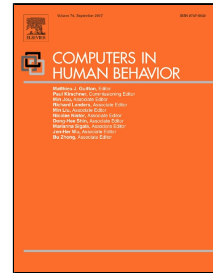


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Sunghun Chung, Jooyoung Park



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Exploring consumer evaluations in social media:
The role of psychological distance between company and consumer

Sunghun Chung ^{a,*}, Jooyoung Park ^{b,1}

^a *The University of Queensland, Australia*

^b *Peking University PHBS Business School, China*

ABSTRACT

While social media has emerged as a key source of information used by consumers in their attitude formation, whether and how companies build a psychological distance with customers has not been thoroughly examined. This study investigates the influence of psychological distance on consumer evaluations of a company and its products when the company's behavior in social media is ambivalent in terms of morality or competence. In two experiments, the findings indicate that consumer evaluations vary as a function of types of ambivalent behavior (morality vs. competence) of a company and psychological distance between consumers and the company. These findings not only advance the understanding of the role of psychological distance in consumers' company evaluations but also offer implications regarding strategies that organizations can employ to manage their public relations by using social media.

Keywords: social media, morality, competence, psychological distance, public relations, ambivalence

* Corresponding author at: Business Information Systems, UQ Business School, The University of Queensland, Brisbane 4072 Queensland, Australia.

Email: s.chung@business.uq.edu.au

¹ Peking University PHBS Business School, University Town, Nanshan District, Shenzhen, China, 518055. Tel: +86 755 2603 3621.

Email: jpark@phbs.pku.edu.cn

☆The authors alone are responsible for all limitations and errors that may relate to the study and the paper.

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