



## How vital is the role of affect on post-adoption behaviors? An examination of social commerce users



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### ABSTRACT

Social commerce describes a new trend and fast-growing e-commerce business model that utilizes social connections in social networking to promote commerce in the online space. Despite its growth much is not known about factors that motivate users beyond their initial adoption to engage in post-adoption behaviors such as continuance intention to use social commerce to the point of becoming addictive users. Two predominant views have been used to study social commerce in the literature; one emphasizes the role of affect on behavioral outcomes (i.e., dual processing view) while the other suggests that affect is not important in use decisions (i.e., the independency view). Moreover, both views offer inconsistent results on understanding how consumers use social commerce sites. To address this inconsistency in the literature, this paper proposes and empirically evaluates a model that integrates the existing views to extend our understanding on social commerce post-adoption behaviors. Based on existing literature, this study identifies social, hedonic, and utilitarian gratifications that social commerce users seek to fulfill on social commerce sites. A cross-section of 510 social commerce users were recruited to report their perceptions on social commerce usage. Results indicate that the integrated model outperforms each of the dominant views in terms of explaining continuance use intentions and addictive behaviors. Satisfaction was found to both fully and partially mediate the relationship between perceived gratifications and their behavioral outcomes on social commerce sites.

### 1. Introduction

Social commerce describes exchange-related activities including various stages of consumers' decision-making such as purchasing and selling in computer-mediated social environments where network members have meaningful personal connections and sustained social interactions (Zhang and Benyoucef, 2016). This model of commerce is an emerging business activity that utilizes the marketing potential of online peers (Liang and Turban, 2011; Zhang and Wang, 2012). Social commerce is becoming increasingly relevant with a revenue estimated to continue to grow and reach \$80 billion U.S dollars by the year 2020 (Insights, 2012).

Although frameworks have been proposed to study social commerce, there is a dearth of research that systematically accounts for context-specific gratifications that shape social commerce users' post-adoption behaviors. Like other IT-based enterprises, consumer post-adoption of social commerce is important to sustain its continued success (Bhattacharjee, 2001a). This study focuses on two post-adoption

behaviors that have been studied in the social commerce context including continuance intentions (Chiu, Wang, Fang, & Huang, 2014; Huang, Hsieh, & Wu, 2014; Liang and Turban, 2011) and addictive use (Chiu et al., 2014; Huang et al., 2014). Continuance intentions refer to a user's intention to continue to use an IS artifact after adopting it rather than discontinue it (Bhattacharjee, 2001a). Addictive use is a more serious use behavior and is defined as the maladaptive psychological dependency on an individual's use of social commerce site which is reflected in behaviors such as compulsion, deviance and state of flow (Turel, Serenko, & Giles, 2011).

Existing research on post-adoption of social commerce mostly suggest that hedonic and utilitarian gratifications are the primary factors that drive consumers' social commerce post-adoption decisions (Chiu et al., 2014; Liang & Turban, 2011). Other research also suggest that since social commerce builds on social-media supported commercial activities, its use fulfills users' social gratification needs (Chen & Shen, 2015; Liang, Ho, Li, & Turban, 2011; Zhang & Wang, 2012). Studies that have examined how need fulfillment motivates use behaviors on

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social commerce either pay attention to utilitarian and hedonic needs (Liang et al., 2011) or just social needs. This paper argues that the simultaneous consideration of all the gratifications (hedonic, utilitarian and social) is useful for a richer understanding of the social commerce context. First, the fulfillment of the three types of needs (utilitarian, social, and hedonic) represents a variety of gratifications individuals can achieve in their usage of social commerce sites. Second, the extent to which these gratifications are met can influence the evaluation of social commerce sites (both affective and behavioral outcomes) differently (Alderfer and Guzzo, 1979). However, to the best of our knowledge and based on a review of the literature (Liang et al., 2011), there is a dearth of a systematic understanding on how the fulfillment of these gratifications (i.e., social, hedonic, or utilitarian) directly or indirectly influence users' post-adoption behaviors through the affective evaluation (i.e., satisfaction) of social commerce sites.

Information systems (IS) researchers use two theoretical views to investigate post-adoption of technologies. The independency view suggests that cognitive appraisal raises independent emotions and influences behaviors directly (Zajonc, Pietromonaco, & Bargh, 1982). A theory that follows this view in IS research is the uses and gratifications theory (U&GT). On the other hand, dual processing view emphasizes the interplay of cognition and emotion suggesting that human decision processes involve both analytical (i.e., what a person thinks) and experiential (i.e., how a person feels about it) thinking (Vance, Lowry, & Eggett, 2013). Following the dual processing view, motivational models (MM) are used to investigate post-adoption technology use (Luo, Chea, & Chen, 2011). Both theoretical views assume that needs motivate an individual's post-adoption of technology. In U&GT studies, users' gratifications directly trigger motivations whereas satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between users' need fulfillment and their use behaviors in MM studies. Findings from using each view demonstrate insufficiencies in the approach based on the limited variability explained in the post-adoption behaviors studied. Consequently, in accordance to the recommendation provided in prior research (Bhattacharjee, 2001a), this study presents an integration of both views to provide a richer contextual understanding of how gratifications directly and indirectly influence social commerce post-adoption behaviors.

To address the issues discussed above, the current study presents and evaluates an integrated gratifications & motivational model (IGMM) that combines both views in explaining post-adoption behaviors in the social commerce context. More importantly, the integrated model allows us to investigate the partial moderation effect of satisfaction (an affective response to technology use) on the relationship between users' gratifications and post-adoption behaviors on social commerce sites. Structural equation modeling analysis was performed to estimate the proposed IGMM. We also tested and compared the two predominant theoretical views with their integration in the context of social commerce. Data collected from 510 social commerce users support the validity of the proposed IGMM in explaining users' continuance intentions and addictive use of social commerce sites. The proposed integrated model bridges the gaps between the two extreme views on the role of affect (satisfaction) on IS post-adoption behaviors. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that the proposed IGMM outperforms models based on both the dual processing and independency views to explain social commerce post-adoption behaviors.

The rest of this paper is organized into sections as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature on the independency view and dual processing view. Section 3 proposes and develops an integrated research model (IGMM) and hypotheses. Section 4 presents the research methodologies, followed by data analysis and results in Section 5. Research and practical implications, limitations and future research are discussed in Section 6. The paper concludes in Section 7.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Independency view: uses and gratifications theory

Under the independency view, U&GT revolves around understanding the process by which consumers' psychological needs act as the motivating factor in determining their media consumption choice. Although U&GT has its roots in communications research, a growing number of studies in the IS literature suggest its efficacy in explaining individuals' technology post-adoption behaviors (Huang et al., 2014; Li, Liu, Xu, Heikkilä, & Van Der Heijden, 2015). According to U&GT, peoples' needs arouse motivations that influence their use of communication media, which ultimately leads to their cognitive and behavioral outcomes (Katz and Blumler, 1974; Weibull, 1985). As mentioned earlier, prior research on social commerce post-adoption suggests three needs that people seek to gratify when using social commerce sites including social, hedonic and utilitarian gratifications (Chiu et al., 2014; Huang et al., 2014; Li et al., 2015). In the following sections, we present how the fulfillment of these needs motivate post-adoption behaviors.

#### 2.1.1. Social gratifications and behavioral outcomes

Social gratifications in this study refer to the assessment of social need fulfillment resulting from a behavior that one considers to be socially desirable as well as socially acceptable in one's intimate social networks. The examination of social gratifications in this study presents a more balanced view of social influence beyond the traditional social norm construct in adoption studies. That is, beyond the social validation from important peers in one's network (social norm), social gratifications also account for how the user perceives the use of social commerce as a source of social capital in his or her social network (Smock, Ellison, Lampe, & Wohn, 2011). Social gratifications derived from using social commerce sites are independent of the product or service obtained from the site (Frenzen and Davis, 1990). Prior research suggests that the use of social commerce is a socially desirable consumer behavior (Huang et al., 2014).

In accordance to U&GT, a user will be motivated to continue the use of social commerce sites and possibly become addicted to those sites because of an established record of the fulfillment of the user's social gratifications. By enabling users to fulfill interests beyond responding to peer influence (Wang & Zhang, 2012), social commerce help users establish social status in their social network. Accordingly, social commerce users who are motivated by social needs are more likely to recognize the value of using it and therefore formulate the intention to continue to use it. Furthermore, the desire to fulfill social gratifications can lead users to develop a strong maladaptive dependency on the rewarding behavior of using social commerce sites (Ahmed, 2004). Based on these discussions, social gratifications positively affect users' continuance intentions and addictive use.

#### 2.1.2. Hedonic gratifications and behavioral outcomes

Perceived hedonic gratifications obtained by users on social commerce sites describe enjoyable experiences associated with the use of social commerce sites. It is defined in this study as the enjoyment gained from using social commerce sites (Lin et al., 2014; Sledgianowski & Kulviwat, 2009). A user who believes that using social commerce will increase his or her sense of enjoyment will continue to engage in social commerce as well as plan to continue to do so in the future. This claim is supported by U&GT, which states that people will continue to choose the media that gratifies their needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973).

Like social networking sites (Xu, Rosson, Gupta, & Carroll, 2012), social commerce sites are considered hedonic information systems since they partly fulfill users' hedonic gratifications (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Research shows that users' hedonic gratifications are an important factor in e-commerce type settings (Ahn, Ryu, & Han, 2007) such as

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