The Conceptual Relation of Electronic Word-of-mouth, Commitment and Trust in Influencing Continuous Usage of Social Commerce

Atyaf Sami Noori[1]*, Kamarul Faizal Hashim[2], Shafiz Affendi Mohd Yusof[3]

[1]School of Computing, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Kedah, Malaysia, [2]School of Computing, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Kedah, Malaysia, [3]School of Computing, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Kedah, Malaysia. *Email: mhsalbayati@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The advancement of social media has attracted businesses and firms to adopt and create a new type of commerce known now as social commerce (s-commerce). Within s-commerce, consumer's loyalty and returning to use have reduced mainly because it is a highly competitive environment, which is simply presented by products that are proposed and announced rapidly to the market. Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), in s-commerce, plays a magic power because it enables consumers to make a collaborative decision. At the same time, it allows businesses to reach up their consumers and their related network in almost no cost and short time. Little is known about the effect of e-WOM on consumers' continuous use behavior. Hence, it is worth to propose a conceptual model to explain the relationship between e-WOM and continuous use behavior. Furthermore, this study explains the mediating role of trust and commitment on the relationship between e-WOM and continuous use behavior by adopting commitment-trust theory. Additionally, this study examines flow experience determinants as predictors for promoting e-WOM among s-commerce consumers.

Keywords: Social Commerce, Electronic Word of Mouth, Consumer's Continuous Use, Commitment, Trust
JEL Classifications: M140, MI50

1. INTRODUCTION

Online commerce transactions have been changed with the advancement of social media. Through the applications of social media, the lack of social interactions between customers and businesses that existed within e-commerce is decreased. By using social media consumers are able to generate and share their opinions and feedbacks with other consumers (Lee et al., 2009). Within social media, e-commerce transaction activities have been extended by enabling consumers to interact with others and make a collaborative purchasing decision (Huang and Benyoucef, 2013). This socially driven commerce activity is termed as social commerce (will be known as s-commerce onwards). Within s-commerce, sharing consumer's experiences, opinions, recommendations and preferences on products that they have purchased become very easy and free. The literature has recorded that 83% of online shoppers are likely to share their opinions with others, and 67% of consumers make their decision

to purchase based on others' reviews and comments (Liang et al., 2011). Such type of communication is known as Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM).

E-WOM is a familiar term in the literature of e-commerce. Similar to s-commerce, e-WOM within e-commerce referred to the sharing of opinions and feedbacks regarding products. Although e-WOM plays the main role in influencing consumers' decision to purchase products online, very little is known about its role in influencing individual's continuous use behavior within s-commerce (Berger, 2014; Chen, 2011). Understanding the effect of e-WOM on continuous use is very important to the stability and sustainability of an e-commerce platform (Berger, 2014). Through continuous use, it can ensure the act of repeating purchases and visit by customers (Ho, 2010). Within the context of s-commerce, there is a high level of competition represented by products that are rapidly introduced to the market (Ko, 2013). Gaining competition does not only depend on the quality of the

product offered but also its acceptance by the consumers as well. Therefore, this paper proposed a conceptual model based on the following discussion.

1. The influence of e-WOM on consumer's continuous use within the context of s-commerce. There is a lack of studies that examine and elaborate the relationship between positive e-WOM and continuous use behavior although the importance of e-WOM in influencing consumer decision and behavior has been acknowledged in the literature.

2. The mediating effect of trust and commitment on the consumer's continuous use behavior within the context of s-commerce. By reviewing the literature, this paper reveals that most of the existing studies focused on examining the role of e-WOM as an antecedent of consumer's trust (Hajli and Khani, 2013). However, the mediating influence of trust and commitment on the relationship between e-WOM and consumer's continuous use is not clear yet.

3. Examine the antecedents of consumer's WOM when using s-commerce. Examining the antecedents of e-WOM is very important as most of the previous studies examine e-WOM as dependent variable (Chow and Shi, 2014; Kim and Park, 2013; Kim et al., 2014) rather examining what actually influence this important factor.

Based on the previous points, this paper is interested in providing a comprehensive understanding of continuous use behavior within the context of s-commerce. This is examined from the perspective of positive e-WOM. Trust and commitment mediate the relationship between positive e-WOM and consumer continuous use behavior. This paper also investigated how to promote positive e-WOM among consumers of s-commerce. To do that, this paper integrates two theories: Commitment-trust theory (CTT) and flow theory (FT). The purpose of using FT is to show that positive e-WOM is the common result of having a positive experience in s-commerce. On the other hand, this paper used CTT to confirm that consumer's within s-commerce are likely to keep sharing their positive e-WOM when they have the sense of commitment and trust.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

S-commerce is a new trend of e-commerce, emerging recently through the development of Web 2.0 technologies. The emergence of Web 2.0 technologies, along with the introduction of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, has changed the way of doing business and introduced a new form of e-commerce known latter as s-commerce. S-commerce is defined as the use of social media that supports social interaction among consumers to produce a collaboration purchasing decision (Huang and Benyoucef, 2013). Within s-commerce consumers may rate and review a product. They also can share their knowledge and experiences about a new product. Additionally, they can refer and recommend a product to other members of a network. Such behavior defined by previous scholars as e-WOM (Hajli et al., 2013). Consumers rely more on e-WOM provided by other consumers to make their purchasing decisions. That is because they consider it as an honest evaluation of the products' advantages and disadvantages since it is created by consumers who are not perceived to strive for manipulation.

Previous scholars have examined the influence of e-WOM on multiple factors. For instance, Hajli and Khani (2013) have demonstrated how e-WOM affect consumers trust. Other scholars (e.g., Villarejo-ramos et al, 2014) examined the influence of e-WOM on community commitment. Karjaluoto et al. (2014) interested in examine how customer's intention to post e-WOM can influence his/her repurchase intention. On the other hand, Chen et al. (2012) examined e-WOM as a mediator variable on the relationship of continuous use.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

FT is adopted to explain e-WOM with the interest of this paper. FT has three constructs clarified in the following sub-section. At the same time CTT is integrated to clarify the mediating role of commitment and trust on the relationship between positive e-WOM and consumer's continous use behavior.

3.1. FT

FT explains that flow is "the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). In general, flow explains the mental state of operation in which a user is fully immersed in what s/he is doing (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Based on FT, individual who experienced flow became more productive and effective. Therefore, scholars in the literature examined the role of flow in explaining users experience within online context. Experience of flow has been acknowledged as a helpful factor in demonstrating several behaviors such as attitude toward websites and loyalty (Bilgihan et al., 2014). However, there are limited studies that investigating customer behavior based on their flow experiences within e-commerce (Bilgihan et al., 2014). Thus, understanding consumer behavior to share positive e-WOM from the perspective of experience flow within the context of s-commerce is an interesting area of research (Bilgihan et al., 2014).

Consumers involved in the task on their hand and examined extremely fun when they experienced flow. Experience flow has three components: Perceived control, enjoyment and concentration (Lee and Chen, 2010; Renard, 2013). Individual who experience flow will be more productive and effective because they are enjoying, controlling and concentrating using the service (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Therefore, in relation to the interest of this paper, s-commerce consumers who believe that providing positive e-WOM can offer perceived enjoyment, control and concentration on the task on hand will be more likely to share their experience, opinions and comments.

3.2. CTT

CTT explains that commitment and trust are the vital factors to maintain the continuous relationship between two parties (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). These authors stated that commitment and trust are the main requirements to build long-lasting relationship. Trust is "existing when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity" (Morgan and Hunt, 1994. p. 23). Meanwhile, commitment refers to the "exchange partner believing that an on-going relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it" (Morgan and Hunt,

1994. p. 23). Besides the well-known role of commitment and trust in building the relationship, relationship commitment is also impacted positively by trust.

4. RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

4.1. e-WOM and Continuous Use

Sustaining business on social media requires promoting e-WOM among consumers, due to its vital role in influencing consumer behavior and decision of long-term purchasing. As a result, positive e-WOM is a very important method that makes business gaining the competition and building on-going relationship with their consumers. Hence, businesses need to pay more attention to e-WOM when promoting new products (Chen, 2011).

In addition, several studies investigated on the impact of e-WOM on consumer' returning behavior report similar findings about the positive role of e-WOM on consumer's loyalty (Yoo et al., 2013).

Therefore, positive e-WOM allows businesses to promote their products successfully and building long-term relationship with their customers and making them more profitable. Thus, we can say that positive e-WOM has to be an essential factor through which businesses can build long-term relationship with their consumers. Existing literature has shown that positive e-WOM shared by consumer is significant predictor of customer repurchase behavior (Chen et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2013; Karjaluoto et al., 2014). In the marketing sector, especially the electronic one, consumers are more likely to depend on the information shared by other consumers rather than those shared by businesses. Hence, they would like to continue using a certain product with positive e-WOM relevant messages rather than those with negative one. In other words, the more positive information and experiences shared about a certain product, the more likely consumers are to keep purchasing it (Allsop et al., 2007). Based on the above discussions, this study proposed the following hypothesis:

H1: Positive e-WOM sharing by other users has positive influence on consumer's continuous use behavior in s-commerce.

4.2. Commitment and Trust

In actual fact, previous works focused on trust has indicated a positive relationship between trust and continuous use (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Hence, Chowdhury (2012) realized that commitment and trust have a positive influence on customer loyalty. In this regard, Lee et al. (2012) concluded that the existing sense of high trust can build success relationship marketing and lead to continuous use behavior. Similarly, Hajli (2014) find out that commitment and trust are influenced by the valuable information provided on the Internet. Most importantly, commitment and trust are significant drivers of conducting and influencing customer loyalty. Thus, information provided on s-commerce sites influence commitment and trust and improve consumer's continuous use.

In s-commerce, social interactions including e-WOM, trust and commitment are positively related to the business success, as it leads to increases in the purchasing items (Lee and Choi, 2014). Additionally, many studies have also found that commitment and trust have a positive influence on consumer's continuous use behavior (Hashim, 2012; Li et al., 2006; Piet al., 2012). Moreover, according to CTT, consumer's commitment is influenced directly by consumers' trust (Morgan, and Hunt, 1994). According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), consumers would be likely to commit to sustain their relationship within the community when trust feelings are existed among them. Therefore, the committed customers would like more than others to be involved in the community activity (i.e. sharing positive e-WOM).

Reviewing the literature related to the consumer behavior show that commitment and trust are essential factors in shaping consumer's continuous use behavior (Lee et al., 2012). Based on theoretical arguments and literature results, the current research proposed the following hypotheses:

H2: Consumer trust is a mediator of the relationship between e-WOM and continuous use.

H3: Consumer commitment is a mediator of the relationship between e-WOM and continuous use.

H4: Consumer trust has a positive influence on customer commitment.

4.3. Concentration, Perceived Control and Enjoyment

FT posits that the effective and productive people in an interactive environment are those who experienced flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Consistent with this view, e-WOM is provided by consumers who experienced flow. According to previous works, flow is the main concept for the explanation of consumer's sharing behavior in online environments. Furthermore, prior literature conceptualizes flow with three major constructs: Enjoyment, perceived control, and concentration (Bilgihan et al., 2014; Koufaris, 2002; Lee and Chen, 2010; Renard, 2013). Users who have experienced flow demonstrate more willingness to share their information (Lu et al., 2010). Flow is about consumer's perceived enjoyment, concentration and perceived control (Bilgihan et al., 2014). Existing IS literature (e.g., Bilgihan et al., 2014; Lee and Chen, 2010; Nasri and Charfeddine, 2012; Shen and Eder, 2009) found that users' perceived enjoyment, sense of being in control and total concentration have a significant influence on behavioral intention of use. This study proposed that when the consumers in s-commerce get enjoyable experience, they will be more likely to share their positive e-WOM. Additionally those who believe to have a sense of control over the interaction in s-commerce would like to promote e-WOM. Furthermore, consumers with total concentration will be more willing to interact and share their e-WOM. Hence, this research proposed the following hypotheses:

H5: Consumer's enjoyment gained from their experience within s-commerce has positive influence on promoting e-WOM.

H6: Consumer's perceived control over activities in s-commerce has positive influence on promoting e-WOM.

H7: Consumer's concentration on s-commerce activities has positive influence on promoting e-WOM.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An extensive literature review was conducted in this study. The review focused on several related topics like s-commerce, continuous use behavior, e-WOM, trust, commitment and experience of flow.

Figure 1: The proposed research model
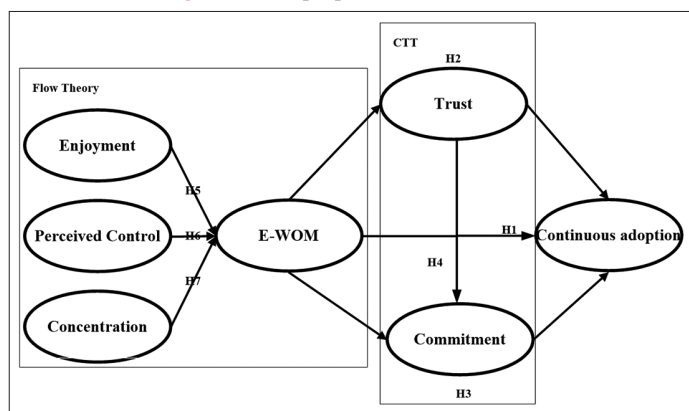
By reviewing the existing literature, authors analyze and identify all the issues that are related to the stability and sustainability of s-commerce in terms of factors, theories and methods.

Deliverable of this method is the identification of the importance of e-WOM and determining how can it impacts consumers' continuous use.

6. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

In conclusion, this paper has developed a theoretical model to highlight the role of e-WOM in achieving consumer's continuous use behavior within the s-commerce environment. At the same time, this paper contributes enormously to the body of knowledge, as it provides a comprehensive framework that is used for explaining the mediating role of trust and commitment on the relationship between e-WOM and continuous use behavior within the context of s-commerce.

It is an accepted fact that, within s-commerce literature, there are limited studies that examined, verified and tested the influence of e-WOM on continuous use.

It is worth mentioning that this paper also investigated how the experience of flow plays a major role in promoting e-WOM among consumers of s-commerce. However, the fact remains that few limitations are not covered in this paper. Firstly, because there is a need for further verification of the proposed model, the authors are going to collect data from consumers who have good experience with s-commerce to test the proposed model and further investigate the proposed hypotheses. Secondly, the current paper developed conceptualization for all s-commerce platforms. Due to the different characteristics of each platform, it is highly advisable to test it on a particular platform such as Facebook or Twitter.

7. FUTURE WORKS

As a future work, the researchers are going to collect data from consumers who have good experience within s-commerce. Then pilot test will be performed by inviting few experts to discuss and comment on selected measurement items to increase content validity. Based on their comments, the measurement items will be modified and developed. A web survey will then be administered. Structural Equation Modeling will be used to analyze the proposed research model (Figure 1).

8. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

REFERENCES

Allsop, D.T., Bassett, B.R., Hoskins, J.A. (2007), Word-of-Mouth Research: Principles and Applications. Journal of Advertising Research, 47(4), 398-403.

Berger, J. (2014), Word of mouth and interpersonal communication: A review and directions for future research. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 24(4), 586-607.

Bilgihan, A., Okumus, F., Nusair, K., Bujisic, M. (2014), Online experiences: Flow theory, measuring online customer experience in e-commerce and managerial implications for the lodging industry. Information Technology and Tourism, 14(1), 49-71.

Chen, S.C. (2011), Understanding the effects of technology readiness, satisfaction and electronic Word-of-Mouth on loyalty in 3C products. Australian Journal of Business and Management Research, 1(3), 1-9.

Chen, S.C., Liu, S.C., Li, S.H., Yen, D.C. (2013), Understanding the mediating effects of relationship quality on technology acceptance: An empirical study of e-appointment system. Journal of Medical Systems, 37(6), 9981-9998.

Chen, S.C., Yen, D.C., Hwang, M.I. (2012), Factors influencing the continuance intention to the usage of Web 2.0: An empirical study. Computers in Human Behavior, 28(3), 933-941.

Chow, W.S., Shi, S. (2014), Understanding Consumer Trust in Social Commerce Websites. PACIS 2014 Proceedings.

Chowdhury, P.P. (2012). In B2B Relationship : A Review of Literature. Indore Management Journal, 4(2), 49-63.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990), Flow: The psychology of optimal experience. Academy of Management Review, 16(3), 636-640.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2014), Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology: The Collected Works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Available from: http://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9088-8.

Hajli, M., Khani, F. (2013), Establishing trust in social commerce through social word of mouth. International Journal of Information Science and Management, 11(SPL.ISS.), 39-53.

Hajli, M.N. (2014), The role of social support on relationship quality and social commerce. Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 87, 17-27.

Hashim, K.F. (2012), Understanding the Determinants of Continuous knowledge Sharing Intention within Business Online Communities Table of Content.

Ho, C. (2010), Continuance intention of e-learning platform : Toward an integrated model. International Journal of Electronic Business Management, 8(3), 206-215.

Huang, Z., Benyoucef, M. (2013), From e-commerce to social commerce: A close look at design features. Electronic Commerce Research and Applications, 12(4), 246-259.

Karjaluoto, H., Munnukka, J., Tikkanen, A. (2014), Are Facebook Brand Community Members Really Loyal to the Brand? 27th Bled eConference eEcosystems, 169-180.

Kim, S., Park, H. (2013), Effects of various characteristics of social commerce (s-commerce) on consumers' trust and trust performance. International Journal of Information Management, 33(2), 318-332.

Kim, Y., Chang, Y., Wong, S.F., Park, M. (2014), Customer attribution of service failure and its impact in social commerce environment. International Journal of Electronic Customer Relationship Management, 8(1), 136-158.

Ko, H.C. (2013), The determinants of continuous use of social networking sites: An empirical study on Taiwanese journal-type bloggers' continuous self-disclosure behavior. Electronic Commerce Research and Applications, 12(2), 103-111.

Koufaris, M. (2002), Applying the technology acceptance model and flow theory to online consumer behavior. Information System Research, 13(2), 205-223.

Lee, C.S., Goh, D.H., Razikin, K., Chua, A.Y.K. (2009), Tagging, sharing and the influence of personal experience. Journal Of Digital Information, 10(1), 1-15. Available from: http://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&btnG=Search&q=intitle: Tagging,+Sharing+and+the+Influence+of+Personal+Experience#0.

Lee, H., Choi, J. (2014), Why do people visit social commerce sites but do not buy? The role of the scarcity heuristic as a momentary characteristic. Ksii Transactions on Internet and Inforamtion Systems, 8(7), 2383-2399.

Lee, J., Park, Y., Jang, J. (2012), Impact of IT service provider's expertise and customer's sociability on continuous intention to use. Contemporary Research on E-Business Technology and Strategy, 332, 135-146.

Lee, S.S., Chen, L. (2010), the impact of flow on online consumer behavior. Journal of Computer Information Systems, 50(4), 1-10. Available from: http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&profile=ehost&scope= site&authtype=crawler&jrnl =08874417&AN= 53383894&h= CqBv8T5o3qnuv4BVcEpmG6bwTVkA4tsaTkX9XSotaZlpMhz9rmhVLS5ghFojb1p2Do/PpEJLQ2Tj6HXyqkm4sw==&crl=c\nhttp://iacis.org/jcis/articles/Lee_Che.

Li, D., Browne, G.J., Chau, P.Y.K. (2006), An empirical investigation of web site use using a committment-based model. Decision Sciences, 37(3), 427-444.

Liang, T.P., Ho, Y.T., Li, Y.W., Turban, E. (2011), What drives social commerce: The role of social support and relationship quality. International Journal of Electronic Commerce, 16(2), 69-90.

Lu, H.P., Lin, J.C.C., Hsiao, K.L., Cheng, L.T. (2010), Information sharing behaviour on blogs in Taiwan: Effects of interactivities and gender differences. Journal of Information Science, 36(3), 401-416.

Morgan, R.M., Hunt, S.D. (1994), The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing. Jornal of Marketing, 58(3), 20-38.

Nasri, W., Charfeddine, L. (2012). An exploration of facebook. com adoption in tunisia using technology acceptance model (TAM) and theory of reasoned action (TRA). Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research In Business, 4(5), 948-968.

Pi, S.M., Liao, H.L., Chen, H.M. (2012), Factors that affect consumers' trust and continuous adoption of online financial services. International Journal of Business and Management, 7(9), 108-119.

Renard, D. (2013), Online Promotional Games: Impact of flow experience on word-of-mouth and personal information sharing. International Business Research, 6(9), 93-101.

Shen, J., Eder, L. (2009), Determining Factors in the Acceptance of Social Shopping Websites. 15th Americas Conference on Information Systems 2009, AMCIS 2009, 3, 2123-2131.

Villarejo-ramos, Á.F., Sánchez-franco, M.J., García-vacas, E.M., Navarro-garcía, A. (2014), Strategies in E-Business, New York, USA: Positioning and Social Networking in Online Markets, Springer. p11-28.

Yoo, C.W., Sanders, G.L., Moon, J. (2013), Exploring the effect of e-WOM participation on e-Loyalty in e-commerce. Decision Support Systems, 55(3), 669-678.