

Chapter 13

Understanding User Social Commerce Usage Intention: A Stimulus–Organism– Response Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The integration of social media and e-commerce leads to the emergence of social commerce. Although previous research has examined social commerce user behaviour from multiple perspectives, it has focused on the effect of instrumental beliefs, such as perceived value, and has seldom examined the effect of emotional factors, such as sense of community on user behaviour. The purpose of this research is to draw on the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model to examine the effect of sense of community on users' social commerce usage intention. The results indicate that both social support and service quality (stimulus) affect the sense of community (organism), which in turn affects users' sharing and participation intention (response). The results imply that service providers need to develop the user's sense of community in order to facilitate his or her social commerce usage intention.

INTRODUCTION

E-commerce has been developing rapidly in the world. A report indicated that about 533 million Chinese users have conducted online purchase, accounting for 69.1% of its internet population (CNNIC, 2018). In the US, this figure is about 80% (Pew Research Center, 2016). At the same time, social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and WeChat have been integrated with e-commerce, which leads to the emergence of social commerce, such as F-commerce (Facebook). In China, Jingdong (JD), a leading e-commerce company, has cooperated with Tencent, which is the largest social networking company. Users can access JD to conduct purchase via WeChat, a leading social networking platform developed by Tencent. These examples indicate that social commerce has been attached importance by enterprises.

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In the social commerce context, users interact between each other and exchange their opinions, ideas and experiences. This plays a great influence on users' behavioural decision. They rely on the comments, reviews and suggestions shared by other members rather than the information posted by online vendors to make their purchase decisions (Chen, Lu and Wang, 2017). However, prior research has found that users lack intention to participate in social commerce (Zhang, Lu, Gupta and Zhao, 2014) and share contents (Liang, Ho, Li and Turban, 2011; Chen and Shen, 2015). This may hinder the development of social commerce. A report indicated that 72% of online shoppers have never shared their purchase experiences (CNNIC, 2017). Service providers need to understand the factors affecting users' social commerce usage intention. Then they can adopt effective measures to facilitate user behaviour and ensure the success of social commerce.

The purpose of this research is to draw on the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model to uncover the effect of sense of community on users' social commerce usage intention. The stimulus includes social support and community quality, which reflect the effect of community members and platforms, respectively. As users frequently interact between each other in social commerce communities, they may exchange social support, which reflects the advice, suggestions, empathy and encouragement. Social support including both informational and emotional support has been found to be a significant determinant of social commerce usage intention (Shanmugam, Sun, Amidi, Khani and Khani, 2016; Li and Ku, 2018). In addition, this research adopted three factors of system quality, information quality and service quality from the information systems (IS) success model to examine their effects on user intention (DeLone and McLean, 2004). These three factors reflect the community platform quality. The organism is represented by sense of community, which reflects a user's feelings of membership, belongingness and attachment to a community (Koh, Kim and Kim, 2003). Response includes sharing intention and participation intention, both of which have been examined as the social commerce users' behavioural variables (Zhang et al., 2014; Ko, 2018). We believe that SOR provides a useful lens to understand social commerce users' behavioral decision process, in which external stimulus affects the internal state that leads to user intention.

Previous research has examined users' social commerce usage intention from multiple perspectives, such as trust (Lu, Zeng and Fan, 2016a; Lu, Fan and Zhou, 2016b; Hajli, Sims, Zadeh and Richard, 2017), social interaction (Xiang, Zheng, Lee and Zhao, 2016; Zhang, Benyoucef and Zhao, 2016; Wang and Yu, 2017), and perceived value (Hu, Huang, Zhong, Davison and Zhao, 2016; Sun, Wei, Fan, Lu and Gupta, 2016; Chung, Song and Lee, 2017). However, it has mainly focused on the effect of instrumental beliefs such as perceived value and has seldom examined the effect of emotional beliefs on user behaviour. This may undermine our understanding of users' social commerce usage intention. Extant research has reported that an individual user's emotion is a significant determinant of his or her behaviour (Tsai and Bagozzi, 2014; Wan, Lu, Wang and Zhao, 2017). In this research, we examine users' social commerce usage intention from the emotional perspective of sense of community. When users interact with each other in a social commerce community, they may develop sense of community, which in turn affects their behavioural decision such as sharing and participation intention.

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