CONSUMER SUPPORT OR DISAPPROVAL OF COMPANIES AS REVEALED BY SOCIAL BIG DATA

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ABSTRACT

Korean consumers have increasingly become aware of the significance of corporate social responsibility and unfairness issues of companies. Furthermore, as consumers are widely networked across the Internet, the reputation of companies can be rapidly disseminated online. The present study attempts to analyze online posts that are created by individual users of social media regarding consumers' different reactions to companies. Based on the result of related and emotional term analysis, we can identify the background to consumer support and disapproval of companies.

KEYWORDS

Consumer Support, Consumer Disapproval, Good Company, Boycott Company, Social Big Data

1. INTRODUCTION

Consumers have increasingly become aware of the significance of corporate social responsibility (Balabanis, 2013), leading to companies becoming concerned with benevolence. In South Korea, companies that exhibit benevolent and altruistic behaviors are termed "good companies" and they attract consumer support. Furthermore, as consumers become more aware of unfairness issues, corporate activities are being monitored by consumers (Shin & Yoon, 2017). Finding unjustifiable activities can trigger consumer boycotts.

As consumers are widely networked across the Internet, the reputation of companies can be rapidly disseminated online. Social media in particular provide individual media to share one's own ideas with other people. In this context, research using text mining of social big data has become increasing popular, which is a very important data source (Bello-Organ, Jung, & Camacho, 2016) for understanding consumer opinions. Consumers share information on both good and bad companies, which eventually affects corporate image and survival.

The purpose of this study is to investigate using text analysis the characteristics of companies that consumers support or disapproval. The result of this study will provide practical insights into understanding what stimulates consumer support or disapproval of companies, and how consumers feel about the companies.

2. METHOD

Online text created by consumers were collected using Trendup 4.0 that provides a platform to collect online text data from online news media and social media. The keywords to extract consumer opinions on good and bad companies were "good company" and "boycott company", respectively. We collected online text data that had been created between September 25, 2017 and September 25, 2018 on Twitter, Instagram, Blog, and other online communities.

We employed the term "good company" to generate the consumer support dataset because this term is much more familiar to Korean consumers, rather than "buycott", as a representative expression of consumer support including higher purchase intention and positive word-of-mouth (WOM). For the consumer disapproval dataset, "boycott company" was used as a keyword to extract consumer opinions on the disapproval and refusal to choose a particular companies' products or services. Based on the two datasets, the collected data were

analyzed using text mining based on Korean natural language processing (KoNLP). To refine the data, stopwords were applied and extracted terms were classified into related and emotional terms according to the original meaning.

3. RESULTS

Firstly, the total number of texts about consumer support was 16,073, while the number of texts about consumer disapproval was 32,623. This implies that negative reputation can be more widely and rapidly disseminated than positive reputation.

Secondly, the results of related term analysis showed that the major characteristics of companies attracting consumer support are “sponsor,” “independence movement from Japanese imperialism,” “disabled,” “price,” “social enterprise,” “health,” “wage,” “environment,” “philanthropy,” and “donation.” The terms are closely related to corporate social responsibility and indicate consumer awareness of a company’s present and past activities. On the other hand, the major characteristics of consumer disapproval were “sexual discrimination,” “misogyny,” “male-dominated,” “laborer,” “corporate culture,” “sexual assault,” “new employee,” “contract,” “obedience,” and “Zionism.” As the “#MeToo” movement has brought into prominence in South Korea, sexual discrimination was the most frequently mentioned term regarding consumer disapproval. Also the result shows that consumers are aware of organizational structure through focusing on lower level staff members such as new employees and laborers. This indicates that consumers are concerned about moral issues rather than product deficiency or typically unfair market practices.

Thirdly, the positive terms related to consumer support were “good,” “cheap,” “various,” “pretty,” “necessary,” “new,” “healthy,” “honest,” “reliable,” and “safe.” This indicates that consumers evaluate company performance based on criteria such as price or quality of products or services, in determining good companies. On the other hand, the negative terms related to consumer disapproval were “serious,” “thoughtless,” “insulted,” “harmful,” “corrupt,” “difficult,” “disgusted,” “dirty,” “blame,” and “irrational.” These results show that consumer disapproval is not only related to a company’s poor performance but also related to immoral or unethical acts.

Table 1. Results of related term analysis

Rank	Consumer support of companies		Consumer disapproval of companies	
	Related term	Frequency	Related term	Frequency
1	Sponsor	5654	Sexual discrimination	13825
2	Independence movement	3857	Misogyny	6812
3	Disabled	2662	Male-dominated	3537
4	Price	2618	Laborer	3146
5	Social enterprise	2019	Corporate culture	3047
6	Health	1575	Sexual assault	2884
7	Wage	1184	New employee	2852
8	Environment	1156	Contract	2843
9	Philanthropy	1151	Obedience	2840
10	Donation	1134	Zionism	2066
11	Protection	1105	Racial discrimination	2066
12	Overseas	1085	Interview	1835
13	Welfare	1033	Litigation	1405
14	Nature	971	Coercion	1168
15	Children	968	Advertisement	1043
16	Voluntary	965	Feminist	765
17	Safety	895	Connivance	603
18	Honesty	884	Murder	478
19	One-man company	879	Unfair dismissal	456
20	Eco-friendly	797	Exploitation	448

Table 2. Results of emotional term analysis

Rank	Consumer support of companies		Consumer disapproval of companies	
	Positive term	Frequency	Negative term	Frequency
1	Good	4295	Serious	2250
2	Cheap	4056	Thoughtless	1823
3	Various	1889	Insulted	1772
4	Pretty	1803	Harmful	597
5	Necessary	1603	Corrupt	340
6	New	926	Difficult	266
7	Healthy	909	Disgusted	220
8	Honest	869	Dirty	207
9	Reliable	860	Blame	164
10	Safe	809	Irrational	144
11	Highly recommended	793	Fearful	138
12	Quickly	763	Unfair	98
13	Benevolent	762	Uncomfortable	90
14	Thankful	744	Angry	87
15	Soft	672	Grudge	78
16	Excellent	625	Vain	77
17	Easily	615	Odd	77
18	Happy	611	Wrong	75
19	Beloved	606	Sensitive	71
20	Famous	599	Ridicule	71

4. CONCLUSION

The current study explored the background to consumer support and disapproval of companies by analyzing consumers' words posted online. In particular, broadening themes for boycotting can be observed. From the failure of business or legality issues to immoral or organizational culture issues, consumers oppose unfairness in society. Based on the result of this study, we can identify the background to consumer support and disapproval of companies. This can provide a guide used to direct companies towards sustainability.

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