

Why We Trust Online Reviewers: The Effect of Compensatory Control and Perceived Similarity
on Trustworthiness

Chanunya Kiatphaibool

Natnapin Kiatbampen

Nichamon Krongphanich

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Author(s) 1. Chanunya Kiatphaibool
 2. Natnapin Kiatbampen
 3. Nichamon Krongphanich

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Senior Project Advisor Dr. Yokfah Isaranon

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..... Dean of the Faculty of Psychology

(Assistant Professor Kakanang Maneesri, Ph.D)

Senior project committee

..... Chairperson
(Dr. Thipnapa Huansuriya)

..... Advisor
(Dr. Yokfah Isaranon)

..... Committee
(Aj. Kris Ariyabuddhiphongs)

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of compensatory control and perceived similarity on perceived trustworthiness towards online reviewers. In a 2 (control: control, no control) x 2 (similarity: high, low) design, we hypothesized that participants in the no control group would perceive the reviewer as more trustworthy than those in the control group and that this effect would be moderated by perceived similarity. A total of 60 female undergraduate students were randomly manipulated on their sense of control and perceived similarity with the online reviewer. The perceived trustworthiness of the reviewer was being assessed after reading a review on a beauty product. There was a marginal significance main effect of control and an interaction between control and perceived similarity. Implications for online marketing strategies are discussed.

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Chanunya Kiatphaibool

Natnapin Kiatbampen

Nichamon Krongphanich

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The use of electronic word-of-mouth messages, often posted in the form of online product reviews, has shaped the way consumers choose to gain information prior to their buying decisions (Bansal & Voyer, 2000). With the use of an interactive media, user-generated content is shifting consumers away from the traditional one-way mass communication in which one sender addresses a mass audience (Senecal & Nantel, 2004). Recently, there is an increase in opportunity for people to engage actively in sharing information regarding products or services. The information generated by consumers known as product reviews are considered as a persuasive source of information in shaping consumers' attitudes which can affect their buying decisions (Plummer, 2007).

Results from an online survey "Global Survey of Trust in Advertising" revealed that among 70 percent of consumers, product reviews were the second most trusted source, followed by recommendations from family and friends (Shan, 2016). In addition, another research found that consumers relied on reviews from fellow consumers and perceived it as more credible than product information from marketers due to the communicator's independence from marketers' persuasive intent (Bickart & Schindler, 2001). This is consistent with McGinnies and Ward (1980)'s study, which showed that a trustworthy source was persuasive, regardless of the source's expertise. This may suggest that the persuasiveness of online reviews can be attributed to the credibility and trustworthiness of the source.

However, not all reviews can be considered as credible. The reviews could be generated by any person, or layperson, with limited knowledge regarding the reviewed product (Filiari, 2015). Moreover, according to the traditional word-of-mouth literature, factors contributing to

the effectiveness of the communication are relational factors between source and receiver, such as social ties (Brown & Reingen, 1987). Nishishiba and Ritchie (2000) suggested that in a given context, people enter each interaction with predetermined ideas of what constitutes a trustworthy person and take these ideas into account in making judgments about others. Nonetheless, under the context of electronic word-of-mouth, social ties between communicators rarely exists since online reviews are mostly communications among strangers with no prior history nor possibility for future interactions (Kusumasondjaja, Shanka & Marchegiani, 2012).

As there is no interpersonal relationship between the communicators, it is worthwhile to explore why some consumers are highly influenced by the reviewers and why they choose to seek for such information in the first place. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the question of what makes consumers choose to trust online reviewers even when there is limited knowledge about the source. More specifically, we aim to examine factors that contribute to the perceived trustworthiness of the online reviewers.

Sense of Control

A sense of personal control or perceived control can generally be defined as an individual's belief that they are responsible for certain outcomes (Rothbaum, Weisz, & Snyder, 1982). In other words, they perceive that they are in control over situations. In this complex world where everything is always changing, having a sense of personal control can provide structure and order that one needs to survive (Kay, Gaucher, Napier, Callan, & Laurin, 2008). Moreover, higher levels of personal control are positively linked with many positive outcomes, such as higher self-esteem and better health practices (Landau, Kay, and Whitson, 2015). Meanwhile, lack of personal control has been associated with depressive symptomatology and overall negative consequences (Rothbaum et al., 1982). That is because it can threaten the belief

that the world is orderly and not random (Kay et al., 2008). As a result, it is natural that one would be motivated to restore that control back to baseline levels (Landau et al., 2015).

Although having a lot of choices may seem like it would aid in decision making, previous studies have shown that a wide assortment of options can make consumers overwhelmed with too much information rather than helping them with decision making (Huffman & Kahn, 1998; Malhotra, 1982). In fact, it was shown that too many choices may impair one's sense of control due to this information overload (Vohs et al., 2008). This can be explained by the assumption that decision making and self-control rely on the same psychological resource, in which one can affect the other and vice versa. Therefore, when there is choice overload, the process required for decision making can deplete the resource used for self-control as a result (Vohs et al., 2008).

When people lose their sense of personal control, they tend to engage in some kind of compensatory behaviors or strategies. This can be explained by the assumptions derived from compensatory control theory, which include: (1) people have a basic need to see the world as orderly and structured, and (2) external sources of control may satisfy this need as they reassure the belief that the world is in order (Friesen, Kay, Eibach, & Galinsky, 2014). Thus, once a sense of control is lost, individuals are likely to orient toward an immediate search for new information in an attempt to restore some of the lost control (Landau et al., 2015).

Believing in the existence of controlling God and supporting the government were some of the strategies to help individuals maintain their sense of control (Kay et al., 2008). This is because people can attribute control to external sources (i.e., God and the government) to compensate with their own loss of personal control. In addition, Landau et al. (2015) proposed an additional compensatory strategy called the affirmation of nonspecific epistemic structure. This strategy is when one searches for simple, clear, and consistent interpretations after control is

diminished. It is nonspecific because the interpretations may not directly relate to the source of control-reducing conditions.

By applying the theory of compensatory control, it may be possible to explain why online reviewers are trusted by many. That is, when sense of control is reduced as a result of choice overload, people may immediately turn to online reviews to compensate for the lost control. One reason may be that the information provided online is readily and easily accessible on various platforms, such as Amazon and eBay (Burton & Khammash, 2010). Although online reviews may appear irrelevant as they are not responsible for the control-reducing conditions, the reviews may be perceived by readers as simple and clear. Hence, it is possible that online reviews may be perceived as a good source of external control, in which it would explain why some people choose to believe the reviews.

In addition, according to Fritsche and colleagues (2013), people who lack control show more salient increased ingroup bias than those who have control. The bias is resulted as the mean to maintain the sense of global control and power by investing in a self-defining group. This implies that there could be a connection between an individual's sense of control and perceived similarity, which in turn could influence the extent to how one perceives the source as trustworthy.

Perceived Similarity

Perceived similarity is a factor that drives trust in online word-of-mouth (eWOM), especially in the evaluation and purchase stage (Racherla et al., 2012). In particular, perceived similarity will serve as a cues about the product and service that may be of interest to them based on the demographic profile, which in turn, increase the sense of trust and confidence in the message. Ziegler and Lausen (2004) found that people tend to prefer receiving recommendations

from people they know and trust (i.e. friends and family members). The similarity-attraction hypothesis by Byrne and Griffitt (1969) also support this notion because they propose that people are attracted to others who are similar to them in term of demographic characteristics, academic interest, leisure activities, and values. They explained that similarity has a positive effect on evaluation because it is rewarding due to three main reasons. First is the effectance-arousal model, which is when there is a lack of objective verification, individual would look for stimuli with reinforcement properties, such as similarity, to trigger affective response. Second, it reduces the uncertainty about the target individual, thus allowing them to communicate with greater confidence and effectiveness. Lastly, they suggest that similarity has a direct effect in creating pleasurable and enjoyable interaction, and reduces the possibility of conflict (Al-Natour, Benbasat, & Cenfetelli, 2011) Therefore, communication between individuals with a shared background is much more efficient and effective than between individuals from disparate backgrounds (Racherla et al., 2012).

Not only does knowing more about the source information will help people make decision about its trustworthiness consciously, but it can also influence people into engaging in consumer conformity. This is when consumers are more likely to believe the source information if they perceive that there is reinforcement from other ingroup members, leading to the acceptance of information that they got from others as evidence of reality (Lascu, 1999). In other word, consumers are more likely to believe the online reviews if they perceive it as coming from an ingroup member, or someone with similar background and motives. If the consumers do identify themselves based on the reference group (with high similarity), there is a higher likelihood of trust and favorable attitudes towards the product and service (Racherla et al., 2012). By perceiving the source provider to be similar to themselves, they are referring them as ingroup

members who are likely to have similar set of values and motives, hence believing in those online reviews can contribute to one sense of social identity (Lascu, 1999).

Perceived similarity between the online reviewer and the consumer can play an important role in how consumers perceive the trustworthiness of that review. They could be using additional information to make conscious inference about the reviewers' motives, or they could be subconsciously conforming to whom they perceive to be ingroup members. Either way, online reviewers who were perceived to have high similarity to consumers are more likely to be viewed more favorably as well as more trustworthy than those with low similarity.

Objectives

As mentioned, compensatory control seems to be the motivating factor for people to seek for additional information from online reviews. In the context where online consumers are able to gain personal information about the review's source, perceived similarity can be assessed. Therefore, the aim for this study is to investigate whether the loss of control would contribute to explaining why people trust online reviewers. Moreover, it would be interesting to see the role of perceived similarity as a moderator to this effect. The present study will examine online reviews on beauty products within Thai female undergraduate students. We will manipulate the participant's sense of control and perceived similarity. Their perceived trustworthiness of the bloggers will be assessed after reading the review on a beauty product.

Research Hypotheses

From the research question, two main hypotheses were generated regarding the interaction between the two independent variables; sense of control and perceived similarity, in influencing perceiver's ratings of the online reviewer's trustworthiness.

H1: Individuals whose sense of control have been threatened will perceive the online reviewer as more trustworthy than those who have not.

H2: This effect will be more pronounced when the reviewer is perceived as more similar to the participants.

Research Benefits

This study would contribute to the knowledge of online word-of-mouth and the factors that are affecting its effectiveness. The results could shed light on the underlying mechanisms that drive consumers to seek online reviews. This might be beneficial to businesses and their marketing departments in developing new online marketing strategies, in addition to just relying on offline marketing plans.

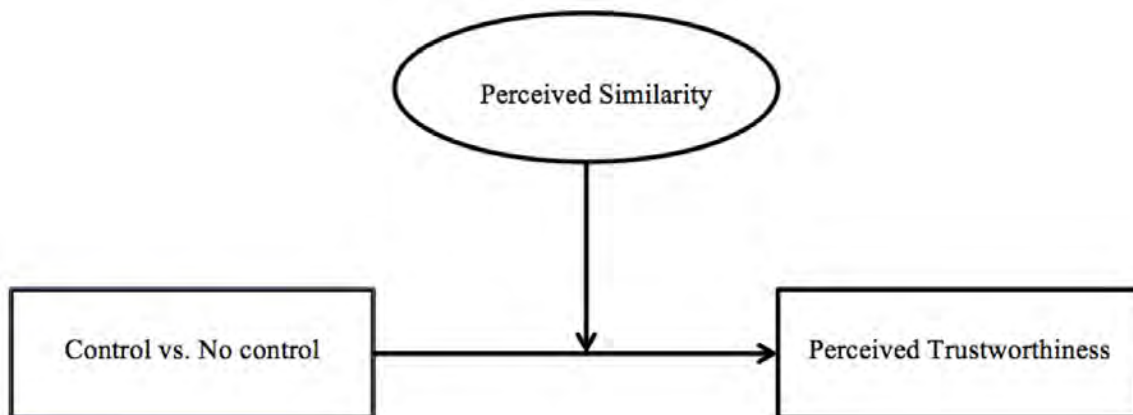


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Chapter 2

Methodology

Participants

We recruited 68 undergraduate female students from various universities from international programs across Bangkok, Thailand. Out of the total number of participants, 8 participants were eliminated because they were either outliers or they did not pass the manipulation check. Therefore, the final number of the participants was 60, in which the range was between 18-24 years of age ($M = 20.97$, $SD = 1.16$). The sampling method used was convenient sampling and random assignment into different conditions. The recruitment was done via online platforms such as Facebook as well as other types of social media. The participants were informed about the study prior to participating. They were told that they can withdraw from the study at any point. Also, all the responses and information of the participants are kept confidential.

Materials

Blog Prototype. The online review used in the study was a 132-word long passage, adapted from a real blogger's review of a beauty product. The original brand of the product were replaced with a non-existing brand to avoid any biases that may arise. The blog was titled 'Reviewed: Rosyglam Blushes'. Two different demographic profiles of the reviewer were shown before the actual review page. One profile was for high similarity condition and the other was for low similarity condition. The profile for the high similarity condition was that of a 20-year-old Nan, a third year, female undergraduate student, currently living in Bangkok, Thailand. The profile for the low similarity condition was of a 38-year-old Nan, a housewife, currently living in

Bangkok, Thailand. The layout and the content of the review were exactly identical across conditions.

Measures

Demographic information. Prior to completing the questionnaires, participants were asked to provide some demographic details including their age, gender, nationality, and current education.

Sense of Control Scale. The Midlife Development Inventory (MIDI) was used to measure participants' sense of control as a manipulation check (Lachman & Weaver, 1998a; Lachman & Weaver, 1998b). MIDI is a self-report measure, which consists of 12 items. It measures sense of control in two categories, including perceived constraints and personal mastery. Perceived constraints category comprises of eight items while personal mastery comprises of four. The scale is a Likert 7-point response scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree), 4 (don't know), to 7 (strongly disagree), in which higher score suggests lesser sense of control. One sample item from the perceived constraints category is "I often feel helpless in dealing with the problems of life." Meanwhile, all items from the personal mastery category is reverse-scored (e.g., "I can do just about anything I set my mind to do."). The total score was calculated by summing the scores for both categories separately. The reliability of the scale for our sample was found to be good ($\alpha = .93$).

Perceived Similarity. Participants' perceived similarity towards the reviewer was assessed by using the Perceived Homophily in Interpersonal Communication Scale (McCroskey, Richmond & Daly, 1975). To date, there is no established direct measure of perceived similarity; therefore, the perceived homophily scale is suitable for this study to assess perceived similarity because homophily refers to the source-receiver similarity in the principle of interpersonal

communication (Rogers & Bhowmik, 1970). The original scale consisted of 16 items assessing the four dimensions of perceived homophily, which are attitude, background, value, and appearance. Only six items from the attitude and background dimensions would be used in the study as other items are not relevant. Based on a 7 point Likert scale, participants had to rate the extent to which the reviewer is similar to them in different dimensions (1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Neutral, 7 = Strongly Agree). Higher overall score suggested a high sense of perceived similarity. Sample items from the attitude and background dimensions are “This person thinks like me” and “This person is from the same social class as me”, respectively. The reliability for the scale was high ($\alpha = .92$).

Trustworthiness. The Source-Credibility Scale developed by Ohanian (1990) was adapted to measure participants’ level of perceived trustworthiness. Originally, the scale was developed to measure celebrity endorsers’ credibility, which consists of three dimensions, including perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Each dimension contains five items. In this study, only the trustworthiness dimension was used. The type of this rating scale was a 7-point semantic differential scale (dependable/undependable, honest/dishonest, reliable/unreliable, sincere/insincere, and trustworthy/untrustworthy). The Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was .89, suggesting a very good reliability.

Design

The study employed a 2x2 between-subjects design, with control (high, low) and perceived similarity (high, low) as the independent variables. Perceived trustworthiness of the reviewer was measured as the dependent variable.

Procedure

All participants were randomly assigned to two conditions: high control and low control (30 people for each condition). They were told that the purpose of the questionnaire was to study consumer behavior as a cover story. Each of them was asked to complete an online questionnaire, which took less than 10 minutes, including demographic information as well as the experimental study. For the participants in the high control condition, they were asked to think and type on the online survey platform about a recent experience in which they felt they had control over. As for the participants in the low control condition, they were asked to do the same, but on a recent experience in which they felt they had *no* control over. Each should be no longer than 150 words. They then completed the MIDI scale as a manipulation check for their sense of control.

Participants in each condition were further randomized into 2 groups (high vs. low perceived similarity with the reviewer), leaving 15 people per each condition. All groups received the same online review on cheek blushes. Participants in the high perceived similarity condition were told that they will be reading a review from a reviewer whom they share similar background (age and occupation), while the participants in low perceived similarity group were told that they will be reading a review from a reviewer with whom they do not share similar background. After reading the online review, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they think the reviewer is similar to them, which would be used as the manipulation check for perceived similarity. After that, participants had to complete a scale on perceived trustworthiness of the reviewer. Lastly, a debrief regarding the actual aim and purpose of the study would be given to the participants.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS statistical software. Participants passed both the manipulation check for sense of control and perceived similarity, as we disregarded those responses that did not pass. To test the hypotheses, a two-way independent group factorial ANOVA between control (high vs. low) and perceived similarity (high vs. low) were conducted. Furthermore, a significant interaction effect of control and perceived similarity on perceived trustworthiness was followed up with pairwise comparisons on the simple effect of perceived similarity at each level of control.

Chapter 3

Results

Manipulation Check

A series of independent samples t-test were conducted to compare the level of sense of control between participants in the high control and low control conditions, and compare the level of perceived similarity between participants in the high and low similarity conditions. Results revealed a significant difference between participants in high and low conditions, such that participants rated that they had a higher sense of control when they were in the high control condition ($M = 4.88, SD = 0.74$) than those in the low control condition ($M = 3.62, SD = 1.25$), $t(58) = 4.72, p = .003$. In addition, there was a significant difference between high and low perceived similarity conditions. That is, participants in the high similarity group ($M = 5.18, SD = 0.54$) perceived the reviewer to be more similar to them than participants in the low similarity group ($M = 3.13, SD = 0.94$), $t(58) = 10.33, p = .024$. Therefore, both manipulations of sense of control and perceived similarity worked successfully.

Hypotheses Testing

Results of a 2 (control: high, low) x 2 (perceived similarity: high, low) between groups ANOVA on perceived trustworthiness revealed a marginal main effect of control $F(1, 56) = 3.21, p = .079, \eta^2 = .05$, one-tailed (see Table 1.). This result partially supports the first hypothesis as there was a higher perceived trustworthiness in the low control group ($M = 4.51, SD = 1.23$) as compared to the high control group ($M = 4.03, SD = 0.95$). Moreover, there was a significant main effect of perceived similarity on perceived trustworthiness, $F(1, 56) = 7.76, p = .007, \eta^2 = .11$. This indicated that overall, participants in the high similarity condition perceive the online

reviewer as more trustworthy ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 1.06$) as compared to participants in the low similarity condition ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.11$).

Results also show that there was a significant interaction between control and perceived similarity on perceived trustworthiness, $F(1, 56) = 4.16$, $p = .046$, $\eta^2 = .06$ (see Fig. 2). A pairwise comparison was conducted to further examine the interaction. There is a significant difference between the high and low similarity conditions, $t(56) = 2.79$, $p = .007$, in which the participants in high similarity condition showed greater perceived trustworthiness towards the reviewer ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 1.06$) than those in the low similarity condition ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.11$) Thus, the second hypothesis was supported.

Additional Analyses

In addition to the main hypotheses, we also investigated the differences between the control conditions with high and low levels of perceived similarity. Results showed that there were no significant differences in the level of perceived trustworthiness between low similarity ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 1.05$) and high similarity ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.86$), $F(1, 56) = 0.28$, *ns*.

According to Table 2, participants in the low control/high similarity group showed the highest perceived trustworthiness towards the reviewer ($M = 5.16$, $SD = 1.01$). Those who were in the high control/high similarity group ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.86$) scored higher perceived trustworthiness than those in the high control/low similarity group ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 1.05$). Participants in the low control/low similar had the lowest rating of perceived trustworthiness ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.20$).

Table 1. *Univariate Effects on Perceived Trustworthiness*

Source	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Control	3.46	1	3.46	3.21	.079	.045
Perceived Similarity	8.36	1	8.36	7.76	.007*	.109
Control x Perceived Similarity	4.48	1	4.48	4.16	.046*	.058
Error	60.34	56	1.08			
Total	76.64	59				

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Trustworthiness as a Function of Control and Perceived Similarity*

	High Control		Low Control	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	Perceived Similarity			
High	4.13	0.86	5.16	1.01
Low	3.93	1.05	3.87	1.20

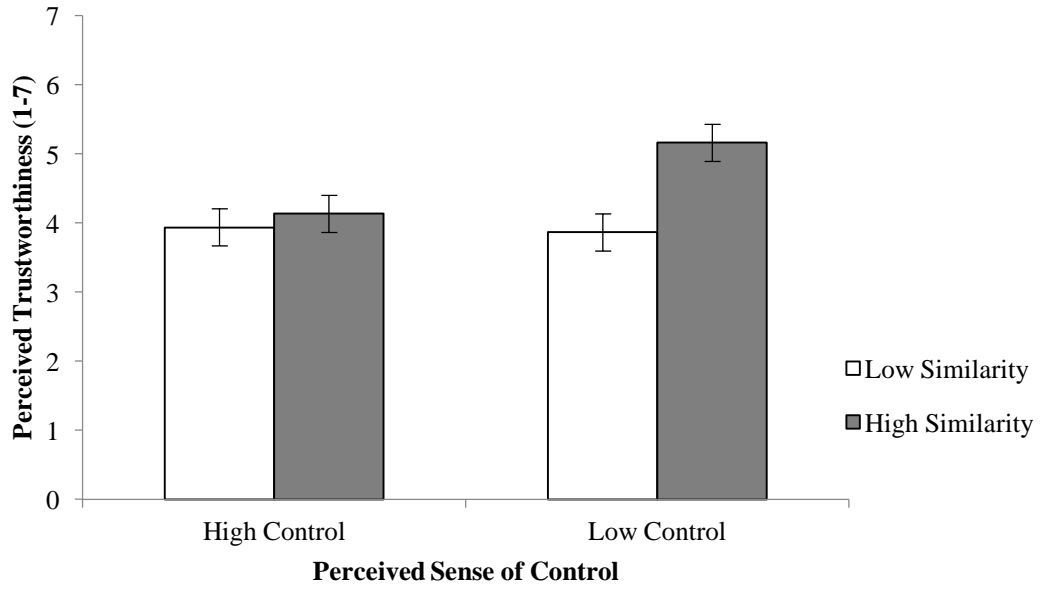


Figure 2. The effects of sense of control on perceived trustworthiness as moderated by perceived similarity. Bars represent standard errors.

Chapter 4

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of compensatory control and perceived similarity on trustworthiness toward the online reviewer. Our first hypothesis, which predicted that those whose sense of control has been threatened would perceive the reviewer as more trustworthy, was supported. This is consistent with previous literature which suggested that, when people have lost their sense of personal control, they tend to believe in external sources in order to gain back some of their control (Kay et al., 2008). In this case, the external source our participants turned to was the online reviewer. This is in line with Landau et al. (2015), which implied that one compensatory strategy would be to seek for simple, clear, and consistent information that might not be related to the source of control-reducing conditions at all. As the online review was provided for the participants to read, it successfully posed as a source of external control (Burton & Khammash, 2010).

The second hypothesis predicted that the tendency that lack of control would increase perceived trustworthiness would be more pronounced for high similarity group. This was supported by the results as it suggested that the effect of control was moderated by perceived similarity. In the low control condition, participants who perceived themselves to be similar to the reviewer rated her as more trustworthy than those who perceived themselves to be low on similarity with the reviewer. Possible explanation to this effect could be that participants in the high similarity condition could regard the reviewer with similar background and motives as their ingroup member. When people identify themselves based on the reference group with high similarity, they tend to perceive the message as more favorable (Racherla et al., 2012). This is considered as an ingroup bias to increase one's sense of social identity (Lascu, 1999). Fritsche

and colleagues (2013) had explored this effect to be more salient with people with lower sense of control. This may suggest that people whose sense of control have been threatened are more likely than those who have control to show ingroup bias in viewing the message from an ingroup member to be trustworthy. Thus, previous literature is consistent with our results, showing an interaction effect between sense of control and perceived similarity.

Implications

Today, online platforms that feature reviews from people on the internet have become increasingly popular. Therefore, it is in our interest to investigate some possible motivations for people that choose to trust online reviewers, whom they have never met before in real life. The findings of the study could potentially provide one of the reasons why people choose to seek for information from online reviewers before deciding on the purchase of a product. This is because they are able to use information from these reviews to help gain some sense of control back.

Moreover, perceived similarity is also found to be one of the factors that can influence an individual's trustworthiness toward the reviewer. As mentioned, choice-overload can lead to lower sense of control. Since there are a lot of competing products from various companies on the market, which means that companies can use online reviews as an alternative marketing strategy. In addition, companies can make sure that there is a high similarity between the online reviewers and the target group in order to enhance this effect.

Strengths and Limitations

One of the strengths of our study was the use of manipulation check. The results showed that both manipulations were successful in inducing the desired sense of control and perceived similarity, suggesting that the effects found in the study were not due to extraneous variables. Furthermore, an excerpt from a real online review was used to test the effect. Although the brand

of the original product was changed to a non-existing one to avoid any product bias, the results reflect the effect of online reviews from the real world setting. Moreover, the scale of perceived trustworthiness, perceived similarity and sense of control used in this study were all shown to have high reliability.

Despite all the strengths, there are a few limitations that need to be taken into account as well. First, the questionnaires used were all in English. Therefore, we could only use them for a limited sample of students who can read and write in English, whom may not be the representation of the whole Thai female undergraduate student population. This leads to our next limitation, which is a small sample size. Hence, it is possible that the significance of our results may be more pronounced with a larger sample size. Moreover, it was an online experiment. Thus, there could be some differences in terms of environmental settings. For instance, some participants may have faced some sort of distractions that we did not know of, such as loud noises during the experiment. Furthermore, we did not assess participants' interests toward cosmetics. Some people might already have special interest toward beauty products than others, in which it could have affected the results overall.

Future Directions

There have been studies that link sense of control with trustworthiness as well as perceived similarity with trustworthiness. However, there has not been a study that looks at the moderating effect between sense of control and similarity on trustworthiness. Therefore, our study can be considered as one of the novel studies that investigates the relationship between these variables.

Future studies could look into this effect on other target group with different age, gender, and nationalities beyond Thai female undergraduate students; for example, by using Thai version

of the survey. They could also look at other categories of products other than the beauty product used in this study. For example, categories such as service reviews can be examined. Also, there are more than one type of online reviews. Apart from written reviews, there are video-recorded reviews as well. Thus, future research can explore the effect found in this study to other types of reviews.

Conclusion

All in all, this paper looked into the role of compensatory control and perceived similarity on trustworthiness regarding online reviewers. The results revealed that (1) people whose sense of control have been reduced perceived the reviewer as more trustworthy than those who have not (2) this effect was moderated by the level of similarity, particularly those who lack control were found to perceive the reviewer as more trustworthy when there was high similarity between them. These key findings have shed some light on consumers' motivations to trust online reviews. Moreover, the results found in this research can be used to apply in the real world setting, such as to develop new marketing plans and strategies.

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Appendix A.

Informed consent

Hello and thank you for clicking the link to take part in my research - I really appreciate it! As you may already know this questionnaire contributes to my research project for my senior project at Chulalongkorn University. The research itself aims to investigate consumer behavior regarding online reviews.

There's just a few more things you need to know before you take part:

- 1) The questionnaire is a self-report scale, and will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. You will be asked questions about your attitude toward online reviews on beauty products.
- 2) All participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from the questionnaire at any time. If there are any questions you do not wish to answer feel free to omit those questions.
- 3) This questionnaire is a part of a student research project.
- 4) This questionnaire is completely anonymous (i.e, no identity questions will be asked). No individual responses of the survey will be shared - only general, overall findings.

Thank you again, Chanunya, Natnapin, and Nichamon
(My email: mayy.k@hotmail.com)

I have read the above information and would like to fill in the questionnaire. I understand the procedures involved and objectives of the research.

I agree

Appendix B.

Sense of Control Manipulation

Low Control Condition:

Please write a few sentences about a recent experience in which you feel you have NO control (e.g. I did poorly on the exam because I was sick on the day despite the fact that I have studied for it) over

High Control Condition:

Please write a few sentences about a recent experience in which you feel you have control over (e.g. I did well on the exam because I have studied really hard for it.)

Appendix C.

Sense of Control Scale

Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

Response Scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly			Don't know			Strongly
Disagree						Agree

- 1) There is little I can do to change many of the important things in my life. (R)
- 2) I often feel helpless in dealing with the problems of life. (R)
- 3) I can do just about anything I really set my mind to do.
- 4) Other people determine most of what I can and cannot do. (R)
- 5) What happens in my life is often beyond my control. (R)
- 6) When I really want to do something, I usually find a way to succeed at it.
- 7) There are many things that interfere with what I want to do. (R)
- 8) Whether or not I am able to get what I want is in my own hands.
- 9) I have little control over the things that happen to me. (R)
- 10) There is really no way I can solve some of the problems I have. (R)
- 11) Sometimes I feel that I am being pushed around in life. (R)
- 12) What happens to me in the future mostly depends on me.

Appendix D.

Perceived Similarity Manipulation

This is the profile of a Thai online reviewer. You will be asked to read one of her reviews and answer some questions about it.

Low Similarity Condition:

Nan

Age: 38

Occupation: Housewife

Bangkok, Thailand

High Similarity Condition:

Nan

Age: 20

Occupation: University student

Bangkok, Thailand

Appendix E.

Online Review Sample



Review: RosyGlam blushes

I'm currently obsessed with RosyGlam blushes. These blushes come in a sleek rose gold compact, which includes a mirror. I love how classy and "high end" the packaging is, without sacrificing the overall quality.

The quality of these blushes are amazing; I love how smooth and silky they feel, while still remaining fairly pigmented. I was a little disappointed of how similar the three pink colors are, as there could have been a larger color variation. I was also disappointed there wasn't any matte blushes in this collection.

Overall I give these blushes a 5 star as the quality and packaging is amazing! It's definitely worth investing in a few different shades that will compliment your skin tone. I hope you all have fun with your makeup shopping!



Appendix F.

Perceived Similarity Scale

For each of the following statements, please use the scale to rate the extent to which the reviewer is similar to you.

Response Scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly			Neutral			Strongly
Disagree						Agree

- 1) This person thinks like me.
- 2) This person is similar to me.
- 3) This person is from a similar social class as mine.
- 4) This person has a status like mine.
- 5) This person is from the same background as mine.
- 6) This person is like me.

Appendix G.

Trustworthiness Scale

Please use the scale to describe how you perceive the reviewer according to the following terms by circling the appropriate number.

Undependable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Dependable
Dishonest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Honest
Unreliable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Reliable
Insincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Sincere
Untrustworthy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Trustworthy

Appendix H.

Debrief

Online reviews, sense of control, perceived similarity, perceived trustworthiness

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. As stated at the beginning, this survey is a part of research examining an individual's attitudes toward online reviews as a form of electronic word-of-mouth. The study involved several manipulations including sense of control and perceived similarity with the online reviewer. This is to fill in the research gap in explaining how choosing to seek for information from online reviewers could act as a compensatory control after one's sense of control had been threatened. Furthermore, the effect could be moderated by another factor such as perceived similarity between the individual and the source.

Your responses are completely anonymous, confidential, and no individual surveys will be shared, only general overall findings.

The research is being led by Chanunya Kiatphaibool, Natnapin Kiatbampen, and Nichamon Krongphanich at Chulalongkorn University and supervised by Dr. Yokfah Isaranon. Please feel free to email Chanunya for more information at mayy.k@hotmail, or her supervisor, Dr. Yokfah Isaranon at yokfah.i@chula.ac.th

Bibliography

Chanunya Kiatphaibool

Chanunya is currently a student in the Joint International Psychology Program at Chulalongkorn University, soon to be graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. In 2016, she has graduated from the University of Queensland with a Bachelor of Arts and an extended major in Sociology as her first degree. Throughout the years as a psychology student, she has always been interested in the field of Child and Developmental Psychology. She hopes to further her studies in this area and apply the knowledge in helping children manage their mental and emotional health.

Natnapin Kiatbampen

Natnapin graduated from the University of Queensland with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology in 2016, and is expected to graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the Joint International Program in Psychology (JIPP) at Chulalongkorn University in May 2017. She has developed an interest in social psychology and consumer behavior throughout her studies, and hopes to be pursuing a career in the field of marketing. She is also currently interested in the emerging field of conservation psychology.

Nichamon Krongphanich

Nichamon is currently an undergraduate student enrolled in the Joint International Program in Psychology (JIPP) in Chulalongkorn University. She graduated from the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia, receiving a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology in 2016. She is also expecting to graduate from Chulalongkorn University with a Bachelor of Science in Psychological Science within the year of 2017. Moreover, she is interested in applying

Psychology to the real world. In the near future, she wishes to pursue a career in the field of marketing and consumer behavior.