

Understanding Consumer Motives for Reading Online Product Reviews: An Extended Model of the Theory of Reasoned Action

Shu-Hui Chuang¹
Department of Business
Administration
Asia University
joyce@asia.edu.tw

Meng-Lin Shih²
Department of Information
Technology
Ching Kuo Institute of
Management and Health
mlshih@mis.ccu.edu.tw

Kuan-Jung Huang³
Department of Accounting
and Information Systems
Asia University
a_lucy0117@hotmail.com

Abstract

Understanding consumers' motives for reading online product reviews appears to be especially important, because the role of these reviews in making online purchase decisions cannot be realized if consumers do not read them first. This study conceptualizes and tests a theoretical model that elaborates what antecedents underlie consumers' attitude toward, and intention of, reading online product reviews. The proposed model is based on the theory of reasoned action, which is further extended by integrating consumers' perceptions, trait, and experience. The results suggest that consumers' attitude toward reading online product reviews may be positive or negative depending mainly on how useful consumers perceive the reviews to be, whether consumers perceive that the reviews are of high quality, whether consumers perceive that the reviews are consistent with their prior knowledge about the products, and whether consumers have the trait of susceptibility to informational influence. Consumers' experience of online shopping has no significant influence on attitude toward reading reviews, although this association is stated as a formal hypothesis. Detailed findings and implications for academics and practitioners are presented.

Keywords: Online product review · Theory of reasoned action · Review reading · Susceptibility to informational influence · Online shopping experience

1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, the rapid development of the Internet and the explosive growth of the World Wide Web (the Web) have changed people's life enormously. Especially the shift in the way of shopping, from the general endorsement of buying a product after visiting a physical store to the widespread acceptance of purchasing through using an online retail outlet, has obviously influenced how consumers decide to buy a product. Unlike consumers in physical stores, those using the online retail outlets cannot touch or smell products, so their purchase judgments must rely on limited product representations, such as photographs and text descriptions presented on the Web. Under such an uncertain situation online product reviews thus appear to be of exceptional importance to consumers, since they will probably view these reviews, the reactions of others, as evidence about the "true" nature of the products [29].

Online product reviews are defined as any positive or negative statement about products made by potential, actual, or former customers [2]. These reviews include consumers' experiences, evaluations, and opinions and are available to a multitude of people via the Internet [9][10][47]. When consumers purchase products or services from online retail outlets, they no longer interact with a salesperson as they do in the physical stores to gain the knowledge of the products they want. Instead, consumers obtain information related to goods or services via sellers' Web sites, including not only seller-created product advertisements but also consumer-created product reviews.

Therefore, the increasing importance of online product reviews inspires academics to focus their research on whether these reviews can affect consumers' online purchasing decisions (e.g., [8][9][10][22]).

This research, mainly conducting an experiment that requests consumers to read online product reviews that are created by the authors, demonstrates that review quality, review quantity, and other related variables are the key factors driving consumers' online purchase intention. For example, if online consumers read a product's positive reviews that demonstrate high quality and/or great quantity, they will have a higher intention to buy this product. On the contrary, negative reviews, especially high-quality and/or high-quantity negative reviews, will urge consumers to hesitate over whether to join the herd of online shoppers. Despite this research, our understanding of the context of online product reviews still remains scant. For example, this research, which focuses on the assessment of the relationship between reviews and online purchase intention, works only under the implicit premise that consumers certainly read the product reviews before buying an online product. However, we are unable to ascertain whether consumers would read product reviews before shopping online. If consumers do not read online product reviews, we will never know the role of these reviews in making online purchase decisions. Understanding why consumers read the online product reviews thus seems another pivotal and interesting topic in the realm of online product reviews.

At least two studies we are aware of [40] [48] have already examined consumers' motives of reading online product reviews, although to date such an examination is still in its infancy. Our study builds on these two studies by endeavoring to conceptualize and test a theoretical model that elaborates what antecedents underlie consumer's attitude and intention of reading online reviews. The proposed model is based on the theory of reasoned action

(TRA) [25], which is further extended by introducing five constructs: (1) review usefulness, (2) review quality, (3) review consistency, (4) susceptibility to informational influence, and (5) online shopping experience. The first three constructs represent consumers' perceptions after reading online reviews. The fourth construct is an individual trait related to whether s/he ordinarily refers to others' opinion before shopping. The fifth construct reflects whether consumers repeatedly shop online. Our purpose is to provoke information systems (IS) academics and practitioners to pay more attention to this as-yet underdeveloped topic. Specifically, for a business-to-consumer (B2C) e-commerce provider (e.g., online shopping channel, online shopping mall) to understand why buyers are willing to read online product reviews will facilitate these companies in managing their Web sites more effectively.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 The Theory of Reasoned Action

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) was first proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen in [25], and it is a widely accepted model in social psychology to explain or predict an individual's behavior. TRA holds that an individual's behavior is predicted by his or her intention to perform the behavior. Based on the suggestions of previous studies, Fishbein and Ajzen [25] presented two factors that determine behavioral intention: namely attitude toward the behavior and subjective norm concerning the behavior. Attitude toward the behavior is a person's positive or negative feelings about performing the behavior, which is a function of beliefs about the consequence of that behavior. Subjective norm is a person's perception that a relevant reference group (people who are important to this person) thinks the person should or should not perform the behavior, which is a function of

normative beliefs about that behavior. In short, TRA assumes that an individual's behavioral intention is highly determined by both her/his positive evaluations of the behavior and her/his perception that significant referents think s/he should perform the behavior.

TRA has received much attention from many researchers. This theory has been used by these researchers to understand a wide range of behaviors, including voting behavior [19], unethical behavior [26], seat-belt use [34], online purchase behavior [12][23], and online game usage behavior[4]. Interested readers are referred to related references, for example, Sheppard et al. (1988) [17]for an in-depth discussion of the application of TRA. With its flexibility, TRA is suitable for a variety of situations, especially when the behavior is under volitional control. Therefore, this theory is conceived as an appropriate baseline model for examining why consumers are willing to read online product reviews.

In TRA, attitude is a function of beliefs about the consequence or outcome of the behavior. These beliefs are scenario specific and a priori cannot be generalized. Hence, for each new behavior, one must identify new salient outcome beliefs for each behavior that are context and population specific [18]. As we know, previous researchers have never identified any outcome beliefs in the TRA to explain why consumers hold positive/negative evaluations about reading others' reviews. Thus, while researchers have adapted TRA to explain different kinds of behavior (e.g., voting behavior, online purchase behavior, etc.), different outcome beliefs need to be considered as the immediate antecedents of attitude toward reading online product reviews. We postulate that a consumer would read reviews for each purchase in a B2C Web site depending on how s/he perceives reading reviews on this Web site. For example, if a consumer perceives that reading the Web site's product reviews is useful (e.g., helping get a product of high

quality), s/he would read them for each purchase from this Web site. Therefore, consumer's perceptions of online reviews are among the salient outcome beliefs underpinning attitude toward reading these reviews. In addition, we postulate that consumer's trait of susceptibility to informational influence and his/her online shopping experience are important in determining whether s/he would read online reviews before embarking on online shopping. These two constructs are thus considered as the direct antecedents of attitude about reading online reviews, in addition to the aforementioned salient outcome beliefs. We expect the adjusted TRA model with these important constructs may demonstrate its predictive ability on the behavior of online review reading.

2.2 Consumer's Perceptions of Online Product Reviews

An online product review is a new form of word-of-mouth communication that functions as a recommendation for buying or not buying a product. It is similar to traditional word-of-mouth communication in that both are considered as a messenger of other consumers' opinion about products [28][46]. However, unlike traditional word-of-mouth, online product reviews come from unknown people around the world, so such reviews have less credibility than direct messages from consumers who are your family or friends [41]. For example, an online review about a certain brand of product may be emotional, less logical, and even contain abusive or adulatory expressions spread by a stranger who may well be a competitor or the owner of the brand. For a consumer, such a kind of review is in effect less trustworthy than traditional word-of-mouth communication. Despite this, there is compelling evidence to suggest that many consumers hold positive attitudes toward reading online product reviews before online shopping. One study, for example, has shown that half the consumers who visit

online shopping malls consider product reviews important in their buying decisions [6]. Also according to another report, 53% of 1000 online shoppers voted that destination and accommodation reviews are the most important factors (excluding price) when buying a holiday online [7]. Why would consumers take the risk of reading the recommendations that come from a stranger, a competitor, or the owner of the brand they want? It must be the reason that consumers perceive that most online product reviews they read are useful, of high quality, and/or consistent with their prior knowledge about the products. In contrast, consumers wouldn't read online product reviews before online purchasing because they perceive that these reviews are useless, inconsistent with their own expertise of products, and even deficient in the quality of supporting their evaluation with reasons based on the facts about the products. In short, a consumer's perceptions of online reviews such as review usefulness, review quality, and review consistency play a pivotal role in determining whether s/he would read reviews prior to shopping online.

2.2.1 Review Usefulness

When users perceive that using an IT is of great usefulness, such as gains in efficiency, effectiveness, or productivity, they will have a positive attitude and a higher intention toward this IT usage. This idea leads us to postulate that consumers will have a higher positive evaluation about reading online product reviews if they perceive that reading these reviews is especially useful, including improving their future purchasing plans more quickly, efficiently, and effectively. That is, "review usefulness," defined as the degree to which a consumer believes that reading product reviews would enhance performance in his/her future purchase plans, is the immediate antecedent driving the attitude toward reading reviews, just as perceived usefulness is the primary belief driving IT usage attitude and intention.

H1: Review usefulness positively affects consumers' attitude toward reading online product reviews.

2.2.2 Review Quality and Consistency

The elaboration-likelihood model (ELM) [30] posits that the same information presented can be processed in two different routes (central route versus peripheral route) depending on individual elaboration likelihood (motivation and ability). A person in high elaboration likelihood tends to think carefully about argument-relevant information (central-route processing), whereas the person in low elaboration likelihood prefers to judge on the basis of heuristic cues (peripheral-route processing). We postulate that a consumer's attitude toward reading product reviews in an online retail outlet may also be caused by these two distinct routes in question. Nevertheless, unlike typical ELM research that operationalizes "argument quality" (the persuasive strength of arguments embedded in an informational message) as the construct of central-route persuasion (e.g., [1]), this study manipulates "review quality" (the quality of a review's contents from the perspective of information characteristics) [10] as the variable of central-route influence, because such a variable that is manipulated as the high-effort-processing one in other studies as well (e.g., [10][22]) has demonstrated its persuasive effect on consumer's attitude toward, or intention of, buying a certain product. Likewise, unlike classical ELM researchers that use "source credibility" (the extent to which an information source is perceived to be believable, competent, and trustworthy by information recipients) as the peripheral cue to persuade an individual (e.g., [31]), we consider "review consistency" (the extent to which a review is consistent with the consumer's prior knowledge about the products) (adapted from [44]) as a simple cue to influence a consumer, since a similar construct (information consistency) that is considered

as one of the peripheral cues as well [44] has demonstrated its influential ability on the knowledge adoption of online community members. In sum, the review quality and review consistency we propose are the central-route and peripheral-route constructs respectively, both of which are paramount in shaping a consumer's attitude toward reading online product reviews.

H2: Review quality positively affects consumers' attitude toward reading online product reviews.

H3: Review consistency positively affects consumers' attitude toward reading online product reviews.

2.3 Consumer Trait and Experience

According to Bearden et al. [43], individuals differ in their responses to social influence. However, earlier efforts to measure such differences were rather fragmented and limited. They thus developed a scale to evaluate consumer's susceptibility to interpersonal influence based on McGuire's [42] concept of influenceability and Deutsch and Gerard's [24] distinction of social influence. This scale is composed of two components: susceptibility to normative influence and susceptibility to informational influence. The former reflects consumer's willingness to conform to the expectations of others regarding purchase decisions, whereas the latter represents the tendency to learn about products and services by observing others or seeking information from others. With its dual components, this scale is readily applicable to evaluating how sensitive a consumer is to normative influence (an influence to conform with the positive expectations of another) and/or informative influence (an influence to accept information obtained from another as evidence about reality), and demonstrates its value in understanding how likely a consumer is to conform to others' expectations and/or to refer to others' information when making her/his purchase decisions. For example, if an individual gets

a high score on the first component of this scale, s/he will be a consumer who is susceptible to normative influence and more likely to conform to others' expectations by buying products that s/he perceives will lead others to evaluate her/him positively.

H4: Consumers' susceptibility to informational influence positively affects their attitude toward reading online product reviews.

Fazio and Zanna [33] suggested that attitudes based on direct experience predict behaviors better than attitudes formed in other manners because direct experience makes more information about the attitude object available to the individual. This implicitly assumes that prior experience of a certain behavior exerts a mediated influence on this behavior through intervening variables such as attitude toward this behavior. Taking this viewpoint into account, we argue that consumers' past experience of the behavior in question, i.e. reading online product reviews, can shape their attitude regarding this behavior and thereby indirectly influence their acceptance of this behavior. Because the more a consumer has experience of online shopping, the more likely s/he has experience of online review reading, we thus use online shopping experience as the surrogate of prior experience of online review reading.

H5: Consumers' online shopping experience positively affects their attitude toward reading online product reviews.

2.4 Subjective Norm about Reading Online Product Reviews

According to TRA, subjective norm refers to a person's perception of the expectations of important others about the specific behavior. Applied to this study, subjective norm is expressed as the degree to which a consumer perceives that her/his important others (e.g., family, friends) approve of her/his reading of online product reviews. The literature has suggested that subjective norm has a significant effect on individuals' behavioral intention. For

instance, subjective norm has demonstrated its explanatory power on consumers' coupon usage intention [39], IT usage intention [11], and online purchase intention [12]. Therefore, a positive relationship between subjective norm and intention to read online product reviews is expected.

H6: Consumers' subjective norm positively affects their intention of reading online product reviews.

Over the years, a number of TRA-based studies have primarily investigated an individual's behavior under the basic assumption that the relationship between the two key components, attitude and subjective norm, is independent. This assumption, however, has been challenged by providing empirical evidence of a causal link between the two belief structures in TRA (e.g., [32][35]. Although the direction of the interdependent relationship between beliefs in TRA is still in question, in a study of online purchase decision [15], subjective norm appeared to have a direct influence on attitude.

H7: Consumers' subjective norm positively affects their attitude toward reading online product reviews.

2.5 Attitude Toward, and Intention of, Reading Online Product Reviews

Attitude toward reading online product reviews is considered as consumers' preference to referring to others' opinions, evaluations, and/or recommendations when shopping at an online retail outlet. Intention to read online product reviews reflects the extent to which consumers would like to read others' opinions, evaluations, and/or recommendations when shopping in an online store. We aver that if a consumer maintains a favorable attitude about considering others' suggestions in an online store, s/he will have a high intention to read these suggestions each time s/he shops in this store. This is consistent with Fishbein and Ajzen's [25] assertion and other research's (e.g., [20][36][37][45]) evidence that attitude positively influences behavioral

intention.

H8: Consumers' attitude toward reading online product reviews positively affects their intention of reading these reviews.

3. Methodology

3.1 Questionnaire Development

The questionnaire was developed to measure eight constructs of interest to this study: attitude, subjective norm, intention, review usefulness, review quality, review consistency, susceptibility to informational influence, and online shopping experience. First, the measurements for attitude toward reading reviews, subjective norm about reading reviews, and intention to read reviews were adapted from Ajzen and Fishbein [18] and Taylor and Todd [38]. These items were slightly modified to suit the context of online product reviews. Next, review usefulness was measured using 4-item scale adapted from Hsu and Lin [5]. Review quality, assessed by 5-item measurement drawn from Park et al. [10], focuses on the relevance, objectiveness, understandability, and sufficiency associated with reading online product reviews. Review consistency was assessed by 3-item instrument adapted from Zhang and Watts [44], which developed consistency scale by modifying information consistency scale based on Vandenbosch and Higgins [3]. Finally, to measure consumer's susceptibility to informational influence and online shopping experience, we used the original scales developed and validated by Bearden et al. [43] and Limayem and Hirt [27] respectively.

3.2 Data Collection

The research model was tested with data from reviewers on Mobile01 (www.mobile01.com) website. Mobile01 was chosen because it is an important online discussion forum about 3C products in Taiwan. The reviewers were students at Asia University in Taiwan. Students were

considered as appropriate surrogates of real world's online buyers because they have most of the attributes of the expected population [14]. The participants were instructed to answer all the questions based on their experience when reading product reviews on the Mobile01 website. The returned questionnaires were initially screened for usability and reliability; 263 responses were found to be complete and valid for data analysis. The data were collected during the period of April to May 2009. The main survey had 286 responses.

We eliminated 23 respondents who were obviously unconcerned (e.g., giving the same rating for all items), thus 263 questionnaires were retained for data analysis. Approximately, 55.9% of the respondents were male; 60.8% were aged between 20 and 39; 94.7% were educated to institute level or above; 50% use the Internet more than 18 hours each week.

4. Analysis and results

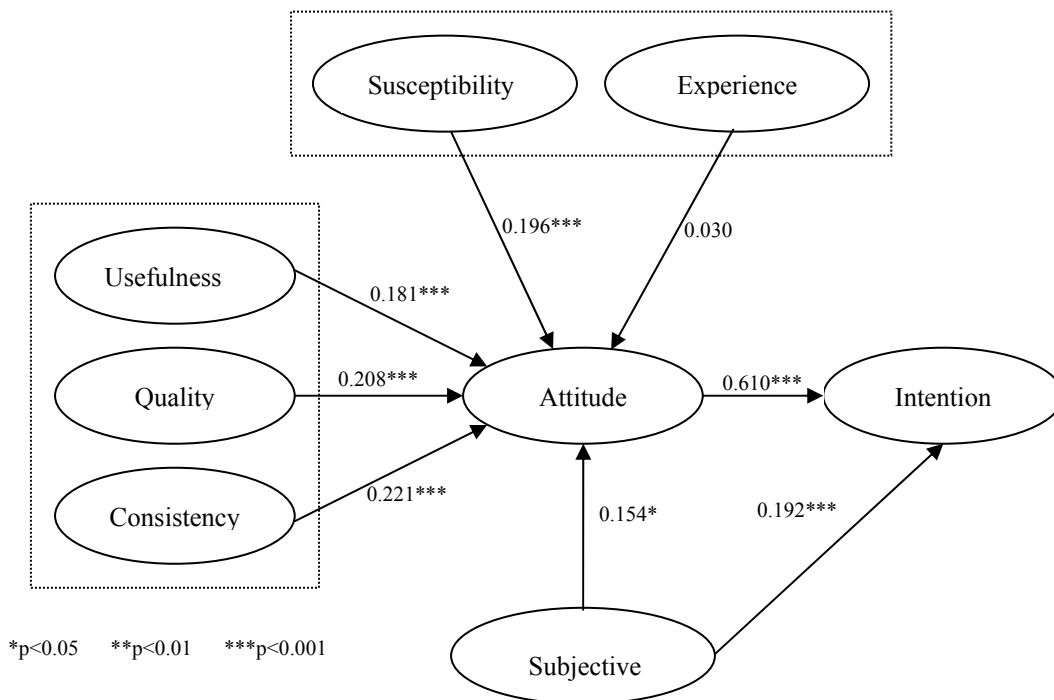


Figure 1. Path diagram for research model

Data analysis was performed using partial least squares (PLS), a structural equation modeling technique that has become widely accepted in recent years due to its accuracy and utility. Table 1 presents standardized loading and other metrics for the item measures as well as reliability and validity measures. Hair et al. [21] suggested that in a sample of 150 respondents, a factor loading of 0.45 or above is significant. In this study, all items in the measurement model exhibit factor loadings ranging from 0.75 to 0.96 and are thus considered acceptable for the remainder of the analysis.

The reliability metrics for all the eight constructs, ranging from 0.888 to 0.961, also exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70 [16] and are fully acceptable. Average variance extracted (AVE) shows that eight AVE values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.50 [16]. The examination of structural equation model includes the coefficients of the causal relationships between constructs, which would validate the hypothesized effects, and the R-square values, which indicate the amount of variance in dependent variables explained by their antecedents.

Table 1. Assessing the measurement model

Constructs/Items	Loading	t-value
Review usefulness (Composite reliability = 0.893, AVE=0.677)		
1. The reviews I read will increase my future purchasing plan more quickly.	0.846	37.156
2. The reviews I read would improve my future purchasing plan performance.	0.819	30.195
3. The reviews I read would enhance my future purchasing plan effectiveness.	0.832	37.404
4. The reviews I read can increase my decision when performing my future purchasing plan.	0.792	36.637
Review quality (Composite reliability = 0.900, AVE=0.643)		
1. Most reviews I read have sufficient reasons supporting the opinions.	0.784	28.340
2. Most reviews I read are objective.	0.814	33.908
3. Most reviews I read are understandable.	0.765	27.233
4. Most reviews I read are credible.	0.810	30.256
5. In general, the quality of most reviews I read is high.	0.833	37.197
Review consistency (Composite reliability = 0.888, AVE=0.725)		
1. The reviews I read reinforced my confidence in my future purchasing plan.	0.870	54.690
2. The arguments in the reviews I read are consistent with my existing knowledge about the product I want to buy.	0.827	30.672
3. The reviews I read verified my assumptions for my future purchasing plan.	0.856	38.811
Attitude toward reading reviews (Composite reliability = 0.907, AVE=0.710)		
1. Before shopping online, reading product reviews in this website is a good idea.	0.866	46.802
2. Before shopping online, reading product reviews in this website is a wise idea.	0.881	56.174
3. I like the idea of reading product reviews in this website before shopping online.	0.865	54.364
4. Reading product reviews in this website would be pleasant.	0.750	21.494
Subjective norm about reading reviews (Composite reliability = 0.957, AVE=0.918)		
1. People who influence my behavior would think that I should read the product reviews in this website before shopping online.	0.955	103.705
2. People who are important to me would think that I should read the product reviews in this website before shopping online.	0.960	138.942
Intention of reading reviews (Composite reliability = 0.961, AVE=0.891)		
1. I plan to read this website's product reviews when I buy a product online.	0.934	78.321
2. I intend to read this website's product reviews when I buy a product online.	0.959	137.283
3. I expect to read this website's product reviews when I buy a product online.	0.938	84.506
Susceptibility to informational influence (Composite reliability = 0.902, AVE=0.697)		
1. To make sure I buy the right product or brand, I often observe what others are buying and using.	0.780	22.164
2. If I have little experience with a product, I often ask my friends about the product.	0.902	59.841
3. I often consult other people to help choose the best alternative available from a product class.	0.866	61.021
4. I frequently gather information from friends or family about a product before I buy.	0.782	20.229
Online shopping experience (Composite reliability = 0.960, AVE=0.889)		
1. I have shopped online extensively.	0.921	64.050
2. I have used the internet to shop for a long time.	0.957	78.489
3. I shop online frequently.	0.948	78.227

As shown in Figure 1, 55.9% of the variance in attitude toward reading reviews was explained by review usefulness ($\beta = 0.181$, $t = 2.631$), review quality ($\beta = 0.208$, $t = 2.991$), review consistency ($\beta = 0.221$, $t = 3.236$), susceptibility to informational influence ($\beta = 0.196$, $t = 3.576$), and subjective norm about reading reviews ($\beta = 0.154$, $t = 2.415$), providing support to Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 respectively. Surprisingly, online shopping experience had no significant impact on attitude toward reading reviews. Intention to read reviews was significantly explained by subjective

norm about reading reviews ($\beta = 0.192$, $t = 4.033$) and attitude toward reading reviews ($\beta = 0.610$, $t = 13.745$). These two factors explained 52.2% of the variance in intention to read reviews, thereby demonstrating support for H6 and H8 respectively.

5. Discussion, Implications, and Limitations

The purpose of this study is to examine consumers' motives of reading online product reviews. The key findings drawn from the data analysis and results can be

placed into three aspects. First, we employ TRA as the referent theory of the proposed model, demonstrating that attitude, subjective norm, and intention are still of primary importance to the reading behavior of online product reviews. That is, consumers' own favorable evaluation and their important others' (e.g., family, friends) approval are both important predictors of intention to read online product reviews. Coupled with a strong intention-behavior association theorized and validated in prior IT usage research (e.g., [13][38]), we may suggest that attitude and subject norm are important predictors of actual reading behavior of online product reviews. Next, a consumer's perceptions from reading reviews in a B2C website determine whether s/he maintains a positive attitude about reading reviews for each purchase from this website. If a consumer perceives that reading the Web site's product reviews is especially useful for improving her/his future purchasing plan quickly, efficiently, and effectively, s/he will have a favorable evaluation about reading reviews for each purchase from this Web site. This is similar to users recognizing that using IT is very useful for providing gains in task efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity; they will exhibit a positive attitude toward IT usage. Likewise, if a consumer perceives that most online product reviews s/he reads on a website are of high quality and consistent with her/his prior knowledge about the products, s/he will be more favorable, desirable, and pleasant in affect when reading reviews for each shopping in this website. This is consistent with the ELM's postulate that central-route (review quality) and peripheral-route (review consistency) variables are equally important in shaping individual's attitude toward a given behavior. Finally, how likely a consumer is to refer to others' information when making her/his purchase decision depends on her/his general trait, susceptibility to informational influence. The higher a consumer is in susceptibility to informational influence, the more positively s/he holds attitude toward

reading others' product reviews for making her/his purchase decisions. This is especially true when purchase decisions are happened under an uncertain environment such as an online retail outlet, because reading others' reviews could reduce the risk of buying a wrong product. The results validated the unexpected non-significant effect of online shopping experience on attitude toward reading online product reviews, although this association is stated as a formal hypothesis. This implicates that a consumer with high experience of online shopping does not signify that s/he ordinarily refers to others' opinions prior to her/his purchase online. Perhaps, a consumer who shops online for a long time knows how to make a better purchase decision regardless of the opinions of others.

From a practical perspective, this study is as important for B2C e-commerce providers as other prior research in this area. However, unlike other prior research that primarily conducted an experiment to examine how positive/negative online reviews benefit/undermine product purchase, this study examining the factors that motivate consumers to read online product reviews can help inform what views consumers really hold about such kind of product reviews. That is, if reviews are logical, persuasive, and with enough reasons based on specific facts about the products, consumers would read them for each online purchase. In contrast, if reviews are abusive, emotional, and even deficient in the quality of supporting their evaluation with reasons based on the facts about the products, consumers would not read them prior to shopping online. Such evidence could help these e-vendors decide whether to add the function of an online discussion forum within their website or not, and how to properly manage product reviews if they decide to establish this function. Even though these e-vendors may hesitate to adopt the strategy of providing a venue where consumers can voice others' opinions because of the fear of the product defamation from such a venue, they still

ought to take the product reviews of third parties (e.g., eopinion.com, www.mobile01.com) into account, since the reviews that are useful, of high quality, and consonant with consumers' prior expertise of products in these opinion platforms actually work to influence consumers very enormously. Particularly for consumers who are susceptible to informative influence, positive reviews will probably easily persuade them to buy products from a website, whereas negative comments may also exert a great influence in persuading them not purchasing goods from an online store. Online sellers had better seek to capture this group of buyers and show them the useful and high-quality positive product reviews strategically, because such a tactic is helpful for these companies in increasing the sales of products, and in the long run it benefits these companies' profits.

Yet, like most empirical research, this study is not without limitations. This study surveys what views or perceptions consumers keep in mind after reading an actual website's (www.mobile01.com) product reviews, and then inquires whether these consumers are willing to refer to related product reviews in this website again if they want buying a product online. According to the data we gathered, Mobile01 is not the most frequently used online retail outlet of our target samples, although this website still has the mechanism of online shopping over and above discussion forum. The most commonly utilized B2C websites in Taiwan are Yahoo, PChome, ETMall, and the like. This study would be more influential and of greater significance if our product reviews came from these online stores.

References

[1] A. Bhattacharjee and C. Sanford, "Influence processes for information technology acceptance: an elaboration likelihood model," *MIS Quarterly*, Vol. 30(4), 2006, pp. 805-825.

- [2] B. Stauss, "Using new media for customer interaction: a challenge for relationship marketing," In: T. Henning-Thurau. U. Hansen (eds.). *Relationship Marketing*. Springer, Berlin.2000.
- [3] B. Vandenbosch, and C. Higgins, "Information acquisition and mental models: an investigation into the relationship between behavior and learning," *Information Systems Research*, Vol. 7(2), 1996, pp. 198-214.
- [4] C. Hsu, and H. Lu, "Consumer behavior in online game communities: a motivational factor perspective," *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol. 23(3), 2007, pp. 1642-1659.
- [5] C. Hsu, and J. C. Lin , "Acceptance of blog usage: the roles of technology acceptance, social influence and knowledge sharing motivation," *Information and Management*, Vol. 45, 2008, pp. 65-74.
- [6] C. Piller, "Everyone is a critic in cyberspace," *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 3, A1.1999.
- [7] C. Walsh, "Online reviews drive net sales," *Travel Trade Gazette UK and Ireland*, Vol. 2, Nov. 2007, pp. 24.
- [8] D. Park, and J. Lee, "eWOM overload and its effect on consumer behavioral intention depending on consumer involvement," *Electronic Commerce Research and Application*, Vol. 7, 2008, pp. 386-398.
- [9] D. Park, and S. Kim, "The effects of consumer knowledge on message processing of electronic word-of-mouth via online consumer reviews," *Electronic Commerce Research and Application*, Vol. 7, 2008, pp. 399-410.
- [10] D. Park, J. Lee, and I. Han, "The effect of on-line consumer reviews on consumer purchasing intention: The moderating role of involvement," *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, Vol. 11(4), 2007, pp. 125-148.
- [11] E. Karahanna, D.W. Straub, and N. L. Chervany , "Information technology

- adoption across time: a cross-sectional comparison of pre-adoption and post-adoption beliefs,” *MIS Quarterly*, Vol. 23(2), 1999, pp. 183-213.
- [12] E. Lee, and J. K. Park, “Online service personalization for apparel shopping,” *Journal of Retailing and Consumer service*, Vol. 16(2), 2009, pp. 83-91.
- [13] F. D. Davis, R. P. Bagozzi, and P. R. Warshaw, “User acceptance of computer technology: A comparison of two theoretical models,” *Management Science*, Vol. 35(8), 1989, pp. 982-1003.
- [14] G. Torkzadeh, and G. Dhillon, “Measuring factors that influence the success of Internet commerce,” *Information Systems Research*, Vol. 13(2), 2002, pp. 187-204.
- [15] H. Lim, and A. J. Dubinsky, “The theory of planned behavior in e-commerce: Making a case for interdependencies between salient beliefs,” *Psychology and Marketing*, Vol. 22(10), 2005, pp. 833-855.
- [16] H. Segars, “Assessing the unidimensionality of measurement: a paradigm and illustration within the context of information systems research,” *Omega*, Vol. 25 (1), 1997, pp. 107-121.
- [17] H. Sheppard, J. Hartwick, and P. Warshaw, “The theory of reasoned action: a meta-analysis of past research with recommendations for modifications and future research,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 15(3), 1988, pp. 325-343.
- [18] I. Ajzen, and M. Fishbein, , “Understanding Attitudes and Predicting Social Behavior,” Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. 1980.
- [19] I. Ajzen, C. Timko, and J. White, “Self monitoring and the attitude-behavior relation,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 42(3), 1982, pp. 426-435.
- [20] J. Chiou, “Antecedents and moderators of behavioral intention: differences between U.S. and Taiwanese students,” *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs*, Vol. 126, 2000, pp. 105-124.
- [21] J. F. Hair, R. E. Anderson, R. L. Tatham, and W. C. Black, “Multivariate data analysis with readings, 5th edn,” Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ. 1998.
- [22] J. Lee, D. Park, and I. Han, “The effect of negative online consumer reviews on product attitude: an information processing view,” *Electronic Commerce Research and Application*, Vol. 7, 2008, pp. 341-352.
- [23] L. Gentry, and R. Calantone , “A comparison of three models to explain shoo-bot use on the Internet,” *Psychology and Marketing*, Vol. 19(11), 2002, pp. 945-956.
- [24] M. Deutsch, and H. B .Gerard, “A study of normative informational influence upon individual judgment,” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 51, November, 1955, pp. 629-636.
- [25] M. Fishbein, and I. Ajzen, “Beliefs attitude, intention and behavior: an introduction to theory and research,” Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Philippines. 1975.
- [26] M. K. Chang, “Predicting unethical behavior: a comparison of the theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behavior,” *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 17(16), 1998, pp. 1825-1834.
- [27] M. Limayem, and S. G. Hirt, “Force of habit and information systems usage: theory and initial validation,” *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, Vol. 4, 2003, pp. 65-97.
- [28] P. Chatterjee, “Online reviews: do consumers use them?” *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 28, 2001, pp. 129-133.
- [29] R. E. Burnkrant, and A. Cousineau, “Informational and Normative Social Influence in Buyer Behavior,” *The*

- Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 2(3), 1975, pp. 206-215.
- [30] R. E. Petty, and J. T. Cacioppo, "Communication and persuasion: central and peripheral routes to attitude change," Springer-Verlag: New York. 1986.
- [31] R. E. Petty, J. T. Cacioppo, and R. Goldman, "Personal involvement as a determinant of argument-based persuasion," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 41(5), 1981, pp. 847-855.
- [32] R. G. Netemeyer, and W. O. Bearden, "A comparative analysis of two models of behavioral intention," Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Vol. 20, 1992, pp. 49-59.
- [33] R. H. Fazio, and M. P. Zanna, "Direct experience and attitude-behavior consistency," Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, Vol. 14, 1981, pp. 161-202.
- [34] R. J. Budd, D. North and C. Spencer, "Understanding seat-belt use: A test of Bentler and Speckart's extension of the theory of reasoned action," European Journal of Social Psychology, Vol. 14(1), 1984, pp. 69-78.
- [35] R. L. Oliver, and W. O. Bearden, "Crossover effects in the theory of reasoned action: A moderating influence attempt," Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 12, 1985, pp. 324-340.
- [36] S. F. Cheung, D. K. S. Chan, and Z. S. Y. Wong, "Reexamining the theory of planned behavior in understanding wastepaper recycling," Environment & Behavior, Vol. 31, 1999, pp. 587-612.
- [37] S. Shim, M. A. Eastlick, S. L. Lotz, and P. Warrington, "An on-line prepurchase intentions model: The role of intention to search," Journal of Retailing, Vol. 77, 2001, pp. 397-416.
- [38] S. Taylor, and P. Todd, "Understanding information technology usage: a test of competing models," Information Systems Research, Vol. 6(2), 1995a, pp. 144-176.
- [39] T. A. Shimp, and A. Kavas, "The theory of reasoned action applied to coupon usage," Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 11, 1984, pp. 795-809.
- [40] T. Henning-Thurau, and G. Walsh, "Electronic word-of-mouth: motives for and consequences of reading customer articulations on the internet," International Journal of Electronic Commerce, Vol. 8(2), 2004, pp. 51-74.
- [41] T. Ratchford, D. Talukdar and M. Lee, "A model of consumer choice of the Internet as an information source," International Journal of Electronic Commerce, Vol. 5(3), 2001, pp. 7-22.
- [42] W. J. McGuire, "Personality and susceptibility to social influence," In E. F. Borgatta and W. W. Lambert (Eds.), Handbook of Personality Theory and Research (pp. 1130-1187). Chicago: Rand McNally. 1968.
- [43] W. O. Bearden, R. G. Netemeyer, and J. E. Teel, "Measurement of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence," Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 15, 1989, pp. 473-481.
- [44] W. Zhang, and S. Watts, "Knowledge adoption in online communities of practice," Systems d'Information et Management, Vol. 9(1), 2004, pp. 81-102.
- [45] Y. Chang, L. D. Burns, and C. J. Noel, "Attitudinal versus normative influence in the purchase of brand-name casual apparel," Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal, Vol. 25, 1996, pp. 79-109.
- [46] Y. Chen, and J. Xie, "Online consumer review: a new element of marketing communications mix," Working Paper, University of Arizona. 2004.
- [47] Y. Chen, and J. Xie, "Online consumer review: word-of-mouth as a new element of marketing communication mix," Management Science, Vol. 54(3), 2008, pp. 477-491.
- [48] Y. K. Huang, and W. I. Yang, "Motives for and consequences of reading internet book reviews," The Electronic Library, Vol. 26(1), 2008, pp. 97-110.