

Chapter 60

Examining Social Commerce Intentions Through the Uses and Gratifications Theory

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ABSTRACT

Changes in consumer behavior enabled by social networking technologies is leading to a transformation in e-commerce. Consumers' use of social media sites and relevant technologies for different aspects of shopping has become an issue of utmost concern to retailers and related businesses. Adopting a uses and gratifications theory (UGT) perspective, the article aims to demonstrate motives of users utilizing social media in their purchase decisions. Drawing from digital marketing and e-commerce literature, relevant uses and gratifications for social commerce (s-commerce) were chosen as information access, escape, entertainment, passing time, cool and new trends, and socialization. The proposed model was analyzed and tested via OLS regression and ANOVA analysis using the data collected from a survey study on 361 subjects in Turkey. Information access, relaxing entertainment, and socialization motives emerged as significant antecedents of s-commerce intentions. No significant effect of demographics on social commerce intentions were observed in the analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ease of access to information, products and services through Internet and information technologies, coupled with the rapid adoption of interactive technologies and social networks all over the world are transforming how business and commerce is conducted. As the number of users of social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram grow, various businesses started using these platforms as an influential channel to reach and connect with potential and existing customers. Social networking sites can be leveraged to create trust and persuade consumers to choose products, however, control over the content published on these platforms is limited. To overcome these limitations e-commerce companies

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started providing opportunities to comment, appraise and share content on their own platforms to create an interactive environment for users that is alike to social media. This transition to Web 2.0, which facilitates interaction between users and organizations, and provides participation and sharing opportunities to its participants has led to the emergence of social commerce (s-commerce) concept in 2005. It has become a hot topic since then (Curty & Zhang, 2011) and interest on it is expected to increase as it gains more significance (Chen & Shen, 2015; Lin, Li, & Wang, 2017). According to a systematic review of scholarly articles published between 2000 to 2014, “social media marketing”, “online shopping & e-commerce” are among the Top-10 topics of online marketing research (Roy, Datta, & Basu, 2017). Two recent literature reviews on s-commerce that analyzed more than 100 and 400 studies respectively, stressed out the increasing significance of this concept (Busalim & Hussin, 2016; Lin et al., 2017). This phenomenon is highlighted by the increasing number of articles-11 in 2011 to 58 in 2016-appearing in Web of Knowledge database for “social commerce” or “s-commerce” terms in manuscript titles.

Social commerce (s-commerce) is considered as a new form of electronic commerce (e-commerce) which involves social networking systems that enable social interaction and user contributions (Liang, Ho, Li, & Turban, 2011). A significant majority of the relevant literature accepts social commerce as the use of social media sites in various stages of consumer decision process and s-commerce activities act as an enabler of online purchase process (Shen, 2012).

S-commerce is expected to become one of the most widely adopted electronic commerce platforms in the not-so-distant future (Zhang and Benyoucef 2016). Social networking sites and relevant tools provide abundant opportunities to browse products and to get comments and reviews provided by real users and peers. Consequently, several companies have made efforts to get a firm foothold and carry out actual sales transactions over social media. For instance, Dell claimed that it made \$6.5 million by selling computers on Twitter between 2007 and 2010 and Disney allowed people to purchase tickets directly on Facebook without leaving the social network (Turban, Strauss, & Lai, 2015, p. 12). Facebook, not so long ago, launched Facebook Marketplace, a platform that facilitates buying and selling of goods. Furthermore, Facebook owned Instagram expanded its “shoppable posts” feature, which provide brands the ability to add e-commerce links within their Instagram posts to help drive transactions, to nine countries (Instagram, 2018).

Companies practicing e-commerce, especially retailers, want to leverage the benefits of social media to a greater extent. For instance, Instagram and Pinterest-the more visually attractive social platforms-have enticed the interest of businesses and entrepreneurs. These platforms are utilized for promotion and marketing communications as well as directly selling products to users (Instagram, 2018). To exploit the opportunities offered by Web 2.0 and social networking systems, it is imperative to study and understand consumer motivations in these environments. Within this dynamic environment, the present study offers two major contributions to the s-commerce literature. From a theoretical perspective, a model based on a well-established theory on consumer motives in social media use, namely UGT is utilized to enhance the classical utilitarian & hedonic motivation perspective that is used extensively in shopping literature. UGT is utilized by researchers in several context such as mobile app use behavior (Ha, Kim, Libaque-Saenz, Chang, & Park, 2015), social media use behavior (Gan & Li, 2018; Phua, Jin, & Kim, 2017), and online shopping use behavior (Lim & Ting, 2012) in addition to its original setting, mass media communications (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Up till this study, UGT’s application to social commerce is limited to only a few studies (Sharma & Crossler, 2014; Yang & Li, 2014). This theoretical approach provides a novel perspective at the s-commerce use behavior compared to extant literature as the general hedonic motives constructs utilized in relevant literature is somewhat limited compared

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