The Impacts of Online Social Network and Website Qualification on the Customers' Purchase Intention from Deal-of-the-day Website in Thailand

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Abstract

Nowadays, "E-Commerce" has grown dramatically and become a multi-billion U.S. dollar business due to the widespread of the Internet usage and its continuingly improving connection speed. With the arrival of online social network a several years ago, many "E-Commerce" websites have evolved to take advantage of its ability to connect customers with their friends, to update and to shares news, events or products and promotion online. These fascinating features bring about the birth of "Social Commerce". The paper aims to empirically investigate the impacts of the website qualifications and online social network on consumers' purchase intention from deal-of-the-day websites that features discounted gift certificates usable at local or national companies. A survey method approach was employed in this study. The information was gathered from 400 respondents who were using both online social network and deal-of-the-day websites in Thailand, whilst the hypotheses in the proposed model were tested using multiple regression analysis. The results revealed that antecedents of trust in product recommendation from online social network were perceived benevolence/integrity, perceived ability, and perceived critical mass. The trust in product recommendations was found to have an important impact on customers' intention to purchase products/services from deal-of-the-day website. While Custom Satisfaction was found to be an

important predictor of Website Loyalty, customers' trust in deal-of-the-day websites was also found to be an important intervening variable between trust in product recommendations and customers' intention to purchase products/services. From a practical perspective, companies can increase their customers' purchase intention by encouraging trustworthy and powerful members in customers' online social communities to provide positive product recommendations. They should also emphasize on improving the trustworthiness of their social commerce websites. The major contribution of this study is that it is the first attempt to investigate the impact of online social network on customers' intention to purchase products/services from deal-of-the-day websites in emerging economies.

Keywords: Social commerce; Deal-of-the-day websites; Online social
              network

Introduction

Despite having been gradually developed since 1970s, the Internet started to be well-known across the globe in the twentieth century. A decade later, its widespread commercial application on the World Wide Web (WWW) was introduced in the western world by a large number of businesses and companies. Since then, it is undeniable that the Internet is embedded in every human's ways of life; not only in business but also in education, leisure, entertainment and so on. Doing a business on the Internet is termed "E-Commerce" which "E" stands for electronics (the Internet) while "Commerce" literally means business. Many people think that it is just the selling or buying goods or services via the Internet. However, it consists of the entire process of developing, marketing, selling, delivering, servicing and paying. Nowadays, "E-Commerce" has grown dramatically and has become a multi-billion U.S. dollar business due to the widespread of the Internet usage and its continuingly improving connection speed.

With the arrival of social network a few years ago, many "E-Commerce" have evolved to take advantage of its ability to connect customers with their friends, to update and to shares news, events or products and promotion online. Their products and services comment and review can be made and distributed online among their group instantly. These fascinating features bring about the birth of "Social Commerce" story. This introductory sections consist of the following discussion; firstly, definition of social commerce, secondly, the beginning of social commerce, thirdly, social commerce in Thailand. More importantly, the objectives, the significance and conceptual framework of the study are presented. At the end of the chapter, hypotheses are developed. Furthermore, the research's limitation and the definition of the frequent used term are defined.

Stephen and Toubia (2010) stated that "Social Commerce" is an emerging trend in which sellers are connected in online social networks, and where sellers are individuals instead of firms. In addition they mentioned that "Social Commerce" is a subset of electronic commerce

that involves using social, online media that supports social interaction and user contributions, to assist in the online buying and selling of products and services. The image of social commerce has been expanded beyond "E-Commerce" to utilize social technologies in the context of in-store marketing. He also added that "Social Commerce" is a buzzword that evokes a combination of two big digital trends of "social media" and "e-commerce" by using win-win-win strategy which entrepreneurs acquire media in advertising, web-owners receive commission fee and customers gain a lot of good deals via social media. It can be directly concluded that "Social Commerce" is one type of innovation using social network to benefit e-commerce activities

Social commerce websites have been popular in other countries for many years, but they have just been introduced in Thailand recently. Now, there are many websites providing "deal-of-the-day services" such as Ensogo.com, Coupon.sanook.com and Thaicitydeal.com. Groupon.com from U.S.A. has officially launched another branch in Thailand as mygroupon.co.th to join this competitive business. Consequently, the market channel and economic value are the interesting issue to be investigated. "Ensogo.com" is the first comer of social commerce service in Thailand. It originally launched in November 2010 by Tom Sriworakul who has been working in online marketing field for more than 10 years. Ensogo currently occupies the largest market share of approximately 80% of all online offered coupons in Thailand. The deals are divided into 5 categories; 1) Dining 2) Activities and Events 3) Health and Beauty 4) Products 5) Escapes and usually give an approximate discount at least 50%. Entrepreneurs do not have to pay entrance or advertisement fee but Ensogo.com will deduct 40% of the offered value for its commission. Presently, there are 295,000 Ensogo.com users who pressed "like" meaning that its product advertisements were seen by hundreds of thousand customers. Some of them might be stimulated to buy the deal without prior intention. Within 2 years, the stunning growth rate of Ensogo.com leaded to

the successful acquisition from Livingsocial.com in June 2011. The propose of this study is to investigate the influence of online social network that leads to trust in products and intention to purchase products in social commerce context.

Literature Review

E-Commerce

E-commerce is a well-known word for many decades, given the definition "the buying and selling of goods and services over electronic system such as the Internet and other computer networks" (Miller, 2002). Beside from buying and selling products online, e-commerce also includes the entire online process of developing, marketing, selling, delivering, servicing and paying for products and services (Tan and Thoen, 2000). Electronic commerce is accepted broadly described as the consumer's engagement in electronic exchange relationships with Web retailers (Pavlou, 2003). The electronic trading value has grown exponentially along with widespread the Internet usage. E-commerce trading value has increased gradually since 2000; however it grew at slower pace during the economic downturn in 2008 (Solorzano, 2011). For Thailand, E-commerce trading value has expanded at least 10% annually and has reached THB 600 billion in 2010. Such significant growth brings a positive indication to other e-commerce context which will be introduced in the future (National Statistical Office, 2010).

Social network

Social network has been defined as web-based services which allow individuals to connect, view and traverse by a set of socially meaningful relationships of those made by others within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). When people are reluctant to adopt a new idea or product, social network may have influence on an adoption of individual (Valente, 1996) because social network reflects the people life styles in the community in the pattern of friendship, advice, and

communication. Hence, an individual engages in a behavior based on the proportion of people in the social system already engaged into such behavior (Kim, Sohn, & Choi, 2011).

Social commerce

Social commerce is an emerging trend which merchandise is connected via online social networks while sellers can be individuals instead of firms (Stephen & Toubia, 2008). Another term "Social Shopping" is concentrated on customers' connection to business (Hsiao et al., 2010). Social commerce method which combines social networking and shopping can assist in information searching before shopping and sharing personal experiences online after use (Stephen & Toubia, 2008).

Service quality

Service quality is the state attitude of consumer satisfaction among goods or service relating to comparison between expectation and performance (Bolton & Drew, 1991). There is an academic research on the measurement of service quality in the early of 1990 by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry. The "SERVQUAL" method or ''Gap Analysis Model'' is developed from customer's opinion on service quality by comparing expectations of services with actual service received from a particular service provider. A set of service quality are divided into five dimensions; tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The "SERVQUAL" model has been extensively used in measurement service quality in the twenty first century (Tsoukatos & Rand, 2006).

Website quality

In the context of e-commerce, service delivery system is crucial to customer perception in aspect of quality since customer can access service through technological-interface service and this reflects the professionalism of business service provider. Some researchers have

turned components of service quality in e-commerce to be an ease of use, website design, responsiveness, personalization or customization, and assurance. These dimensions can positively influence customer satisfaction (Gummerus et al., 2004; Ribbink et al., 2004). Ease of use is indicated as a factor in which the self-service activity provides a clear interface and simple process to ensure that customers can use it effectively (Dabholkar, 1996). For e-commerce access, ease of use is considered as one of the most important factors in creating "user-friendly" website (Hajli, 2013). This is because customer does not want to spend time neither searching what they look for nor go through many complicated web pages.

Reputation

Reputation is defined as an opinion about that entity, typically a result of social evaluation on a set of criteria (Resnick & Zeckhauser, 2002). Reputation has been accepted as a trust builder for a long time. Especially, trust in a website could positively affect purchasing decision of Internet shoppers (Jarvenpaa and Tractinsky, 1999; McKnight et al., 2002). The previous researchers also found that web vendors' reputations had a significant influence on consumers' trust beside from quality factors (Tam, 2009; Fung & Lee, 1999).

Security

Security refers to the protection of information, systems or outflows while privacy refers to the protection of various types of data that are collected during users' interactions with the online system (Wang et al., 2003). Data privacy and security are an essential issue of e-commerce because each customer gives sensitive information to the unknown person to process purchasing transaction (McKnight et al., 2002). Only one time visiting can harm user by spam or virus. Many people are not comfortable giving personal email address and personal phone number which is required by some purchase to the others since they are afraid

of spam mails. The online services usage intention could be affected by users' perceptions of credibility regarding security and privacy (Norizan & Nor, 2010).

Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a response related to a particular aspect such as a purchase experience or quality of product which occur after purchasing or after consumption. It is found that customer satisfaction can be linked to profitability and customer loyalty (Hallowell, 1996). With reference to social commerce, customer satisfaction is a crucial point when measuring perceived customer's delivered value that is offered by e-commerce. Customer need, customer value and customer cost are three main scales which plays significant role in influencing customer satisfaction (Chia, 2003).

Trust

Trust is a psychological state composing the retention to accept vulnerability based on expectations of the intentions or behavior of another (Rousseau et al., 1998) so it is considered as the crucial process to build and maintain the relationship in any action. In order to increase Internet-based transactions, business must encourage trust to Internet users reducing risk perceived among customers (Hsiao et al., 2010). Websites owner must learn what the potential obstacles for users to purchase deal from website; even though they have never seen the real product or service. It is very challenging to find such solutions encouraging customers to handle perceived risk and ultimately loose to such risk to acceptable level. It has been found that Internet shoppers are less risk averse than those who are non-shoppers (Naveen & Garcia, 1999). For Internet service providers, they should understand the barriers that prevent customers from purchasing products or services so that management can deploy the strategy to reduce risk in consumers' point of view (Jarvenpaa & Tractinsky, 1999).

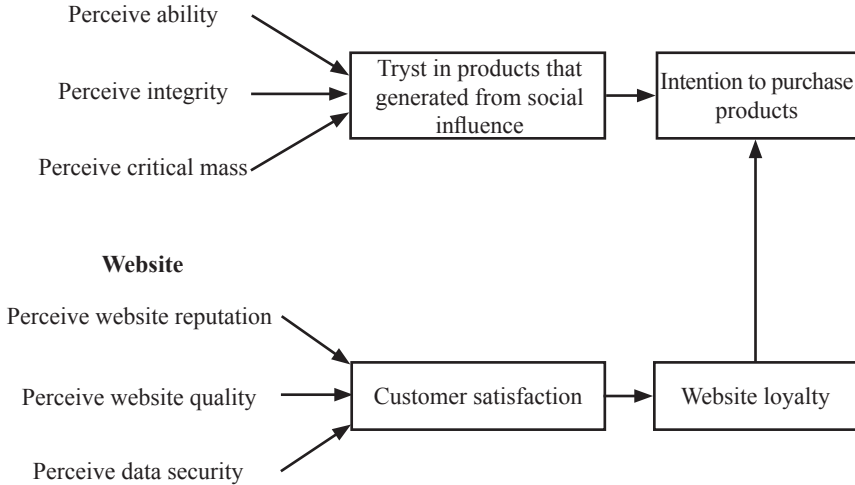## Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

Influence from social network

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Hypothesis development
Influence of online social network on trust in product

There are not many research papers investigating the influence of online social network on trust of Internet shoppers despite the increasing number of Internet users. Hsiao et al. (2010) revealed that perceived ability, perceived integrity and perceived critical mass of the reviewers were the most three frequently mentioned reasons for trusting the recommendations of shoppers. In addition, the result stated that the perceived critical mass was another essential antecedent of trust in product recommendations. It showed that consumers tend to trust more in the recommendations from large numbers of shoppers. Moreover, integrity is a fundamental factor of social network services because it will not be popular without the benevolence which leads to positive interactions between individuals (Mayer et al., 1995). Based on these findings, the following hypotheses are proposed as below;

H1.1: The degree of the consumer's perceived ability of the recommenders in the social network service positively affects trust in products that generated from the influence of social network

H1.2: The degree of the consumer's perceived integrity of the recommenders in the social network service positively affects trust in products that generated from the influence of social network

H1.3: The degree of the consumer's perceived critical mass of the recommenders in the social network service positively affects trust in products that generated from the influence of social network

Trust in product generated from social influence and intention to purchase products

Before making a purchase, most Internet shoppers will take shopping hint from influential product reviewers or bloggers. Recommendations can be viewed as a type of word-of-mouth (Brown et al., 2005). Based on the prior literature discussed above, trust in recommendations is herein defined as the willingness of a consumer to trust the product recommendations of shoppers (Norizan & Nor, 2009) and H2 is stated as follows:

H2: Trust in product that generated from the influence of social network positively affects the consumer's intention to purchase the products that shoppers recommend.

Website qualification and customer satisfaction

SERVQUAL-related studies (Lin, 2007; Pavlou, 2003), revealed that service quality or web quality has a strong influence on customer satisfaction and website's reputation. Institutional assurance is an important factor that reduces security concern of Internet users and increase trust on web-based

providers (McKnight et al., 2002). Better relationship quality leads to greater satisfaction, trust, and commitment (De Wulf, 2001). Similarly, service quality was found to have a significant impact on customer satisfaction (Norizan and Nor, 2009). Website design dimension is also important in creating customer satisfaction because it is directly related to the user interface (Van Riel et al., 2004). Understanding customer requirements and developing the service based on responsive feedback contributes to service satisfaction and trust as well (Gummerus et al., 2004).

> H3.1: The degree of the consumer's perceived web reputation positively affects consumer satisfaction.
>
> H3.2: The degree of the consumer's perceived web quality positively affects the consumer satisfaction.
>
> H3.3: The degree of the consumer's perceived data security positively affects the consumer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction and website loyalty

Consumer satisfaction in web providers usually affects their intention to purchase from the website or their loyalty. Norizan and Nor (2009) stated that customer satisfaction and trust have significant effects on loyalty. E-commerce entrepreneurs usually look beyond satisfaction to generate trust among customers to reduce their perceived risks (Ranaweera and Prabhu, 2003). Trust is also evaluated as a main factor of building and maintaining relationships process in online services. Therefore, the following hypothesis is developed.

> H 4: Customer satisfaction in a website positively affects the website loyalty.

Website loyalty to intention to purchase products

The commitment to re-purchase product or service consistently in the future leads to same brand-set purchasing (Caceres and Paparoidamis, 2007). However, there would be a possibility that customers might switch to competitive brand; the loyalty generated from trust could be the outcome of favorable attitude towards a brand since there was confidence in a partner's reliability and integrity (Caceres and Paparoidamis, 2007). Hence, this brings about the following hypothesis;

H5: An increased degree of website loyalty positively affects the degree of intention to purchase products from social network.

Methods

The survey was conducted with the samples aged from 18 to 40 which is in line with the average age of Ensogo's customers. They have prior experience in purchasing deals from the websites. Structured survey instrument was used to collect the information from 400 respondents calculated using Yaman's formula (Yamane, 1967). Convergent validity in this study is assessed by analyzing the factor structures (Cavana et al., 2001). The reliability of all constructs in this study fall within the acceptable range of 0.712 – 0.895.

Results

Initial analysis

Each of the items was first checked for skewness and kurtosis, and the presence of normality and outliers. In order to obtain a holistic picture of each of the variables across a small range of scores (1-7), histograms and box plots were deemed appropriate. The histograms and box plots were visually examined. Furthermore, an examination of another regression assumption of independent errors which requires no serial correlations between errors in regression model was necessary. Regarding the assumption of independent errors, the residuals should be uncorrelated for any two observations in regression (Field, 2005).

The Durbin-Watson test was used to assess this assumption. A test value close to 2 indicates that the residuals are uncorrelated (Field, 2005). The results of the regression analysis in Table 1 revealed that the Durbin-Watson statistics was close to 2.0, therefore, the assumption of independent errors was not violated.

The results show that most of the respondents are female and accounts approximately for 70.5%. 57.80% of the samples are between 23 to 29 years old. In terms of educational background, over 59% of respondents hold the degree higher than bachelor level and the rest, 41%, hold a bachelor degreel. More than 85.30% of respondents work in private companies, while 5.30% are students, 6% run their own business and only 1% of the sample is unemployed. With regardsto the Internet usage information from Table 1, the majority of the respondents have been using Internet for more than 10 years. Furthermore, 70.30% of respondents use Internet 2-5 hours per day.

Table 1 Hypothesis 1.1 to Hypothesis 1.3 regression results

H:	Influence from social network (Independent variable)	Dependent variable	β	t	Sig	R^2
1.1	Perceived Ability	Trust	0.174	9.407	0.000	0.030
1.2	Perceived Integrity	Trust	0.329	13.435	0.000	0.108
1.3	Perceived Critical Mass	Trust	0.338	10.754	0.000	0.114

According to the hypothesis testing result in Table 1, Perceived Ability significantly influences Trust in Products Generated from Social Influence (b = 0.174, t = 9.407, and p < 0.05) and it explained 3% of the variation in trust (R^2 = .03). For Hypothesis 1.2, it is found that Consumer's Perceived Integrity significantly affects Trust in Product Recommendations (b = 0.329, t = 13.435, and p < 0.05) and it explained 10.8% of the variation in trust (R^2 = 0.108). For Hypothesis 1.3, Consumer's Perceived Critical Mass is found to be a significant predictor of Trust in Product Recommendations

(b = 0.338, t = 10.754, p <0.05) and it explained 11.4% of the variation in trust (R^2=0.114).

Table 2 Hypothesis 2 regression result

H:	Independent variable	Dependent variable	*β*	t	Sig	R^2
2	Trust	Intention to purchase products	0.418	9.109	0.000	0.175

According to hypothesis testing results in Table 2, Trust significantly affects Intention to Purchase the Products (b = 0.418, t = 9.109, and p < 0.05) and it explained 17.5 % of the variation in Intention to Purchase Products from deal-of-the-day websites (R^2 = 0.175).

Table 3 Hypothesis 3.1 to Hypothesis 3.3 regression results

H:	Website qualifications (Independent variable)	Satisfaction Dependent variable	*β*	t	Sig	R^2
3.1	Website Reputation	Satisfaction	0.408	10.561	0.001	0.167
3.2	Website Quality	Satisfaction	0.538	12.324	0.000	0.290
3.3	Data Security	Satisfaction	0.354	17.773	0.000	0.125

According to hypothesis testing results in Table 3, Consumer Satisfaction was significantly influenced by Website Reputation (b = 0.408, t = 10.561, and p < 0.05). For hypothesis 3.2, it is also found that Website Quality was a significant predictor of Customer Satisfaction (b = 0.538, t = 12.324, and p < 0.05) and it explained 29% of the variation in Customer Satisfaction (R^2 = 0.29). While Consumer's Perceived Data Security was also found to be a significant predictor of Customer Satisfaction (b = 0.354, t = 17.773, and p < 0.05) and it explained 12.5% of the variation in Customer Satisfaction as well (R^2 = 0.125).

Table 4 Hypothesis 4 regression result

Hypothesis	Independent variable	Dependent variable	β	t	Sig	R^2
4	Satisfaction	Website loyalty	0.578	13.971	0.000	0.334

According to hypothesis testing results in Table 4, Customer Satisfaction significantly affect Website Loyalty (b = 0.578, t = 13.971, and p < .005) and it explained 33.4% of the variation in Website Loyalty (R^2 = 0.334).

Table 5 Hypothesis 5 regression result

Hypothesis	Independent variable	Dependent variable	β	t	Sig	R^2
5	Website loyalty	Intention to purchase products	0.560	13.388	0.000	0.314

Finally, in Table 5, it is found that Website Loyalty significantly influence Intention to Purchase Products (b = 0.560, t = 13.388, p < .005) and it explained 31.4 % of the Intention to Purchase Products' variability (R^2 = 0.334).

Discussion

The major objective of this research is to investigate the factors influencing the usage of social commerce website in Thailand. Structured questionnaire was collected from 400 respondents who have ever shopped at social commerce websites. The profile of the respondents reveals that most of them are female This finding is consistent with data found in the industry statistics in that most social commerce website sell beauty and cosmetic products (Saniotis, 2007). The hypothesis testing

results in this research conform with the relationships found in "SERVQUAL" model. The model is found to be applicable in social commerce market. Wording of mouth is also found to be an important driver to website loyalty and consumers' purchase intention. Whilst security and service creditability was found to be critical success factors for deal websites due to the fact that Facebook and webboard information can be spread much faster than any other online social network websites. Another important finding was that most new users are reluctant to give their true personal data as they believed that the online social commerce websites are not secure and credible.

In contrast to the findings from similar research in the past (Stephen & Toubia, 2008), this research found that Trust in Product generated from social network will increase the consumer's purchase intention that shoppers recommend. However, this research conforms with the research done by Norizan and Nor (2009) and Hsiao (2010) in that Perceived Ability, Perceived Integrity and Perceived Critical Mass of the reviewers are the three most frequently mentioned reasons for trusting the recommendations of shoppers. Nevertheless, website loyalty will not occur without the website qualifications.

The findings from this research can benefit both academicians and practioners in context of social commerce in many ways. The findings add the new knowledge in the area of social commerce. This research is one of the first paper that integrate two popular areas of students; E-commerce and Online social network Furthermore, They can help social commerce websites' managers to develop their promotion strategies. Service providers better understand the nature of the social commerce market and be able to design and develop their websites meeting the demand of the customers.

Future Research

It is recommended that the researchers who want to conduct the similar research to study other factors possibly influencing Website Loyalty and Consumers' Purchase Intention such as customers' consumption experience, the personalities or other personal characteristics of the

customers The future researchers may also consider studying with the subjects who are non-social commerce uses and those who live in non-metropolitan areas. Qualitative research method will be a good alternative mean to collect the information from the subjects which can complement the findings from this research.

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