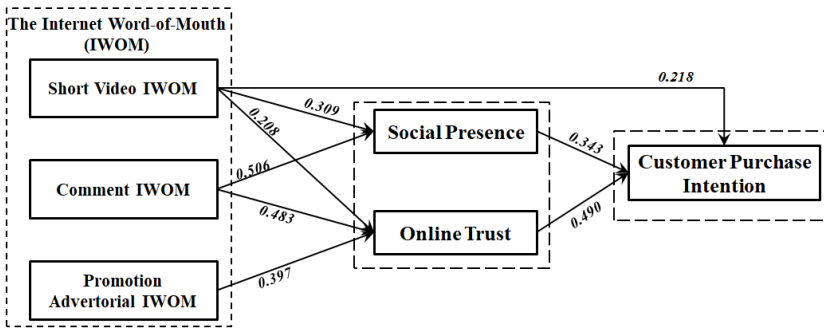


Fig. 4. The revised research model

5 Discussion

Based on the research results, this study proposes the following suggestions to the catering industry.

1. Establish a comprehensive IWOM system: Fig. 4 reveals that the IWOM possess a significant impact on consumers' purchase intention. This implies that, for catering enterprises, establishing a comprehensive IWOM management system is an important task that can effectively attract consumers. Only catering enterprises with a comprehensive IWOM management system can effectively manage and control their IWOM.
2. Emphasize the shaping and maintenance of brand image: In the context of the Internet, catering enterprises should focus on shaping and maintaining their brand image, and take advantage of the IWOM for brand marketing to enhance consum-

ers' evaluation and the WOM of the restaurant. Catering enterprises should pay attention to learn the consumer needs. The consumer needs can be learned through surveying the customer feedback and questionnaire. Then the catering enterprises should design and produce restaurant products or services based on customer needs to meet the growing needs of consumers.

3. Strengthen monitoring of the IWOM: The results of this study show that the IWOM has a significant impact on consumers' purchasing intentions. However, many catering companies currently do not systematically monitor the IWOM. To ensure the quality of the IWOM evaluation, catering enterprises should attach importance to the IWOM monitoring tasks.

The IWOM monitoring tasks can be carried out through a combination of manual monitoring and intelligent monitoring. Manual monitoring can be conducted through manual collection, with staff conducting searches on the internet. During the search process, negative and positive evaluations can be collected separately. Intelligent monitoring is the use of advanced online public opinion monitoring systems to automatically collect negative and positive evaluations related to the catering enterprise in the network, as well as consumer evaluations of its brand, and then conduct systematic analysis and processing.

4. Emphasize the impact of different IWOM: Based on the results of this study, it can be understood that different types of IWOM have varying degrees of impact on consumers' purchase intention. Therefore, when the catering industry conducts online marketing strategies, it should not only focus on a certain IWOM platform. The catering industry should maintain different types of IWOM in multiple ways. At the same time, it is also necessary to conduct surveys and interviews with consumers to understand which online word-of-mouth is the main way consumers know about this restaurant. And then based on the survey results, carry out targeted management of IWOM platforms and develop targeted online marketing strategies.

6 Conclusion and Future Works

This study divides the IWON into three types: the short video IWON, the comment IWON, and the promotion advertorial IWON. Several assumptions regarding the IWON are proposed and then a hypothesis research model is inferred based on the proposed assumptions. This study adopts the questionnaire method to verify the hypothesis research model. A total of 255 valid questionnaires were collected. Reliability and validity test was conducted after data preprocessing. The test shows the variables are valid and reliable. This study then employed the IBM SPSS 23.0 and AMOS 24.0 to test the hypothesis research model and the test results removed three assumptions from the hypothesis research model. This study then proposed the revised research model for evaluating the IWOM marketing strategies for the catering industry. Based on the proposed research model, several comments are proposed to the catering industry.

In the research process, this study observed that different types of IWOM not only have an impact on consumers' purchase intention, but may also have an impact on

their recommendation intention. Therefore, if a restaurant meets consumers' expectations, they have higher probability to recommend it to netizens, family and friends online or offline. The authenticity of this observation has not yet been verified, and it may be one of the future works of this study.

In this study, the main focus is on the catering industry. Therefore, from the perspective of research models, the analysis results of each path in the hypothesis research model are targeted at the entire catering industry. This method may not be highly targeted for certain specific categories of catering. Therefore, in subsequent research, case studies should be conducted on one or two types of catering, comparing the results of the model with the current research model to see if they are significantly different, and then providing more valuable recommendations for catering based on the results.

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