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Perceived derived attributes of online customer reviews



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ABSTRACT

The influence of online customer reviews (OCRs) on customers' purchase intention has recently gained considerable attention, in both academic and business communities. Technology allows customers to freely and easily post their comments and opinions online about any product or service; this type of customer review can have a significant effect on customers' purchase decisions. Previous studies, however, have mainly focused on the influence of the virtual attributes of OCRs such as volume and valence on consumers' intentions, while limited attention has been paid to understanding the effects of the derived attributes. This study, thus, aims to understand the impact of the perceived derived attributes of OCRs on customer trust and intention. This study develops a – Perceived Derived Attributes (PDA) – model, based on the inclusion of perceived control from the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), in order to investigate the effects of OCRs on customers' purchasing intention. A total of 489 responses to a survey were collected from users of amazon.com. The findings from this study suggest that customer trust in an e-vendor and their intention to shop online are significantly affected by perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and perceived enjoyment of OCRs. Furthermore, the sense of control derived from OCRs significantly affects customer intention and significantly affects customer trust in e-vendors, particularly for customers who frequently check OCRs before making a purchase. Clearly, those attributes of OCRs are linked to the development of the shopping environment, which consequently can affect sales.

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1. Introduction

Online customer reviews (OCRs) are a form of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) that refers to the user-generated contents that are posted on e-vendor websites or third-party websites (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). OCRs have become a key source of product information (Huang, Chen, Yen, & Tran, 2015). Chen and Xie (2008) suggest that OCRs are a new element of the marketing communication mix. Firms have also started using them to understand customers' attitudes (Dellarocas, Zhang, & Awad, 2007).

OCRs are a rich source of product information. Customers tend to engage in reading online product information, as it assists customers in making the purchase decision (Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn, 2008). Given the trustworthiness and credibility of OCRs (Gruen, Osmonbekov, & Czaplewski, 2006; Hu, Liu, Bose, & Shen, 2010), a customer's adoption of the information provided by OCRs is likely to be a key factor affecting the customer's decision to purchase

online. Previous studies (e.g. Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Flanagan & Metzger, 2013; Huang et al., 2015; Lee & Koo, 2015; Olbrich & Holsing, 2011; Pan & Zhang, 2011; Tirunillai & Tellis, 2012) have mainly focused on the virtual attributes of OCRs such as volume, valence, variance and length (Elwalda & Lu, 2016; Moon, Park, & Seog Kim, 2014). However, there are also derived attributes resulting from OCRs as a support tool for customers to make the purchasing decision.

What has not been adequately explained in the literature is the derived attributes of OCRs, such as usefulness, understandability, simplicity, enjoyment and sense of control (Liang, Ekinci, Occhiocupo, & Whyatt, 2013; Yang, 2013). Unlike traditional WOM, eWOM is mediated by Internet technology; suggesting the significance of perceived factors (Sun, Youn, Wu, & Kuntaraporn, 2006). Perceived derived attributes from OCRs are suggested to be a key factor in affecting customers' intention. Such importance of perceived derived attributes raises the need for investigating their effects on customer intention. Limited research has been reported on how these factors contribute to explaining customers' behavioural intention in the context of OCRs.

Hence, the present study aims to investigate and empirically test

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the effects of OCRs' derived attributes on customer trust and intention, as determined by perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment and perceived control.

The present study contributes to the understanding of eWOM and OCRs' behaviour in several ways. Firstly, our study introduces a perceived derived attributes model (PDA) for understanding OCR behaviour, based on the inclusion of perceived control with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) model. The PDA model employs *technology acceptance model (TAM)*, and *theory of planned behaviour (TPB)* in order to investigate the role of the attribute resulting from OCRs. This is the first time that such an approach has been applied in the literature to understand the effects of the derived attributes of OCRs. The PDA model claims that the effects of OCRs are not only limited to the virtual attributes, such as volume and valance, but also that the perceived derived attributes of OCRs have an impact on customers' behaviour. We extend the TAM by arguing that the inclusion of perceived control from the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) in the TAM is crucial when analysing the influence of eWOM.

Secondly, to the best of our knowledge, there is no study examining the impact of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment and perceived control derived from OCRs on customer trust and behavioural intention. The present study finds that customer trust in an e-vendor and customer intention to shop online are significantly affected by these perceived derived factors. The third contribution is that perceived control was employed in order to understand the effects that sense of control, derived from OCRs, has on customer trust and intention. The present study indicates that perceived control has a significant effect on customer intention to shop online. Additionally, the results reveal that for customers who frequently check OCRs before making a purchase, their trust in the e-vendor is significantly influenced by perceived control resulting from OCRs.

2. Theoretical background

Online customer reviews (OCRs) have become a primary source of product information. This has resulted in them having a significant impact on consumer purchase decision making. However, previous investigations have mainly concerned with the virtual attributes of OCRs, such as, valance, volume, and variance. For example, [Moe and Trusov \(2011\)](#) indicate that the valence of OCRs has a direct influence on sales. Similarly, [Floh, Koller, and Zauner \(2013\)](#) find the intensity of the valence of OCRs has a significant effect on the sale of both books and hotels. Furthermore, [Liu \(2006\)](#) reveals that the volume of OCRs positively affects box office returns. On the other hand, the influence of OCRs is not only limited to the virtual attributes, but also to the derived attributes such as, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment, and perceived control that might significantly affect customers' behavioural intentions ([Liang et al., 2013](#); [Yang, 2013](#)).

Perceived derived attributes from OCRs are suggested to be a main key affecting customers' intention. For example, perceived usefulness and ease of use were found to be an important antecedent in adopting eWOM ([Hsu, Lin, & Chiang, 2013](#); [Liang et al., 2013](#); [Yang, 2013](#)). Furthermore, [Park, Lee, and Han \(2007\)](#) report that the quality of the OCRs positively impact product sales. Also perceived ease of use was found to influence online trust ([Aghdaie, Piraman, & Fathi, 2011](#); [Gefen, Karahanna, & Straub, 2003](#)). In addition, perceived enjoyment and perceived control have been established to be significant derived attributes from online discussion that affect intention ([Van Dolen, Dabholkar, & de Ruyter, 2007](#)), and vital characteristics of Internet usage ([Dabholkar, 1996](#); [Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1992](#); [Koufaris, 2002](#); [Wolfinger & Gilly, 2001](#)).

Drawn from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the present study introduces a "Perceived Derived Attributes" model (PDA) for investigating the behaviour of eWOM and OCRs. An integration of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment, and perceived control is applied to understand the effects of the derived attributes of OCRs on customer trust and purchase intentions.

2.1. Technology acceptance model (TAM)

The growth in virtual communities has empowered businesses to widen their interaction space with Internet users ([Lin, 2007](#)). As much as this interaction is social, it is mediated and supported by technology factors ([Sun et al. 2006](#); [Wang, Yu, & Fesenmaier, 2002](#)). Recently, the TAM has been employed in explaining the effect of information adoption in the context of eWOM ([Aye, 2015](#); [Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalíu, 2010](#); [Hsu et al., 2013](#); [Liang et al., 2013](#); [Yang, 2013](#)). TAM has been accepted as a model to explain online customer behaviour ([Gefen et al., 2003](#)), and is broadly used for examining information technology adoption ([Venkatesh, 2000](#)). Additionally, previous studies have also indicated that eWOM has a significant influence on customers' intentions ([Chen & Xie, 2008](#); [Clemons, Gao, & Hitt, 2006](#); [Godes & Mayzlin, 2004](#)).

TAM is a model developed to study the acceptance of the technology by individuals that explains how individuals come to accept and use a technology, originating from the theory of reasoned action. It is widely used to explain the adoption of new technology, underpinned by two constructs: "perceived usefulness" and "perceived ease of use". [Davis et al. \(1992\)](#) in an attempt to address TAM limitations in regard to its explanatory power ([Bagozzi, 2007](#); [Bhattacharjee & Premkumar, 2004](#)). [Davis et al. \(1992\)](#) report that perceived enjoyment has a significant impact on behavioural intention.

A *theoretical background* on the concepts of the three constructs of TAM Perceived Usefulness, Perceived ease of Use and Perceived enjoyment is provided next.

2.2. Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use

TAM suggests that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are the main determinants of system use and information adoption. Perceived usefulness is defined as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance" ([Davis, 1989](#), p. 320). Perceived ease of use is defined as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particularly system would be free of effort" ([Davis, 1989](#), p. 320). Employing these two definitions, this study refers to the perceived usefulness as the degree to which a customer believes that using OCRs enhances their online shopping experience. Perceived ease of use refers to the degree to which a customer believes that using OCRs is simple, and straightforward.

Drawing on TAM, [Liang et al. \(2013\)](#) studied international travellers' eWOM communication. Their study reveals that both perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use have a direct significant impact on overall attitude to adopting eWOM communication, while an indirect effect was observed for behavioural intention to use eWOM. Their findings also indicate that overall attitude towards eWOM communication partially mediates the relationship between the adoption of eWOM and the behavioural intention to use it. Taken together, these results suggest that customers are likely to use eWOM if the online information presented is useful and easy. Similarly, [Casaló et al. \(2010\)](#) indicate that participating in online travel communities is positively affected by their perceived usefulness. They also find that perceived ease of use influences both perceived usefulness and attitude towards

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