

**THE ROLE OF WORD-OF-MOUTH COMMUNICATION IN THE FORMATION OF
CYNICAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS PRIVATE HEALTH CARE INSTITUTIONS**Asst. Prof. Gülnil AYDIN (Ph.D.) **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study is to explain the role of negative and positive word-of-mouth communication in consumers' development of cynical attitude towards private health care institutions, and to understand how this role can be shaped, especially when the risk perception comes into play. The role of negative and positive word-of-mouth communication on consumers' purchasing behavior has been the subject of various studies. Previous literature indicates that negative word-of-mouth communication is taken into account more strongly by cynical consumers, while other studies emphasize the importance of recommendations and positive word-of-mouth communication in customers' purchase behavior. The data were collected by online survey method and used structural equation modelling. Analysis of the data collected from 362 participants in this study shows that, in regards to customers' cynical attitudes, the rate at which positive word of mouth abates cynicism is higher than the rate at which negative word of mouth reinforces cynicism. As a result of this study, suggestions were made for practitioners and new studies in light of these findings.

Keywords: *Consumer Cynicism, Negative Word of Mouth, Positive Word of Mouth, Risk, Private Health Care Institutions, Services Marketing*

Jel Classification: *M31, M39, I12*

1. INTRODUCTION

With the COVID-19 pandemic affecting the whole world, the importance of the health sector and health services infrastructure came to the fore once again. As health is one of people's most treasured possessions, the service offered in by institutions this field are also among the main research topics.

Health care in Turkey is provided through private and public institutions and university hospitals. According to TÜİK data, total health expenditure in Turkey increased by 24.3% in 2020 compared to the previous year, to 249 billion 932 million ₺. The general government health expenditure increased by 26.3%, totalling at 198 billion 62 million ₺. Private sector health expenditure was calculated to be at 51 billion 869 million ₺, with an increase rate of 17.3%. An examination of the distribution of the total health expenditure in terms of the units providing health services shows that hospitals constituted the

* Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University, F.E.A.S., Department of Business Administration, Balıkesir/ Turkey. E-mail: gaydin@bandirma.edu.tr

Makale Geçmiři/Article History

Bařvuru Tarihi / Date of Application : 01 Ocak / January 2022

Düzeltilme Tarihi / Revision Date : 01 Şubat / February 2022

Kabul Tarihi / Acceptance Date : 05 Mart / March 2022

largest share, with 49.4% in 2020. 78% of the total health expenditure is directed towards government institutions, and 22% are directed towards private health care institutions. As of 2019, it is stated that there are 895 public health institutions, 575 private health care institutions, and 68 university hospitals affiliated with the Ministry of Health. A comparison with the previous year shows an increase in the number of public hospitals, while there was a decline in the number of private hospitals (TUİK, 2022). An evaluation of physician referrals shows that, in 2019, approximately 388 million referrals were made in public hospitals, with 73.7 million in private institutions and 46.2 million in university hospitals (Sağlık Bakanlığı, 2020). An international comparison shows that in terms of number of physician visits per capita, Turkey is ranked at number 6 with 9.8. This figure can be interpreted as an individual in Turkey going to the hospital about 10 times in a year (Dünya, 2020).

Private health institutions have a very important role in ensuring that health care can be carried to an adequate level in Turkey. However, it is noted that the share of expenditure related to private hospitals has declined over the last 10 years. While private hospitals had a 27% share in 2011, we see that this has decreased to 22% in 2020. It is stated that at the end of 2019, 30 private hospitals were closed and, accordingly, 20 thousand health workers were left unemployed. Very different factors can play a role in this loss. For example, higher prices due to increases in cost are considered to be among the factors that negatively affect patient preferences (Dünya, 2020). Furthermore, patients' positive or negative attitudes towards private hospitals, their perceptions about quality-price ratio, patient/consumer trust can also be considered among these factors. Among the important points to be taken into account is healthcare institutions meeting patient needs and expectations and giving importance to building trust with the patients (Akçay & Ozdemir, 2021a; Spake & Bishop, 2009).

In terms of the health sector, a relationship of trust can be evaluated as trust in the physician, institution, and system, and it carries particular importance. In some cases, patients may have a sense of trust towards the physicians providing health services to them, while they may have a distrust towards the institutions. Rowe and Calnan (2006) state that while individuals have a high sense of trust in physicians, their level of trust in health care managers may be lower. Low levels of trust and skepticism can be considered among the factors that have a negative impact on consumers' service demand. In this sense, it is important to focus on consumer cynicism, which may be associated with low levels of trust and skepticism. This is due to the fact that consumer cynicism is identified as skepticism, as well as distrust and negative feelings towards the goals behind the actions of enterprises (Helm, 2004: 348).

Consumer cynicism is a concept used to define the "skeptical approaches developed by individuals towards the enterprises they come in contact with throughout their consumption processes". Having first attracted more attention in the field of management, the concept later became a field of concentrated interest in marketing studies as well. The main reason for this concentration is the increasing negative attitudes consumers develop towards brands/organizations, which affect their consumption trends, and this in turn considerably affecting business/brand success and activities.

Helm, Moulard and Richins (2015) state that cynical consumers have some beliefs. One of these is the belief that consumers have a responsibility to shape the market system by rewarding and punishing businesses and raising awareness as well as mobilizing other consumers. Another belief is associating the customer's main reason for dissatisfaction with a product or service with the fact that businesses act in their own interests. These beliefs may cause consumers to blame businesses for some of their practices and exhibit tendencies to retaliate by acting on these accusations (Chu & Chylinski, 2006). The retaliation behavior may vary from consumer to consumer (Chebat, Davidow, & Codjovi 2005). Consumer reactions have been discussed in previous literature in forms of warning, criticism, complaint, negative word-of-mouth communication, abandonment, and so on (Chu & Chylinski, 2006). It is established that it is possible for consumers to influence many people through negative word-of-mouth communication, especially with the development of social media today (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008).

Negative word-of-mouth communication is generally considered as an output, a result, in other words, a consequent in consumer cynicism (Helm, 2006). However, it can also be considered a prerequisite for the development of a cynical attitude. Chu and Chilinski (2006) argue that negative word-of-mouth communication is one of the influential factors in the formation of cynicism. Previous studies in the field of consumer behavior has shown that consumers pay more attention to negative information than positive information. Bad reviews about a product or brand may be taken into consideration more than good reviews. Moreover, individuals tend to weigh negative information more than positive information when evaluating and decision-making (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Park & Lee, 2009). On the other hand, some studies emphasize that sharing positive information is as effective as negative word-of-mouth communication, if not more effective (Yozgat & Deniz, 2011). Thus, this brings the question of whether the accumulation of bad comments or the erosive effect of positive comments is more effective in terms of cynical attitudes.

In light of the discussion above, the evaluation of up-to-date literature shows the need for studies regarding:

1. Whether negative word-of-mouth communication, which is generally considered one of the consequents/results of a cynical attitude, should also be considered a prerequisite/reason,
2. If negative word-of-mouth communication has a role in the formation of cynical attitudes, how different is this role from the restorative effect that positive word-of-mouth communication can create,
3. In what ways the effects of sharing negative or positive experiences on cynical attitudes can take shape, especially in an area where there may be a perception of risk (such as health).

Thus, the aim of the study is to explain and compare the role of positive or negative word-of-mouth communication in customers' cynical attitudes (while also evaluating whether they exist) towards

private health care institutions, and to understand how this role takes shape when risk perception also enters the picture.

In the sense, the study first goes through the relevant definitions and researchs within the scope of the conceptual framework, followed by the findings of the quantitative research conducted.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Consumer Cynicism and Important Factors in the Development of Cynical Attitudes

The concept of cynicism is based on the ancient Greek Cynic school of thought developed around B.C. 500. It represents a way of thinking and a way of life more than anything else. It is based on distrust towards people's beliefs and behavior (Chylinski & Chu; 2010; Andersson & Bateman, 1997).

The concept of cynicism, which in ancient Greece reflected an approach to living an idealistic life by isolating oneself from society, is more often associated with negative attitudes formed as a result of distrust, dissatisfaction and unmet expectations today (Chu & Chylinsky, 2006). Abraham (2000) states that the basic tenet of cynicism is the principles of honesty, justice and sincerity being sacrificed in the interests of advancing leadership. This, in turn, leads to actions based on ulterior motives and deception.

Other researchers argue that customer cynicism should not only be evaluated on an individual and psychological level, but also on a sociological level; wherein it becomes a tool that enables customers to resist marketing techniques and strengthens the customers against what the consumerist society imposes on them (Oudou & Pechpeyrou, 2011). Thus, consumer cynicism is also defined as a reaction and resistance to the social order created by the consumerist society and all the structures that were brought by this order.

Van Dolen et al. (2012) state that consumers believe businesses focus on their own interests rather than trying to meet the needs of the target audience, and as a result of their negative experiences, develop a cynical attitude. Therefore, corporate attempts at creating an unselfish image in order to mask their own selfish goals is also at the center of both the concept of cynicism and the criticism related to advertising and other marketing messages (Helm, 2004).

While some reasons for consumer cynicism are listed as skepticism, distrust, negative experiences as a customer, value incompatibility, and an urge to protect oneself against disappointment; the consequences are listed as negative word-of-mouth communication, initiatives to boycott or stop shopping from the brand, and business/brand abandonment (Aydın, 2021; Akçay & Ozdemir, 2021b). Furthermore, research states that the effect of customers' risk perception and assessment during their purchase process on skepticism and cynical behavior should also be taken into account, and points to a need for more studies on this are (Uğran, 2019; Çetinkaya & Ceng, 2018). In their study examining the causes and consequences of consumer cynicism in terms of the service sector, Akçay (2021) states that

the cynical attitude manifests itself through negative word-of-mouth communication, boycotting the business, and brand abandonment behaviors.

2.2. Negative and Positive Word of Mouth Communication

Word-of-mouth communication is one of the oldest ways of transferring information. Though it has different definitions, one of the oldest definitions of the concept of word-of-mouth communication defines the concept as “the exchanging of marketing information between consumers in such a way that it plays a fundamental role in shaping their behavior and in changing attitudes toward products and services” (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1966 in Huete-Alcocer, 2017: 1). Moreover, it is often emphasized that there is no commercial purpose in the definitions of word-of-mouth communication (Çokyaşar, 2018).

In the process described as word-of-mouth communication, consumers share information and opinions that direct or divert buyers to specific products, brands, and services. Word-of-mouth communication is regarded one of the most influential factors playing a role on consumer behavior, and an important source of information in purchasing decisions (Ayyıldız & Baykal, 2021; Daugherty & Hoffman, 2014). This effect is especially important for abstract products/services that are difficult to evaluate before consumption, such as health, tourism, or accommodation (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008). In addition, customers who purchase services tend to share their experiences more, unlike physical product buyers. In a study examining the behavior of car and cable television buyers after use and purchase, Westbrook (1987) states that positive and negative emotions associated with a product experience create internal tension and lead to a release in the form of word-of-mouth communication. It is also stated that the elements of affective satisfaction, pleasure, and sadness motivate consumers to want to share their experiences with others (Neelamegham & Jain, 1999).

Furthermore, research has shown that consumers regard word-of-mouth communication as a much more reliable tool compared to traditional media (print media, TV, radio, etc.) (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). These effects are especially noticeable for word-of-mouth communication carried out in an electronic environment. Potential customers generally trust other buyers more than sellers (Nieto et al., 2014).

Considering the theoretical background in the field of word-of-mouth communication studies, several basic theories and approaches are worth noting. Due to the presence of mutual interaction in the process of word-of-mouth communication, more attention has been given to dual theories, examples including the Elaboration Likelihood Model and the Heuristic-Systematic Model. It is stated that these models are often used in studies conducted to analyze the word-of-mouth communication processes that take place in electronic environments in particular (Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

Nowadays, consumers can share their thoughts about businesses and brands on different platforms, and sometimes even lead to serious problems for businesses through sharing their negative

experiences. Consumers' negative attitudes, dissatisfaction and distrust are usually at the root of negative internet posts. Consumer cynicism, which is mainly associated with negative attitudes such as distrust, dissatisfaction and skepticism, can also be considered as one of the reasons for these posts (Çetinkaya & Ceng 2018).

Doubts about the reputation of the enterprise, the perception that there are hidden intentions, or product and service failures affect consumer-brand relations. Many studies evaluate unfavorable/negative word-of-mouth communications as a consequence of product and service failure, and state that negative word-of-mouth communication has a greater influence on consumers' attitudes and evaluations than positive word-of-mouth communication (Chang, Hsieh & Tseng, 2013; Laczniak, DeCarlo & Motley, 1996). Furthermore, some studies consider negative word-of-mouth communication on digital platforms (henceforth eWOM) to be a factor that seriously negatively affects marketing communication, especially on social media (Amezcuca & Quintanilla, 2016).

According to the Prospect Theory, the pain stemming from experiencing loss is perceived to be greater than the pleasure that comes from gaining an amount equivalent to what is lost (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Thus, it is stated that negative reviews will be more effective on brand preferences and purchase intention than positive communication (Lee, Park & Han, 2008), since this allows consumers to protect themselves from making mistakes and making wrong decisions and gain information about the risks.

Indeed, previous studies in the field of consumer behavior has shown that consumers pay more attention to negative information than positive information. In addition, they tend to weigh negative information more than positive information during evaluation and decision-making (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Park & Lee, 2009). Park & Lee (2009) state that negative word-of-mouth communication has a stronger effect than positive word-of-mouth communication. Baumeister et al. (2001) suggest that the principle "Bad is stronger than good" is valid in many areas, and that people tend to react more strongly to bad things in their physical and social environment (in Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Similarly, in their study on the effect of negative word-of-mouth communication on consumers' purchasing decisions, Laczniak, DeCarlo & Ramaswami (2001) found that consumers consider the source of information, especially negative information, before changing their opinion about a product or service.

However, while different studies point to negative word-of-mouth having more impact on attitudes and purchase decisions compared to positive word of mouth communication, Charlett, Garland and Marr (1995) show that both positive and negative word of mouth have the power to affect consumer attitudes and purchase behavior. In other words, the study claims that there is no difference in terms of the effects of negative and positive word-of-mouth communication. On the other hand, Yozgat and Deniz (2011) find that positive word-of-mouth communication is taken into account more in consumers' purchasing decisions than negative word-of-mouth communication. Thus, a review of previous literature

shows new research is needed to help understand whether negative and positive word-of-mouth communication has different effects on consumer purchasing decisions and attitudes, and if so, which one has a greater impact.

2.3. The Relationship Between Word of Mouth Communication and Consumer Cynicism

A large number of factors influence the emergence of cynicism. Studies conducted on the causes of consumer cynicism point to negative attitudes especially in consumers who experience dissatisfaction and distrust as a result of unsatisfied expectations (Chu & Chylinski, 2006). It is thought that consumers often develop a cynical attitude as a result of these negative (including unfair or insincere treatment, or even fraud) experiences.

When consumers have negative experiences in the past, they can shut out up-to-date information about the brand and the business. Therefore, in this case, consumers will prefer to refer to their old experience to a large extent in their purchasing decisions rather than to different sources of information about businesses and brands (Oates et al., 2008). Perhaps for this reason, older consumers make more cautious purchases than younger people, and examine the information about the products more slowly or more carefully (Tokgöz, 2020).

Word-of-mouth communication is considered the consequent, or, in other words, the result of consumer cynicism (Tran et al., 2022). Thus, it is stated that consumers who develop a cynical attitude towards businesses and their activities tends to share this attitude with negative rhetoric. However, even though word-of-mouth communication is regarded a result of consumer cynicism, it is expressed that negative reviews also have an impact on consumers' attitudes towards businesses. For example, Ketron (2016) states that consumers having negative information about businesses can enhance their reactions to unfavorable conditions that may arise during the purchase of services. This negative information can be obtained through word-of-mouth communication, as well as from different sources of information. From this point of view, it may be that negative information sharing has a positive (or provocative) effect on the formation and/or aggravation of consumer cynicism, and positive information sharing has the opposite (reducing) effect. As a matter of fact, as Buttle (1998) notes in his study, word-of-mouth communication activities can serve as a source of information before the purchase, as well as an output as post-purchase information sharing.

Darke and Ritchie (2007) recommend marketers to use alternative ways such as viral marketing, which aims to increase word-of-mouth communication, in order to communicate with customers who are skeptical about advertising or have a negative outlook on marketing activities. In fact, Stokes, Syed and Lomax (2002) found that membership in a health club more than doubled after a series of activities designed to increase positive word-of-mouth communication and recommendation tendency.

In addition to brand abandonment, depreciating behaviors can also be exhibited in terms of the behavioral consequences of cynicism (Helm, 2006). Statements of depreciation can be found in form of negative word-of-mouth communication both face-to-face and in online environments in form of electronic word-of-mouth communication (Güven, 2016). Depreciating rhetoric or negative word-of-mouth communication can be considered in two categories depending on the consumer's intention: firstly, it is considered as a kind of retaliatory action against businesses and is exhibited as an aggressive complaining behavior with the intention of harming a particular business (Cheng, Lam, & Hsu, 2006). Retaliatory behaviors can also take place in the forms of cost/loss creation, vandalism, creating confusion, stealing, and personal attacks (Aron, 2016). The second is a simple communication mechanism that is used to prevent others from experiencing the same problem.

Amezcuca and Quintanilla (2016) evaluate comments from consumers regarding a social responsibility activity conducted by Coca Cola against obesity through social media. The result of the study points to three forms of cynical consumer communication styles: *sceptical*, *passive-aggressive* and *warrior* word-of-mouth communication. Depreciating rhetoric and negative comments seriously affect the way consumers view businesses. Consumers who think that they are being approached by opportunistic businesses can also resort to ways to influence businesses with their negative rhetoric.

As mentioned earlier, in this study, word-of-mouth communication is considered as a cause, not as a result. Therefore, in the quantitative research conducted within the scope of the study, the participants were asked not how much they shared their experiences, but how much they took into consideration negative and positive information sharing.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study investigates cynical attitudes towards private health care institutions. The main purpose of choosing health care institutions is the consideration that individuals might be more sensitive when it comes to decisions about health. Individuals tend to perceive a higher risk when purchasing health services (Öz & Uyar, 2014). Moreover, individuals' attitudes towards institutions may also play a decisive role when comparing public and private health care service alternatives.

The population is defined as individuals over the age of 18 who have purchased health care services. The questionnaire technique was used as a data collection tool in the study. The 5-point Likert scale statements included in the questionnaire were adapted based on studies on consumer cynicism (8 items) (Helm, Moulard & Richins, 2015), risk perception (3 items) (Vazquez-Casielles, Suarez-Alvarez & Del Rio-Lanza, 2013), and negative and positive word-of-mouth communication (6 items) (Günay, 2014; Öz, 2016).

The questionnaire was distributed online, and was kept open between March 2021 and December 2021. The participation recruitment process involved sharing the questionnaire on social media

platforms. A total of 362 participants participated in the questionnaire. In determining the number of samples, the size of the population was determined to be over 10 million, odds of discovery for negative and positive word-of-mouth communications (p/q values) were at 60%/40%, 95% confidence interval, and the significance level was at 0.05 with acceptable sampling error at 0.05 (Altunışık, Coşkun, Bayraktaroğlu & Yıldırım, 2012).

The hypotheses of the study:

H1: Negative word-of-mouth communication has a positive statistically significant effect on the development of a cynical attitude towards private health care institutions.

H2: Negative word-of-mouth communication has a positive statistically significant effect on consumers' risk perceptions towards private health care institutions.

H3: Positive word-of-mouth communication has a negative statistically significant effect on the development of cynical attitudes towards private health care institutions.

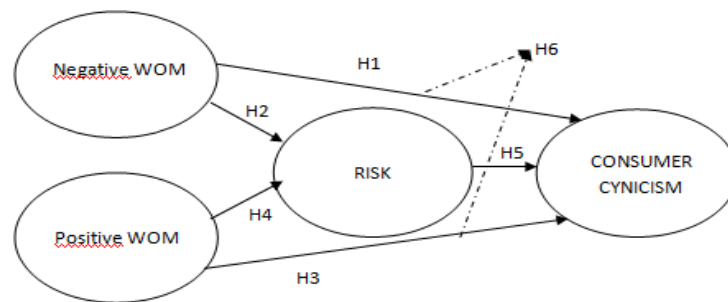
H4: Positive word-of-mouth communication has a negative statistically significant effect on consumers' risk perception towards private health care institutions.

H5: Consumers' risk perception towards private health care institutions has a positive statistically significant effect on their cynical attitudes.

H6: The positive effect of negative word-of-mouth communication on the development of a cynical attitude towards private health care institutions is greater than the negative effect of positive word-of-mouth communication.

The research model with the hypotheses is shown in the Figure 1.

Figure 1. The Research Model



3.1. Analysis and Findings

Table 1 shows the answers to the demographic questions in the questionnaire form answered by 362 participants.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

<i>n</i> : 362	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender		
Female	234	65
Male	128	35
Age		
18-25	108	30
26-35	121	33
36-45	72	20
46-55	40	11
56 +	21	6
Education		
Primary edu.	4	1
Secondary edu./High School	50	14
Associate Degree	27	8
Undergraduate	194	53
Post Graduate	87	24
Marital Status		
Married	160	44
Single	202	56
Job Status		
Public	102	28
Private	107	30
Not working	153	42
Monthly Household Income		
2.000 ₺ and less	28	8
2.501-4.000 ₺	58	16
4.001-6.000 ₺	80	22
6.001-8.000 ₺	66	18
8.001-10.000 ₺	48	13
10.001-12.000 ₺	23	7
12.001-14.000 ₺	22	6
14.001 ₺ and above	37	10

Table 2 shows the distribution of institutions that are participants' first choice for health services. The distributions show that public hospitals are preferred slightly more than their private counterparts. 152 people preferred public hospitals as a priority, while 133 people indicated that they preferred private medical institutions. The "Other" category mostly received answers favoring community health centers.

Table 2. Distribution of Priority Preferred Institutions for Health Services

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
State Hospital	152	42
Private Hospital	133	37
University Hospital (Education and Research)	73	20
Other	4	1

Table 3 shows participant answers to the question about how they define those who ask others' opinion in deciding on health care providers. The participants associated the tendency to seek advice with being cautious in choosing a private hospital. Being cautious can be more desirable in situations where there is a high perception of anxiety/risk. This brings to mind the high risk perception in health care service purchases.

Table 3. How would you describe those who refer to the opinion of others in choosing a private hospital?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Hesitant	25	7
Facilitator	47	13
Researcher	97	27
Prudent	146	40
Conscious	44	12
Having plenty of time	3	1

The percentage distributions of the participants regarding whether they have a cynical attitude towards private health care institutions are shown in the following table.

Table 4. Percentage Distributions for Consumer Cynicism Items

<i>Consumer Cynicism Items</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
CC1-	4,4	13	27,3	26,8	28,5
CC2-	3,3	13	26,5	31,5	25,7
CC3-	6,1	18,5	32,9	23,8	18,8
CC4-	7,7	23,8	26,8	22,7	19,1
CC5-	14,9	30,7	32,6	12,2	9,7
CC6-	10,2	24,9	28,7	19,6	16,6
CC7-	3,9	14,4	22,9	30,4	28,5
CC8-	3,9	13,8	27,3	28,2	26,8

1: Completely Disagree 2: Disagree 3: Neither Disagree nor agree 4: Agree 5: Completely Agree

As can be seen from Table 4, consumers exhibit a high level of participation in judgments expressing a cynical attitude. It is worth noting that the participants showed low participation only in CC5. In particular, the statement that private medical institutions are willing to do everything they can to make a profit is the attitude expression that has the highest participation. There is also a high participation to CC2. Based on these results, it is understood that a remarkable majority of the participants have a belief that private health care institutions prioritize profitability rather than patient service, do not care much about patients, and can resort to different ways to increase profit share by reducing costs.

Measurement Model Test

The hypotheses of the study were tested by using the structural equation modeling. The scales used before the test of the research model were evaluated in terms of reliability and validity. Cronbach alpha values were examined for reliability and was found to be higher than the general acceptance value of 0.70 for all scales (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018). In terms of validity, construct and discriminant validity were examined. For this purpose, CR (Composite Reliability) and AVE (Average Variance Extracted) values were taken into account. For construct validity, CR value should be greater than 0.70, the AVE value should be greater than 0.50, and the CR values should be greater than the AVE values (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As for the discriminant validity, we observe that the MSV values (Maximum Shared Variance) are smaller than the AVE values, and when the square roots of the AVE values and the inter-

variable correlations are examined, it is seen that the discriminant validity is present for all latent variables.

Table 5. Reliability and Validity Results of Scales and Correlation Coefficients Between Variables

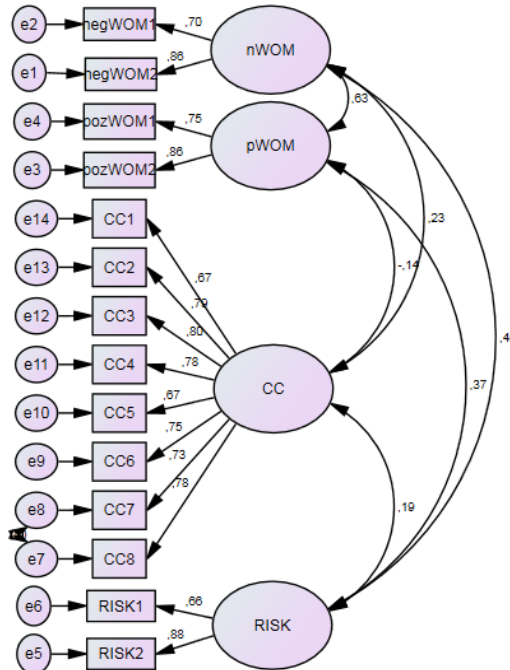
<i>Variables*</i>	<i>Cr.Alpha</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>MSV</i>	<i>nWOM</i>	<i>pWOM</i>	<i>CC</i>	<i>RISK</i>
nWOM	0,75	0,76	0,61	0,40	(0,78)			
pWOM	0,78	0,78	0,65	0,40	0,629	(0,81)		
CC	0,91	0,91	0,56	0,06	0,242	-0,129	(0,87)	
RISK	0,74	0,75	0,61	0,21	0,456	0,373	0,195	(0,78)

Note: The numbers in bold indicate the \sqrt{AVE} values.

*Variables: Negative Word of mouth (nWOM), Pozitive word of mouth (pWOM), Consumer Cynicism (CC), Risk perception (RISK)

The measurement model was tested using the variables negative word of mouth (nWOM), positive word of mouth (pWOM), consumer cynicism (CC) and consumer risk perception (RISK) included in the study model. Due to the fact that the data shows a normal distribution¹, maximum likelihood estimation was used. After the modification of the disturbance terms on the scale of consumer cynicism proposed by the AMOS 24 software for the measurement model (e5-e6), it was observed that the goodness-of-fit values of the measurement model improved. Items with low factor loading were excluded from the model. The goodness of fit values obtained as a result of the test of the measurement model after the modification in question (CMIN/df: 3,5; $p < 0.01$; GFI: 0.91; CFI: 0.91; RMSEA: 0.08; NFI: 0.91) indicate that the proposed model is compatible and acceptable with the data (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018).

Figure 2: The Measurement Model

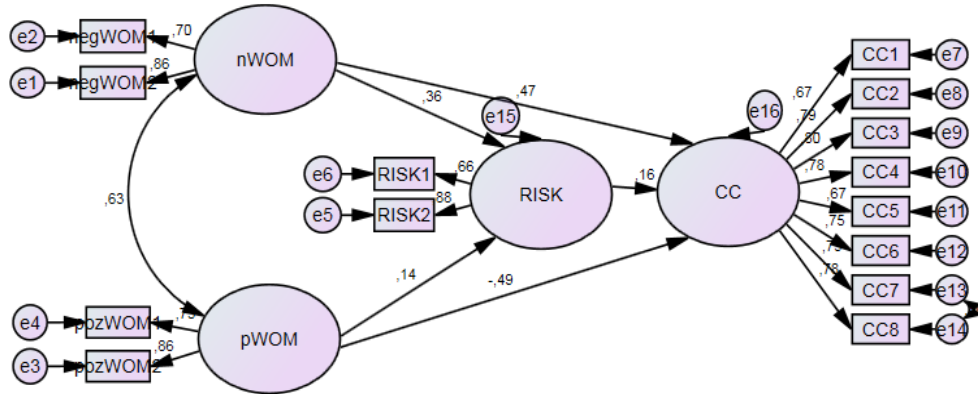


¹ In order to understand whether the data are distributed normally, coefficients of skewness and kurtosis were examined. Since the values were found to be in the ± 1 range, it was accepted that the data were distributed normally (Kalaycı, 2005).

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Path Analysis Findings (Structural Model)

The research model was tested by SEM path analysis. It was found that the goodness-of-fit values of the model were within the acceptable range (CMIN/df: 3.47; $p < 0.01$; GFI: 0.91; NFI: 0.91; CFI: 0.93; RMSEA: 0.08).

Figure 3. SEM Path Analysis



Findings show that negative word-of-mouth communication has a positive effect on consumer cynicism and positive word-of-mouth communication has a negative effect on consumer cynicism. In this case, the hypotheses H1 (nWOM towards private healthcare institutions has a positive impact on consumer cynicism), H2 (nWOM towards private healthcare institutions has a positive effect on risk perception) and H3 (the negative effect of pWOM on consumer cynicism) developed within the context of this study, are accepted. H4 (the effect of pWOM on consumers' risk perception) was rejected. The H5 hypothesis, which was created regarding the effect of risk perception on consumer cynicism, was also accepted (see Table 6). Examining the standardized regression values regarding nWOM and pWOM's effects on customer cynicism for the last hypothesis (H6), expressed as “the positive effect of negative word-of-mouth communication on the development of a cynical attitude towards private institutions providing health care is greater than the negative effect of positive word-of-mouth communication”, we see that pWOM has a more considerable effect than nWOM, albeit by a narrow margin ($-0.488 > 0.468$). Moreover, when the relationship between pWOM communication and risk perception were removed from the model due to being statistically insignificant and other factors reanalysed, it was observed that the impact of pWOM and nWOM on consumer cynicism increased ($-0.508 > 0.500$).

Table 6. Results of the Research Hypotheses and Values of the Model

	<i>Variables</i>	<i>Standardized Regression Value</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Result</i>
H1	nWOM → CC	0,468	0,092	0,000	4,319	Accept
H2	nWOM → RISK	0,364	0,105	0,000	3,858	Accept
H3	pWOM → CC	-0,488	0,106	0,000	-4,793	Accept
H4	pWOM → RISK	0,144	0,122	0,108	1,608	Reject
H5	RISK → CC	0,157	0,057	0,034	2,117	Accept
R²	CC = 0,21	RISK = 0,22				

Based on these findings, it can be argued that the role of positive WOM in reducing cynical attitude is more decisive in the scope of the study compared to the effect of negative WOM on increasing consumer cynicism. The indirect effect of nWOM communication on consumer cynicism through the risk perception was tested using the bootstrap method and found to be statistically significant ($\beta = 0.057$; 95% CI; 0.016-0.120). When the risk perception is a mediator, the effect of negative word-of-mouth communication on consumer cynicism decreases. This result can be explained by the low role of risk on consumer cynicism.

4. CONCLUSION

Individuals have to contact the institutions that provide relevant services in order to solve their health problems, and they will never want to add new problems to the bunch while they already have a problem that they want to solve at hand. Therefore, they will prefer the alternatives they trust more and they will not want to face higher costs than they can bear or accept as a result of these choices (Kayaoğlu & Gülmez, 2020).

Consumers who have experienced negative experiences and are wary of reliving them, whose trust has been broken, may develop a cynical attitude over time. In order to act more cautiously, these consumers may need to resort to a process of researching information, especially when purchasing services. In an important issue such as health, individuals' positive/negative feelings about service delivery alternatives may play a role in shaping their decisions.

This study aimed to explain and compare the role of negative and positive word-of-mouth communication in cynical attitudes towards private health care institutions, as well as to understand the role of risk perception when it enters the equation; and to do so, it firstly examined whether such an attitude existed. There was a higher-than-average participation in statements about cynical attitudes. The study showed that both positive and negative posts and information have an important effect on shaping the cynical attitude of individuals. When people intend to choose private institutions for their health problems, they take into account positive and negative information. While positive comments have the effect of reducing cynical attitudes, doubts and distrust, negative comments have the opposite effect. Another noteworthy finding in the study is that the effect of positive information sharing is higher than negative information sharing. Although these findings are in parallel to some of the previous studies on

the subject (Charlett, Garland & Marr 1995; Yozgat & Deniz, 2011), they are different from yet others (Laczniak, DeCarlo & Motley, 1996; Chang, Hsieh & Tseng, 2013). The reason for the effect of positive word-of-mouth communication being stronger than negative word-of-mouth communication may be that the study was about health care services. This is due to the fact that health care demands posit a higher necessity for individuals as opposed to choosing a restaurant, a holiday destination, or buying a car. In an environment where needing health care services is seen as undesirable yet indispensable, even if the consumers develop a cynical attitude, it may be inevitable to consider and even take more into account the positive information related to these institutions. However, when the risk perception comes into play, the effect of negative information on cynical attitudes decreases.

In the light of these findings, it may be recommended for private health care institutions to implement practices that will encourage positive information sharing. It may be more meaningful to implement this information in a way that they can reach different groups in environments outside the hospital, rather than in the form of informing existing patients, such as closed-circuit information sources within the hospital. It is also interesting that the participants defined people who ask for other people's opinion in their choice of private hospitals as "cautious". Assuming that caution is a concept that is usually used for risky situations, it becomes clear how important it is to develop the established communication with patients in a way that reduces anxiety.

The current study has limitations in terms of the number of participants and the method of data collection (online questionnaires). Therefore, the results are not generalizable. There is a need for new studies to be carried out on the subject. In addition, new studies can break down perceived risk factors (financial risk, performance risk, physical risk, etc.) and measure the issues of trust/distrust, physician/institution distinction. Additionally, word-of-mouth communication can be analyzed taking into account the distinction between online and offline communications. The effects of negative and positive word-of-mouth communication on cynical attitude or brand trust can also be compared in a field other than health care.

REFERENCES

- Abraham, R. (2000) "Organizational Cynicism: Bases and Consequences", *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs*, 126 (3): 269-292.
- Akçay, G. (2021) "Tüketici sinizminin öncülleri ve sonuçları: Hizmet sektörü üzerinde bir araştırma", Bursa Uludağ Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yayınlanmamış Doktora Tezi, Bursa.
- Akçay, G. & Özdemir, E. (2021a) "Hizmet Sektörüne Yönelik Tüketici Sinizmi: Demografik Özellikler Açısından Bir Araştırma". *Business and Economics Research Journal*, 12(4): 855-870.

- Akçay, G., & Özdemir, E. (2021b) “The Effect of Unethical Sales Behaviors on Consumer Cynicism and the Moderating Role of Demographic Characteristics: A Study on the Service Sector”, *İşletme Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 13(3): 2394-2413.
- Altunışık, R., Coşkun, R., Bayraktaroğlu, S. & Yıldırım, E. (2012) *Sosyal Bilimlerde Araştırma Yöntemleri*, Sakarya Yayınları.
- Amezcuca, B. & Quintanilla, C. (2016) “When eWOM become cynical”, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 40: 290-298.
- Andersson, L.M. & Bateman, T.S. (1997) “Cynicism in the workplace: some causes and effects” *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 18: 449-469.
- Aron, D. (2016) “Digital Dysfunction: Consumer grudgeholding and retaliation in the digital era” *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior*, 29: 119-129.
- Aydın, G. (2021) “Consumer Cynicism, Skepticism, Brand Boycotts and Social Media” ed. Bingol, U., *Trending Topics on Social Media Researches*, Peter Lang, DOI 10.3726/b18979: 61-90.
- Ayyıldız, A. Y. & Baykal, M. (2021) “Otel işletmelerinde tüketici sinizminin satın alma niyetine etkisinde elektronik ağızdan ağıza pazarlama niyetinin rolü”, *Balıkesir Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 24(46-1): 1521-1535.
- Buttle, A.F. (1998) “Word of Mouth: Understanding and managing referral marketing”, *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 12(6): 241-254.
- Chang, A., Hsieh, S.H. & Tseng, T.H. (2013) “Online Brand Community Response to Negative Brand Events: The role of group Ewom” *Internet Research*, 23(4), 486-506.
- Charlett, D., Garland, R. & Marr, N. (1995) “How damaging is negative word of mouth”, *Marketing Bulletin*, 6(1): 42-50.
- Chebat, J.C., Davidow, M. & Codjovi, I. (2005) “Silent voices: Why some dissatisfied consumers fail to complain”, *Journal of Service Research*, 7(4): 328-342.
- Cheng, S., Lam, T. & Hsu, C.H.C. (2006) “Negative word of mouth, communication intention: an application of the theory of planned behavior”, *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 30(1): 95-116.
- Cheung, C.M. & Thadani, D.R. (2012) “The impact of electronic word-of-mouth communication: a literature analysis and integrative model”, *Decision Support System*. 54: 461–470.
- Chylinski, M. & Chu, A. (2010) “Consumer Cynicism: antecedents and consequences”, *European Journal of Marketing*, 44(6): 796-837.

- Chu, A. & Chylinski, M. (2006) “A model of consumer cynicism – antecedents and consequences”, Proceedings of the Australian and New Zeland Marketing Academy, 1-9.
- Çetinkaya, Ö.A. & Ceng, E. (2018) “Türkiye’deki Black Friday Etkinliğinin Tüketici Sinizmi Bağlamında Bir Değerlendirmesi”, Manas Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi, 7(4):167-180.
- Çokyaşar, D. (2018) “Ağızdan ağıza İletişimin Satın Alma üzerindeki Etkisi”, Journal of International Social Research, 11(61).
- Darke, P.R. & Ritchie, R.J.B. (2007) “The defensive consumer: advertising deception, defensive processing and distrust”, Journal of Marketing Research, Vol. XLIV, <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.44.1.114>, 114-127.
- Daugherty, T., & Hoffman, E. (2014) “eWOM and the importance of capturing consumer attention within social media”, Journal of Marketing Communication 20: 82–102.
- Günay, N. (2014) “Tüketicilerin Hastane Seçiminde Ağızdan Ağıza İletişimin Etkisi”, Selçuk Üniversitesi. Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi.
- Gürbüz, S. & Şahin, F. (2014) Sosyal Bilimlerde Araştırma Yöntemleri, 3.b., Seçkin Yayınları.
- Güven, E. (2016) “Tüketimde sinik tutum, tüketici sinizminin sebep ve sonuçları”, İşletme Araştırmaları Dergisi, 8(2): 152-174.
- Hair, J., Anderson, R., Tatham, R., & Black, W. (1998) Multivariate Data Analysis (5th ed.). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- Helm, A. (2004) Cynics and Skeptics: Consumer Dispositional Trust, in NA - Advances in Consumer Research, 31, eds. Barbara E. Kahn and Mary Frances Luce, Valdosta, GA : Association for Consumer Research, 345-351.
- Helm, A. E. (2006) Cynical consumers: Dangerous enemies, loyal friends (Doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri, Columbia).
- Helm, A.E., Moulard, J.G., & Richins, M. (2015) “Consumer cynicism: developing a scale to measure underlying attitudes influencing marketplace shaping and withdrawal behaviours”, International Journal of Consumer Studies, 39: 515-524.
- Huete-Alcocer, N. (2017) “A literature review of word of mouth and electronic word of mouth: Implications for consumer behavior”, Frontiers in Psychology. 8:1256.
- Jalilvand, M. R., & Samiei, N. (2012) “The impact of electronic word of mouth on a tourism destination choice: testing the theory of planned behavior (TPB)”, Internet Research. 22:591–612.
- Kahneman, D. & Tversky A. (1979) “Prospect theory: an analysis of decision under risk”, Econometrica 47 (2), 263–292.

- Kalaycı, Ş. (2005) SPSS Uygulamalı Çok Değişkenli İstatistik Teknikleri. Asil Yayın ve Dağıtım.
- Kayaoğlu, A. & Gülmez Y. S. (2020) “Sağlık Hizmetleri Tüketicisi Olarak Hastaların Özel Hastane Tercihini Etkileyen Faktörlerin Belirlenmesi: Diyarbakır Örneği”, Atatürk Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Dergisi, 34(4): 1267-1286.
- Ketron, S. (2016) “Consumer cynicism and perceived deception in vanity sizing: the moderating role of retailer (dis)honesty”, Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 33: 33-42.
- Laczniak, R.N., De Carlo, T. E. & Motley, C.M. (1996) “Retail Equity perceptions and consumers’ processing of negative word-of-mouth communication”, Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, 4(4): 37-48.
- Laczniak, R.N., DeCarlo, T.E., & Ramaswami, S.N. (2001) “Consumers’ responses to negative word-of-mouth communication: An attribution theory perspective”, Journal of Consumer Psychology, 11(1): 57–73.
- Lee, J., Park D.H. & Han, I. (2008) “The effect of negative online consumer reviews on product attitude: An information processing view”, Electronic Commerce Research and Applications, 7: 341-352.
- Litvin, S. W., Goldsmith, R. E., & Pan, B. (2008) “Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management”, Tourism Management 29: 458–468.
- Neelamegham, R., & Jain, D. (1999) “Consumer choice process for experience goods: An econometric model and analysis”, Journal of Marketing Research, 36(3): 373–386.
- Nieto, J., Hernández-Maestro, R. M., & Muñoz-Gallego, P. A. (2014) “Marketing decisions, customer reviews, and business performance: the use of the Tripadvisor website by Spanish rural lodging establishments”, Tourism Management. 45: 115–123.
- Oates, C., McDonald, S., Alevizou, P., Hwang, K., Young, W. & McMorland, L. (2008) “Marketing Sustainability: Use of Information Sources and Degrees of Voluntary Simplicity”, Journal of Marketing Communications, 14 (5): 351-365.
- Odou, P. & De Pechpeyrou, P. (2011) “Consumer cynicism: From resistance to anti-consumption in a disenchanted world?”, European Journal of Marketing, 45 (11/12): 1799-1808.
- Öz, M., & Uyar, E. (2014) “Sağlık hizmetleri pazarlamasında algılanan hizmet kalitesi ve müşteri memnuniyeti üzerinde ağızdan ağıza pazarlamanın etkisini belirlemeye yönelik bir araştırma”, Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Ekonomik Araştırmalar Dergisi, 2014(1): 123-132.
- Dunya, (2020), “Özel Hastaneler Turizme Tutundu”, <https://www.dunya.com/sectorler/ozel-hastaneler-turizme-tutundu-haberi-460459>. (10.12.2020).

- Park, C., & Lee, T. M. (2009) “Information direction, website reputation and eWOM effect: a moderating role of product type”, *Journal of Business Research*, 62: 61–67.
- Rowe, R., & Calnan, M. (2006) “Trust relations in health care—the new agenda”, *The European Journal of Public Health*, 16(1): 4-6.
- Sağlık Bakanlığı (2019) <https://dosyasb.saglik.gov.tr/Eklenti/40564,saglik-istatistikleri-yilligi-2019pdf.pdf?0> (12.11.2022).
- Spake, D. F., & Bishop Jr, J. S. (2009) “The impact of perceived closeness on the differing roles of satisfaction, trust, commitment, and comfort on intention to remain with a physician”, *Health Marketing Quarterly*, 26(1): 1-15.
- Tokgöz, E. (2020) “Tüketicinin kin tutma eğiliminin pazardan geri çekilme niyeti üzerinde etkisi: Tüketici sinizminin aracı ve düzenleyici rolü”, *Yönetim ve Ekonomi Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 18(1): 36-58.
- Tran, H. A., Strizhakova, Y., Usrey, B., & Johnson, S. (2022) “Consumer cynicism in service failures”, *Psychology & Marketing*, 39(2): 346-359.
- TUİK (2020). Sağlık Harcamaları İstatistikleri, <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Saglik-Harcamalari-Istatistikleri-2020-37192>, (10.12.2021).
- Uğran, F. (2019) “Tüketicilerin Risk Algısı ve Tüketici Şüpheliği Arasındaki İlişki: Batman İlinde Bir Araştırma”, *Batman SBE İşletme Anabilim Dalı. Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi*.
- van Dolen, W., de Cremer, D. & de Ruyter, K. (2012) “Consumer cynicism toward collective buying: the interplay of others’ outcomes, social value orientation, and mood”, *Psychology & Marketing*, 29(5): 306-321.
- Vazquez-Casielles, R., Suarez-Alvarez, L. & Del Rio-Lanza, A. (2013) “The Word of Mouth Dynamic: How Positive (and Negative) WOM Drives Purchase Probability”, *Journal of Advertising Research*, 53(1): 43-60.
- Westbrook, R. A. (1987) “Product/consumption-based affective responses and postpurchase processes”, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 24(3): 258–270.

Hakem Değerlendirmesi: Dış bağımsız.

Çıkar Çatışması: Yazar çıkar çatışması bildirmemiştir.

Finansal Destek: Yazar bu çalışma için finansal destek almadığını beyan etmiştir.

Teşekkür: -

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

Conflict of Interest: The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

Grant Support: The author declared that this study has received no financial support.

Acknowledgement: -
