

Chapter 12

A Continuance Model for Optimized Participation in Virtual Communities

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ABSTRACT

The social commerce wave has opened up vast opportunities in emerging markets through virtual communities' participation. This chapter investigates the constructs and theories from the social psychology perspective looking into the intention and behaviour prospect by extending the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and integrating the Social Support Theory (SST) to purport a continuance model for virtual communities' optimized participation in Malaysia. The model uncovers that the emotional and informational constructs of the SST and constructs of the TPB as well as perceived value optimizes participation. This chapter also establishes a continuance model and illustrates how theory from the social psychology literature positions the constructs of SST, TPB and perceived value in enhancing the participation of virtual communities. The SEM-PLS method used to analyse the data shows that the intention and behaviour of the virtual communities determine users' participation level. Furthermore, this chapter seeks to enlighten our knowledge on virtual communities and tap into the social commerce capabilities.

INTRODUCTION

Social commerce, an extension of e-commerce is an emerging platform mediated by the increased popularity of social networking sites such as the Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, wikis and micro

blogging (M. N. Hajli, 2014b; Z. Huang & Benyoucef, 2013). With the massive proliferation of the internet, Web 2.0 technologies hold great potential in redesigning the way people interact online (Cova & White, 2010). Precisely, Web 2.0 applications help people build and maintain

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their social networks online and encourages social network-facilitated team collaboration (Shen, Lee, Cheung, & Chen, 2010). Described as web pages that uses a two-way stream of communication that connects users, Web 2.0 allows individuals to socialize online (Evans, 2008) and share their own user-generated content (Lefebvre, 2007). These social interactions are significant in promoting and ensuring the successful operation of online community sites (Corrocher, 2011).

Previous literature has shown that investigating on continuance participation is focal because the full values and potential of virtual communities are not realized without users' ongoing participation (Jina, Lee, & Cheung, 2010). At the same time, the sustainability and operability of the websites are highly dependent on the continuance usage and engagement of its own users (Al-Debei, Al-Lozi, & Papazafeiropoulou, 2013). Research on continuance participation (Al-Debei et al., 2013) has introduced several constructs in driving the intention and behavior of users and has shed much insight however a major key determinant from the social-related influence, the social support construct is not included in the model. The absence of informational and emotional support of the social support theory in continuance participation model is a limitation that needs to be critically addressed. This is evident because recent research has shown that social interaction of users in virtual communities establish social support and develop these networks for co-creation of value (M. N. Hajli, 2014a; M. N. Hajli & Lin, 2014). Therefore, it is vital to investigate the social support constructs that drive the intention and behavior of online users in an online community purview to ensure the successful operation and continuity of online community sites.

The purpose of this study is to propose a social-related influence construct that drives the post-adoptive intentions and behaviours of virtual communities. Social support is known to have significant effects in the way how human

feel being cared for and responded to (Ali, 2011). Behavioral sciences and individual psychology also suggest that social influences and personal traits are potentially important determinants of adoption (Lua, Yaob, & Yua, 2005). The inclusion of social support construct contributes in positive engagement of online users in their online community which strengthens the reliability of the continuance participation model. The motivation of this study is to further develop continuance use distinctively focusing on post-adoption phenomenon looking at social support theory by proposing a model that integrates the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Social Support and perceived value. TPB is an established social psychological conceptual model used to examine and predict human intentions and behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). This functional theory explains the complexity of influences in the behavioural decision-making where previous literature has demonstrated its efficacy (Ajzen, 1991).

The research model proposed highlights the contributing constructs that affect virtual communities' decision on their social networking continuance participation. Through this extension, our results indicate that (1) the effect of social support measured by informational and emotional support is significant in driving continuance participation intention and behavior of online community; and (2) social support has strong effect on continuance use intention.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows where next sections review prior literature on social commerce, social support theory and theory of planned behavior. This is followed by the research model and hypotheses. Development of the research instrument and the process of the empirical study are provided in the third section followed by the findings from data analysis in the fourth section. The remaining sections conclude the paper and present the limitation and future research directions.

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