Investigating the Importance of Trust Psychologically Based on Self-Determination Theory

Mahmoud Akbarieh Yazdi  
*Wuhan University of Technology, China, mahmoud_akbarieh@yahoo.com*

Yanxia Cheng  
*Wuhan University of Technology, China, chengyanxia221@126.com*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://aisel.aisnet.org/whiceb2016](http://aisel.aisnet.org/whiceb2016)

**Recommended Citation**  
[http://aisel.aisnet.org/whiceb2016/65](http://aisel.aisnet.org/whiceb2016/65)

*This material is brought to you by the Wuhan International Conference on e-Business at AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). It has been accepted for inclusion in WHICEB 2016 Proceedings by an authorized administrator of AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). For more information, please contact elibrary@aisnet.org.*
Abstract: "Trust" has been studied by different experts in the field of business particularly in e-business. As reasons regarding trust’s importance has not been studied yet, this research concentrated on "why" trust is so important in business area. Toward this, the trust is analyzed psychologically using self-determination theory. For this purpose, deep interviews are performed which fourteen interviewees attended and responded to the questionnaires. According to the SDT, human’s needs include three different kinds psychologically; competency, relatedness, and authority. Since trust associates with the sense of cheating, resulting that sense affects the need for competency and relatedness as well. Moreover, a customer worries to be cheated by feeling a sense of incompetency where the society may have negative reactions, leading to explore the reliability by customers. Therefore, cheating has its negative influences on needs for competency and relatedness. Consequently, customer initially attempts to decrease the intermediaries before purchasing and then he/she highly will enclose his/her experience with the society.

Keywords: trust psychological needs, self-determination theory, competency, relatedness

1. INTRODUCTION

Trust plays a pivotal role in business, both micro level and macro level [1]. In the macro level, trust has been discussed as an important factor that forms social capital. In the micro level also without trust exchange barely takes place. Trust has rooted in security need. It means without sense of security from the partner, trust would not be formed. Need introduced in Levitt article for the first time. He highlighted need in marketing by presenting “marketing myopia”. He believed that if the business focuses on customer need, the chance of success will be more. [2] What Levitt presented in his article referred to functional role of product and needs which functional roles can satisfy. But over time and because of different issues such as competition and improving the level of well-being in the society, psychological needs become more important. Need for security is the first psychological need of customer and trust is a criterion for satisfying this need. In this paper, we are going to investigate the trust based on self-determination theory.

2. SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a new theory of motivation, needs and development. [3] [4] Self-determination theory postulates that human beings have three inherent psychological needs: the needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy. SDT depicts needs as universal necessities. So, these needs are not learned but are innate and thus are independent from gender, culture and time. To the extent that the needs are thwarted, one would expect to find passivity, ill-being, and fragmentation and alienated functioning. SDT posits that human beings have both self-oriented and socially-oriented psychological needs, which are labeled ‘autonomy’ and ‘relatedness’. [5] Autonomy involves the desire to ‘self-organize experience and behavior, and to have activity be concordant with one’s integrated sense of self’ [6]

SDT argues individuals seek autonomy and self-expression within the context of social relationships. In particular, the theory focuses on the factors that enable individuals to meet their psychological needs when they
are in a lower-power position.

The need for competence highlights inherent desire of people to be effective in dealing with the environment. Throughout life, people engage their world and try to master it and to feel they can manage it. The need for relatedness concerns the universal propensity to have interaction with others. A lot of human activities are directed to have belongingness feeling. Finally the need for autonomy referred to people's universal urge to be causal agents to experience volition to act in accord with their integrated sense of self and to endorse their actions at the highest level of reflective capacity. To be autonomous does not mean to be independent of others, but rather it means to feel a sense of willingness and choice when acting whether the actions are independently initiated or are in responsible for a request from significant others.

Because these needs are essential, people tend to those situations that can satisfy their needs better and away from those that thwart their needs. However, human behavior is not specifically intended to satisfy its basic needs. Rather they do what they tend based on their inner preferences and personality to satisfy their needs. [7]

**Figure 1:** The effect of buying on customer needs and customer main goals

3. TRUST

Trust is a key facilitator of commerce especially of electronic commerce. [8] - [9] Trust includes two basic types, namely direct trust and third-party trust. Direct trust is a trust relationship which develops between the two parties by themselves. Third-party trust is a trust that develops between the two parties by intervention of a third party. In fact, the third party assures the security of the relationship. Third-party trust is of especial importance in the e-commerce because it is very common that in online transactions two parties be unfamiliar to each other. [10]

Today, trusted relationships are not created only between people or between people and organizations but can also be found between people and computing systems, or people and shopping agents. [11]

The challenge is that both the virtual and global context of e-commerce impede trust in its development as trust requires face to face interaction, the very activity that virtual e-commerce eliminates. According to Handy (1995) “the more virtue the organization, the more its people need to meet in person”. [12] Virtuality requires trust to make it work. In the virtual world, the customer doesn’t have direct control over the actions of the seller. In virtual form trust is the primary means of social controls and co-ordination. [13] Trust counteracts risk of opportunistic behavior and as a result, it can limit the transaction costs associated with an electronic exchange.

Trust is not specifically just between two people. It can be transferred from person to brand but not from our own experience but through recommendations of people who belong to our close social environment, such as family and friends. [14]

4. METHODOLOGY

We applied deep interview in this research and focus on the importance of trust and its psychological roots. We interviewed 14 persons in different gender and age. We asked open questions about pre-purchase,
5. DISCUSSION

Trust and security are two construct that depend to each other extremely. People sense security when they can trust to another part and trust when sense that their partner is secure. These two constructs are very important in the traditional marketing. In internet marketing also trust plays more important role. One reason is that in the e-commerce customer should trust on more factors. In traditional commerce, customers just counteract with a sales person or company but in the e-commerce there are more factors. In the e-commerce, customer first should trust the e-seller for the quality of products, because they cannot check the product tangibly and also they are not sure about receiving the bought product. After choosing the product then customer is conducted to bank webpage to pay the price. And customer again should trust to the bank. So traditional commerce needs less trust rather than e-commerce.

As we mention before trust has two kinds: direct trust and third party trust. In the third party trust, a partner trust to his/her partner because of the third party. In fact, the third party has a duty to develop the trust between trustor and trustee. So what that is important in this kind of trust, is the reputation and the process of the website. Martin: I don’t buy from all web sites. In china, I prefer to buy from JD, because JD is a B2C and can be trusted easily:

Zahra: in my country I just buy from DiJi because all products are original. I trust to this website because I counteract with the website which is famous, not other partners who I don’t know them. So I can’t trust on Taobao.

Masu: I cannot trust on Taobao because although the security of this website is ok, but the product may be fake. I mean the actual seller is not trustable.

Thus the intervention of the website and the reputation of the website especially for C2C and B2B websites are very important. But why trust is so important?

The main goals of people are physiological growth, well-being and integrity. All of actions in our life, including buying, is toward these main goals. These goals can be achieved through satisfying three basic needs. Human basic needs are psychological but physiological need also affect them. These three basic needs are competency, relatedness and authority. People shall cost to achieve higher well-being so are going to gain the maximum well-being. But if individuals don’t obtain what they demand, not only don’t achieve their goals and sense satisfaction but also have a negative effect on their psychological needs. Customers in this situation feel incompetency because another person might utilize from what they have earned – their money.

Markov: I don’t have a good feeling because I am cheated. I feel I am an incompetent man.

Ali: I feel I’ve been humiliated

Gol: I feel my money has been stolen and I blame myself.

All people look for competency but when a customer is cheated, not only his/her needs for competency don’t meet, but also customer feel incompetency because of losing his/her money and being cheated from another person that can be a sign of being gullible. Trust in exchange is more important rather than common counteraction in the society. As in the exchange, customer should cost, so through buying one thing customer will be divested from similar ones because of limitation in the budget.

Being cheated has negative influence also on relatedness need. This happens especially for symbolic brands. Customer buys a symbolic brand to express him/herself in the society. When the product is fake, others may
don’t give him/her good feedback. The importance of this note – relatedness- refers to the other factors such as personality that customer have extroversion either introversion personality.

![figure 2](image)

**Figure 2: effect of being cheated on psychological needs**

The reaction of the customer in this situation is considerable. They try to acquit themselves by incriminating the seller and the company. They explain their negative experience to other people to convince them that they are competent people and the seller or company was dishonest. They state the story in such a way that the audience would not feel they are simpleton.

Kyan: I was not going to study in this university. I have admission from one famous universities of Europe but one person who takes money from this university showed some certificates that this university is as same as that European university but cheaper.

![figure 3](image)

**Figure 3: the reaction of the customer**

6. **CONCLUSION**

Trust is one behavioral factor which plays an important role in business and the exchange cannot occur with trust’s absence. Since the number of intermediaries has increased notably trust in the e-commerce is more highlighted. The question of our research is that why trust is so important psychologically? In this research, SDT has been utilized to analyze the trust’s importance. SDT is a theory in social psychology containing a comprehensive view to the human needs. According to SDT, human have three basic needs: need for competency, relatedness and authority. In this study, deep interviews are conducted which nine interviewees participated and replied to the questionnaires. In those questionnaires, we asked open questions related to the trust in shopping procedure. The findings demonstrated that individuals try to purchase from reliable sellers as they worried to be cheated by unreliable people. It should be mentioned that cheating has negative influences on people psychologically. Being cheated causes people feel incompetency because they have been supposed as a gullible man. It also has negative effects on need for relatedness especially for symbolic brands. Reaction of customers in this situation includes sharing their negative experience with the society to blame the seller and express their competency to the individuals and society.
REFERENCES


