WHAT MAKES AN ONLINE BRAND COMMUNITY DETAIN ITS USERS? A LAYERED MOTIVATION PERSPECTIVE

Jae Hoon Lim

Brunel University

Brunel Business School, Brunel University

Kingstone Lane, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 3PH, U.K.

E-mail: Jae.Lim@brunel.ac.uk

Habin Lee

Brunel University/

Brunel Business School, Brunel University
Kingstone Lane, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 3PH, U.K.

E-mail: Habin.Lee@Brunel.ac.uk

-Abstract-

The previous researches regarding user and information systems (IS) acceptance focused on users' acceptance and intention to use of IS. However, it is difficult to explain online eService community's members who have got different user's behaviours. Therefore, this study will be performed for two purposes. Firstly, we will classify the members of an eService community by five layers according to consumption and exchange behaviour and social tie and secondly, we will investigate the different motivations that affect to perceive usefulness and intent and continue to use of eService community in five layers of members.

Key words: *online brand community, user acceptance, continued use of IS, motivation model*

JEL Classification: M15

1. INTRODUCTION

Most of information system (IS) acceptance models assume that IS users are homogeneous regardless of their stage of using the system. However, an online brand community (OBC) has different layers of users and their motivation to use OBC may be different for different layers of users. This paper aims to reveal the layered motivation model accordingly.

During the last two decades user acceptance of IS has been one of the most active research areas in IS discipline. One of the major trends of the research stream is to consider users of target ISs as a homogeneous group whose members have relatively similar goals of using the ISs. However, OBCs have different layers of user group according to social tie, product consumption behaviours (Kozinets, 1999), and online relation norms with brand or brand retailer and usage behaviour

(Mathwick, 2002), social and usage behaviour (Preece and Shneiderman, 2009) in online community.

The presence of diverse user groups requires a new perspective on understanding user acceptance of ISs. Most of existing studies on user acceptance and continued use of ISs paid little attention to the presence of different group of users.

This paper aims to identify different user groups according to their purpose to use of OBC and to find different motivators among different groups of members to accept and continued use of OBC based on technology acceptant model (TAM) and motivation model (MM). Therefore, firstly this study classifies OBC members according to consumer purchase decision process and social relationship and usage behaviour of OBC. Secondly, the motivations as external variables those influence to the perceive usefulness (PU) and perceived enjoyment (PE) and behavioural intention (BI) to use of OBC and those are investigated into different categories according to the different user groups.

The paper is organised as follows. The prior researches about IS and user acceptance will be reviewed and the research gap will be discussed in section 2. The research model and hypotheses of this study will be suggested in section 3. In the section 4, the future work will be discussed.

2. LITERATURE REVIEWS

2.1 TAM and perceived usefulness

In a review of prior research, Technology acceptance model (TAM) was one of most prominent models and it used widely and effectively by other researcher for explanation and developing the relation with user and information system acceptance (Malhotra Yogesh, 1999). TAM (Davis, 1989) is based on TRA (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). TAM applied the TRA of belief-attitude-intention behaviour to explain the determinants of IT acceptant (Lee et al., 2002). TAM explain the beliefs of TRA by two factors that are perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEU) and Davis (1989) predicted these two factors -PU and PEU- are as main determinants to influence the behavioural intention (BI) and actual use (AU) in particularly IT and the study revealed PU powerfully influence to user's intentions and PEU affect to intention of users significantly but it had a small effect (Davis et al., 1989). The importance of PU was also explained by UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2003). In UTAUT model, there are three direct determinants of BI; those are performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and social influence. In these three determinants, the performance expectancy is composed by the five constructs that are PU (TAM/TAM2 and C-TAM-TPB), extrinsic motivation (MM), job-fit (MPCU), relative advantage (IDT), and outcome expectations (SCT) and some authors agreed the PU has similarities with other four constructs of performance expectancy. It means that performance expectancy has deep relation with PU and the study demonstrated that the performance expectancy is one of the most influential determinants to behavioural intention (BI) by empirical research (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

2.2 MM and perceived enjoyment

As extended TAM, Davis et al., (1992) studied about extrinsic and intrinsic motivation to use computers in the work place. The study discovered that perceived usefulness (PU) as extrinsic

motivation and perceived enjoyment (PE) as intrinsic motivation influenced usage intention directly and usage behaviour through their effects on intentions. They recommended that ignoring the point of intrinsic enjoyment in work activities by computer could put at risk whatever productivity gains that are provided by computer use.

To sum up, PU is in general considered to be one of the most important for IS acceptance research. PE is also one of the important mediators to investigate users' acceptance and intention to use of IS. However, most of studies including TAM and MM consider the users as homogeneous meaning they have the same purpose acting for using IS or IT. Furthermore, external variables that influence to PU and PE in these studies are not enough to adopt for explanation user acceptance and intention and continuation to use of OBC as an IS.

3. Research Model

In previous research, some of researchers tried to classify online community members by several groups (Kozinets, 1999; Mathwick, 2002; Preece and Shneiderman, 2009). See Table 1.

Table 1: Classification of Online community members

Researcher	Four group of members	Criterion	Perspective
Kozinets (1999)	Tourists / Minglers/ Devotees/ Insiders	Consumption behaviour/ Social tie/ Knowledge sharing	Marketing
Mathwick (2002)	Lurkers/ Socialisers/ Connectoers/ Transactional Community Members	Relation between transactional community sponsors and their patrons/ Exchange relationship/ Communal relationship	Marketing
Preece and Shneiderman (2009)	Readers/ Contributors/ Collaborators/ Leaders	Usability factors/ Sociability factors	Technology-mediated communication

3.1 Classification of OBC members

In a marketing theory, Kolter and Amstrong (2001) identified a process of consumer purchase decision in an online community. Therefore, an OBC's members can be explained and classified by *consumption behaviours* in an OBC related with consumer purchase decision process. Furthermore, unlike other online communities, interest on a particular product or brand is one of the significant motivators to join in and continued to use of an OBC (Kozinets, 1999; Mathwick, 2002). It means that the consumer can be clustered by strength of *brand interest or loyalty*. Moreover, As Füller, et al. (2006) suggests the accumulated knowledge by the practical product usage as brand experience enforces consumers to join and participate in OBC activities and it can be appeared by usage behaviour of an OBC such as exchanging information and knowledge. It

could also be an essential reason for classification the members by different *knowledge sharing behaviour* (Kozinets, 1999; Mathwick, 2002; Preece and Shneiderman, 2009). The other one is social relationship. Some of members in an OBC would like to develop their personal identity by recognition from other members (Kozinets, 1999; Mathwick, 2002; Preece and Shneiderman, 2009). Therefore, the strength of *social tie* is one of the criterions to classify OBC members.

3.2. Motivators of different user groups in OBC

The major aim of this paper is not to identify all motivators in each layer of user group but to show the motivators in different groups are different each other. Therefore this paper identifies the most significant motivator for each layer of user group in OBC.

3.2.1 Critical mass for Visitors
'Visitors' (Kozinets, 1999) are as potential members of OBC, who need or are interested in products or brands to consumption. A virtual community's success is able to measure as the number of participants and posted articles in the community (Preece, 2001). Hiltz and Turoff first mentioned that 'critical mass' is related with group size in 1978 and many researchers have referred that "sizeable number" is as "critical mass" (Zhang and Hiltz, 2003). Markus (1987) first applied the theory of critical mass to diffusion of communication technology also believed that if a fairly large number of partners who are able to communicate are not using a new medium; people are unlikely to adopt it. Therefore, critical mass will be a more significant determinant as an external variable to 'Visitors' who are looking for an OBC and it will encourage joining in and continued use of the OBC. [H1a], [H1b].

3.2.2 Information quality for Tourists
'Tourists' are a group of members whose behaviour of OBC usage may merely observe opinions of other members who are already purchase or using the brand product as luckers (Mathwick, 2002) and readers (Preece and Shneiderman, 2009). The members of this group would mostly be appeared by people who have just become a member of an OBC to investigate the brand products for decision making to purchase. When consumers compare products and make a purchase decision, information quality helps them (AlSajjan, 2008) and Jeoug and Lambert (2001) also claimed that information quality is a determinant of consumers' purchasing decision on the Internet. Therefore, perceived information quality will be a more significant determinant than others for 'tourists' to accept and continue and intent to use of OBC. [H2a], [H2b].

3.2.3 Sense of belonging for Socialisers
'Socialisers' are a group of members who are sociable and crave or already have strong social tie than other members of groups. They would have interest of brand but may not have a strong brand loyalty as minglers (Kozinets, 1999), and socializers (Mathwick, 2002). Even if they have brand loyalty, they may not have a good knowledge of brand and skill of product usage. The case of this group member is mostly likely to be appeared by people who have just purchased a brand product. Hence, they may not have professional knowledge about product usage because less experience so, they may interest in social relationship from experienced members of an OBC. Mcmillan and Chavis (1986) defined that sense of community (SoC) within a group is as "a feeling that members have of belonging" and "a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together." The meaning of purchase and possession of brand product belong in the OBC may

represent sense of belonging of community because the members would not purchase brand products without trust about other members and possession of product make a sense of belonging to the OBC. Sense of belonging is treated as a vital element to participate in online communities' activities and if it is absent the members would not be participate and involved in a online community (Lin, 2008) because social participation in online communities are associated with interpersonal and affiliate behaviours of members (Van Dyne et al., 1994). Therefore, perceived sense of belonging will be a significant determinant as an external variable to accept and continue and intent to use of OBC and it may a more critical factor for 'socialisers' than other determinants. [H3a], [H3b].

3.2.4 Brand loyalty for Devotees

'Devotees' are members who are knowledgeable and interested in brand or its products usage and new product of the brand. They have a strong brand loyalty and interested in brand products consumption (Kozinets, 1999) or as personal connectors (Mathwick, 2002). They are not actually interested in social relationship (Kozinets, 1999) they would communicate other member who have same interest of brand product or brand loyalty (Kozinets, 1999; Mathwick, 2002). Supphellen and Nysveen (2001) revealed that corporate brand loyalty is a strong predictor and a positive impact on attitudes toward the site and intentions to revisit the site by empirical research of Scandinavian Airline System. Furthermore, Thorbjørnsen and Supphellen (2004) demonstrate brand loyalty is a greatly stronger determinant of website usage than conventional determinants, such as motivations for visiting web site and internet experience. Therefore, perceived brand loyalty from other members will be a significant determinant as an external variable to accept and continue and intent to use of OBC and it may a more critical factor for 'devotees' than other determinants. [H4a], [H4b].

3.2.5 Recognition for Leaders

'Leaders' are members who have strong brand loyalty and they are also interested in social relationship as insider (Kozinets, 1999) and transactional community members (Mathwick, 2002) leader (Preece and Shneiderman, 2009). The mostly differentiate with purchaser and adaptors is that they pay strong attention to all members' activities such as consumption and product usage and social behaviours in an OBC. They have a professional knowledge and insight of brand products as well as new product development of the brand. They strive to help members by reply of inquiries and explain of products and product usage. Preece and Shneiderman (2009) identified this group members who have got leadership that is given them an honoured position and the respect from honoured position is a motivation to help other members and deal with problems as mentors in online communities.

If the members are   judged by other members as experts, they are likely to participate in an online community's activities to exchange more knowledge and the judgment is as intangible rewards and it increase self-esteem and self-efficacy (Constant et al., 1994; Jarvenpaa and Staples, 2000). Furthermore, many studies mentioned that the desire of status and prestige is one of the motivations to participate in the activities of virtual communities (Andrews, 2002; Hars and Ou, 2002; Rheingold, 1993). Lastly, Chan, et al. (2004) suggested that possessing the fellowship in position of expert is able to enhance to participate in online communities' activities. Thomas-Hunt, et al. (2003) argued that few members in the group possess the status of expert (Thomas-Hunt et al., 2003) and it has a thread of connection with the Koznets' view that lead users as expert are just few members of in an online community (Kozinets, 1999). Therefore, perceived recognition from

other members will be a significant determinant as an external variable to accept and continue and intent to use of OBC and it may a more critical factor for 'leaders' than other determinants. [H5a], [H5b].
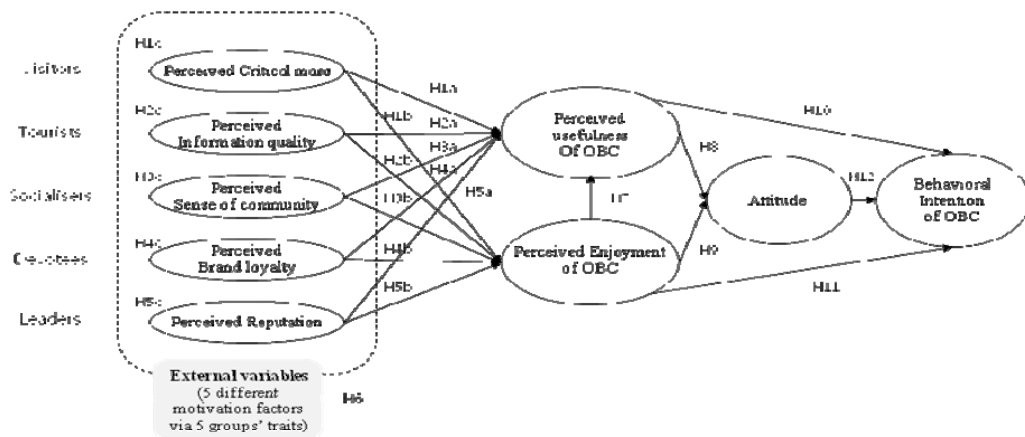
3.2.6 Five motivations and all members

These five motivations may influence all members of an OBC to be accumulated from visitors group to leaders group. [H6]

3.2.7 Beliefs, attitude, intention paradigm

Many studies demonstrated that the original TAM can be applied for behavioral intention to use the web (Moon and Kim, 2001) and website success and acceptance of knowledge management information systems (Liu and Arnett, 2000). Davis et al., (1992) revealed that both perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment are positive influence on the behavioral intention to use computers. However, the study have not demonstrated whether perceived enjoyment affect to perceived usefulness or not. Venkatesh (2000) revealed that perceived enjoyment is significant determinants affect to perceived usefulness. Dahui et al., (2005) demonstrated perceived enjoyment is positively associated with perceived usefulness by empirical research for instant messaging adoption. [H7] [H8]. Furthermore, Moon and Kim (2001) revealed that perceived playfulness is as a factor that reflects the user's intrinsic belief in World Wide Web (WWW) acceptance and perceived playfulness influence to attitude toward using of WWW. [H9]. Moreover, According to various theoretical and empirical studies such as TAM (Davis, 1989) and motivation model (Davis et al., 1992) and IM (Instant Messaging) adoption model (Dahui et al., 2005) and web site success model in the context of electronic commerce (Liu and Arnett, 2000), PU and PE and AT influence directly on BI. [H10], [H11], [H12].

Based on above arguments, the research model of this paper can be drawn as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Research model

4. Future work

The empirical study will be performed to verify the research model. The survey will be used as a method to collect data and it will be conducted with members of online brand communities that are particularly for technology product such as DSLR camera or SMART phones and so on.   Firstly, the members of OBCs will be measured by questionnaire for classification them as five groups then we will measured all research variables using multiple-item scales adapted from prior studies, making minor wording changes to tailor them to the target context. With the results in the measurement model, we will examine the structural model to test the relationships among constructs.

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