



What drives purchase intention in the context of online content services? The moderating role of ethical self-efficacy for online piracy

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ABSTRACT

With the proliferation of online content service industry, understanding the factors affecting consumer intention to purchase online content services has become an important issue for academics and practitioners. While previous research has suggested that consumers' perceived value and moral judgment are two main factors influencing behavioral intention to purchase online content services, few studies have explored what drives perceived value and if customers' ethical self-efficacy will moderate the effect of perceived value on purchase intention. Thus, based on the value-based adoption model and previous literature, this study explores the antecedents of perceived value and the moderating effect of ethical self-efficacy for online piracy (ESEOP) on the relationship between perceived value and purchase intention in the context of online content services. Data collected from 124 respondents in Taiwan are tested against the research model using the partial least squares (PLS) approach. The results indicate that perceived enjoyment, perceived usefulness, perceived fee, and ESEOP have a significant influence on perceived value and that ESEOP can enhance the positive effect of perceived value on purchase intention. The findings of this study provide several important theoretical and practical implications for consumer online content purchase behaviors.

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1. Introduction

With the development of the Internet, online content service industries have recently grown rapidly in the form of online game, e-book, e-learning, e-music, Internet broadcasting, and video on demand (VOD) (Joo & Sohn, 2008). However, when compared with the rapid growth of the online content services markets, especially online music services in the USA and Western Europe, no such success has emerged in Asia (Chu & Lu, 2007). Previous studies have suggested that Asians are reluctant to pay for the download of online contents, particularly in Great China Region (i.e., Mainland China, and Hong Kong) (Chen, Shang, & Lin, 2008; Chu & Lu, 2007; Joo & Sohn, 2008; Lu & Hsiao, 2010). Thus, in order for the online content industry to succeed, it is essential to understand why consumers are willing to pay for online/digital content services or not. That is, investigating the factors affecting consumer intention to purchase online content services has been an important issue for academics and practitioners.

Several previous studies have explored the factors affecting online consumers' behavior (e.g., Doong, Wang, & Foxall, 2011;

Hong & Cho, 2011; Kuo & Wu, 2012; Liu, Guo, & Lee, 2011; Song, Baker, Lee, & Wetherbe, 2012; Udo, Bagchi, & Kirs, 2010). Some studies have also suggested that customer-perceived value is a critical factor affecting behavioral intention to purchase or repurchase online services in the context of electronic/mobile commerce (Chen et al., 2008; Chu & Lu, 2007; Kim, Chan, & Gupta, 2007; Lin & Wang, 2006; Lu & Hsiao, 2010; Wang, 2008). Perceived value is frequently conceptualized as involving a consumer's assessment of the ratio of perceived benefits to perceived costs (Monroe, 1990; Zeithaml, 1988). However, few studies have investigated the antecedents of perceived value from the perspective of perceived benefits and perceived costs in the context of online content services (e.g., Chen et al., 2008; Chu & Lu, 2007; Lu & Hsiao, 2010). Thus, there is a need for research to explore what factors drive consumers' perceived value of online content services in the cost–benefit framework.

In addition to perceived value, previous studies have also suggested that moral judgment or ethical self-efficacy is another influential factor of digital material piracy (Chen et al., 2008; Gopal, Sanders, Bhattacharjee, Agrawal, & Wager, 2004; Kuo & Hsu, 2001; Moores & Chang, 2006). Many researchers have found that more strongly held beliefs that piracy is wrong, unethical, or immoral lead to a lower likelihood of intended piracy behavior (Miyazaki, Rodriguez, & Langenderfer, 2009). While perceived value is a critical influential factor of consumer intention to purchase online contents, considering that illegal online music and video file

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download are still rampant in most of the Asian region, a question remains; that is, are consumers willing to purchase high perceived value online contents. Furthermore, although some researchers found a direct relationship between moral judgment and ethical behavior (Cronan & Al-Rafee, 2008; Pan & Sparks, 2012; Yoon, 2011a), Chen et al. (2008) found that the degree of morality has not a significant influence on behavioral intention to download unauthorized music files, but that perceived value of downloading free music files influences behavioral intention to download unauthorized music files more strongly for the low morality group than for the high morality group. These results imply that consumers' moral beliefs or self-efficacy toward online piracy may play a moderating role in the effect of perceived value on online content purchase intentions. Thus, the relationship between perceived value, purchase intention, and piracy ethics still needs to be further addressed in the context of online content services.

Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to (1) investigate the antecedents of perceived value from the cost–benefit framework, and (2) explore the moderating effect of consumers' ethical self-efficacy for online piracy on the relationship between perceived value and purchase intention in the context of online content services. This paper is structured as follows. First, this study reviews the conceptualization and antecedents of perceived value and discusses the concept of online piracy ethics. Second, based on previous literature, a research model and a comprehensive set of hypotheses are proposed. Next, the methods, measures, and results of this study are then presented. Finally, the results are discussed in terms of their implications for research and managerial activity.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Conceptualization and antecedents of perceived value

As noted earlier, several previous studies have suggested that perceived value is a crucial factor that influences user intention to use/purchase online service in the context of electronic/mobile commerce (e.g., Chen et al., 2008; Chu & Lu, 2007; Kim et al., 2007; Lin & Wang, 2006; Lu & Hsiao, 2010; Wang, 2008). Perceived value is frequently conceptualized as involving a consumer's assessment of the ratio of perceived quality and perceived sacrifice (Monroe, 1990; Zeithaml, 1988). Bolton and Drew (1991) suggested that perceived value is a richer measure of customers' overall evaluation of a service than perceived service quality. According to Zeithaml (1988), perceived sacrifice are influenced by both perceived monetary price and perceived nonmonetary price. Similarly, Parasuraman and Grewal (2000) contend that perceived value is a function of a 'get' component – i.e., the benefits a buyer derives from a seller's offering – and a 'give' component – i.e., the buyer's monetary and nonmonetary costs of acquiring the offering (Zeithaml, 1988).

Traditionally, technology acceptance model (TAM) is one of the most influential models in the research area of user acceptance of information systems (IS) (Davis, 1989; Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989), which posits that user acceptance can be explained by two beliefs: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. IS researchers have investigated and replicated the TAM, and agreed that it is valid in predicting an individual's acceptance of various corporate IT (Adams, Nelson, & Todd, 1992; Chin & Todd, 1995; Segars & Grover, 1993). However, as Wang (2008) noted, in the context of electronic/mobile commerce, many users may abandon or be reluctant to use a for-fee information service even if it is useful for them. This phenomenon may decrease the power of TAM in explaining and predicting user acceptance of for-fee information and content services, which have become very popular in the context of electronic/mobile commerce, because TAM's

perceived usefulness only taps the perceived benefit component, but it omits the perceived monetary cost component in user acceptance of information services (Wang, 2008). Consequently, Wang (2008) proposed a revised TAM (i.e., a value-based TAM), which replaces perceived usefulness with perceived value, and suggested that perceived value is more dominant than perceived usefulness in explaining the behavioral intention to use for-fee information and content services. This also implies that for-fee online content services appear to be accepted less because of their perceived usefulness than because of their perceived value.

Similarly, as Kim et al. (2007) contend, in an organizational context, the cost of mandatory adoption and usage is borne by the organization; in contrast, in an online service context, the cost of voluntary adoption and usage is borne by the individuals. Thus, the adopters of online services play the dual roles of IT user and service consumer, and they would concern about the cost and benefit of using the online services when deciding whether or not to adopt the services. Using the theory of consumer choice and decision making from the field of economics and marketing research, Kim et al. (2007) proposed a value-based adoption model (VAM) to explain customers' mobile Internet service adoption from the value maximization perspective. Their empirical findings also indicate that perceived value of mobile Internet service is a principal determinant of adoption intention, and that two cost beliefs (i.e., perceived fee and technicality) and two benefit beliefs (i.e., usefulness and enjoyment) affect adoption intention through the mediation of perceived value. Meanwhile, Chu and Lu (2007) also empirically investigated the factors influencing online music purchase intention based on the value–intention framework. Similarly, they found that perceived value of online music has a positive influence on purchaser intention to buy online music and that two beneficial factors (i.e., perceived usefulness and perceived playfulness) and one sacrificing factor (i.e., perceived price) are determinants of perceived value. Thus, VAM's benefit-sacrifice framework proposed by previous researchers (Chu & Lu, 2007; Kim et al., 2007; Wang, 2008) can be used to explain and predict consumer behaviors of purchasing online content services.

While several typologies of value are proposed (e.g., Holbrook, 1999; Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991), they are comprehensive in explaining the benefits customers get from consumption but they fail to take into account the costs associated with consumption (Kim et al., 2007). Thus, this study adopts Zeithaml's (1988) definition of perceived value which is the most widely accepted by previous consumer behavior research. According to Zeithaml (1988), perceived value of online content services in this study is defined as a consumer's overall perception of online content service based on the considerations of its benefits and sacrifices needed to acquire and/or use it. Thus, perceived value in the VAM is equivalent to the framework of cost–benefit analysis. Further, the VAM could not only capture the utilitarian and hedonic benefit components (i.e., perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment), but it also could take into account the monetary and nonmonetary sacrifice components (i.e., perceived fee and perceived technicality). Thus, this study uses the VAM to develop a comprehensive model for explaining and predicting consumer intention to purchase online content services by integrating the concepts of perceived value and online piracy ethics. The following section elaborates the conceptualization of online piracy ethics and its potential role in moderating the effect of perceived value on online content purchase intention.

2.2. Online piracy ethics

To achieve a profitable online content service, both perceived value and consumers' piracy behavior should be seriously contemplated since the former contributes to consumers' purchase intention and the latter results in firms' earnings downturn. Based

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