Selling Issues by Selling Attitudes:
Analyzing Three Components of Attitudes in Online Issue Selling

온라인 상에서의 이슈 판매:
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ABSTRACT

Issue selling is an early phase of change initiation in organizations by which issue sellers draw others' attention to and influence their understanding of issues. Although issue sellers initiate individuals' attitudinal changes before organizational changes, previous studies have focused heavily on organizational changes. To approach issue selling fundamentally, it is necessary to examine attitudinal changes of individuals. Also, the previous studies have not reflected a shift in organizational communication to online interactive systems and are limited to face-to-face issue selling. If our research focus remains in face-to-face situations, we cannot capture current issue topics among organizational members.

In this regard, the present study explores issue selling behaviors in online settings by adopting an attitude-based approach, which underscores precedence of individuals' attitudinal changes over organizational changes. Data was collected from online organizational bulletin boards, which guarantee the anonymity of their users. Issue selling postings were selected for analysis, and a number of "Like" on each posting was also counted to examine supportive responses.

The result indicated that online issue sellers sell issues with cognitive and affective components the most but with only behavioral component the least. Issue sellers used their affective components more when their issues were about human resources (HR) system. Interestingly, issue sellers used the

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behavioral components less when they found top management teams (TMTs) responsible for causing issues. It suggests that issue sellers still tend to inhibit the inclusion of behavioral expression for the issues, which TMTs are responsible for. In addition, it is indicated that the cognitive component increases supportive responses from recipients of issue selling and that affective and behavioral components have non-additive persuasive effects.

The current study provides a comprehensive analysis of online issue selling by exploring how online issue sellers use the three attitudinal components in their selling attempts. In addition, this study contributes to related research areas as it uncovers the importance of sensemaking in issue selling processes and limited effects of anonymity. However, this study only addresses supportive responses but not actual issue buying behaviors of issue selling recipients. Thus, future studies should address the effects of attitudinal components on issue buying behaviors.

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INTRODUCTION

In December 2014, an anonymous person wrote about an heiress of a South Korean airline on an online app where people share their workplace experiences. The posting described how she had delayed a takeoff of a flight from New York to Seoul by ordering a flight to return to a gate and forcing flight attendants to kneel before her for serving her nuts in a bag instead of a plate. In a moment, this scandal of "nut rage" incident hit the whole world and awakened people to a problem of power abuse against people in weaker positions. The writer of the posting brought up the issue related to misbehaviors of the executive, drew attention from people, and influenced their understanding of a brand image of the airline. Put differently, the anonymous writer has sold the issue about the executive to other users of the online app and, eventually, to people around the world.

Issue selling refers to individuals' behaviors to draw others' attention on and influence their understanding of issues (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). Any happening in organizations can be an issue when people consider it an important topic and frame it as an organizational issue (Kitsuse & Spector, 1981). Thus, issues cover a broad range of topics, including technological changes and changes in goal levels (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998). For example, performance-based pay system would be a typical issue for individual level and disharmony among team members would be a

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common issue for interpersonal level.

As a form of employee participation, issue selling is similar to whistle blowing but has a broader motivation. Both issue selling and whistle blowing are individual-level behaviors that people voluntarily speak out to influence other organizational members. However, whistle blowers focus on illegality within organizations (Near & Miceli, 1986) while issue sellers bring up topics, which seems to be important to organizations based on their beliefs (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). Issue sellers are not motivated to reveal illegal behaviors but to raise important issues. Put differently, issue selling has a different motivation from whistle blowing.

Extant literature on issue selling has focused on middle managers' face-to-face attempts to convince top management teams (TMTs) and allocate their attention on issues that have implications for organizational development and adaptations (Dutton, Ashford, Lawrence, & Minor-Rubino, 2002; Ling, Floyd, & Baldridge, 2005; Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, & Lawrence, 2001). For example, Dutton, Ashford, Wierba, O'Neil, and Hayes (1997) addressed favorable and unfavorable contexts for middle managers to sell issues directly to TMTs. Ashford et al. (1998) also examined female middle managers' attempts to sell gender-equity issues in organizations.

However, as shown in the case of nut rage incident, people recently sell issues through online channels rather than face-to-face interaction. By

means of IT systems in the workplace, employees interact with other organizational members from anywhere and at any time (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016; Mano & Mesch, 2010; Barber & Suntuzzi, 2015; Stich, Tarafdar, & Cooper, 2018). A convenience of such electronic system, thus, causes a shift in organizational communication channels from offline to online channels. In turn, more issue selling attempts are recently through online channels rather than offline channels.

Surprisingly, none of studies yet examined employees' online issue selling behaviors. Limited to face-to-face issue selling (Dutton et al., 2002; Ling et al., 2005; Dutton et al., 2001), the previous studies do not reflect the change of communication channels. If the research attention remains in offline channels, we cannot capture current issue topics among organizational members because more employees would use online channels to interact with others. In addition, it would be difficult to understand a process of how people draw others' attention by written messages instead of spoken words. Hence, a question for online issue selling is crucial for our knowledge of issue selling behaviors.

Also, a mainstream research has focused on organizational changes, which follow after attitudinal changes of individuals. Previous studies consider issue sellers, who bring up issues, as change agents because their issue selling behaviors can eventually lead to company-wide changes to

improve the "issue" conditions (Dutton et al, 2001; Dutton et al., 2002; Ling et al., 2005). However, individual-level changes usually precede organizational-level changes (Bartunek, 1984; Porras & Robertson, 1992; George & Jones, 2001). Unless each organizational member changes his or her understanding and attitudes toward issues, company-wide changes cannot be initiated. Hence, an essential goal of issue selling is to influence others' attitudes toward issues rather than to initiate organizational changes. In this regard, it would be necessary to approach issue selling by attitude-based approach to examine it at a more fundamental level.

Thus, the aim of the present study is to examine online issue selling attempts using attitude-based approach. This study focuses on online organizational bulletin boards to address effects of online space on issue selling behaviors. Also, this study investigates how issue sellers influence others' attitudes towards issues.

By doing so, the present study makes several contributions to issue selling literature. First, it expands a limited research focus on face-to-face issue selling to online issue selling. As mentioned earlier, organizational communication trends have been changed to computer-mediated interactions. As employees use online channels to voice and exchange their opinions with one another, it is necessary to investigate issue selling behaviors using online channels to understand the current issue topics among them. By analyzing

issue selling attempts on online bulletin boards, this study provides a knowledge of how employees sell issues in online settings.

Second, this study suggests a more fundamental approach to issue selling, underscoring precedence of individual changes over company-wide changes. The previous studies focused heavily on company-wide changes (Dutton et al, 2001; Dutton et al., 2002; Ling et al., 2005) although they follow after organizational members' individual changes. Such organizational level approach cannot capture the essential goal of issue selling. As noted earlier, the essential goal for issue sellers is to influence others' attitudes toward issues. Thus, it is necessary to focus on attitudes to examine issue sellers' tactics and potential issue buyers' responses. By suggesting the attitude-based approach, this study furthers our understanding of fundamental dynamics of issue selling at the interpersonal level.

The remainder of this paper first addresses characteristics of online space that may influence individuals' issue selling behaviors. Then, I introduce the attitude-based approach to issue selling with three attitudinal components (i.e., cognitive, affective and behavioral components). Hypotheses are developed on online issue sellers' and potential issue buyers' sides separately. Finally, this study clarifies the assumptions upon results of data analysis and concludes by discussing its implications and directions for future studies.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

DEVELOPMENT

Online Issue Selling

Online issue selling may have different features from offline issue selling because of two unique characteristics of online space, anonymity and easier accessibility (Culnan & Markus, 1987; Kiesler, Siegel, & McGuire, 1984). First, anonymity releases online issue sellers from pressures for impression management (Spears & Lea, 1994). Impression management demonstrates individuals' behaviors to control the image of themselves created by others (Schenkler, 1980; Tedeschi, 1981). In offline settings, issue selling behaviors directly affect images of issue sellers because they promote issues face-to-face. If issue selling attempts are not successful, they can lose credibility within organizations or receive negative appraisals by other members (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Ashford et al., 1998). Thus, offline issue sellers feel pressures for impression management and speak with restraint in their issue selling attempts (McKenna & Bargh, 1999).

In online settings, however, issue sellers can free themselves from such pressures because it is less clear to infer who promotes issues from anonymous online postings. As people feel psychologically secured more in online settings, they express their concerns and intentions related to issues in a more candid way (Spears & Lea, 1994; Dubrovskey, Kiesler, & Sethna,

1991; Zuboff, 1988). Likewise, online issue sellers may address issues differently compared to offline issue sellers because they feel less pressured for impression management.

Second, easier accessibility of online space expands potential issue buyers. When issue sellers present an issue on an online organizational bulletin board, potential issue buyers are not limited to the top management teams as studied in previous literature (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton et al., 2001; Howard-Grenville, 2007; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Ling et al., 2005; Dutton et al., 2002) but to whoever has access to it, literally all organizational members. It is supported in previous studies that computer-mediated communication increases access and interactions to widen the scope of participants in communication (Culnan & Markus, 1987; Kiesler et al., 1984; Sproull & Kiesler, 1986). Thus, online issue sellers target not only TMTs but also their coworkers.

Issue sellers targeting coworkers may behave differently from those targeting top management teams because coworkers share a unique understanding of task environments (Ray, 1993; Comer, 1991). Online space allows the organizational members to exchange their opinions by writing comments and to co-reconstruct the issue with the initial issue seller. Consequently, online issue selling reflects lateral interactions among the members while offline issue selling refers to an upward influence by a few

organizational members.

Taken together, anonymity and easier accessibility of online space enable issue sellers to express their opinions and to target all organizational members. These characteristics imply that online issue selling may differ from offline issue selling.

Attitude-based Approach to Issue Selling

Extant literature of issue selling has focused on organizational changes (Dutton et al., 2002; Dutton et al., 2001). However, individual changes are more fundamental in issue selling as they precede organizational changes (Bartunek, 1984; Porras & Robertson, 1992; George & Jones, 2001). Unless organizational members change their understandings and attitudes toward issues, company-wide changes cannot be initiated. Issue sellers cannot directly draw company-wide awareness to issues. They first need to target each member to influence his or her attitude toward issues. When a majority of the members recognize an issue as a serious condition and engage in change movements, organizational level changes are about to start. Thus, in many cases except where organizational policy induces individual-level change (e.g., initiating performance-based pay system), issue selling is about attitudinal changes of individuals.

In addition, according to social problem theory (Spector & Kitsuse,

1977), issues are not objective conditions but constructed by issue sellers, thereby reflecting their opinions. Thus, issue selling attempts inevitably contain issue sellers' attitudes toward issues. Because the selling attempts show how they think about issues, issue sellers can imply their attitudes toward issues to others and encourage them to have similar attitudes to theirs. In sum, an essential goal of issue selling is to influence others' attitudes by presenting issue sellers' attitudes toward issues.

Such attitude-based approach can extend our understanding of issue selling in two ways. First, using the attitude-based approach, scholars can analyze issue selling attempts of organizational members regardless of their positions as it takes a more comprehensive perspective on issue selling. Previous literature has assumed that issue sellers should have structural power in the corporate hierarchy to influence TMTs to initiate organizational change (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). Because of this assumption, relatively less attention has given to selling attempts by those who have little power in the corporate hierarchy. The attitude-based approach, however, interprets that anyone can be an issue seller. It assumes that issue sellers do not have to initiate company-wide changes but influence others' attitudes on issues by sharing their attitudes. Hence, all organizational members become potential issue sellers. Using the attitude-based approach, we can overcome limited research attention on issue selling attempts by people in weaker positions in

the corporate hierarchy.

Second, attitude-based approach implies some essential aspects of successful issue selling. Previous studies examined various issue selling tactics (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton et al., 1997; Dutton et al., 2001; Sonenshein, 2006; Alt & Craig, 2016; Bishop, Webber, & O'Neill, 2011) and favorable contexts for successful selling attempts (Ashford et al., 1998; Dutton et al., 2002). For instance, Dutton and Ashford (1993) explored whether selling issues with others are more persuasive than when selling issues alone. These studies have focused more on ancillary conditions rather than core tactics for successful issue selling. Based on the attitude-based approach, however, a key for successful issue selling is to present issue sellers' attitudes in more persuasive tones to recipients to influence their attitudes. Thus, this approach implies more essential and direct tactics to increase potential issue buyers' attention invested in issues.

Hence, the present study adopts the attitude-based approach to examine online issue selling from a more comprehensive perspective and to address more fundamental tactics for successful issue selling attempts.

Attitudinal Components of Issues

A number of previous studies approached attitude from a multi-component view, implying a tripartite structure of attitude: cognitive,

affective, and behavioral (Breckler, 1984; D. Katz & Stotland, 1959; Insko, Schopler, 1967; Rosenberg, Hovland, McGuire, Abelson, & Brehm, 1960). Also known as ABC (affective-behavioral-cognitive) model of attitude, the tripartite model of attitude structure extends our understanding of various attitudinal phenomena (Eagley & Chaiken, 1998). Attitude is defined as responses to attitude object (Breckler, 1984). Adding more to this definition, the tripartite model of attitude distinguishes the three dimensions of attitudinal responses and elucidates how people respond to the attitude object in each dimension. The validity for the distinctiveness of the three dimensions is also confirmed in several studies (Ostrom, 1969; Kothandapani, 1971; Breckler, 1984).

According to Rosenberg and Hovland's (1960) schematization of the tripartite model, cognitive components refer to perceptual responses to and verbal statements of belief about an attitude object. Affective components refer to emotional responses to and verbal statements of affect about the attitude object while behavioral components refer to overt actions and verbal statements about behaviors related to the attitude object (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960; Breckler, 1984). For example, an individual may have an attitude toward a team work of the group, which he or she is involved in. In this case, an attitude object is the team work. A cognitive component could be the individual's determination of a problem in the teamwork. The related

affective component can be the individual's negative feelings for inharmonious teamwork. The possible behavioral component would be the individual's cooperative behaviors with other team members to improve their teamwork.

Likewise, issue sellers' attitudes toward issues can be distinguished into the three attitudinal components: how they recognize the situation as an issue (i.e., cognitive), how they feel toward it (i.e., affective), and how they react to it (i.e., behavioral). As mentioned earlier, issue selling is individuals' behaviors to influence others' attitudes toward an issue by sharing their attitudes. Thus, the three components of attitude would be critical contents in issue selling attempts. When the concept of three attitudinal components is applied to issue selling, attitude objects are issues (see Figure 1). Thus, cognitive components of issues refer to issue sellers' perceptions of a discrepancy between the expected conditions and the reality. Such discrepancy arouses emotional reactions (Mandler, 1984; Fiebig & Kramer, 1998; Kiefer, 2005), which represents the issue sellers' affective components of issues. Finally, behavioral components refer to how issue sellers would take actions regarding the "issue" conditions.
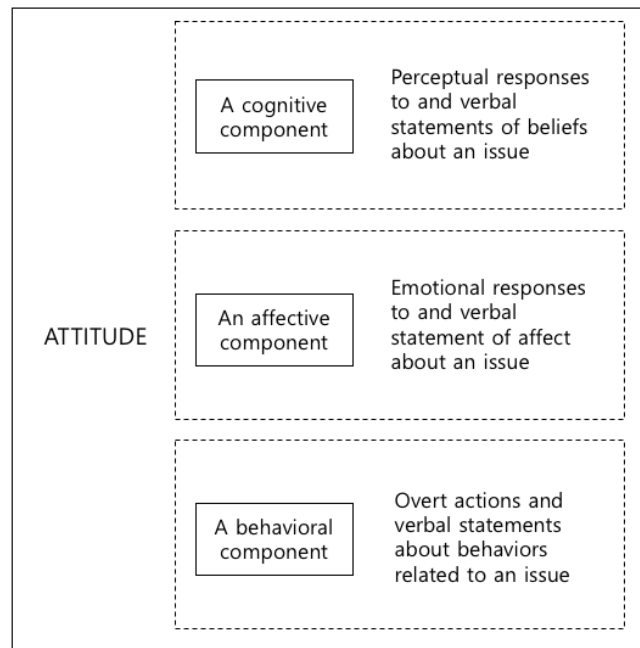
Figure 1. *Attitudinal Components of Issues*

Taken together, issue sellers can use their attitudinal components of issues as their primary contents for issue selling attempts. To influence the potential issue buyers' attitudes, issue sellers may selectively use their attitudinal components related to issues. As a result, there would be seven types of issue selling attempts with the three attitudinal components: issue selling attempts with a cognitive component only, those with an affective component only, those with a behavioral component only, those with cognitive and affective components, those with cognitive and behavioral components, those with affective and behavioral components, and lastly those with cognitive, affective and behavioral components (See Table 1).

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Table 1. *Types of Issue Selling Attempts with Three Attitudinal Components of Issues*

	Cognitive	Affective	Behavioral
A cognitive component only	o	x	x
An affective component only	x	o	x
A behavioral component only	x	x	o
Cognitive + Affective	o	o	x
Cognitive + Behavioral	o	x	o
Affective + Behavioral	x	o	o
Cognitive + Affective + Behavioral	o	o	o

Note. Columns named as cognitive, affective, and behavioral represent whether a corresponding attitudinal component is included in each type of issue selling attempt or not. "o" means that such component is included and "x" means that it is not included.

Hypotheses on Online Issue Sellers

In this section, the current study focuses on online issue sellers' side, exploring how they use the attitudinal components of issues in their selling attempts.

Types of the most and the least issue selling attempts

A key point of issue selling is to make sense of issues (i.e, sensemaking) and give such sense (i.e., sensegiving) to potential issue buyers to increase their supportive responses. One of the attitudinal components of issues, a cognitive component mostly represents issue sellers' recognition of issues. To recognize an issue, issue sellers need to organize their sense

impressions of the workplace, notice possible signals of unexpected circumstances, and label them as an issue (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005). Such processes reflect how issue sellers make sense of the issue. As a result, the cognitive component represents issue sellers' sensemaking process of the issue.

Because workplace experiences are all different from organizational members, other members cannot fully understand issue sellers' sense impressions of workplace. An individual needs information that describes how other people make sense of situations to understand their behaviors (Ranson, Hinings, & Greenwood, 1980). Therefore, issue sellers need to include the cognitive component of issues to provide justification and logical reasoning to recipients of issue. If issue sellers give a sense to the recipients by providing justifications for issues, they would recognize the seriousness of issues better.

In Gioia and Chittipeddi's (1991) study, it is demonstrated that both sensemaking and sensegiving are critical for change initiators to get supportive reactions from organizational members. Similarly, issue sellers also need to makes sense of issues and give such sense to the recipients. Among the three attitudinal components, the cognitive component helps issue sellers to demonstrate their sensemaking processes to give sense to the recipients.

In addition, people have needs for cognition although a desire for such needs varies from person to person (Cohen, 1957; Murphy, 1947; Katz, 1960). Especially, Katz (1960) noted that whether a referent person satisfies target people's needs for cognition or not can affect their attitudes related to his or her direction. It is also known in social persuasion literature that messages with information, which helps persuasion targets' understanding, are more persuasive than those lacking the information (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). Thus, it is expected that issue sellers would frequently use the cognitive component of issues as it satisfies potential issue buyers' needs for cognition.

However, this study assumes that online issue selling attempts with only cognitive component would not be more than those with both cognitive and affective components. Because an affective component demonstrates issue sellers' emotional reactions to issues, it describes their attitudes more vividly. Thus, the cognitive and affective components would make synergy effects on convincing the recipients of issue selling. In this regard, this study expects that issue selling attempts with both cognitive and affective components would be more than those only with either cognitive or affective component.

Especially, anonymity would encourage online issue sellers to use the affective component in their selling attempts. In offline issue selling, issue

sellers need to take risks for getting negative reputations or unfavorable organizational treatments when promoting sensitive issues (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). Their selling behaviors possibly become more inhibited to decrease such impression management risks. In online issue selling, however, anonymity may reduce issue sellers' pressures for impression management and evaluation anxiety, a concern to be negatively appraised (Dubrovskey et al., 1991). Thus, online issue sellers can show uninhibited behaviors more than offline issue sellers (Kieslrt, Zubrow, Moses, & Geller, 1985). One of the uninhibited behaviors frequently observed in online space is flaming. Flaming is an "expression of strong opinions, accompanied by the display of negative, antagonistic emotions in the form of insulting, swearing, offending, or hostile comment" (Siegel, Dubrovsky, Kiesler, & McGuire, 1986). Flaming can occur more when a stimulus triggers negative feeling as issues do. Issues usually cause negative feelings as they reflect unfavorable conditions, in which a discrepancy of issue sellers' expected conditions and the reality exists. Thus, the anonymity of online settings raises a degree of negative emotional expressions among online issue sellers while offline settings inhibit their emotional expressions due to impression management pressures.

Anonymity can also affect a frequency of negative emotional expressions among online issues sellers as well as its degree because it does

not constrain their behaviors (Derks, Fischer, & Bos, 2007). Previous studies related to computer-mediated communication showed that emotional expression is more frequent and explicit in online communication compared to face-to-face communication (Derks et al., 2007; Spears & Lea, 1994). Such increased emotional expressions imply that online issue sellers would include an affective component of issues in their selling attempts more than offline issue sellers would. As Spears and Lea (1994) noted that computer-mediated communication allows "freer and fuller expressions," online issue sellers would demonstrate fuller emotional expressions regarding issues. Hence, anonymity of online space encourages issue sellers to express their emotions stronger and more frequent by using the affective attitudinal component. Overall, online settings allow issue sellers to use the affective component more than offline settings. However, online issue sellers would rather use the affective component with the cognitive component than use it by itself for their synergy effects on convincing the recipients.

A behavioral component of issues is different from cognitive and affective components in its unique characteristic. Although all three components constitute attitude, each component may have a different motivation base. As mentioned above, the cognitive component is for making sense of issues and the affective component is for emotional expression related to issues. Both cognitive and affective components are focused on

appealing for organizational members' awareness to an undesirable condition, an issue. In contrast, the behavioral component is more for clarification of who causes the "issue" condition and for solution development.

For the behavioral component, issue sellers need to process several steps: they first find an issue, figure out who is responsibility for causing issues, and then decide how they would react to it to improve the conditions. This process is more time-consuming and complicated compared to sharing sensemaking (cognitive component) or expressing emotions (affective component). Thus, online issue seller may not include the behavioral component as much as the cognitive or affective component. In addition, Dutton and Ashford (1993) noted that issue sellers' interest would not be always to sell issues with solutions. When issue sellers may not figure out any currently available solutions, they may simply appeal to other organizational members for their attention on the issue to develop solutions together.

Hence, the present study expects that online issue sellers may feel easier to demonstrate cognitive and affective components rather than the behavioral component, which needs more processes. It can be assumed that issue selling attempts with cognitive and affective components of issues would be more than those that include behavioral components (see Table 2). Taken together, a type of online issue selling attempts with cognitive and affective components would be the most among the seven types of issue

selling attempts.

Hypothesis 1: A type of online issue selling attempts with cognitive and affective components of issues would be the most among the seven possible types of online issue selling attempts with the three attitudinal components.

Table 2. *Summary of Hypothesis 1 and 2*

Types of issue selling attempts with	Expected frequency
A cognitive component only	
An affective component only	
A behavioral component only	The least (hypothesis 2)
Cognitive + Affective	The most (hypothesis 1)
Cognitive + Behavioral	
Affective + Behavioral	
Cognitive + Affective + Behavioral	

Furthermore, the present study assumes that issue selling attempts with only behavioral component of issues would be the least among the seven types of issue selling attempts (See Table 2). The behavioral component represents overt actions or verbal statements of actions related to issues. Such actions are behaviors to demand changes to those responsible for causing issues. Therefore, issue sellers need to figure out who causes issues before they make any decisions for the actions. Such analysis of responsibility for causing issues is a part of issue sellers' cognitive processes. Therefore, a separation of the behavioral component from the cognitive component is

unusual and difficult. It can be expected that issue selling attempts with only behavioral component would be less than either those with cognitive and behavioral components or those with cognitive, affective and behavioral components. In addition, compared to an affective component, the behavioral component has more complicated and time-consuming processes. Hence, issue selling attempts with only behavioral component would be less than those with only affective component. Also, issue sellers may consider that using two attitudinal components would be a better tactic than using a single attitudinal component, although issue selling attempts with affective and behavioral components do not provide enough justification to the recipients. Therefore, the selling attempts with only behavioral component would be less that those with affective and behavioral components. Overall,

Hypothesis 2: A type of online issue selling attempts with only behavioral component of issues would be the least among the seven possible types of online issue selling attempts with the three attitudinal components.

A Topic of Human Resources System and Affective Component

In his previous study, Sonenshein (2016) addressed that people craft issues to convey their intentions and thoughts more effectively to potential issue buyers. In accordance with this previous finding, the current study expects that issue sellers decide to include or exclude each attitudinal

component, considering their intentions behind issue selling and issue topics to convey their thoughts effectively to the recipients (see Figure 2).
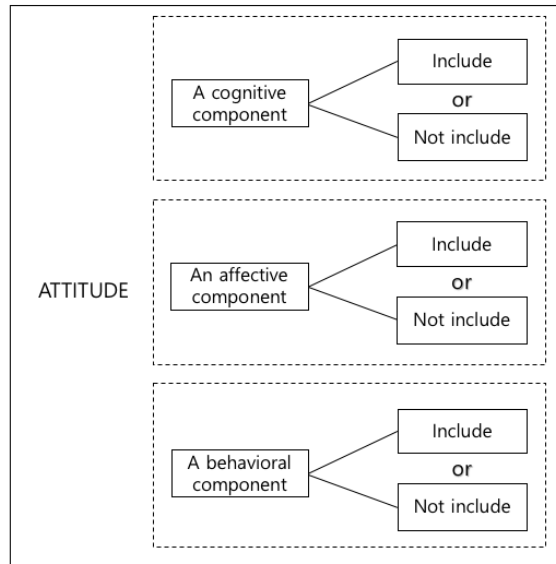
Figure 2. *Choices for Issue Sellers to Include Attitudinal Components in Their Issue Selling Attempts*

Among the various topics in organizational context, the present study focuses on human resources (HR) system to examine how issue sellers selectively include attitudinal components to demonstrate their intentions. HR system issues represent a topic of the organizational members' highest interest as HR system indicates how much employees are valued by the workgroup (Guzzo and Noonan, 1994; Schneider, 2000). HR system refers to organizational treatments of employees including selection, appraisal, compensation, and placement. As people determine their status in

organizations based on organizational treatment (Colquitt & Zipay, 2015), they devote more attention to HR system. Also, the previous study addressed that how they get promoted, appraised, and rewarded is particularly salient to employees (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001). For these reasons, HR system issues would be one of the most popular topics for online issue sellers.

Drawing on psychological contract literature, the present study proposes that online issues sellers promoting HR system issues would include the affective component of issues more than other issue topics. Previous literature related to psychological contract indicated that balanced mutuality between employees and employers are critical to employees' performance and workplace satisfaction (Dabos & Rousseau, 2004). However, employees tend to rate themselves as having fulfilled their side of the contract to a greater degree than their employer does (Rousseau, 2004). This perception of unbalanced employment relation causes organizational members' discontent associated with organizational treatment (i.e., HR system). As employees believe that the employer does not payback as much as they fulfill their side of the contract, they may regard it as organizational injustice. Organizational injustice is positively related to highly aroused negative emotions such as anger and resentment (Bies & Tripp, 2002; Colquitt & Zipay, 2015). Bies & Tripp (2002) stated that "injustice is typically hot, emotionally laden experience". Organizational justice theory also supports that injustice triggers

highly aroused negative emotions (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001). As negative emotions have strong effects (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001), negative emotional responses toward HR system are more likley to be included in individual's issue selling behaviors. Thus,

Hypothesis 3: Within a topic of human resources system, online issue selling attempts that include an affective component would be more than those that do not include the affective component.

Responsibility of TMTs for Causing Issues and Behavioral Component

Whether issue sellers include the behavioral component or not is influenced by who is responsible for causing an issue. People have desires to infer causes of confronted situations (Heider, 1958). If the confronted situation is unexpected, people are more inclined to find out who is responsible for the situation to understand its cause (Blount, 1995). Since an issue refers to a discrepancy between issue sellers' expected conditions and the reality, issue sellers may desire to find who is responsible for the discrepancy to improve the unsatisfactory condition.

For example, employees may hold top management teams (TMTs) accountable for various organizational issues, because a role of top management teams is to manage and sustain the organization successfully. They may attribute unsuccessful business performances or poor welfare

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policy to top management teams' ineffective strategies and ignorance. However, employees may find it difficult to demand *behavioral* changes to the top managements who are in the top of corporate hierarchy. This positional disparity restrains employees from engaging in organizational communications (Kramer, 1993; McGrath, 1984). Botero and Dyne (2009) also addressed that power distance is negatively related to voice behaviors, implying that people more hesitate to raise behavioral changes to those in higher positions than to those in similar positions.

The current study, however, assumes that online issue sellers are less likely to hesitate in suggesting issues to TMTs because of reduced positional disparities in online space. According to related literature, online space reduces perceived social barriers in corporate hierarchy, thus enabling democratic and equalized communication (Dubrovsky et al., 1991; Kiesler & Sproull, 1992; Sproull & Kiesler, 1991; Weisband, 1992). It can be expected that hierarchical positions would be less salient to issue sellers. For this reason, online issue sellers would demand changes to people in higher positions as much as they do to people in similar positions. The present study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 4: When issue sellers find TMTs are responsible for causing issues, there would be no significant difference between a number of issue selling attempts that include a behavioral component and those that

do not include the behavioral component.

Hypotheses on Recipients of Issue Selling

In this section, this study also focuses on a side of recipients of issue selling, potential issue buyers.

As noted earlier, a key of issue selling would be sensemaking of issue for the recipients of issue seling. Conseqently, the present study expects that including cognitive component of issues would elicit more supportive responses from potential issue buyers than not including such component. Although Breckler (1984) addressed that attitudes are not always formed through cognitive processes, Eagley and Chaiken (1998) underscored the importance of cognitive processes in message-based persuasion. Particularly in message-based persuasion, persuasion targets need information, which they can rely on to understand the attitude objects (Eagely & Chaiken, 1998). Exposure to new information about the attitude objects causes changes in people's perception and eventually in their attitudes. In issue selling postings, references of issue sellers' sensemaking process act as the new information for potential issue buyers to make new perceptions of issues. When the potential issue buyers make new perceptions of issues and recognize seriousness of issues, they are more likely to be positive to issue sellers' change initiations. Thus, online issue selling attempts that include the

cognitive component of issues would be more supported by people (see Table 3). Hence,

Hypothesis 5: Online issue selling attempts that include cognitive components of issues would be more supported by recipients of issue selling than those that do not include the cognitive components of issues.

Table 3. *Summary of Hypotheses on Recipients of Issue Selling*

	Cognitive components not included	Cognitive components only	Cognitive + an extra attitudinal component	Cognitive + two extra attitudinal components
Hypothesis 5	Group 1	Group 2		
Hypothesis 6	N/A	Group 1	Group 2	
Hypothesis 7	N/A		Group 1	Group 2

Note. In each hypothesis, a number of supportive responses for group 1 is compared to that of group 2. N/A (not applicable) means that such cell is excluded from the hypothesis testing.

In addition, the present study expects that when the cognitive component is accompanied with other attitudinal components, it would elicit more supportive responses than when it is not. Although the cognitive component is persuasive to people by providing justifications for issues, it would be more persuasive when it is presented with other components. It can make synergy effects with other components: affective and behavioral components.

The affective component would elicit more supportive responses when the recipients' needs for cognition of are satisfied. Previous research of

product and innovation champions verified that emotional terms have positive effects on promoting new ideas (Howell & Higgins, 1990; Dean, 1987). Likewise, emotional terms can describe issues more vividly, hereby helping potential issue buyers to understand the issues easily.

Furthermore, the inclusion of the affective component would lead more supportive responses from potential issue buyers by allowing vicarious emotional experiences. The affective component of issues represents how issue sellers feel toward the unfavorable discrepancy between desired conditions and the realities. When issue sellers' emotional terms are provided, potential issue buyers can understand and empathize their dissatisfaction through vicarious emotional experiences. This advantageous effect of the affective component can have potential issue buyers to support issue sellers' selling attempts more.

Also, the use of the behavioral component can be effective when the cognitive component gives information of sensemaking processes. The behavioral component represents statements of issue sellers' action tendencies to demand changes to whom they find responsible for causing issues. Thus, the behavioral component demonstrates solutions, suggested by issue sellers, to improve "issue" conditions. Providing solutions may give impression that issue sellers understand the organizational situations well to potential issue buyers. In social persuasion studies, it is noted that source

credibility (as applied in issue selling, trustworthiness of issue sellers) influences the supportive responses of the message (McGuire, 1985). Thus, if issue sellers include the behavioral component, their selling attempts would be appealing to potential issue buyers by giving competent and credible impressions of themselves.

Therefore, the present study hypothesizes that issue selling attempts that include the cognitive component and other attitudinal components would receive more supportive responses from potential issue buyers than those that include only cognitive component. Moreover, issue selling attempts that include all three attitudinal components would be supported the most due to their synergy effects. Thus,

Hypothesis 6: Online issue selling attempts that include cognitive and other attitudinal components of issues would be more supported by recipients of issue selling than those that include only cognitive component.

Hypothesis 7: Online issue selling attempts that include cognitive and two more attitudinal components would be more supported by recipients of issue selling than those that include cognitive and a single extra attitudinal component.

METHOD

Data Collection

To address online issue selling behaviors, the current study collected data from a worldwide online anonymous community app. The app groups its users by topics of interests, company, and their greater industry and provides a bulletin board to each group. Thus, the users can choose on which board they will upload postings to communicate with others about their interests, careers, or workplace experiences. Among the various types of bulletin boards provided by the app, the current study collected data from the boards by companies to capture online issue selling attempts within organizations. More than 3000 companies are currently active on the app and privacy of users' information is ensured for anonymity. It is expected that ensured anonymity of the app would allow its users to exhibit issue selling behaviors in online settings. If anonymity is not guaranteed, people's issue selling attempts would not be different from those in offline settings due to impression management risks. Therefore, the current study assumes that issue selling attempts on the online anonymous community app may represent the typical online issue selling behaviors.

3 people currently working in banking, construction, and aviation industries were recruited to collect the data. They were asked to log in to the app and to provide the online postings on their companies' bulletin boards on

the app. The total of 602 postings were collected from the three companies. On the boards, however, several types of postings such as issue selling, information sharing, personal inquiries and socializing attempts are observed. For instance, people frequently shared newspaper articles related to their company or asked other organizational members for advice on career development. Because the aim of the current study is to examine online issue selling attempts, three coders first distinguished issue selling postings based on Dutton and Ashford's (1993) definition of an issue before data analysis. They first individually determine whether the posting is for issue selling or not. After that, the three coders met and discussed to the point of agreement to select issue selling postings for the data analysis. As a result, 318 total issue selling postings were collected. From Company A, 120 postings posted from September 2015 to March 2016 were collected. From Company B, 103 postings from December 2015 to December 2016 were collected. Lastly, 95 postings from October 2017 to March 2018 were collected from Company C.

Case Selection

In accordance with principles of critical case sampling, three South Korean for-profit companies were selected for contextual variance (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2015). The current study sought not to select companies from the same

industries but instead to collect data from various industries in different sizes and in different organizational circumstances.

The first site selected for this study is Company A, a middle-sized firm in banking industry. It was founded in a form of agricultural cooperative, which has the strong foundation and large business scale. It has been selected as one of the top capitalization companies in South Korea. However, due to its unique decentralization system, there has been conflicts between a headquarter and branches regarding task processes and organizational cultures. At the time of the data collection, the company underwent an election of a labor union representative and promotion assessments. Also, severe conflicts between generations appeared after an influx of younger employees. The present study expected that Company A would serve a contrast to the other companies due to its size and unique structure.

Company B is a major construction and engineering company founded in late 1960s. It has been selected as one of KOSPI (Korea Composite Stock Price Index) 200 corporations and as a growth corporation in South Korea. At the time of data collection, it experienced a change of the largest shareholder. However, their organizational performance was above the average that it won several domestic and overseas contracts despite of the recession of its industry. Due to its sales growth and organizational outperformance during the data collection, the current study presumed that

Company B would represent online issue selling attempts within organizations in the midst of satisfactory performance.

The third site, Company C is a major company in the aviation industry with approximately 2 million employees. A scandal of executives broken in early 2010s has caused severe damage to the reputation of its top management teams within and outside the company. During the data collection, it also reduced the number of employees. Thus, it is expected that Company C adds more contextual variance as they would demonstrate organizations in unfavorable conditions. Also, given the characteristics of aviation industry, Company C has not only domestic workers but also expatriates working in foreign branches. Therefore, analysis of issue selling postings on Company C's bulletin board could allow us to examine issue selling attempts of workers of different employment status.

Data Analysis

The analysis involved four steps. First, because the aim of this study was to examine online issue selling attempts by the attitude-based approach, the three coders, who have distinguished issue selling postings from other types of postings previously, determined which attitudinal components are used in selling attempts. The three coders together familiarized with the definition of each attitudinal component before the coding process. The

definition of each component used for the coding is based on the tripartite model of attitudes by Rosenberg and Hovland (1960). Issues substitute attitude objects in the tripartite model. In addition, as the current study analyzes the written postings on online bulletin boards, the definition of the three components are as follows. The cognitive component of issues means verbal statements of beliefs about issues while the affective component means verbal statements of affect about issues. Finally, the behavioral component means verbal statements of behaviors related to issues. After the three coders familiarized with the definitions, they independently read the issues and coded whether each attitudinal component is included in each issue selling posting. Then, their codes were compared to check interrater reliability using Fleiss' Kappa. In the case of disagreement, they reviewed the issues and discussed to the point of consensus to determine whether each component is included in the postings.

Second, to examine online issue selling attempts regarding HR system, one of prevalent topics in organizational context, the present study used content analysis to analyze a topic categorization of issue. To capture the categories of abstract issue topics, content analysis is used (Hinkin, 1998). The three main coders again independently scanned for preliminary ideas for categorization and identified possible issue topic categories. Then they met, discussed, and jointly discussed to the point of consensus to generate a topic

categorization. Throughout the coding process, the coders continually discussed and revised the categorization as necessary. Then, the coders classified the issue selling attempts by topics, based on the finalized topic categorization.

Third, the three coders followed the same procedures to determine the targets of causal attribution in issue selling postings. They, again, read the issue selling postings and independently determine whether issue sellers find TMTs are responsible for causing issues or not. Then, their interrater reliability was checked with Fleiss' Kappa. In the case of disagreement, they discussed to a consensual agreement.

Finally, the number of Likes on each issue posting was counted after the whole coding process.

Measures

Issue Selling Attempts. The current study defines an online issue selling attempt as a behavior to upload issue selling postings on online organizational bulletin boards. Online postings do not specify and limit the recipients, but anyone who has access to the bulletin boards can open and read the postings. Thus, if an individual uploads an issue selling postings on the bulletin boards, we can understand that the individual attempts to sell issues to people using the same bulletin boards.

Supportive Responses. Supportive responses of potential issue buyers were measured by a number of "Like" on each posting. In consumer behavior studies, consumers' attitudes on products can be understood by the number of "Like" on online commercials (Poyry, Parvinen, & Malmivaara, 2013; Chin, Lu, & Wu, 2015). People click the "Like" button in online space when they agree and be pleased with the postings contents. Put differently, the "Like" button enables people to easily demonstrate their positive stances with the postings. It is also noted that clicking the "Like" button has a positive effect on behavioral intention, which is also positively related to actual behaviors (Chin et al., 2015). Thus, the present study assumes that the "Like" on the postings represents supportive responses of potential issue buyers. If a posting has a higher number of "Like", we can interpret that the posting received more supportive responses compared to other postings with low numbers of "Like".

RESULT

Three Attitudinal Components of Issues

As expected, issue sellers used their attitudinal components of issues as their primary contents for issue selling attempts. Having issues as their attitude objects, issue sellers presented the three attitudinal components: cognitive, affective and behavioral components.

Cognitive Components. The cognitive components of issues referred to issue sellers' perceptions of a discrepancy between the expected conditions and the reality. The typical example of cognitive components was:

> Whenever I go to the restroom, I see some people chitchatting in the hallway (Yeah, I'm in 4th floor). It's ALWAYS same people from 000 department. Seems like they need some more work…! Well, people in my department are stuck in the paper works for more than 8 hours with only a few restroom break. It's not fair. This is a SERIOUS problem.

Affective Components. The affective components of issues represented the issue sellers' emotional responses toward the issues. The typical example of affective components was:

> … Cutting the budget for employee welfare? HOW can it be possible? I absolutely cannot accept it. Can you guys? So

annoyed with this decision ;(((((

Behavioral Components. The behavioral components of issues demonstrated how issue sellers would take actions for issues. The typical example of behavioral components was:

… we should together take an action! Unless we voice our opinions, the TMT never knows. On this Saturday, I am definitely going to attend the rally to oppose to pay cut. Come out to secure your rights and support your coworkers!

Topic of Online Issue Selling

As a result of content analysis, ten categories of online issue selling topic emerged. The ten categories were task, work condition, HR system, Business strategy, organizational culture, labor union, top management team, interpersonal conflict, work attitude, and external stakeholder. Table 4 presents a description of each topic category.

Interrater Reliability

Fleiss's κ was run to determine to check if there was agreement between the three coders on determination of 1) whether each attitudinal component is included and 2) whether issue sellers find TMTs responsible for causing issues or not. There was a moderate agreement between the three coders in both determinations, 1) $\kappa=.580$, p<.01 and 2) $\kappa=.607$, p<.01.

Table 4. *A Topic Categorization of Online Issue Selling*

Topic	Description & Example
Task	Issues related to task allocation and work process ex. unbalanced workload
Work condition	Issues related to workplace conditions ex. Indoor air ventilation problems
HR system	Issues related to organizational treatments ex. performance appraisal, reward system
Business strategy	Issues related to strategic plans of organizations ex. branch expansion strategy
Organizational culture	Issues related to organizational cultures ex. failure of employee-centric culture
Labor union	Issues related to union-negotiated benefits ex. job stability and incentives
Top management team	Issues related to executive members ex. moral responsibility of corporate executives
Interpersonal conflict	Issues related to workplace conflict ex. workplace aggression
Work attitude	Issues related to attitude problems in workplace ex. irresponsible behaviors of employees
External stakeholder	Issues related to customers, partners, and etc. ex. complaints about rude customers

Tests of Hypotheses

Hypotheses on Issue Sellers

To test Hypotheses 1 through 4, chi-square tests of goodness-of-fit were conducted. First, regarding the Hypothesis 1 and 2, the result indicated statistical differences in frequencies of the seven types of issue selling

attempts ($\chi^2(6, N = 318) = 248.296, p < .01$). Based upon observed

frequencies, it appeared that a type of issue selling attempts with cognitive

and affective components ($N = 119$) was the most and a type of those with

only behavioral component ($N = 3$) was the least (see Table 5). Hence, the

result supported the Hypothesis 1 and 2.

Table 5. *A Frequency of Issue Selling Attempts by Type*

	Observed Freq. (prop.)
Cognitive components only	83 (.26)
Affective components only	13 (.04)
Behavioral component only	3 (.01)
Cognitive + Affective	119 (.37)
Cognitive + Behavioral	60 (.19)
Affective + Behavioral	13 (.04)
Cognitive+ Affective+ Behavioral	27 (.09)

Note: χ^2 = 248.30*, df =6. Numbers in parentheses, (), are observed proportions for observed frequency. Freq. = frequency and prop. = proportion. *p < .05

To test the Hypothesis 3, only issue selling attempts related to HR

system ($N = 103$) were used for the analysis. The chi-square test of

goodness-of-fit was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 103) = 17.951, p < .01$,

indicating that a frequency of the selling attempts that include the affective

component and that of the selling attempts that do not include the affective

component were statistically different from what would be expected by

chance. It appeared that issue selling attempts that include the affective

component ($N = 73$) are disproportionately more than those that do not include such component ($N = 30$) in selling HR system issues (see Table 6). Since there was not enough selling attempts of 9 issue topics except HR system issues, the 9 issue topics are combined to be named as non-HR system issues (see Table 7). When issue are not related to HR system, there was no significant difference between the frequency of the selling attempts that include the affective component ($N = 98$) and that of the selling attempts that do not include such component ($N = 117$), $\chi^2(1, N = 215) = 1.679$, $p = .20$. In addition, 2x2 (HR/non-HR system issues x inclusion of affective components) chi-square test was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 318) = 17.921$, $p < .01$, indicating that there is an association between HR/non-HR system issues and inclusion of affective components in online issue selling attempts (see Table 6). Hence, Hypothesis 3 was also supported.

Table 6. *A Frequency of Issue Selling Attempts that Include /do not Include an Affective Component*

	An affective component	
	Included	Not included
HR system issues	73 (.73)	30 (.27)
Non-HR system issues	98 (.46)	117 (.54)

Note. $\chi^2 = 17.921^*$, df=1. Numbers in parentheses, (), are proportion. *p<.01

Table 7. *A Frequency of Non-HR System Issue Selling Attempts that Include /do not Include an Affective Component*

	An affective component	
Categories of non-HR system issues	Included	Not included
Task	12	12
Work Condition	15	16
Business Strategy	14	18
Organizational Culture	11	11
Labor Union	12	16
Top Management Team	7	8
Interpersonal Conflict	19	21
Work Attitude	7	12
External Stakeholder	1	3

To test the Hypothesis 4, the chi-square goodness of fit was also used. The result was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 180) = 67.22$, $p < .01$, indicating that a frequency of selling attempts that include the behavioral component and the frequency of selling attempts that do not include the behavioral component were statistically different from what would be expected by chance. Based upon observed frequencies, online issue sellers less include the behavioral component when they find TMTs are responsible for causing issues (see Table 8). When issue sellers do not find TMTs responsible for causing Issues, there was no significant difference between the frequency of the selling attempts that include the behavioral component $(N = 69)$ and that of the selling attempts that do not include such component$(N = 69)$,

$\chi^2(1, N = 138) = .00$, $p = 1.00$. In addition, 2x2 (TMT responsible/not responsible for causing issues x inclusion of behavioral components) chi-square test was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 318) = 33.137$, $p < .01$, indicating that there is an association between whether TMT responsible/not responsible for causing issues and the inclusion of behavioral components in online issue selling attempts (see Table 8). Hence, Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Table 8. *A Frequency of Issue Selling Attempts that Include/ do not Include a Behavioral Component*

	A behavioral component	
	Included	Not included
TMTs responsible for causing issues	35 (.19)	145 (.81)
TMTs not responsible for causing issues	69 (.5)	69 (.5)

Note. $\chi^2 = 33.137*$, df=1. Numbers in parentheses, (), are proportion. *p<.01

Hypotheses on Recipients of Issue Selling

To examine a critical role of cognitive components in issue selling, this study grouped issue selling postings into 4 groups: a cognitive component not included (group A), only cognitive component included (group B), cognitive and a single extra attitudinal component included (group C), and cognitive and two extra attitudinal components included (group D) (see Table 9). A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) conducted on a number of "Like" on issue selling postings revealed a statistical difference among the

four groups, $F(3, 314) = 4.00, \ p < .01$.

This was followed by planned comparisons to test the hypotheses 4 through 6. The first comparison (i.e., group 1 vs. group 2, 3, and 4) was significant, $t(314) = 2.62, \ p < .01$, demonstrating that online issue selling attempts that include the cognitive component (*M*=4.62, *SD*=5.40) received more supports from the recipients of issue selling than those that do not include such component (*M*=16.46, *SD*=23.70).

The second comparison (i.e., group 2 vs. group 3 and 4) was also significant, $t(314) = -2.03, \ p < .05$. Thus, it is shown that issue selling attempts that include cognitive and an extra attitudinal component (*M*=11.95, *SD*=18.62) received more supportive responses than those that include only cognitive component (*M*=18.28, *SD*=25.28).

Finally, the third comparison (i.e., group 3 vs. group 4) did not show a significant difference, $t(314) = -.33, \ p = .74$. Such result demonstrated that the number of "Like" did not differ between issue selling attempts that include cognitive and two extra attitudinal components (*M*=18.08, *SD*=25.61) and the attempts that include cognitive and a single extra component (*M*=19.63, *SD*=23.31).

In addition, this study examined the number of "Like" on the selling attempts within the group C. Group C includes issue selling attempts that have cognitive and an extra attitudinal component. Thus, either affective or

behavioral component would be the extra component. The result showed that the number of "Like" on the selling attempts with cognitive and affective components (*M*=18.12, *SD*=21.41) and that on the selling attempts with cognitive and behavioral components (*M*=18.16, *SD*=27.67) were not statistically different, $t(176) = -.01, \ p = .99$.

Overall, Hypothesis 5 and 6 were supported whereas Hypothesis 7 was not.

Table 9. *Number of Like on Issue Selling Attempts by Group*

DV	Group A (cognitive comp. not included)		Group B (only cognitive comp.)		Group C (cognitive comp. with an extra comp.)		Group D (cognitive comp. with two extra comp.)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Number of Likes	4.62	5.40	11.95	18.62	18.08	25.61	19.63	23.31

Note. DV means a dependent variable; Group A refers to issue selling attempts that do not include cognitive components; Group B refers to issue selling attempts that include only cognitive component; Group C refers to issue selling attempts that include cognitive and a single extra attitudinal component; Group D refers to issue selling attempts that include cognitive and two extra attitudinal components.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the current study was to examine issue selling attempts in online settings, using the attitude-based approach. Thus, the current study analyzed the postings on the organizational online bulletin boards to explore online issue sellers' behaviors to influence others' attitudes toward issues. Also, supportive responses of the recipients of issue selling were assessed by the number of "Like" on the postings.

The result of the hypotheses on issue sellers indicated that online issue sellers sell issues with cognitive and affective components the most but issues with only behavioral component the least. As hypothesized, online issue sellers tended to include their affective components when their issues are related to HR system more than when they are non-HR issues. However, opposed to what I hypothesized, the result showed that issue sellers include behavioral components less when they find TMTs responsible for causing issues.

For hypotheses on the recipients of issue selling, the finding indicated that using cognitive components would increase supportive responses from the recipients. Furthermore, using extra attitudinal components with cognitive components increased the recipients' supportive responses. However, using two extra attitudinal components with the cognitive component did not lead more supportive responses than using a

single extra attitudinal component with the cognitive component.

Overall, this study provides a more comprehensive analysis of issue selling. It furthers our understanding of issue selling by addressing how issue sellers use their attitudinal components of issues to draw more attention and get supportive responses through online communication channels.

Theoretical Implications

The present study has three major theoretical implications. First, this study reflects a trend of online communication channels and demonstrates issue selling behaviors through such channels. As organizational communication channels have shifted from face-to-face interactions to computer-mediated interactions, it is critical to understand how characteristics of online space influence organizational members' issue selling behaviors. One of the most salient characteristics of online space is anonymity (Weisband, Schneider & Connolly, 1995).

The result of this study indicated that online issue sellers include their feelings as well as their sensemaking processes of issues in their selling attempts. These tendencies are different from offline issue sellers who are more inclined to economic values of issues for justifications (Sonenshien, 2016). Put differently, offline issue sellers focus on sense-giving of issues more than emotional expressions while online issue sellers focus on

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emotional expressions as much as on sense-giving. This result is in accordance with the previous studies that a characteristic of online space, anonymity, reduces social inhibition (Baumeister, 1982) and evaluation anxiety (Dubrovsky et al., 1991) thereby encouraging emotional expressions to people. As anonymity weakens the salience of spatial and physical cues (Kiesler et al., 1984; Sproull & Kiesler, 1986; Sproull & Kiesler, 1991; Spears, Lea, Corneliussen, Postmes, & Ter Haar, 2002), people feel less pressure to suppress their negative emotional expressions in online space.

Similar to its reducing effects on spatial and physical cues, anonymity can be expected to reduce status cues in online space. Thus, this study hypothesized that online issue sellers could include behavioral components (i.e., verbal statements that demand changes of those responsible for causing issues) even though they find TMTs responsible for causing issues. However, the data indicated that issue selling attempts that do not include the behavioral component are significantly more than those that include the behavioral component.

These results may be due to limited effects of anonymity on status cues. Spear and Lea's (1994) argued that anonymity does not remove all social cues, especially cues for status and roles. They asserted that anonymity reduces interpersonal cues but not status cues. In other words, people are anonymous in online space, but their perceived positional disparities with top

management teams remain salient. Similarly, Weisband et al. (1995) also noted that status differences cannot be attenuated in online space when people are aware of status compositions and differences. In organizational contexts, assigned roles and status are inevitably salient to employees because differentiation of role is important for effective organizational performance. Organizational members can bring up issues but hesitate to demand changes to TMTs, those distant from them in the corporate hierarchy. The result of this study, thus, implies that anonymity of online settings cannot reduce the salience of status cues.

Overall, this study not only captures reducing effects of anonymity on social inhibition but also acknowledges its limited effects on reducing status cues in issue selling behaviors. The current study thus suggests a more balanced view of effects of anonymity on online issue selling behaviors.

Second, this study extends issue selling literature by suggesting a more fundamental approach to issue selling and clarifying an essential goal of issue selling. In most cases, the essential goal of issue selling would be individuals' attitudinal changes, followed by organizational changes. The attitude-based approach used in this study interprets a result of issue selling at an individual level, thereby tackles how issue sellers mention their attitudes to influence others' attitudes. By adopting the attitude-based approach, this study addresses the essential goal of issue selling.

Third, the current study introduces an attitude-based approach by understanding issue selling as attitude-sharing behaviors to influence others' attitude. Based on the tripartite model of attitude, this study demonstrates the effects of three attitudinal components of issues in various forms of combinations.

The result of this study implied that issue sellers selectively use the attitudinal components of issues depending on their objectives and perceived positional disparities with those responsible for causing issues. In addition, the analysis showed that it is pivotal for issue sellers to mention their sensemaking processes of issues to get more supportive responses from the recipients of issue selling. Also, when issue sellers use a cognitive component with extra attitudinal components, they received more support than when they use only cognitive component. However, whether the cognitive component is presented with a single (either affective or behavioral) or two (both affective and behavioral) extra attitudinal components does not make a difference in a a number of "Like". These results suggest that affective and behavioral components make synergy effects with the cognitive component but their effects are not additive. In other words, including cognitive components with both affective and behavioral components does not guarantee twice supportive responses as much as including the cognitive component with either affective or behavioral component does. Either affective and behavioral

component helps issue sellers to present issues in more persuasive tone with the cognitive component, but it does not have additive persuasive effects. Hence, this study opens up new avenues for successful issue selling tactics by addressing the effects of using the three attitudinal components in issue selling attempts.

Practical Implications

The current study also has important implications for practitioners. First, this study suggests a rule of thumb for successful issue selling attempts to potential issue sellers by implying the importance of sensegiving of issues. The findings of this study demonstrated that the cognitive component would satisfy needs for cognition for recipients of issue selling. Also, it is addressed that issue selling attempts that include the cognitive component are more supported by the recipients than those that do not include the cognitive component. Put differently, the cognitive component enables the recipients to make sense of issues and eventually elicit more supportive responses from them. These findings implied that potential issue sellers should provide their sensemaking processes of issues to give sense to and to get more support from the recipients.

Second, the findings of this study suggest that top management teams should promote active and open voice culture within organizations for

organizational adaptations and development. The result of this study supported that anonymity of online space reduces spatial and physical cues for issue sellers so that they can express their negative feelings related to issues. However, it is found that issue sellers less include the behavioral components of their attitudes toward issues when they believe that TMTs are responsible for causing issues. These result implied that given anonymity in online organizational bulletin boards does not guarantee enough psychological safety to employees to put forward constructive advice to TMTs. If employees do not demand changes directly to TMTs but only describe the issue situations, changes cannot be started because TMTs may not recognize their responsibility for causing issues. Therefore, this study addresses employees' difficulties for raising issues to TMTs, implying a necessity of more active and open voice culture within organizations.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite its significant theoretical and practical implications, this study is not without limitations. First, this study only addresses supportive responses but not actual issue buying behaviors of recipients of online issue selling. The current study interprets clicking a "Like" button as a supportive reaction to the postings. Based on such interpretation, it examined the effects of attitudinal components of issues on eliciting supportive responses from

recipients of issue selling. A purpose of issue selling, however, is not limited to getting support but to leading actual issue buying behaviors. Issue buying refers to recipients' behaviors to pay attention to issues. Chin et al. (2015) noted that clicking the "Like" button has a positive effect on behavioral intention, which is also positively related to actual behaviors. According to their research, it is reasonable to assume that supportive responses can lead to issue buying behaviors, but it does not guarantee that clicking the "Like" always lead to actual buying behaviors. As this study analyzes online issue selling postings, there was no way to track whether those who clicked the "Like" button consequently has bought the issues or not. Therefore, future studies should address actual issue buying behaviors among the recipients of online issue selling to examine the effects of attitudinal components on them.

Second, the samples of this study may not be enough to generalize its findings. The current study collected online issue selling postings from three different South Korean companies. The findings of this study could be due to specific organizational culture that those all three companies may have. Thus, further investigation of online issue selling behaviors of employees from other companies would be necessary to support the generalizability of the result of this study.

CONCLUSION

Previous issue selling literature has missed a shift of organizational communication channels to online interactive systems and paid much attention to organizational changes instead of individual attitudinal changes. To overcome these limitations of previous studies, the current study adopts attitude-based approach to examine issue selling behaviors in online settings. The result of this study implied that online issue sellers selectively use the three attitudinal components of issues depending on their objectives and perceived responsibility for causing issues. It also showed that the cognitive components increase supportive responses from recipients of issue selling and that affective and behavioral components have non-additive persuasive effects. Overall, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of online issue selling behaviors and suggests a precedence of organizational members' individual changes over organizational changes.

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국문 초록

　　이슈 판매(issue selling)는 이슈에 대한 관심을 유발하고, 이슈를 이해하는 과정에 영향을 미치는 행위이다. 이슈 판매자(issue seller)는 이슈를 판매함으로써 우선적으로 다른 조직원들의 태도를 변화시키고, 더 나아가 조직 수준의 변화를 야기한다. 이슈 판매에 대한 기존 연구들은 조직 수준의 변화에 더 많은 관심을 두었다. 그러나 이슈 판매를 근본적으로 이해하기 위해서는 조직 수준 변화에 선행하는 개인 수준의 태도 변화를 살펴볼 필요성이 있다. 또한, 조직내 소통 채널이 면대면(face-to-face) 상황에서 온라인으로 변화하고 있는 최근의 트렌드를 반영하기 위해서는, 조직 구성원들이 주로 사용하는 온라인 채널을 고려하여 오늘날의 이슈의 주제와 판매 방식을 파악하는 것이 바람직하다.

　　본 연구는 개인 수준의 태도 변화를 이해하기 위해 태도 기반 접근 방식으로 온라인 상에서의 이슈 판매를 분석하였다. 이를 위해 직장인들이 익명으로 소통하는 모바일 커뮤니티 앱 내 3개의 회사 게시판에서 데이터를 수집하였다. 이슈 판매 시도를 한 게시글을 먼저 선별하였고, 각 게시글에 대한 좋아요 수를 지지 구매반응으로 간주하였다.

　　분석 결과, 인지적 요소와 정서적 요소를 함께 포함한 이슈 판매 시도가 가장 많았으며, 행동적 요소만을 포함한 이슈 판매 시도가 가장 적었다. 또한 이슈 셀러들은 인사 관련 이슈를 제기할 때 정서적 요소를 가장 많이 포함시켰다. 그리고 온라인에서 최고경영층이 책임이 있다고 판단되는 이슈를 판매할 때에는 여전히 해결방안을 제시하기를 꺼리는 경향이 있음이 확인되었다. 이 결과는 온라인 상에서의 익명성 효과는 권력 차이의 해소를 가져오게 하지는 못한다는 것을 시사해주고 있다. 각 태도 요소의 효과로는, 인지적 요소를 포함한 이슈 판매 시도가 포함하지 않은 시도보다 더 많은 지지 구매 반응을 얻었다. 정서적, 행동적 요소는 이슈 판매 시도를 설득력 있게 나타내어 더 많은 지지 구매 반응을 유도하였으나, 그 효과는 비가산적(非加算的)이었다.

　　본 연구는 온라인 상에서 이슈 판매자가 이슈를 판매하는 과정에서 태도 3 요소를 어떻게 사용하는지 살펴보았음에 의의를 가진다. 뿐만 아니라, 이슈 판매과정에서 센스 메이킹의 중요성과 익명성의 제한적인 효과를 검증해보았다는 점 또한 관련연구분야에 기여를 할 것으로 예상한다. 다만, 지지 구매 반응이 실제 구매 행동으로 이어지는지 판단하기 어렵다는 연구 한계가 있다. 후속 연구에서는 이 관계를 보다 면밀히 살펴볼 필요가 있다.