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## Negative eWOM and perceived credibility: a potent mix in consumer relationships

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – Based on the foundations of the schema theory, the elaboration likelihood model, and customer experience literature, this research examines how the interplay between a consumer's previous shopping experience(s) and perceived credibility of negative online word-of-mouth leads to improved consumer-firm relationship quality.

**Design/methodology/approach** – We utilised series of scenario-based experiments ( $N = 918$ ) to test our research hypotheses.

**Findings** – We show that a focal customer's previous shopping experiences attenuate the perceived credibility of negative word-of-mouth on social media by other customers, which in turn weakens consumer-firm relationship quality. We also show that positive and negative perceptual experiences are asymmetric.

**Research limitations/implications** – First, the online shopping experiences described in the experimental scenarios were generic and did not refer to any particular product/service. Thus, calibrating products and services into categories, and studying how product type differences impact online shopping experiences warrant further research.

**Practical implications** – From a practical perspective, we demonstrate that not only does enhancing consumer-firm relationship quality demand meticulous integration of consumers' website and social media experiences, in positive vs. negative perception scenarios, relationship quality wane as review frequency increases.

**Originality/value** – We contribute significant insight to the existing literature by specifically adopting the premise that consumers' previous online shopping experience(s) will influence how credibly they will perceive negative online WOM posted on social media.

**Keywords** eWOM, perceived credibility, online shopping experience, relationship quality, elaboration likelihood model

## Introduction

Most people who shop online seek out experiences of other shoppers about products/services they are about to buy on social networks. Such advice/reviews are considered to be electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and are defined as “all informal communications directed at consumers through Internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services, or their sellers” (Litvin *et al.*, 2008, p. 461). Such shared customer experiences have become very influential (Mukerjee, 2020; Irshad *et al.*, 2020) because the faceless online reviewers are increasingly becoming opinion leaders of online communities (Dalman *et al.*, 2020; Litvin *et al.*, 2008). This is especially so when eWOM is perceived to be credible – the extent to which a piece of information is believable or true. Research shows that 95% of shoppers read a review prior to making a purchase while 82% specifically seek out negative reviews (McCabe, 2018). But somewhat problematic is that “*roughly half (51%) of those who read online reviews say they generally give an accurate picture of the true quality of the product, but a similar share (48%) believes it is often hard to tell if online reviews are truthful and unbiased*” (Smith and Anderson, 2016). Likewise, more than half of the product reviews shared about certain products on Amazon are potentially deceptive or questionable (Pyle *et al.*, 2021).

Given that the credibility of reviews plays an important role in online consumers purchase decisions and consumers appear to seek out negative reviews in particular, we pose two important managerial questions. First, how does consumers’ previous shopping experience(s) influence their perceived credibility of negative online word-of-mouth (PCNWOM)? Second, in light of the influence of reviews on purchase decisions, how should retailers manage relationships with shoppers with different levels of online shopping experience? These questions are vital because previous customer experience influence consumer attitude (Park *et al.*, 2021; Zheng and Bensebaa, 2022; Lao *et al.*, 2021) and experience has been touted as a significant

differentiator of how consumers process information (Dagger and O'Brien, 2010; Lao *et al.*, 2021; Talwar *et al.*, 2021). Despite Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman (2015) stating that the changing retail landscape brought about by digitalisation have affected the business models of many retailers, our understanding of the interactions of customer experience and WOM in general remains poor (Talwar *et al.*, 2021). Similarly, there have been calls to investigate how subsequent customer experience is influenced by customers' perceptions of a retail brand and the potential asymmetric effects of positive and negative perceptions (see Verhoef *et al.*, 2009). We contextualise our inquiry within an emerging market context where retailing dynamics are different, and thereby advance extant understanding of consumption experience from a developing market perspective. We contend that our efforts are the first to investigate the potential asymmetric outcome of positive and negative perceptions and how such polarised effect interact with shoppers' experience level to influence PCNWOM.

We draw on the schema theory (Bartlett 1932 in Brewer and Nakamura, 1984), the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986), and customer experience literature (notably Verhoef *et al.*, 2015; Verhoef *et al.*, 2009) to build a unique experience-perception-relationship quality model. By so doing, we make several theoretical and practical contributions. From a theoretical perspective, our study advances the literature based on the foundations of schema theory and the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) by specifically adopting the premise that consumers' previous online shopping experience(s) will influence how credibly they will perceive negative online WOM posted on social media. From a practical perspective, we demonstrate that positive and negative perceptual experiences are asymmetric. Thus, not only does enhancing consumer-firm relationship quality demand meticulous integration of consumers' website and social media experiences, in positive vs. negative perception scenarios, relationship quality wane as review frequency increases.

The next section presents the study's conceptual framework and develops the hypotheses. Thereafter, we explain the experimental method, and present the results of data analysis. Finally, we discuss the research implications and point out future research directions.

### **Conceptual framework**

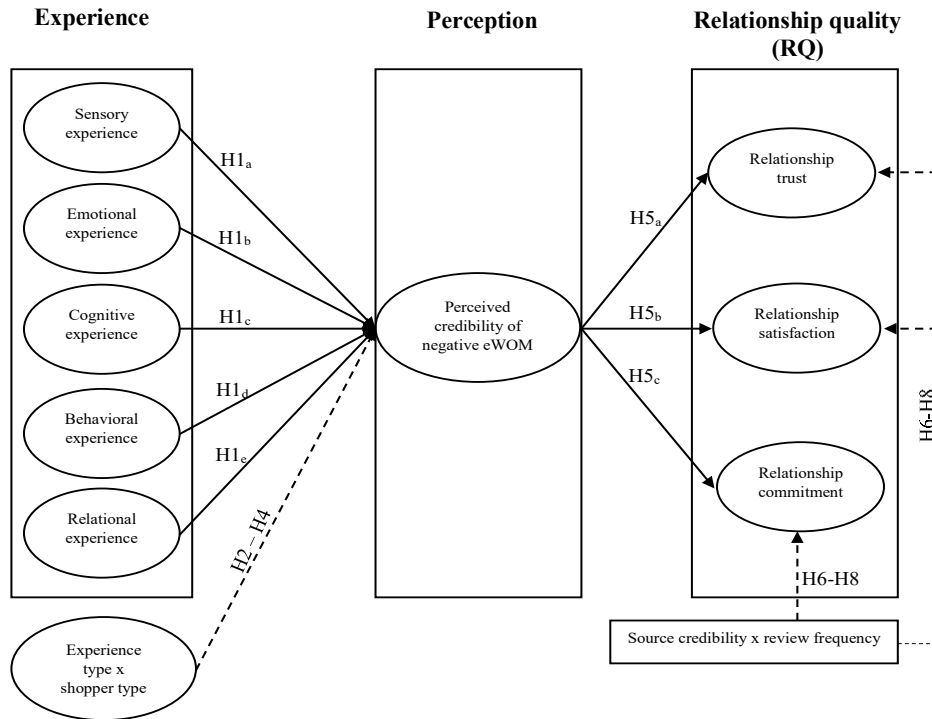
Verhoef *et al.* (2009, p. 32) posit that “customer experience construct is holistic in nature and involves the customer’s cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to the retailer”. Specifically, online customer experience (hereafter referred to as OCE) has been described as the overall psychological effect that a customer feels and which arises from customer interactions with numerous virtual touchpoints (Rose *et al.*, 2012). Customer experience has gained traction because firms have realised that success is inextricably tied to the delivery of seamless shopping experiences to customers; thus, organisations are making significant financial investments to create positive and memorable experiences that trigger greater sales (Rose *et al.*, 2012). Positive customer experiences attract greater emotional attachment to their brands, enhanced customer satisfaction and loyalty (Anshu *et al.*, 2022). Full comprehension of the domain of OCE must start with a deeper understanding of every direct and indirect customer-firm interactions (Frasquet *et al.*, 2015).

OCE has been shown to be a subjective, holistic, and multidimensional concept that originates from customers’ interactions with the online environment (Adhikari, 2015; Rose *et al.*, 2012; Gentile *et al.*, 2007). For instance, Klaus (2013) found that OCE comprises the functional and psychological dimensions. While the functional dimension in Klaus’ (2013) framework comprises usability, interactivity, communication, product presence and social presence, the psychological dimension constitutes value for money, trust, and context familiarity. Pandey and Chawla (2018) adopted four dimensions of OCE including

informativeness, interactivity, ease of navigation, and visual engagement as the functional elements of OCE, while the six psychological dimensions of OCE include e-negative beliefs, e-distrust, e-logistic ease, e-self efficacy, e-enjoyment, and e-convenience. We adopt the view that customer experience includes sensory, affective, cognitive, behavioural, and relational dimensions (Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2013) because it is encompassing and reduces the redundancy that might be inherent in adopting two-dimensional model with a variety of several sub-dimensions. Despite the growing body of extant works on customer experience, Nguyen et al. (2022) and Pandey and Chawla (2018) argue that the consequences of OCE are not completely understood.

Drawing upon the foregoing, our conceptual model (figure 1) captures customers' experiences across two touchpoints – all channels through which consumers experience a firm or its products and service – and its consequent effect on consumer-firm relationship quality (RQ hereafter). It postulates that consumers' previous online shopping experience(s) will influence how credibly they will perceive negative eWOM posted on the social media. Review source credibility reflects the confidence and assurance of the message's source (Belanche *et al.*, 2021). The model further postulates that perceptions from exposure to negative eWOM posted by other consumers will influence the consumer-firm RQ. RQ is a higher-order construct consisting of three different but interrelated constructs: trust, satisfaction and commitment (Dagger and O'Brien, 2010; Crosby *et al.*, 1990). While satisfaction is the affective state that arise from consumers' overall assessment of the service experience (Dagger and O'Brien, 2010), we define trust as the confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity. Morgan and Hunt (1994) defined relationship commitment as the enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship. These components of RQ are built based on

consumer-firm encounters or interactions through customer facing employees, marketing communication, or eWOM.



**Figure 1 Conceptual model**

**Hypotheses development**

*Schema theory*

According to Aronson *et al.* (2010, p. 85) “Schemas [are] mental structures [that] people use to organise their knowledge about the social world around themes or subjects, and influence the information that people notice, think about, and remember.” The schema theory assumes that when exposed to a phenomenon, the individual abstracts generic cognitive representation in his/her mind; thus, individuals enact meanings when new information interacts with old information represented in the schema (Bartlett 1932 in Brewer and Nakamura, 1984). For



instance, a shopper exposed to eWOM will judge its credibility by abstracting schemas of previous experiences with the firm in question or its products/services. Customers evaluate market offerings based on their own and/or other customers' experiences (Belanche *et al.*, 2021; Irshad *et al.*, 2020) because consumers influence one another through eWOM (Mukerjee, 2020). Consumers can only perceive integrated interactions if they had previously encountered congruent experiences across the firm's channels (Bèzes, 2021). According to Zheng and Bensebaa (2022), previous perceptual state triggers several attitude and behaviour. Thus, customers' previous experiences with a company or its products/services can influence the customers' perception of available information especially across different customer touchpoints. The utility of the schema theory in explaining the mechanics of our conceptual model also lies in the reasoning that retail customer experiences are complex because of the multiplicity of touchpoints that consumers encounter which implies that inference making is inevitable at some point.

#### *Previous OCE and PCNWOM*

Previous experience facilitates the understanding of consumer perceptions (Bèzes, 2021; Zheng and Bensebaa, 2022). Lao *et al.* (2021) and Bonfanti and Yfantidou (2021) highlighted the influence that the different components of customer shopping experience has in the shopping context. Consumers rely on previous consumption experiences as decision-making heuristics. Thus, past shopping experiences can influence the credibility of eWOM posted in the social media. Consumers' perceptions are a function of previous experiences that shape socially shared and unquestioned beliefs (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020; Holttinen, 2014). Per McVee *et al.* (2005), the schema theory provides the basis for linking up the interpretation of current information with previous experience. Given that previous purchase experience is linked to several attitudinal and

behavioural outcomes (see Zheng and Bensebaa, 2022), we theorise that website attributes previously experienced in the form of the five dimensions of customer experience will likely affect consumers' PCNWOM posted by other consumers. Thus:

**H1.** Consumers' previous OCE – a) sensory experience; b) emotional experience; c) cognitive experience; d) behavioural experience; and e) relational experience will negatively affect PCNWOM

### *Shopping experience and shopper type*

Customer service experiences can become memorable either because they were favourable or unfavourable (Bonfanti and Yfantidou, 2021; Åkesson *et al.*, 2014). A memorable experience is highly personalised and immersing (Landmark and Sjøbakk, 2017) and can result from processing customer cues such as service systems (e.g. Facebook posts and other self-service technologies) provided by the firm (Åkesson *et al.*, 2014). Consistent with the schema theory, self-schema and service experience are positively related (Yim *et al.*, 2007). Particularly, Pan and Chiou (2011) demonstrate that negative information weighs greater than positive information of similar extreme magnitude. Thus, negative eWOM will be more credible to consumers who have previously had negative experiences, but the opposite effect will be experienced by a consumer who previously had positive experience. However, consistent with the negativity bias perspective, the effect of negative experience will be more pronounced than the effect of positive information. Therefore, previous experience can conceivably influence consumer perception depending on whether it is positive or negative such that both will induce opposing effects. The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

**H2.** Shopping experience (i.e. positive vs. negative experience) will moderate PCNWOM links. Specifically, PCNWOM will be higher for customers who had negative experience(s) compared to those who had positive experience(s)

Less experienced shoppers are more likely to have lower expectations than experienced shoppers. This is so because a positive evaluation of service alternatives is more likely to occur if the focal service is congruent with self-schema (Yim *et al.*, 2007). Additionally, Dagger and O'Brien (2010) found that the knowledge structures upon which novice and experienced shoppers base their evaluations differ. Similarly, Talwar *et al.* (2021) argued that positive and negative WOM are driven by different motivations leading to varied effects on behavioural intentions. Since consumers differ in terms of shopping experience, knowledge, and mental states (Holttinen, 2014), considerations made by an experienced online customer differs from those made by novices (Boyer and Hult, 2006). There is a consensus that more experience leads to higher levels of expectations (Matzler *et al.*, 2015). Novice shoppers perceive a negative effect of special treatment benefits on trust because customers perceive this as familiarity beyond expectations while experienced shoppers perceive a positive effect between social benefits and trust, satisfaction and commitment (Dagger and O'Brien, 2010). Thus, the following is hypothesised:

**H3.** Shopper type (i.e. experienced shopper vs. novice shopper) will moderate the PCNWOM links. Specifically, PCNWOM will be higher for experienced shoppers compared to novice shoppers

The nature of eWOM following a shopping experience is not only dependent on present consumption experience, but also on the intensity and frequency of previous experiences. Online shoppers are often uncertain about what to expect during their first few episodes from an e-retailer, but successive episode adds to accumulated experience which adds to their comfort level with online purchases (Boyer and Hult, 2006). This is consistent with the schema theory, where the enactment of meanings manifests when old and new information interact (Bartlett 1932 in Brewer and Nakamura, 1984). Accordingly, online shoppers who have previously had series of negative experiences are more likely to assess negative eWOM more credibly than shoppers who have previously had series of positive experiences. This is because congruent experiences or communications are better perceived to be credible (Bèzes, 2021; Belanche *et al.*, 2021). Even when experienced and novice shoppers base their perceptions on a set of product/services attributes that are alike, they weigh those attributes differently (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987). However, the nature of the differential weighting of negative and positive information is also very likely to depend on whether a novice or an experienced customer is involved. Specifically, novice shoppers are more likely to attribute greater weight to both positive and negative previous experience(s) than experienced shoppers. Thus, we hypothesise as follows:

**H4.** Shopper type will have a moderating effect on the shopping experience and PCNWOM links. Specifically, PCNWOM will be higher for both positive previous experience condition and negative previous experience condition for novice shoppers compared to experienced shoppers

### *PCNWOM and relationship quality (RQ)*

The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) describes how persuasive communications can effectively lead to attitude formation and change (Petty and Cacioppo 1986). ELM posits that “a model explaining two ways that persuasive communications can cause attitude change: centrally, when people are motivated and have the ability to pay attention to the arguments in the communication, and peripherally, when people do not pay attention to the arguments but are instead swayed by surface characteristics (e.g. who gave the speech)” (Aronson *et al.*, 2010, p.217). For instance, consumers exposed to eWOM written by unknown reviewers are more likely to change their attitude due to the arguments in the review while consumers exposed to eWOM written by a popular celebrity(ies) are more likely to base their choices on the personality of the reviewer. Since consumers make more informed purchase decisions based on the information shared on social media by consumers who had experience with the company or its products/services (Irshad *et al.*, 2020), eWOM is one of the most influential archetype of customers’ voice that can influence the attitude of consumers.

Consumers exposed to negative reviews can assess the product as a poor-quality product (Dalman *et al.*, 2020; Lee *et al.*, 2008). Such quality assessment can consequently affect the consumer-firm RQ because customer shopping experience has an influence on value assessment (Lao *et al.*, 2021). Consumers consult eWOM to guide their brand choices (Pyle *et al.*, 2021) whilst eWOM is perceived as an important information source (Mukerjee, 2020). Online WOM is declared more impactful because consumers are of the view that it offers a more credible and reliable advice (Pyle *et al.*, 2021). Drawing on the foregoing and the tenets of the ELM, it follows that PCNWOM can influence RQ especially when the consumer is exposed to reviews with consistent valence. We therefore hypothesise that:

**H5.** PCNWOM will negatively influence a) relationship trust; b) relationship satisfaction; and  
c) relationship commitment

*Review source credibility, review frequency and RQ*

Consumers of online information mitigate message uncertainty and enhance credibility decisions by relying on opinion leaders, experts, and information arbiters' views (Dalman *et al.*, 2020) while the influence of online reviews on well-known hotel is less pronounced than for less-known hotels (Ladhari and Michaud, 2015). This is because brand testimonials originating from consumers that had first-hand satisfactory experiences are more credible in counteracting negative WOM (Dalman *et al.*, 2020). Thus, information from more credible sources are more likely to generate greater effects than information from less credible sources. The effect of online reviews varies depending on content (Talwar *et al.*, 2021; Belanche *et al.*, 2021; Kim and Lee, 2015). When consumer decision-making is driven by message content, the effect induced by messages emanate from message disparity (Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy, 1990). Thus, when available messages are consistent, the sources of those messages might induce little or no effect. But when opinion sources are inconsistent, consumers' uncertainty increases, and this can undermine the stability of consumer attitude (Lee *et al.*, 2008; Kim and Lee, 2015). Conversely, consumers will perceive greater certainty and their attitudes will remain stable irrespective of source when review valence is consistent. We, therefore, hypothesise that:

**H6.** The main effect of review source credibility on a) relationship trust, b) relationship satisfaction, and c) relationship commitment will attenuate when review valence is consistent.

High frequency of negative reviews induces consumers' negative attitude (Ladhari and Michaud, 2015; Lee *et al.*, 2008), and firms' reputation (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009). Conversely, negative online reviews are likely to have a weak effect on consumers who are already familiar with the services of the firm in question especially if they are few. Thus, while few number of negative reviews is innocuous and tolerable, it becomes more harmful as the frequency increases. The consensus in the literature is that consistent negative reviews induce negative effects whilst reviews are poised to have greater effects when they are numerous. Thus:

**H7.** Review frequency will moderate the links between PCNWOM and a) relationship trust, b) relationship satisfaction, and c) relationship commitment. Specifically, the links will be stronger for high review frequency compared with low review frequency

With the passage of time it becomes easier to make mental registration of the frequency at which certain incidents occur than the content of those incidents (Lin *et al.*, 2011). Review frequency is more pronounced in the consumers' memory than the contents of those experiences. According to Petty and Cacioppo (1984 in Lee *et al.*, 2008), when involvement is low, the effect of the arguments of a message is weakened as the number of arguments in that message increases. Consumers can activate low involvement mode when the valence of eWOM is consistent. When the low involvement mode is activated due to consistency in eWOM valence, the effect of the message source is automatically weakened. Thus, contrary to the tenets of ELM that distinguishes between two routes through which message persuasion occur, the differing effect of those routes may become infinitesimal if messages have consistent valence irrespective of source. Since less positive eWOM corresponds to frequency, review frequency can still have a pronounced effect in a situation whereby eWOM

has consistent valence as hypothesised in H7. However, the interaction effect of review source credibility and reviews' frequency on relationship quality (RQ) is likely to be attenuated in the face of consistent negative reviews, as individuals evaluate the weight of evidence supporting the weakening effect of message consistency. Specifically, under situation of consistent negative eWOM, the effect of review source credibility and review frequency will be weakened to a negligible extent irrespective of whether review source credibility and review frequency are at the high or low thresholds. We, therefore, hypothesise as follows:

**H8.** The interaction effect of review source credibility and review frequency on a) relationship trust, b) relationship satisfaction, and c) relationship commitment will be weakened when eWOM valence is consistent.

## **Methodology**

We devised two pilot studies to validate the experimental scenarios and two main studies to test our research hypotheses. While a large cohort of Postgraduate students participated in the pilot studies for a course credit, the main studies involved both staff and students at a university situated in Southeast Nigeria, a typical emerging market. Following current research (e.g., Izogo and Mpinganjira, 2022), participants were recruited through an invitation sent to an email list obtained from the university's IT department. Response rate was enhanced by incentivising participation in the main studies. Data quality was ensured across the studies through a filter question: previous online shopping experience (yes/no). We discounted participants who had no previous online shopping experience. Thus, valid participants were able to relate themselves to the experimental scenarios. Overall, the experimental procedure across the studies involved a demonstration of a typical shopping scenario, exposure to the experimental scenarios, and measurement of the latent variables and the manipulation checks. The appendix summarises all



the constructs examined in this study. Different scale formats and anchors used in the scales is consistent with its utility in attenuating common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). All the measurement scales were in the 7-point Likert-type scale format. The partial least squares structural equation modelling procedure, independent sample t-test, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) aided examination of experimental manipulation and test of research hypotheses.

### **Pilot study**

We conducted a pilot study to pre-test the experimental scenarios and establish measures of OCE. The pilot study combined two experiments. The first pilot experiment utilised a 2 (experience type: positive vs. negative)  $\times$  2 (shopper type: experienced shopper vs. novice shopper) between-subject factorial design. Consistent with extant works (see Izogo and Mpinganjira, 2021; Wan and Wyer, 2015; Mittal *et al.*, 2008), a scenario-based/vignette experiment was conducted with four scenarios (available on request). Scenario 1 described an experienced shopper who had series of positive experiences. The three remaining scenarios are similar to scenario 1 except that scenario 2 described a novice shopper who had a positive experience while scenario 3 described an experienced shopper who had series of negative experiences. Scenario 4 described a novice shopper who had a negative experience.

The second pilot experiment employed a 2 (review source credibility: high vs. low)  $\times$  2 (negative experience eWOM frequency: high vs. low) between-subject factorial design. Consistent with Ladhari and Michaud (2015) and Izogo and Mpinganjira (2020), the experiment was scenario-based. The design also called for four scenarios in which review source credibility and negative experience eWOM frequency were manipulated. Review source credibility was manipulated using popular Nigerian celebrities for high source credibility and unknown review writer(s) for low source credibility. This manipulation is consistent with the assumptions of the

ELM. For the manipulation of eWOM frequency, 3 reviews reflect high while 1 reflect low frequency. The validity of this manipulation is supported in previous research (see Boyer and Hult, 2006). Scenario 1 depicts a high review source credibility and high review frequency condition. The same opening vignette and reviews captured above were used for the three remaining scenarios except that the names of posters and the number of reviews were varied.

### *Procedure and findings*

A booklet containing the experimental scenarios for the two combined studies and the accompanying survey were developed and administered through a pen and paper approach. The measures of the five OCE dimensions contained in the survey were adapted from Hsu and Tsou (2011), Schmitt (1999) and Gentile *et al.* (2007) while the measures of PCNWOM were adapted from Freeman and Spyridakis (2004). To ensure that the instruments were randomly administered, they were premixed beforehand while also adhering to order counterbalancing procedures to check response bias. A total of 160 subjects simultaneously participated in the two pilot experiments (76.25% were valid for analysis). The manipulation of the variables in the first pilot experiment through three measures of satisfaction adapted from Crosby *et al.* (1990) which proved high internal consistency ( $\alpha$ : 0.949) and was therefore, averaged to form a composite score was successful ( $F_{(3, 118)} = 134.614, p < 0.001$ ) whilst the experiment was perceived to be realistic by all the four experimental groups (mean: 4.400–5.548 in a scale of 1–7). The resultant measures of all constructs examined through the Cronbach alpha reliability measure proved internal consistency ( $\alpha$ : 0.76–0.939). In the second pilot experiment, although measures of the three components of RQ which were adapted from Ndubisi (2007), Morgan and Hunt (1994), and Crosby, Evans, and Cowles (1990) and measures of PCNWOM demonstrated high internal consistency ( $\alpha$ : 0.918–0.966), its manipulation which was solely based on measures of cognition adapted from Mittal *et al.* (2008) proved unsuccessful both in terms of cognitive immersion ( $F_{(3,$

$_{118})= 1.535, p= 0.209)$  and PCNWOM ( $F_{(3, 118)}= 2.108, p= 0.103)$ ). We estimate that this manipulation error is traceable to the fact that the manipulation of previous experience had positive valence. In study 2, three remedial steps were taken to correct the manipulation error. Overall, the pilot study validated the OCE scales, experimental manipulations' quality and the timing of study 1 and 2.

## **Study 1**

### *Subjects, design and experimental procedures*

This study, like the pilot experiment 1 above in all respects, utilised a 2 (experience type: positive vs. negative)  $\times$  2 (shopper type: experienced shopper vs. novice shopper) between-subject factorial design. A total of 420 subjects participated and 378 responses were usable. Additionally, a teaching laboratory commonly used for a variety of postgraduate business classes with 15 participants seating capacity was the setting for stimuli presentation and survey completion. The researcher's computer situated in the front of the teaching laboratory was connected to an LCD projector with 8' x 8' screen. As subjects arrived at the laboratory, they were instructed to sit quietly, and the experimental guidelines were explained to them.

After the preliminary guidelines, the researcher proceeded to navigate through the Amazon.com website as an illustrative example of online shopping and its features. Subjects were encouraged to ask questions regarding the online shopping navigation as the demonstration proceeded. After demonstrating online shopping in Amazon.com for about 15 minutes, a booklet containing a described shopping scenario and the accompanying survey were shared to the subjects. To eliminate the effects of previous experiences with existing companies, a fictitious company name (Osas.com) was used in the experiment. The booklets were randomised by pre-mixing them beforehand. The booklets were retrieved 20 minutes after they were administered.

Of the 378 usable responses, 52.6% were female ( $M_{\text{age}} = 27.7$  years,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 6.6$  years). All the constructs demonstrated internal consistency ( $\alpha$ : 0.826–0.981; composite reliability: 0.919–0.986). The scale also demonstrated convergent and discriminant validity (AVEs: 0.820–0.945) while the square root of the AVEs were greater than the highest correlation pair (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

### *Results and discussion*

We find that OCE manipulation was successful: positive experience treatments were rated more positively and satisfactorily by experienced and novice shoppers ( $M_{\text{Experienced shopper}} = 6.23$  vs.  $M_{\text{novice shopper}} = 6.22$ ) than negative experience treatments ( $M_{\text{Experienced shopper}} = 3.28$  vs.  $M_{\text{novice shopper}} = 2.45$ ;  $F_{(3, 374)} = 323.40$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). The mean value of the aggregate measures employed to assess experimental realism is  $M = 5.48$  on a scale of 1–7, an indication of realistic experimental treatments.

As illustrated in Table 1, emotional experience ( $\beta = -0.488$ ;  $t = 8.103$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) and cognitive experience ( $\beta = -0.166$ ;  $t = 3.003$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) have a significant negative effect on PCNWOM. Conversely, sensory experience ( $\beta = 0.057$ ;  $t = 1.437$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ), behavioural experience ( $\beta = 0.022$ ;  $t = 0.015$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ), and relational experience ( $\beta = 0.001$ ;  $t = 0.015$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) do not significantly predict PCNWOM. The predictive accuracy of our model lies between weak and moderate thresholds ( $R^2 = 0.350$ ) (Hair et al. 2011). Additionally, the  $Q^2$  for the endogenous construct (i.e. PCNWOM) is 0.317. Thus, the model has acceptable predictive relevance (Hair et al. 2014). Therefore, *H1a-e* is partially supported.

We examined *H2–H4* using a two-way ANOVA test. The main effect of experience type was significant ( $F_{(1, 377)} = 252.75$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Shoppers who previously had positive experience(s) perceived negative experience eWOM to be less credible than shoppers who previously had

negative experience(s) ( $M_{\text{Positive experience}} = 3.21$  vs.  $M_{\text{Negative experience}} = 5.81$ ). Therefore, *H2* is supported. Conversely, the main effect of shopper type ( $F_{(1, 377)} = 0.99, p = 0.32$ ) and the interaction effect of experience type and shopper type ( $F_{(1, 377)} = 0.01, p = 0.91$ ) on PCNWOM was not significant. Thus, *H3* and *H4* are not supported.

Summarily, results of study 1 reveal that emotional experience is the most prominent negative predictor of PCNWOM posted in the social media followed by cognitive experience. These findings present an empirical reinforcement of the thoughts of business consultants who claim that 85% and 15% of customer experience are respectively emotional and physical (Shaw, 2007) and the intuition-based reasoning that developed markets' consumers place more emphasis on 'value for money' than emerging markets' consumers (Marceux, 2015). Additionally, it was established that experience type has a significant main effect on PCNWOM. Such evidence supposes that positive and negative perceptions induces asymmetric effects on PCNWOM but fails to indicate how this sequence of effect affect consumer-firm RQ. Study 2 therefore reports the results of an empirical study that investigated the PCNWOM–RQ link.

Hypothesized path	Path coefficient	t-value
H1a: Sensory experience → PCNWOM	0.057	1.437 <sup>ns</sup>
H1b: Emotional experience → PCNWOM	-0.488	8.103***
H1c: Cognitive experience → PCNWOM	-0.166	3.003**
H1d: Behavioral experience → PCNWOM	0.022	0.474 <sup>ns</sup>
H1e: Relational experience → PCNWOM	0.001	0.015 <sup>ns</sup>
Notes: <sup>ns</sup> = Not significant; ** $p < 0.01$ ; *** $p < 0.001$ ; $R^2 = 0.350$ ; $Q^2 = 0.317$ ; observed power = 1.0		

**Table 1 OCE and its Effects**

## Study 2

### *Subjects, design and experimental procedures*

In this study we employed a 2 (experience type: positive vs. negative)  $\times$  2 (review source credibility: high vs. low)  $\times$  2 (frequency of negative experience eWOM: high vs. low) between-subject factorial design to remedy the manipulation shortfall in the pilot study. Except for distinguishing between prior positive experience and prior negative experience, everything else was as in pilot experiment 2. The experimental procedures were the same as in study 1 except that the maximum number of subjects in each experimental section which lasted for an average of 35 minutes was 20. To eliminate the effects of previous experiences with existing companies, a new company name (Blue Gate) was devised for the experiment. Subjects were provided with differing scenarios (a brief shopping episode and a selection of consumer reviews), and these scenarios were randomised between-subjects. 400 subjects participated resulting in 380 usable responses. 51.8% of the valid responses were male ( $M_{\text{age}} = 23.79\text{years}$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 3.64\text{years}$ ). An independent sample *t*-test applied to the randomly split sample indicate that response bias was not a serious source of concern because apart from PCNWOM ( $t_{(224)} = 2.278$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), other group comparisons across all the study variables were not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). All the constructs demonstrated internal consistency ( $\alpha$ : 0.958–0.978; composite reliability: 0.973–0.986). The scale also demonstrated convergent and discriminant validity since the AVEs (0.901–0.958) were above 0.5 while the square root of the AVEs were greater than the highest correlation pair (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

### *Results*

The manipulation quality of review source credibility was checked based on the Wan and Wyer's (2015) approach by comparing the rating given to celebrities with the rating given to non-

celebrities on the following question: “To what extent can you say that the people who posted these comments are popular Nigerian celebrities?” The review source credibility manipulation was successful: the independent sample *t*-test indicates that reviews posted by celebrities were rated more positively/credibly than the reviews posted by non-celebrities ( $M_{\text{Celebrities}} = 5.94$  vs.  $M_{\text{Non-celebrities}} = 2.99$ ;  $t_{(378)} = 16.06$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) along a scale from 1 to 7. The review frequency manipulation examined by asking a dichotomous yes/no question was also successful: the Chi-Square statistic indicated a significant difference between subjects who read three reviews and those who read a single review ( $\chi^2_{(1)} = 221.693$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The manipulation quality of prior experience type was assessed by examining cognition across the two groups. The use of cognition is strictly based on the reasoning that negative information carries greater weight than extremely positive information (Park and Lee, 2009). Measures of cognition were negatively worded so that high scores reflect low cognition while low scores reflect high cognition. The manipulation was successful: the independent sample *t*-test indicates that subjects who read prior positive experience were lower in cognition than those who read prior negative experience ( $M_{\text{Prior positive experience}} = 5.31$  vs.  $M_{\text{Prior negative experience}} = 4.83$ ;  $t_{(368.256)} = 3.33$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

We find that PCNWOM (see Table 2) have a significant negative effect on relationship trust ( $\beta = -0.681$ ;  $t = 20.997$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), relationship satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.697$ ;  $t = 22.762$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), and relationship commitment ( $\beta = -0.636$ ;  $t = 19.555$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, we conclude that *H5a-c* are all supported.

Hypothesized path	Path coefficient	t-value	Cross-validated redundancy ( $Q^2$ )
H5a: PCNWOM→ Relationship trust	-0.681	20.997***	0.371
H5b: PCNWOM→ Relationship satisfaction	-0.697	22.762***	0.447
H5c: PCNWOM→ Relationship commitment	-0.636	19.555***	0.409

\*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ;  $R^2 = 0.350$

**Table 2 PCNWOM and its Effects**

Following Wan and Wyer's (2015), a three-way independent MANOVA was utilised to examine *H6–H8*. As shown in Table 4, the results indicate that after reading other customers' negative experience review(s), participants were generally more likely to exhibit relationship trust ( $M_{\text{Positive experience}} = 5.12$  vs.  $M_{\text{Negative experience}} = 2.41$ ;  $F_{(1, 379)} = 322.09$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); relationship satisfaction ( $M_{\text{Positive experience}} = 5.19$  vs.  $M_{\text{Negative experience}} = 2.05$ ;  $F_{(1, 379)} = 361.13$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and relationship commitment ( $M_{\text{Positive experience}} = 4.99$  vs.  $M_{\text{Negative experience}} = 2.42$ ;  $F_{(1, 379)} = 273.91$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) when their previous shopping experiences are positive than when their previous shopping experience are negative. We also find that after reading other customers' negative experience review(s), participants were generally less likely to exhibit relationship trust ( $M_{\text{High frequency}} = 3.49$  vs.  $M_{\text{Low frequency}} = 4.04$ ;  $F_{(1, 379)} = 13.18$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); relationship satisfaction ( $M_{\text{High frequency}} = 3.37$  vs.  $M_{\text{Low frequency}} = 3.88$ ;  $F_{(1, 379)} = 9.47$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and relationship commitment ( $M_{\text{High frequency}} = 3.50$  vs.  $M_{\text{Low frequency}} = 3.91$ ;  $F_{(1, 379)} = 6.88$ ,  $p = 0.009$ ) when exposed to three negative experience reviews than when exposed to one negative experience review. The above results permit us to confirm that *H7a-c* are supported.

Consistent with our expectations, the main effect of review source credibility on relationship trust ( $M_{\text{High review source credibility}} = 3.88$  vs.  $M_{\text{Low review source credibility}} = 3.65$ ;  $F_{(1, 379)} = 2.28$ ,  $p = 0.13$ ); relationship satisfaction ( $M_{\text{High review source credibility}} = 3.76$  vs.  $M_{\text{Low review source credibility}} = 3.49$ ;  $F_{(1, 379)} = 2.58$ ,  $p = 0.11$ ), and relationship commitment ( $M_{\text{High review source credibility}} = 3.83$  vs.  $M_{\text{Low}}$



review source credibility = 3.58;  $F_{(1, 379)} = 2.61, p = 0.11$ ) were not significant. Additionally, the interaction effects of review source credibility and review frequency ( $F_{(1, 379)}, p > 0.05$ ) and the three-way interaction of these variables and experience type ( $F_{(1, 379)}; p > 0.05$ ) on the three components of RQ were all insignificant. With insufficient power and very low effect sizes (see Table 3), there was enough evidence to confirm that no such effect is evident in the population. Thus,  $H6a-c$  and  $H8a-c$  are supported.

Independent variables	Wilks' Lambda	F	p-value	$\eta^2$
Experience type	0.509	118.773	0.000	0.491
Review source credibility	0.991	1.070	0.362	0.009
Review frequency	0.967	4.242	0.006	0.033
Experience type × review source credibility	0.989	1.331	0.264	0.011
Experience type × review frequency	0.969	3.895	0.009	0.031
Review source credibility × review frequency	1.000	0.055	0.983	0.000
Experience type × review source credibility × review frequency	0.984	2.047	0.107	0.016

**Table 3 Wilks' Lambda, Effect Size and Statistical Power**

	High review frequency		Low review frequency	
	High review source credibility	Low review source credibility	High review source credibility	Low review source credibility
Relationship trust				
Positive experience	4.54 <sub>a</sub> (1.83) (4.17–4.90)	4.66 <sub>a</sub> (1.96) (4.2–5.05)	5.71 <sub>c</sub> (1.20) (5.34–6.08)	5.55 <sub>c</sub> (1.33) (5.15–5.95)
Negative experience	2.68 <sub>b</sub> (1.47) (2.23–3.13)	2.07 <sub>ab</sub> (0.83) (1.63–2.52)	2.57 <sub>b</sub> (1.20) (2.10–3.04)	2.30 <sub>b</sub> (0.97) (1.84–2.77)
Relationship satisfaction				
Positive experience	4.79 <sub>a</sub> (2.07) (4.40–5.19)	4.62 <sub>a</sub> (2.34) (4.20–5.05)	5.75 <sub>c</sub> (1.25) (5.35–6.16)	5.60 <sub>c</sub> (1.49) (5.19–6.03)
Negative experience	2.18 <sub>b</sub> (1.32) (1.68–2.68)	1.88 <sub>b</sub> (1.00) (1.39–2.36)	2.30 <sub>b</sub> (1.37) (1.79–2.81)	1.86 <sub>bc</sub> (0.89) (1.35–2.37)
Relationship commitment				
Positive experience	4.79 <sub>a</sub> (1.82) (4.41–5.16)	4.40 <sub>a</sub> (2.00) (4.00–4.80)	5.46 <sub>c</sub> (1.07) (5.08–5.84)	5.31 <sub>c</sub> (1.34) (4.90–5.71)
Negative experience	2.47 <sub>b</sub> (1.53) (2.00–2.94)	2.35 <sub>b</sub> (1.18) (1.89–2.81)	2.60 <sub>b</sub> (1.25) (2.12–3.08)	2.26 <sub>bc</sub> (1.15) (1.78–2.74)

Note: The range of values in the parenthesis represent 95% confidence interval. The standard deviations are the decimal values in parentheses. The values with subscripts are the means. Means with different subscripts are significantly different at  $p < 0.05$

**Table 4 Dimensions of RQ as a Function of Review Source Credibility, Review Frequency, and Experience Type**

Hypothesized path	Evidence	Result
<i>H1a</i> : Sensory experience → PCNWOM	$p > 0.05$	Not supported
<i>H1b</i> : Emotional experience → PCNWOM	$p < 0.001$	Supported
<i>H1c</i> : Cognitive experience → PCNWOM	$p < 0.01$	Supported
<i>H1d</i> : Behavioral experience → PCNWOM	$p > 0.05$	Not supported
<i>H1e</i> : Relational experience → PCNWOM	$p > 0.05$	Not supported
<i>H2</i> : Experience type → PCNWOM	$p < 0.001$	Supported
<i>H3</i> : Shopper type → PCNWOM	$p > 0.05$	Insufficient power
<i>H4</i> : Experience type × shopper type → PCNWOM	$p > 0.05$	Insufficient power
<i>H5a</i> : PCNWOM → Relationship trust	$p < 0.001$	Supported
<i>H5b</i> : PCNWOM → Relationship satisfaction	$p < 0.001$	Supported
<i>H5c</i> : PCNWOM → Relationship commitment	$p < 0.001$	Supported
<i>H6a</i> : Review source credibility → Relationship trust	$p > 0.05$	Supported
<i>H6b</i> : Review source credibility → Relationship satisfaction	$p > 0.05$	Supported
<i>H6c</i> : Review source credibility → Relationship commitment	$p > 0.05$	Supported
<i>H7a</i> : Review frequency → Relationship trust	$p < 0.01$	Supported
<i>H7b</i> : Review frequency → Relationship satisfaction	$p < 0.01$	Supported
<i>H7c</i> : Review frequency → Relationship commitment	$p < 0.01$	Supported
<i>H8a</i> : Review source credibility × review frequency → Relationship trust	$p > 0.05$	Supported
<i>H8b</i> : Review source credibility × review frequency → Relationship satisfaction	$p > 0.05$	Supported
<i>H8c</i> : Review source credibility × review frequency → Relationship commitment	$p > 0.05$	Supported

Notes: Insufficient power connotes that the test is not sufficiently powered to conclude on the observed effect and by implication the hypothesized path

**Table 5 Summary of the Results Generated from the Hypotheses Tests**

## General discussion and implications

We set initially out to explore how a consumers' previous shopping experience(s) influence their perceived credibility of negative online word of mouth (PCNWOM) and how firms could manage consumer-firm relationship quality (RQ) with shoppers given that they have different levels of online shopping experience. Overall, we find support for the differential importance of the online customer experience (OCE) dimensions on PCNWOM. Our findings resonate with the works of Schmitt and Zarantonello (2013) and Lao *et al.* (2021). Specifically, we demonstrate the key role of emotional experience and cognitive experience in predicting PCNWOM. This is consistent with Adhikari (2015) who found that subjective attributes are more influential than objective attributes. Conversely, evidence from developed markets indicate that relational experience is an important driver of consumer behaviour (see Bonfanti and Yfantidou, 2021). We also show that PCNWOM has a significant negative effect on the

three dimensions of RQ (i.e. relationship trust, relationship satisfaction, and relationship commitment). Amongst others, our findings make important theoretical and managerial contributions.

### *Theoretical implications*

First, we offer insights to the experiential consumption literature by developing and testing an experience-perception-RQ model in a unique way. Although the effects of previous OCE have been previously examined, the effect of previous OCE on PCNWOM is yet to be established. Equally, little attention has been paid to how consumers process and integrate multiple online reviews (Kim and Lee, 2015) especially the processes through which PCNWOM generate consumer-firm RQ. The model advanced here not only portray the multi-channel nature of OCE from the perspective of two social cognitive psychology theories, but also advance the holistic view of customer experience held in a variety of previous studies (see Bèzes, 2021; Verhoef *et al.*, 2009; Gentile *et al.*, 2007) by demonstrating how consumer-firm RQ can be enhanced through a simultaneous consideration of customer experiences emanating from both company website and social media site. Additionally, as Herhausen *et al.* (2015) demonstrably argued, while channel integration has been recognised as a promising strategy for retailers, its influence on customer responses toward retailers and across several channels remains unclear. We build on previous works on channel integration (e.g. Herhausen *et al.*, 2015; Bèzes, 2021) by facilitating the understanding of how multichannel customer experience influence RQ from the viewpoint of two theories of social cognitive psychology.

Second, while there is merit in examining customer experience holistically through aggregate measures, examining specific dimensions of customer experience is vital because it has been argued that specific elements of experience are more influential than others in certain

contexts (Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2013; Lao *et al.*, 2021). We incrementally extended the context-specific character of OCE by demonstrating that shoppers' previous emotional experience(s) is/are the most influential driver of PCNWOM in an emerging online retailing market. This strengthens the view that developed market consumers place more emphasis on 'value for money' than their emerging markets counterparts (see Marceux, 2015). From a theoretical standpoint, we add to the extant body of works that support the dominance of subjective over objectives experiential attributes (see Adhikari, 2015).

There is a broad claim that eWOM has become a key determinant of consumer behaviour (Irshad *et al.*, 2020; Park *et al.*, 2021). Given this background, our third contribution is that we examine how review source credibility interacts with review quantity to influence RQ from the perspective of ELM. By so doing, we incrementally advance eWOM literature by drawing on the ELM to demonstrate that PCNWOM has a negative effect on consumer-firm RQ. We also show that review frequency affects consumer-firm RQ such that consumer-firm RQ attenuates as review frequency increases. Furthermore, by simultaneously demonstrating the abovementioned effects in situations of previous positive experience vs. previous negative experience, we respond to previous calls in the literature to ascertain whether positive and negative perceptions induce asymmetric effects (see Verhoef *et al.*, 2009). We also advance literature on the ELM by demonstrating that the effects (i.e. main and interaction effects) of the two thresholds of elaboration can become infinitesimal if consumers are exposed to reviews with consistent valence. We highlight the attenuating effect of message consistency on source credibility and demonstrate that contrary to the tenets of the ELM, consumers exposed to reviews of consistent negative valence will focus less on review source credibility: thereby, weakening its effect to an insignificant level.

Finally, little is known about how customers' multiple channel experiences form into a process (Bèzes, 2021). Extant customer experience studies that utilised an experimental design failed to delineate how experiences gleaned from a company's website can influence consumers' perception of negative experience reviews posted by fellow customers on the social media. We broaden our understanding and advance the channel integration literature (see Bèzes, 2021) by demonstrating how website experiences affect consumer perception through an experimental kind of research design. The designs of the scenario-based experiments were uniquely consistent with Kozinets' (1998) netnographic research approach which is supported as the best suited for the study of consumers' behaviour of Internet cultures and communities while also offering significant insights into the consumption patterns of online consumer groups because the narratives built into pilot experiment 2 and study 2 were naturalistic reviews of experienced customers.

### *Managerial implications*

Emerging markets consumers differ from their matured markets counterparts because the latter place more emphasis on 'value for money' than the former who are argued to be more emotional in their purchase decisions (Marceux, 2015). However, our findings suggest that it may be prudent for online retailers in emerging e-retailing markets to target online shoppers on an emotional level. Similarly, given that previous positive experiences attenuate the effect of negative experience review(s) posted in the social media, online retailers can take comfort in that continued positive experiences are perhaps the most important aspect of online shopping. Consumers are willing to overlook negative eWOM if they have had good experiences in the past.

Second, our results suggest that those consumers who give credence to perceive negative experience reviews are very unlikely to maintain their relationships with a firm if alternative offerings abound. Negative experiences developed from exposure to negative reviews can be extrapolated to competing market offerings (Sawyer, 1997). For instance, if an online electronic repair centre creates more problem than they solve when working on a consumers' electronic gadget, the consumer may join those that believe that online repair centres are not to be trusted and must be avoided at all cost. We recommend that online retailers can improve complaint management and consequently enhance consumer-firm RQ by creating Facebook pages to respond to consumers' reviews.

Third, given that we show that credibly perceived negative experience reviews can be extrapolated to competing offerings, it can be fruitful for firms to explore ways and means of enticing customers who are dissatisfied with its offerings. This may mean implementing strategies such as superior services, competitive positioning in their websites and Facebook pages in place of attempting to be on the defensive from the influence of negative eWOM emanating from customers of competitors. Additionally, online retailers can deploy their Facebook pages to tell distinctive and compelling stories about their products/services. For example, companies like Microsoft, IBM, and Dell have acknowledged online product communities as core elements of their service infrastructure and consequently positioned the platforms as post-purchase support centres. Distinctive and compelling stories have the capacity to weaken the effects of negative eWOM emanating from competitors.

#### *Limitations and future research*

As with every research of this nature, some evident limitations are noteworthy. First, the online shopping experiences described in the experimental scenarios were generic and did not refer to

any particular product/service. The scenarios may, therefore, lack the capacity to reflect the unique attributes of different categories of product. Thus, calibrating products and services into categories, and studying how product types impact online shopping experiences warrant further research. It will be interesting if the features of experience goods that can be easily transformed into search features by the Internet are properly delineated because such insight will guide practitioners on features they can focus on to achieve product or service differentiation. Additionally, studying the interaction effect of experience type and social aggregation factors on consumer-firm RQ from the viewpoint of the dual-process theory is a viable area of research that can serve to advance contemporary theories of persuasion and the multiple processes that trigger attitude change. Finally, since our study is limited to two customer touchpoints, we submit that the understanding of omni-channel customer experience can be furthered by investigating how other touchpoints such as MySpace, Friendster, twitter, YouTube, emails and so on shape customers perception about products/services and consumer-firm RQ.

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## **Appendix**

### Measurement scales

Sensory experience (Hsu and Tsou, 2011; Schmitt, 1999):

- How interesting do you think the shopping experience described above was?
- How important will quality of pictures of products and the website’s beauty be to you in making that purchase?
- How important will the visual quality of videos demonstrating product features be to you in making that purchase?
- How important will the clearness and quality of sounds of audio videos demonstrating products features be to you in making that purchase?

Emotional experience (Hsu and Tsou, 2011; Schmitt, 1999):

- To what extent would you say shopping on [firm] website went in creating positive feelings in you?
- To what extent would you say that shopping on [firm] website went in putting you in certain mood (e.g. joyous mood)?
- To what extent would you say shopping on [firm] website went in creating fun-like feelings in you?
- To what extent can you say that shopping on [firm] website didn’t appealed to your inner feelings in anyway (-)

Cognitive experience (Hsu and Tsou, 2011; Schmitt, 1999):

- How helpful was the online shopping activity in stimulating your curiosity/interest in online shopping?
- How helpful would you say the quality/price relationship was to you in making the purchase on [firm] website?
- How helpful do you think the ease with which you can shop around/access products on [firm] website was to you in making the purchase?
- Overall, how helpful do you think [firm] website was in enabling you solve your purchase problems?

Behavioural experience (Hsu and Tsou, 2011; Schmitt, 1999):

- How important do you think shopping on [firm] website was in making you think about your lifestyle?
- How important do you think shopping on [firm] website was in reminding you of the things you can do?
- How important would you say shopping on [firm] website from the comfort of your home or office was in enabling you change your lifestyle?
- Shopping on [firm] website did not make you think about your lifestyle (-)
- Shopping on [firm] website did not remind you of what you can do (-)

Relational experience (Hsu and Tsou, 2011; Gentile et al., 2007):

- How likely are you to share your [firm] shopping experience with other people (e.g. friends, colleagues, family members etc.)?
- To what extent do you think shopping on [firm] website makes you feel a sense of belonging to the wider society (i.e. do you think shopping Osas.com will make you feel perceived positively by your peers, family members, colleagues etc?)
- To what extent does shopping on [firm] website make you think about relationships with others (e.g. friends, colleagues, family members etc)
- To what extent do you think shopping on [firm] website doesn't make you feel a sense of belonging to the wider society (-)

Perceived credibility of negative eWOM (Freeman and Spyridakis, 2004):

- I will perceive that information as credible/reliable



- I will perceive the information as trustworthy
- I will perceive the information as accurate
- I will perceive the information as biased (-)

Relationship trust (Crosby et al., 1990; and Ndubisi, 2007):

- I can still rely upon blue gate to keep to their promises
- [Firm] is a trustworthy company
- I still believe that [firm] puts the customers' interests before its own interest
- I still feel safe to transact businesses with [firm]

Relationship satisfaction (Crosby et al., 1990):

- Overall, how satisfactory would you say your shopping experience with [firm] was?
- Overall, how favourable would you say your shopping experience with [firm] was?
- Overall, how pleased would you say your shopping experience with [firm] was?

Relationship commitment (Morgan and Hunt, 1994):

- My relationship with [firm] is something that I'm still committed to
- I'm still willing to maintain my relationship with [firm] indefinitely
- I'm still willing to put maximum effort to ensure that I maintain my relationship with [firm]