THE INFLUENCE OF INFORMATION HEURISTICS IN DETERMINING THE EVALUATION OF MICROBLOG MUSIC REVIEW CREDIBILITY

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─Abstract─

The inherent fears about the credibility of digital media, stemming from the fact that there are few standards of quality control, exacerbate potential problems regarding the reliability of electronic word of mouth (eWOM). The primary objective for this study was to investigate the influence of credibility heuristics when applied during the evaluation of eWOM communication about music content generated by microbloggers. A mono-quantitative research strategy was applied, whereby, hypotheses testing was consummated from a cross-sectional sample of 485 participants (microbloggers) based in five major towns of the southern Gauteng region in South Africa. A paper and pencil-based questionnaire was administered. Six factors were drawn by applying an exploratory factor analysis procedure. Mono-method bias was checked and the reliability and validity of the study were confirmed. The hypotheses testing comprised the estimation of a multiple regression model. The findings established the predictive power of four heuristics that pose a statistically significant influence on consumers' evaluation of eWOM credibility. The findings point to the import in applying information heuristics in evaluating microblog reviews about music, a low-involvement product. The findings could assist both microblog administrators

and marketing communication practitioners to better design the platforms to facilitate reader credibility evaluations regarding a broader product portfolio.

Key Words: Credibility, Heuristics, Microblogs and music reviews.

JEL Classification: M31

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Schiffman et al. (2014), the marketing communication process commences with either a formal or an informal source encoding a marketing message with words, symbols or gestures. In the case of microblogging, consumers post information on various topics (Jin & Liu, 2010:431). Participants have a public profile where they post short messages or comments using text or other multi-media content, frequently update and re-post content on various issues, which are then broadcast publicly. Some of the microblog platforms that consumers are privy to include Twitter™, Jaiku™, 12Seconds™, Dailybooth™, Tumblr™, FriendFeed™ and Plurk™ (Shu, 2014), among which Twitter™ is the most preferred microblog platform, globally. A favourable trend towards microblogging has been noted in South Africa and the BlueMagnet media report (2016) points to the growth of Twitter™ users in South Africa, ranging between 1.1 million and 7.7 million users in the period 2012 to 2016.

While the universal adoption of digital medium is welcome, the technology brings a myriad of challenges for online users. First, there is an unprecedented increase in the amount of easily-accessible information on the Web (Moran & Muzellec, 2017). Consequent to the increased information abundance that comes about from digital media is the difficulty of finding the most reliable information to meet one's needs from among the multiple microblog platforms. Secondly, fears about the credibility of digital media environment also stem from the fact that there are few standards for quality control and evaluation online (Metzger & Flanagan, 2013). This implies information can be readily changed or misrepresented, while digital data pliability exacerbates additional data reliability issues. Finally, online information lacks traditional authority indicators such as author identity or reputation markers (Metzger & Flanagin, 2013). In some cases, information about the source of information is unavailable, masked or missing from the microblog platform. In other cases, source information is re-purposed from one platform to another, thereby creating concerns and uncertainty regarding who is responsible for creating the microblog content and whether it should be believed and/or considered credible.

2. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Moran and Muzellec (2017) mention that consumers are reluctant to adopt eWOM because it is not easy for them to ascertain the level of credibility, which is the focus of this article. Likewise, Cheung et al. (2009) make audible appeals for increased investigations on the way consumers evaluate the credibility of online reviews. Therefore, this study seeks to evaluate the extent to which cognitive heuristics can be instrumental cues for evaluating the credibility of eWOM communication proffered through microblog music reviews.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Consumer behavioural theorists such as Schiffman et al., (2014:214) maintain that in instances where a consumer's assessment skills are low, learning and attitude changes tend to occur through the peripheral route, to the exclusion of evaluating information relevant to the attitude object itself. Drawing from Fogg's (2003:15) contention that "peripheral cues is the rule of web use", it can be emphasised that consumers rely on verification strategies that require the least amount of effort to perform. Termed cognitive heuristics, these strategies ignore conventional information processing routes and instead, apply minimal cognitive load and time to process information (Gigerenzer & Todd, 1999; Metzger & Flanagin, 2013). The heuristics are not mutually exclusive but instead, can be combined, re-combined or nested during the evaluation process. This study is premised on Metzger, Flanagin and Medders' (2010) five credibility heuristics, which are instrumental in exerting a significant influence on eWOM credibility. The five heuristics are discussed next.

3.1. Reputation heuristic

This heuristic is rooted in a basic heuristic principle of favouring recognised sources of information whose names are easily recognisable, even without having thoroughly inspected the actual content or the source's credentials (Gigerenzer & Todd, 1999). In this respect, familiar sources are often judged more credible than unfamiliar sources, independent of message characteristics such as argument quality (Metzger & Flanagin, 2013). The reputation heuristic can be determined from the authority of the eWOM source, in terms of subject expertise (Sundar, 2008:84). In digital media contexts, the reputation heuristic pertains to name recognition of a Web platform or content author, of which the familiarity lends towards acceptance of the source as a provider of credible information. In light of this, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Ho_1: Source reputation does not have a direct and significant influence on the credibility evaluation of microblog music reviews.

Ha_1: Source reputation has a direct and significant influence on the credibility evaluation of microblog music reviews.

3.2. Expectancy-violation heuristic

The first point of contact when evaluating online information is the web interface. As such, the expectancy-violation heuristic alludes to the quality of the online message and interface, which ultimately determines the persuasive strength of the communicated message (Teng et al., 2014). Most prevalent are the expectancy violations stemming from the "presence of typos or grammatical errors, poor site design, visual appearance, or navigation", all of which result in strong negative credibility evaluation (Metzger & Flanagin, 2010:216). Relatedly, Metzger et al., (2010) shows that some forms of expectancy violations occur when websites ask for more information than necessary or provide more information than is requested by users. Put simply, the decision to continue on a specific platform is dependent on whether or not consumers' expectations are met or violated; in which case, violation can occur through lack of professionalism in the content of microblog posts, profaning online media regulations and not upholding security standards, which would likely lead to negative evaluation of credibility. On the other hand, professional-looking content and smooth site navigation positively impact consumers' credibility evaluation of microblog content. Thus;

Ho_2: Message quality does not have a direct and significant influence on the credibility evaluation of microblog music reviews.

Ha_2: Message quality has a direct and significant influence on the credibility evaluation of microblog music reviews.

3.3. Endorsement heuristic

The endorsement heuristic suggests that people are inclined to believe information and sources if others do so, without much scrutiny of the site content or source (Metzger & Flanagin, 2010). Thus, content evaluation draws upon the level of trust derived from known or unknown participants in the online platforms, yielding the bandwagon effect. In addition, the endorsement heuristic is underpinned by a sense of liking or agreement (Chaiken, 1980), whereby online information is considered credible and yielding persuasive effects if significant groups agree with the content. While bandwagon perceptions are a form of secondary inducement on consumers, this heuristic influences credibility evaluations. For example, Sundar (2008) demonstrated how the manipulation of web content cues such as star ratings and sales rankings significantly influenced

product evaluations and overall purchase intentions of consumers. The endorsement heuristic is invaluable in microblogs since it provides an opportunity for consumers to network in a homophilous fashion with unfamiliar individuals, thereby converging on mutually identified areas of interest. The shared interests and mindsets of microbloggers can be instrumental in enhancing the credibility perceptions of eWOM communication along microblog platforms. Thus, it can be hypothesised that:

Ho_3: Information endorsement does not have a direct and significant influence on the credibility evaluation of microblog music reviews.

Ha_3: Information endorsement has a direct and significant influence on the credibility evaluation of microblog music reviews.

3.4. Consistency heuristic

In eWOM communication along microblogs, consumers are presented with the opportunity to consult various sources of information to expand or validate the messages they are receiving. The consistency heuristic involves making cross-comparisons of online information across web platforms to check the level of agreement with other independent sources. Consumers apply the consistency heuristic when they assume the correctness and credibility of online information based on consensus from multiple web sources or platforms, consistent with Chaiken's (1980) consensus view. The consistency heuristic presents a relatively fast and frugal means of evaluating online information credibility (Metzger & Flanagin, 2013). Information consistency was first introduced as a determinant of eWOM credibility by Cheung et al., (2009), who noted that the consistency of recommendations posted by users of products and services across multiple platforms has a significant influence on other consumers' perceptions of the credibility of an eWOM message. Therefore, inferring from the literature and the empirical evidence, the present study hypothesised that:

Ho_4: Information consistency does not have a direct and significant influence on the credibility evaluation of microblog music reviews.

Ha_4: Information consistency has a direct and significant influence on the credibility evaluation of microblog music reviews.

3.5. Self-confirmation heuristic

Consumers enter the information evaluation process with their own pre-conceived ideas, beliefs and attitudes about certain phenomena. Usually, prior-beliefs are held in the memory of a consumer as a result of direct experience and/or the

indirect experiences of other individuals within the same circle (Luzzani, 2015). The pre-existing beliefs act as a risk-reliever, thereby providing confidence when analysing information. This school of thought is upheld by Metzger et al., (2010:428), who conceive the self-confirmation heuristic as a "tendency for people to view information as credible if it confirms their pre-existing beliefs and not credible if it counters their existing beliefs, regardless of how well-argued, duly researched or appropriately sourced the online information is". Other scholars support the view that Internet users tend to select content that is consistent with their already existing attitudes and opinions (Cheung et al., 2009; Ismagilova et al., 2017). In the case of time-constrained decision making, online users may decide to stop the online search process when they find information that confirms their attitudes and existing beliefs. Whereas the downside is the genesis of a 'false consensus-effect' where online users believe that their own opinions are shared right and widely by others (Metzger & Flanagin, 2013), it is contended that for a low-involvement product (i.e. music), existing beliefs of consumers do in fact provide ready-aids for evaluating the credibility of information. Hence;

Ho_5: Confirmed beliefs do not have a direct and significant influence on the credibility evaluation of microblog music reviews.

Ha_5: Confirmed beliefs have a direct and significant influence on the credibility evaluation of microblog music reviews.

4. METHODOLOGY

A mono-quantitative research strategy was applied, whereby hypotheses testing was consummated by drawing a cross-sectional sample of 485 participants (microbloggers) aged between 18 and 65 years. The sample was based in five major towns of the southern Gauteng region of South Africa, whereas the region displays a microcosm of South Africa due to its urban and cosmopolitan nature. Given the constraint of consumers' privacy rights, a reliable and accurate list of participants could not be obtained, signalling that the study was amenable to non-probability-based sampling procedures. Specifically, convenience sampling was applied as it has been cited as very beneficial, in the absence of a suitable sampling frame (Brown, Suter & Churchill, 2018). In addition, the character elements of convenience sampling seem to appeal to studies bearing severe financial and time constraints such as this study. Likewise, previous studies (Cheung et al., 2009; Luo et al., 2013) have also espoused a convenience sampling procedure.

4.1. Data collection and measuring instrument

While upholding ethical research protocol, a structured questionnaire was administered between July and November 2018. Two distribution points were used to ensure that there was extended reach for the survey, namely a microblog posted link (https://myresearchsurvey.com/MMRC) as well as a paper and pencil-based questionnaire distributed on a pick and drop basis.

The variables under investigation were operationalised from previous studies. Modifications to the scales were made to reflect the study context of microblog music reviews. Source reputation was adapted from Luo et al. (2013), eWOM credibility was gleaned from Durmaz and Yuksel (2017) while message quality was adapted from Lin, Wu and Chen (2013). Information endorsement was adapted from Wu (2013), whereas both review consistency and confirmed prior beliefs were operationalised from Cheung et al. (2009). The scale indicators were affixed to a strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) Likert-scale continuum. The questionnaire included a screening question to ensure that the respondents had made a music review post on a microblog within three months of the survey date.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

Editing checks were conducted to ensure that qualifying criteria were met and double submissions eliminated. Data cleaning yielded 485 usable questionnaires for analysis on Version 25.0 of the Statistical Package for Social Science.

5.1. Sample characteristics

Most of the study participants (n=261; 53.8%) were female. Regarding the population groups, 51.3 percent of respondents were black African (n=249) while only 32.0 percent were White (n=155) and 16.7 percent were Indian/Asian (n=81). In terms of their highest level of education, the respondents had completed either Matric/Grade 12 (n=165; 34%), a Diploma (n=185; 38.1%) or a Bachelor's degree (n=96; 19.8%), denoting that extensive tertiary education is not a pre-requisite for disseminating music content along microblogs. Entertainment was elected as the most preferred content on microblogs (n=224; 46.2%), of which music is a part.

5.2. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

To reduce the dimensionality of the data and evaluate the construct validity of the measurement scales, EFA was performed (Field, 2013; Hair et al., 2018). The large and significant Chi Square value on the Bartlett's test statistic (2394.316; DF=231; $p < 0.05$) and a Kaiser-Meyer's Olkin value reported above 0.50

(KMO=0.809) provide adequate evidence of meritorious data for factorability (Hair et al., 2018). Measures of sampling adequacy (MSA) were computed for each variable (ranging between 0.738 and 0.939), pointing to a sufficiently large sample size. Absence of common method bias was ascertained when the unrotated EFA yielded only 23.17 percent of variance (below 50%) on the singular factor that was extracted.

In the final EFA, no restriction was placed on the number of factors to be extracted. Instead, the Eigen values 'greater than one criteria' (Malhotra et al., 2017) were applied. Secondly, for meaningful results, the cumulative percentage of variance should be in excess of 60 percent (Hair et al., 2018). The first factor to be extracted after Varimax rotation yielded a 26.165 percentage of variance, demonstrating that no single factor in the model was domineering. The cumulative percentage of variance in this work was 70.5 percent upon extraction of six factors, namely message quality, eWOM credibility evaluation, information endorsement, source reputation, information consistency and confirmed beliefs (Table 1).

Table 1: Rotated component matrix

Components							**Validity and reliability**		
Items	**MQ**	**CE**	**IE**	**SR**	**IC**	**CB**	**COMM**	**ITTC**	**MSA**
C1	0.194	0.113	0.170	0.531	0.047	0.375	0.491	0.427	0.939
C2*	0.281	0.247	0.010	0.102	0.398	0.294	0.319	0.372	0.809
C3	0.209	0.007	0.106	0.599	0.018	0.020	0.415	0.406	0.897
C4	0.144	0.018	0.312	0.608	0.038	0.038	0.490	0.460	0.901
C5	0.064	0.019	0.132	0.668	0.191	0.048	0.506	0.411	0.903
C6	0.156	0.236	0.024	0.587	0.202	0.011	0.411	0.489	0.871
C7	0.525	0.157	0.224	0.097	0.208	0.253	0.478	0.479	0.896
C8	0.702	0.103	0.104	0.086	0.028	0.158	0.605	0.514	0.841
C9	0.678	0.107	0.093	0.044	0.203	0.015	0.462	0.484	0.882
C10*	0.181	0.212	0.032	0.117	0.156	0.235	0.367	0.436	0.810
C11	0.568	0.272	0.015	0.175	0.166	0.312	0.513	0.474	0.905
C12	0.626	0.159	0.142	0.209	0.039	0.049	0.497	0.464	0.903
C13	0.038	0.118	0.543	0.328	0.062	0.266	0.444	0.477	0.923

C14	0.098	0.173	0.749	0.159	0.044	0.085	0.465	0.543	0.899
C15	0.133	0.237	0.650	0.105	0.102	0.021	0.590	0.449	0.908
C16	0.073	0.105	0.648	0.147	0.182	0.182	0.606	0.525	0.917
C17	0.158	0.276	0.609	0.060	0.028	0.123	0.478	0.513	0.881
C18	0.141	0.002	0.313	0.020	0.566	0.073	0.569	0.544	0.919
C19	0.073	0.177	0.135	0.205	0.610	0.164	0.617	0.571	0.910
C20	0.083	0.222	0.057	0.198	0.717	0.162	0.443	0.535	0.887
C21*	0.479	0.162	0.067	0.140	0.426	0.414	0.334	0.346	0.883
C22	0.230	0.054	0.261	0.082	0.123	0.653	0.537	0.465	0.859
C23	0.292	0.111	0.253	0.019	0.276	0.625	0.511	0.465	0.825
C24*	0.345	0.277	0.157	0.525	0.510	0.064	0.297	0.260	0.738
C25*	0.009	0.345	0.055	0.548	0.517	0.162	0.314	0.313	0.816
C26	0.115	0.604	0.266	0.312	0.278	0.287	0.413	0.493	0.914
C27	0.302	0.718	0.022	0.007	0.103	0.307	0.530	0.560	0.897
C28	0.128	0.720	0.007	0.206	0.078	0.106	0.553	0.590	0.901
C29	0.250	0.733	0.243	0.185	0.274	0.285	0.564	0.591	0.894
C30	0.102	0.667	0.302	0.009	0.189	0.254	0.482	0.530	0.903
Eigen value	**5.756**	**2.647**	**1.647**	**1.337**	**1.169**	**1.013**			
% of variance	**26.165**	**17.445**	**10.873**	**6.077**	**5.314**	**4.608**			

MQ=Message quality; CE=Credibility evaluation; IE=Information endorsement; SR=Source reputation; IC=Information consistency; CB=Confirmed beliefs; Comm=Communalities; ITTC=Item to total correlations

Most of the items aligned as expected with their respective factors. However, there are fundamental thresholds that were observed in the EFA to purify the scale. First, each variable loading should be above 0.50, preferably above 0.70 to be considered significant and valid (Malhotra et al., 2017). Secondly, items with loading below 0.50 or cross-loading items should be deleted. Thirdly, items returning weak item-to-total correlations and/or communality values should be rejected as they demonstrate weak association with other items on the measurement scale (Field, 2013). In this research, variable C2 (*music reviews are rated highly*) and C10 (*music reviews are useful*) were deleted based on weak and insignificant factor loadings (below 0.50), low communalities (below 0.40) as well as poor correlated item-to-total correlation coefficients (below 0.40).

Likewise, variable C21 (*music reviews support my impressions*), C24 (*music reviews resonate with previous expectations*) and C25 (*music reviews reinforce previous knowledge*) also yielded weak communalities and loadings, while seemingly loading over multiple factors, simultaneously making it difficult to discriminate the variables with accuracy. Consequent to this criteria evaluation, the five variables (C2, C10, C21, C24 and C25) where excluded from the inferential analysis since they did not measure at least 50 percent of the variance in the respective constructs they were representing.

5.3. Reliability and validity

Cronbach's alpha test results ranged between 0.686 and 0.898, which is above the 0.70 benchmark for acceptable *internal-consistency reliability* (Field, 2013), save for the factor confirmed beliefs, which was slightly below 0.70; it was retained in this research based on Babin and Zikmund's (2016) lenient benchmark that Cronbach's alpha coefficients between 0.60 and 0.70 infer "fair reliability". *Face validity* was assessed by two online consumer behaviour experts who evaluated linguistic errors and possible misrepresentation of wording in the questionnaire. *Content validity* was confirmed by the fair results from a preliminary pilot study with 62 students from a university (α = 0.604 to 0.811), denoting that representative questions were included in the survey. As an indicator of *convergent validity*, the significant loadings (0.531 to 0.749), strong communalities (0.411 to 0.617) and item-to-total correlations (0.406 to 0.591) inferred a large variance captured by each of the 25 variables accepted for analysis. In terms of *discriminant validity*, all the correlation coefficients of this study fell below 0.70, thereby confirming the theoretical uniqueness of each identified factor in this research (Field, 2013). Predictive validity was assessed by estimating a multiple regression model concurrently with the hypothesis testing.

5.4. Regression analysis

Since only positive correlations existed between eWOM credibility evaluation (dependent variable) and the five cognitive heuristics (independent variables), it was necessary to estimate a multiple regression model to establish the strength of the predictive relationships among the variables.

5.4.1. Data requirements and assumptions of regression

A sample comprising 485 valid cases was considered sufficiently representative, consistent with Tabachnick and Fidell (2012:613) who posited that "if multivariate statistics like EFA and regression analysis are to be applied it is comforting to have 300 or more cases". In a later study, the scholars proposed a

sample size of 50 plus eight times the number of independent variables (50 + [8*5 independent variables] =90), of which 485 cases exceeded the minimum requirements.

The SPSS functionality was computed to check the assumptions of regression. First, the test for linearity was satisfied upon observing the positive and statistically significant correlation coefficients reported in this work ($+0.303 \leq r \leq +0.544$, $p < 0.05$ level). Furthermore, after plotting the independent variables against eWOM credibility evaluation on a scatter plot, absence of curvilinearity was evident since the scores were concentrated in the middle, tangential to the zero-point. Secondly, the bell-shaped histogram provided visual evidence for verifying data. Statistically, the standardised residuals on the probability plots (-2.238 to +2.898) did not exceed the absolute values of ±3 range (Field, 2013), denoting constant variance and a zero mean for the error terms of the heuristics. The skewness (-0.153 and -0.494) and kurtosis (+0.432 and +0.067) values were within the ±2 threshold, further corroborating the normally-distributed data in this research (Hair et al., 2018).

Thirdly, the diagonal lines on the P-P plots of standardised residuals provided a tell-tale pattern that as the independent variable increases, so does the variance of the residuals, denoting that the data were homoscedastic. In fact, the Mahalanobis distance calculated was 7.46, with the highest Cook's distance of 0.086 (below 1), suggesting that no disturbing outliers were present (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). Fourthly, Durbin-Watson' test statistic was 1.924, which is within the 1.5 and 2.5 range, signalling the absence of autocorrelation. Finally, colinearity problems were presumed absent in this research since the tolerance values (0.675 to 0.798) were greater than 0.1 and the reported VIF values (1.254 to 1.480) did not exceed 10.0 (Field, 2013). Other collinearity diagnostics included verifying that the condition index values for each independent variable are below 30 (10.676 to 15.736), while the returned eigen values (0.025 and 5.832) and variance proportions (0.01 to 0.48) were above 0.01, implying the data were beyond the point at which colinearity begins to affect statistical estimates awkwardly (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012).

5.4.2. Fit of the regression model

The adjusted R-square (Adj. $R^2 = 0.433$) denotes that 43 percent of the variation in microbloggers' evaluation of eWOM credibility is explained by the heuristics identified in this work. Upon fitting the regression model, the F-statistic gives evidence of a significant relationship between the independent variables with the dependent variable ($F=74.950$; mean square=27.729; $df = 3$; $p < 0.01$).

5.4.3. Hypotheses testing and the effects of predictor variables

To assess the size of the effects of each independent variable on the dependent variable, the regression coefficients were evaluated (Table 2). The beta coefficients in Table 3 indicate that four of the five heuristics, namely source reputation, message quality, information endorsement and confirmed beliefs contribute significantly to the prediction of eWOM credibility.

Table 2: Regression coefficients for the model

	Unstandardised coefficients		**Standardised coefficients**			**Decision**
	B	**Standard error term**	**Beta**	**T**	**Sig.**	
(Constant)	0.429	0.162		2.646	0.008	
Source reputation	0.212	0.044	0.198	4.780	0.000	Reject H_o1 Accept H_a1
Message quality	0.306	0.041	0.307	7.506	0.000	Reject H_o2 Accept H_a2
Information endorsement	0.150	0.041	0.154	3.688	0.000	Reject H_o3 Accept H_a3
Information consistency	0.057	0.040	0.058	1.449	0.148	Fail to reject H_o4
Confirmed beliefs	0.153	0.031	0.191	4.992	0.000	Reject H_o5 Accept H_a5

6. DISCUSSION

The results of this study prove that the reputation of the microblog reviewer does indeed influence consumers' evaluation of eWOM credibility as depicted by the second highest Beta regression coefficient in the regression model (β = +0.198; t-value = 4.780; $p < 0.01$). Therefore, H_o1 is accepted while H_o1 is rejected in this study. The results are consistent with the findings of Cheung et al., (2009) who also found a statistically significant influence of the reputation of the source of an online recommendation about products on the credibility judgements of consumers. The second hypotheses aimed at testing whether message quality was a significant predictor of positive eWOM credibility evaluations. Interestingly, the statistically significant result along this regression path indicated that among the five heuristics, the quality of the message content yields the strongest cue effect on consumers' overall judgements about the credibility of microblog eWOM communication about music (β=+0.307; t=7.506; $p < 0.01$). This empirical result provided adequate support for H_a2, while H_o2 was rejected in this research.

The third hypothesis proposed the existence of an influential relationship between information endorsement and positive credibility evaluation of music reviews posted on microblogs. The empirical results of this work supported H_a3, while H_o3 was rejected ($\beta = +0.154$; t-value = 3.688; $p < 0.01$). Microbloggers who participated in this research purported to judge music-related posts based on whether they were sanctioned by homophilous others, such as peers, family, colleagues and fellow microbloggers. Notwithstanding the weak predictive effect of information endorsement on credibility evaluations, the statistically significant result provides sufficient evidence of the importance of this variable. In fact, the result of this study is consistent with Shamhuyenhanzva et al., (2016), who reviewed the influence of homophily on South African consumers of fast food products, another low-involvement product. Thus, it can be concluded that endorsement of information by homophilous parties is a vital component in the credibility evaluations of South African consumers.

Regrettably, the empirical results of this work did not yield sufficient evidence to infer a predictive relationship between information consistency and credibility evaluations of microblog music reviews ($\beta = 0.058$; t-value = 1.449; $p = 0.148$). In this regard, the hypothesis H_o4 could not be rejected in this research. Notably, this result is contrary to previous research (e.g. Cheung et al., 2009). Thus, there is insufficient evidence in this research to conclude that the consistency of reviews across social media platforms is a legible heuristic that is applied by consumers when evaluating the credibility of music reviews. Finally, with respect to the fifth hypothesis, sufficient evidence exists for a positive and statistically significant relationship between confirmed beliefs and the evaluation of eWOM credibility of microblog music reviews ($\beta = +0.191$; t-value = 4.992; $p < 0.01$). Consequently, H_o5 is rejected, whereas H_a5 is supported in this work. Thus, consumers are likely to perceive microblog music posts in a positive light if they confirm the beliefs they previously held or if the online content confirms that which consumers already know. Notably, Ismagilova et al.'s (2017) work guides researchers towards proving this predictive effect across samples and contexts.

7. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The results of this study are relevant in that they could advance the work by microblog administrators by profiling consumers along the four heuristics such that unique and segmented design platforms are created by online marketing communication practitioners that facilitate the evaluation of the credibility of online information that is posted about a variety of products.

8. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research adds to the knowledge base by testing a cohort of heuristics that are considered when evaluating the credibility of microblog music reviews. From the results, it is noted that positive evaluation response is an outcome of secondary inducements from four heuristics, namely the reputation of the online content source (*source reputation*), endorsement of the online content by homophilous others (*information endorsement*), quality of the posted content in terms of professionalism and content accuracy (*message quality*) as well as resonance of the music reviews with previously held attitudes and beliefs (*confirmed beliefs*). While these four heuristics only explain about 43 percent of the credibility evaluation process, the remaining 57 percent could possibly be a result of other cues that are not mentioned in the heuristics' theory, including central cues, pointing to the potential dual-effect of both central and peripheral cues when evaluating eWOM communication about low-involvement products. This dual perspective presents fertile ground for future research.

In light of the unsupported predictive effect between information consistency and the evaluation of eWOM credibility, it should be noted that posts made along microblogs may be reviewed by a large number of customers with diverse backgrounds. Therefore, influences such as culture, personality, perceptions and preferences for music genres and music producers could actually play a leading role in shaping the ultimate evaluation of the credibility of microblog music content, rather than the consistency of music posts across platforms.

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