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Recommended Citation

Lin, Sheng-Wei and Lo, Louis Yi-Shih, "MOTIVATION FOR USING THE SOCIAL COMMERCE WEBSITE IN THE SHARING ECONOMY: A TWO-FACTOR THEORY PERSPECTIVE" (2016). *PACIS 2016 Proceedings*. 108.
<http://aisel.aisnet.org/pacis2016/108>

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MOTIVATION FOR USING THE SOCIAL COMMERCE WEBSITE IN THE SHARING ECONOMY: A TWO-FACTOR THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The influence and power of the sharing economy are beginning to change our lifestyles and consumption patterns. Among the sharing firms operating in the sharing economy, Airbnb is not only a well-known example of a successful O2O (online to offline) giant but also positions itself as a social commerce website. This study intends to remove the mask of Airbnb from the perspectives of website decomposing because it is important to understand how social commerce is incorporated into the websites of e-commerce retailers to support their online business models. Drawing on the two-factor theory, we focus on the following two research questions:

- (1) Which website features are hygiene factors and which are motivation factors?*
- (2) How are the hygiene and motivation factors that affect a consumer's motivation for using the Airbnb website distributed across the stages of the consumer decision-making process?*

To answer these questions, this study will be conducted by a survey methodology to collect the data.

Keywords: Sharing economy, Airbnb, social commerce, website decomposing, two-factor theory, EKB model.

1. INTRODUCTION

The sharing economy, also known as collaborative consumption, refers to peer-to-peer-based goods sharing and services access. The sharing economy advocates product and service sharing or paying to temporarily access rights substitutes for product transactions or ownership through underused resources (e.g., vacant accommodations or cars). Although vast amounts of underused resources are being activated, the importance and requirement of resource ownership is decreasing, and easy access to products anytime and anywhere is becoming essential. Such trends are facilitating the disappearance of traditional wholesalers or brokers and transforming the economy into a peer-to-peer-based barter economy. For example, Uber enables private car drivers to carry passengers for a charge, and Airbnb enables accommodation owners to become hoteliers. To date, 60% of Millennials aged 18-34 worldwide have used Uber and Airbnb in their travels (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2014). PricewaterhouseCoopers (2014) estimates that the gross business product of the sharing economy will increase in multiples, growing from \$15 billion in 2014 to \$335 billion by 2025. Indeed, the influence and power of the sharing economy are beginning to change our lifestyles and consumption patterns.

Among the sharing firms operating in the sharing economy era, Airbnb is not only a well-known example of a successful O2O (online to offline) giant but also a social commerce website. Social commerce is a stream of e-commerce, which is characterized by Web 2.0 technology such as user-generated content and content sharing to integrate information exchange and online transaction (Wang & Zhang, 2012). In such context, website design features are regarded as important drivers of social commerce because they facilitate information sharing and social interactions (Grange & Benbasat, 2010). Thus, it is important to understand how social commerce is incorporated into the websites of e-commerce retailers to support their online business models (Curty & Zhang, 2013), especially in the case of Airbnb. This study adopts Airbnb as its research target. We intend to remove the mask of Airbnb, the iconic model of accommodation sharing in the sharing economy, from the perspectives of website decomposing.

Despite abundant research investigating the effects of external stimuli on consumer motivations to use an e-commerce website (e.g., Liang & Lai, 2002; Park & Gretzel, 2010), there are two research gaps. First, social commerce websites incorporate more design features than traditional e-commerce websites. However, there has been limited research focus on social commerce website design issues (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013). Furthermore, consumers have only temporary access rights rather than actual ownership in the sharing economy. Thus, the determinants of consumer motivations for using an e-commerce website do not always apply to the social commerce website in the sharing economy. Second, several studies have investigated the effects of website features on consumers' adoption behavior. However, how to best distribute classified website features across different stages of the consumer decision-making process is unknown, let alone how to best design specific features at each stage to induce a long-lasting motivation in consumers to use a social commerce website. Thus, this study seeks to bridge these research gaps by decomposing the website features that influence consumer motivations for using a social commerce website in the sharing economy across the different stages of the consumer decision-making process.

Inspired by two-factor theory of job motivation (Herzberg, 2003; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1993), this study classifies website features that affect consumer motivations for using the Airbnb website into hygiene and motivation factors. We assume that the motives of e-retailers to increase the likelihood of consumer motivations for using a website are consistent with the motives of organizations to encourage employees to work harder. Following Herzberg's two-factor theory in social commerce context, *hygiene factors* are design features that induce a consumer to use a social commerce website in short bursts. Furthermore, *motivation factors* are design features that encourage consumers to continue using a social commerce website. This study posits that there are two kinds of motivation for using a social commerce website: (a) the *try-out* motivation and (b) the *keep-using* motivation (Wu, Chuang, & Chen, 2008). The try-out motivation refers to users who are attracted to

use a social commerce website for a short time period, and the keep-using motivation refers to users who decide to continue using a social commerce website to fulfill their future needs. Thus, in terms of using social commerce website, we can reasonably infer that hygiene factors are most likely to be associated with the try-out motivation; whereas, motivation factors are most likely to be associated with the keep-using motivation (e.g., Wu et al., 2008). The purpose of this study is to explicitly identify the most crucial design features of the Airbnb website and further explores how they affect consumers' *try-out* and *keep-using* motivations across the different stages of the consumer decision-making process. Drawing on the two-factor theory, we focus on the following two research questions. (1) Which website features are hygiene factors and which are motivation factors? (2) How are the hygiene and motivation factors that affect a consumer's motivation for using the Airbnb website distributed across the stages of the consumer decision-making process?

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 EKB Model

A consumer decision-making model is used to simplify complex consumer behavior through abstract representations of the consumer decision-making process. This simplification can help salespeople to effectively understand consumer responses to marketing efforts. The EKB model is one of the most widely used consumer decision-making models. It comprises six stages: need recognition, searching for information, pre-purchase evaluation of alternatives, choice, transaction, and post-sale services (Engel & Blackwell, 1982).

2.2 Two-Factor Theory

This study adopts two-factor theory as proposed by Herzberg et al. (1993) to explain the work motivations of workers and categorize the factors involved in the various stages of the EKB model. Herzberg et al. (1993) ascertain two types of factors that can influence the work motivations of workers: hygiene and motivation factors. Hygiene factors refer to the contextual features of organizations that support the work of workers (e.g., salary, company policy, work conditions, relationships with supervisors). Without this type of factor, employees would harbor grievances against their organizations. Motivation factors represent the content of the work itself and the direct reward gained from satisfactory job performance (e.g., sense of accomplishment, appreciation from supervisors or colleagues) (Herzberg, 2003). Motivation factors can strengthen a worker's need for self-realization through work. Hygiene and motivation factors are correlated with job dissatisfaction and satisfaction, respectively. However, rather than being situated at the opposite ends of a continuous spectrum, they represent two distinctive spectra. Dissatisfaction does not result when the factors of high satisfaction disappear (House & Wigdor, 1967). In other words, hygiene factors are necessary, but insufficient to produce satisfaction. Two-factor theory has been applied widely to establish the motivation-related factors of work content. In recent years, it has been used to investigate the behavioral motivation induced by Internet services (e.g., Liang & Lai, 2002; Ong et al., 2013; Park & Ryoo, 2013; Wu et al., 2008). Looking at the design factors of online stores, Liang and Lai (2002) state that hygiene factors are the basic conditions used to judge whether consumers enter this market, and motivation factors are crucial for consumers when deciding whether to purchase from a particular online platform.

In this study, we define two kinds of motivation for using the Airbnb website: (a) the try-out motivation and (b) the keep-using motivation. The try-out motivation has a much shorter time span than the keep-using motivation. In discriminating the influence that website features exert on consumers' motivations to use the Airbnb website, we adopt two-factor theory to categorize the website features into hygiene and motivation factors. Hygiene factors are necessary conditions to attract consumers to try out the Airbnb website and are associated with dissatisfaction. However, sufficient hygiene factors do not necessarily trigger a long-lasting motivation to use the Airbnb website. Contrary to hygiene factors, motivation factors are associated with satisfaction. Thus,

motivation factors can really facilitate a long-lasting motivation to use the Airbnb website. Nevertheless, if the design features of the Airbnb website are motivation factors, then such factors can encourage consumers to keep using the Airbnb website more effectively than hygiene factors.

2.3 Effective Design Features of the Airbnb Website

In terms of the motivation for using a website, researchers have frequently implemented website design elements that interest them the most as antecedents to examine whether they influence usage intention. However, a website has more features in social commerce than in e-commerce. Thus, this study investigates the design features required for social commerce to fulfill the promise of developing effective and efficient social commerce websites.

Website features may influence each stage of the consumer decision-making process and increase consumers' motivations for using a website. Therefore, this study uses the consumer decision-making model as a framework to categorize website features while examining the influence that design features have on consumers' motivations for using a website during specific stages of the consumer decision-making process. A consumer decision-making model simplifies complex consumer behavior through abstract representations of the consumer decision-making process. The EKB model is one of the most widely used consumer decision-making models, comprising six stages: need recognition, searching for information, pre-purchase evaluation of alternatives, choice, transaction, and post-sale services (Engel & Blackwell, 1982). We present the features of the Airbnb website across the stages of the EKB model as follows.

2.3.1 Need Recognition

Need recognition refers to consumers' perceived need for products before purchase. Need can be generated by external stimuli or the intrinsic motivation of consumers. The potential functions through which website or mobile APP designs enable consumers to recognize need include the following.

Easy to Get Started

1. Easy-to-use website interfaces: Easy-to-use website interfaces can decrease the cognitive load of consumers during use (e.g., Chen, Hsu, & Lin, 2010).
2. Cutting-edge website style: The cutting-edge website style is visually attractive. It also revolutionizes mobile website availability and decreases construction costs. For example, the Airbnb website features cutting-edge design, and users can scroll down the webpage seamlessly to browse its well-displayed products (e.g., Airbnb, 2015).
3. Providing a mobile APP or website: Providing a mobile APP or website that fits to all mobile devices can increase the readability of a website for consumers (e.g., Curty & Zhang, 2013).

Shopping Navigation

A website demonstrates various products and thus must have clear navigation guides. According to previous studies, the shopping navigation approaches commonly used include the following.

4. Website navigation: A step-by-step guide on a website can lead consumers from searching for products to completing transactions (e.g., Liang & Lai, 2002; Park & Gretzel, 2010).
5. Using appropriate fonts: Fonts that facilitate ease of reading and a clear color contrast between fonts and backgrounds can effectively convey information and decrease the cognitive load of consumers (e.g., Eroglu et al., 2001).
6. Providing logistical information on listings pages: The listing pages on the Airbnb website are arranged in a logistical way. For example, the fields for location, availability, pricing, and check-in/out times are organized based on a simple and standard design, decreasing the cognitive load of consumers (e.g., Airbnb, 2015).

Stimulating Purchase Desire

7. Sending e-mail or text message notifications: Airbnb can interact directly with its consumers by e-mail or text message (SMS) to notify them of new products deals, new messages, and alerts after registration (e.g., Airbnb, 2015; Curty & Zhang, 2013).

8. Large eye-catching titles: Large eye-catching titles, which are usually used on clearances or price reductions, can be used to attract consumers' attention (e.g., Madhavaram & Laverie, 2004).

9. Websites consisting mainly of product pictures: Websites that display many photos of listings can decrease text descriptions and increase product recognition by consumers (e.g., Parboteeah et al., 2009).

10. Providing product previews: Online product photo previews that show customers what a real product looks like can decrease their uncertainty before purchasing (e.g., Eroglu et al., 2001).

2.3.2 Search for Information

When products or services enable consumers to solve the problems they encounter, achieve their goals, and generate perceived goal value, the consumers pay increasing attention to information pertinent to the achievement of their goals. Providing and reinforcing the function of information searching can decrease the cognitive noise that disturbs consumer attention.

Providing Useful Tools

11. Providing fast search tools: Effective search functions or well-organized search results on a website can enable consumers to efficiently look for products or services that satisfy their needs (e.g., Chen et al., 2010; Curty & Zhang, 2013).

12. Providing converter tools: A website can provide useful converter tools for consumers to efficiently decode information when they browse webpages (e.g., Curty & Zhang, 2013).

13. Providing login notifications: Login notifications are a security feature that allows consumers to determine whether someone is accessing their Airbnb account without their permission (Airbnb, 2015).

Providing Value-added Information

14. Providing hot picks information: Hot picks contain information about potential products of interest and enable consumers to easily determine which items are popular (e.g., Curty & Zhang, 2013).

15. Providing new product/service release: A new product or service release enables consumers to obtain the latest product or service information (e.g., Curty & Zhang, 2013).

16. Providing a guidebook: Airbnb suggests great local highlights and destinations for consumers, called local lists, for specific cities (Airbnb, 2015). Created by Airbnb hosts, local lists can improve tourists' experiences when they visit a city for the first time.

2.3.3 Pre-purchase Evaluation of Alternatives

After searching for information, consumers enter the third stage: pre-purchase evaluation of alternatives. Consumers evaluate various purchase plans based on the information they acquired during the second stage.

Support of Product Evaluation

17. Showing consumer reviews: Airbnb provides its consumers with reviews of hosts and accommodations in the form of comments (e.g., Airbnb, 2015; Curty & Zhang, 2013).

18. Showing review evaluations: Airbnb provides consumers with the option to judge reviews as helpful or not and thereby to show approval for the reviews of others where warranted (Airbnb, 2015).

19. Showing the listing views: Listing views information indicates the number of travelers who have looked at a host's listing page. Such information can give customers a sense of the popularity of a product (e.g., Airbnb, 2015).

20. Showing the overall product rating: The overall star rating is a metaphor for product quality (e.g., Curty & Zhang, 2013).

21. Saving and managing wish lists: Wish lists allow consumers to flag favorite products they plan or want to purchase in the future (e.g., Curty & Zhang, 2013).

22. Sharing wish lists: The "Share wish lists" option on the Airbnb website allows users to share their favorite wish lists with their friends on social networks such as Facebook, Weibo, and QQ (Airbnb, 2015).

23. Showing social connections: A website provides consumers with ways to connect with friends or relatives to convey their interest in a specific product (e.g., Curty & Zhang, 2013).

Building Trust

24. Protecting consumer profiles: Airbnb does not display full names or contact information on consumers' public profiles. Thus, consumers can feel at ease that their information is safe (e.g., Chen et al., 2010).

25. Showing host verifications: Airbnb puts its consumers at ease with features such as host verified ID, which includes a specific set of verifications such as offline ID, online ID, a profile photo, an e-mail address, and a phone number (Airbnb, 2015).

26. Showing Superhost badge: Airbnb awards the Superhost badge to hosts who are dedicated to showing hospitality to their consumers (Airbnb, 2015).

27. Showing online host associations: Airbnb provides several convenient ways to contact hosts as soon as possible, such as Facebook, Google+, Amex, e-mail, and a "Contact host" button (Airbnb, 2015).

28. Providing an in-site messaging system: The in-site messaging system provides chat and video-chat services for consumers to communicate with a representative (e.g., Curty & Zhang, 2013).

29. Showing a host's response rate: The host's response rate tells consumers how quickly and consistently the host responds to travelers who contact them (Airbnb, 2015).

30. Providing reporting system: Consumers can easily notify Airbnb if they feel uncomfortable after contacting a host (Airbnb, 2015).

31. Providing a resolution center: Airbnb provides a resolution center for its consumers to contact if they have trouble reaching an agreement with a host (Airbnb, 2015).

Sales Promotion

32. Offering business travel coupons: When consumers book a business trip through Airbnb for the first time, they are given a \$50 coupon to use toward their next trip (Airbnb, 2015).

33. Offering membership benefits: Airbnb implements several reward offers for its consumers. For example, it eliminates service charges for customers who book their accommodations through the site for the first time (Airbnb, 2015).

2.3.4 Choice

After the evaluation stage, consumers need tools to aggregate the purchasing information they have collected to make a decision. Websites should provide functions that enable consumers to make choices easily and recommend items they may be interested in purchasing.

34. Showing substitute suggestions of listings: Airbnb offers consumers substitute options around their destinations, such as by showing popular neighborhoods, similar listings, or “people also stay in” listings (Airbnb, 2015).

35. Providing customer support: Consumers can deal with specific problems by visiting the online help center or looking up the online most common questions about Airbnb (Airbnb, 2015).

2.3.5 Transaction

Once a product is chosen, the customer must fill out ordering and payment data. The website provides the following functions.

36. Easy to register: Many websites require customers to be members before placing orders, making payments, and requesting delivery. Therefore, easy registration procedures can maintain the purchase intentions of consumers (e.g., Liang & Lai, 2002).

37. Fully electronic purchase process: This function enables consumers to place, change, and cancel orders online. Placing orders online can effectively alleviate consumer hesitation (e.g., Loiacono et al., 2007).

38. Providing a booking and confirmation system: Airbnb provides consumers with a “Request to book” button or an “Instant book” button to make their reservations. Airbnb can then hold consumers’ reservations according to their payment details (Airbnb, 2015).

39. Providing a trusted payments system: Airbnb manages a trusted system to collect and transfer payments. For example, Airbnb collaborates with third-party partners to ensure safe transfers of money (Airbnb, 2015).

2.3.6 Post-sales Services

The final stage is post-sales services. The ease of accessing a product delivery status and the quality of post-sales services influence the degrees of consumer satisfaction following a transaction. If stores can create higher levels of satisfaction in consumers, they can lessen consumer price sensitivity and attract new consumers as well (Engel & Blackwell, 1982).

Order Tracking and Cancellation Services

40. Inquiring about and tracking order statuses: Consumers are allowed to inquire about and track their reservations on the Airbnb website.

41. Allowing for online cancellations and refunds: Consumers are allowed to cancel their reservations on the Airbnb website. Once they cancel a reservation, consumers are automatically refunded their money according to the host’s cancellation policy.

42. Providing compensation service: When a host cancels a reservation, the consumer is compensated with a coupon for 20% of the payment, which can be used for the next trip (Airbnb, 2015).

Organizing Consumer Clubs

43. Providing community meet-ups: Airbnb community meet-ups allow consumers engage in authentic local activities with like-minded locals and travelers around the world (Airbnb, 2015).

44. Making Airbnb yours: Airbnb allows its consumers to create a personalized version of the Airbnb symbol to tell their own stories about what Airbnb and the feeling of belonging means to them (Airbnb, 2015).

45. Providing a reputation system: Airbnb allows its consumers to write reviews about hosts/accommodations they have stayed with/at through an online reputation system (Airbnb, 2015).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

In this study, we will adopt the survey method to collect respondent opinions about the factors that motivate consumers to use the Airbnb website. The survey comprises three sections: (a) categorization of the factors that motivate consumers to use the Airbnb website (i.e., the try-out and keep-using motivations); (b) Airbnb registered user; and (c) demographic information. The items pertaining to Airbnb registered user verified that the survey respondents were representative consumers.

At the beginning of the survey, the system will provide the respondents with a scenario and ask them to recall their most recent Airbnb using experiences. Every respondent will be instructed to classify the factors that influenced their motivations to use Airbnb into either category based on two factors: (a) the presence of such a service/feature on the Airbnb website attracts them to try out the website (i.e., the hygiene factor) and (b) the presence of such a service/feature on the Airbnb website motivates them to keep using the website (i.e., motivation factor). All of the website features will be randomly arranged. The respondents select the category they considered appropriate for each factor. As this study investigates motivations for using the Airbnb website, the respondents are required to have Airbnb using experiences. Before conducting the data analysis, the data from respondents who had no Airbnb using experiences will be removed. In addition, we will collect the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

We will conduct the data analysis on the retrieved surveys to determine the category of each factor. Factors will be classified into hygiene or motivation factors according to the definition of two-factor theory and ranked against the frequencies with which they are marked as either hygiene or motivation factors in the surveys.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

We will post a Web survey link on the PTT, the largest bulletin board system in Taiwan. We will obtain the results of this study by calculating the frequency with which each factor is categorized as a service/feature on the Airbnb website that attracts users to try out the website (hygiene factor) or a service/feature that motivates users to keep using the website (motivation factor). According to central limit theorem, when the people in a sample number more than 30, the sampling distribution of the sample mean becomes normal (Shayib, 2013). Thus, z testing can be used to examine whether there is a significant preference for the choice of each factor. Consequently, we will conduct z testing to examine the differences in preference of the classification of each factor.

4. Conclusion

Drawing on the two-factor theory, this study provides a very integral view to explicitly identify the most crucial design features of the Airbnb website and further distinguish the motivation and hygiene factors for using the Airbnb website across the different stages of the consumer decision-making process. As Airbnb's business model is reshaping the traditional hotel industry, this study should add to the growing literature related to the rapidly emerging sharing economy. Overall, our study makes contributions to both theory and practice. First, to the best of our knowledge, this study is the first to examine the influence of website features on consumer motivations for using the Airbnb website. Second, by classifying the 45 factors into motivation and hygiene factors across each stage of the EKB model, their influence on consumer motivations for using the Airbnb website become more apparent. Third, this study ranks the effects of the design features of the Airbnb website on consumer motivations for using the website. This ranking pinpoints the most effective design features and offers a comprehensive checklist for Web designers to organize their website features in a way that encourages a long-lasting motivation for using a social commerce website in the sharing economy.

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