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IM in C2C Markets: A Translucent Technology Designed to Facilitate Interactions

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Abstract

In Chinese consumer-to-consumer (C2C) markets, the embedding of Instant Messenger (IM) tools, like TaoBao’s WangWang, appears unique when compared with C2C markets, such as eBay, in other parts of the world. These tools are considered to be examples of translucent technologies, providing socially richer information about the space where interlocutors meet online. These tools have shown their determining influence in the purchasing process. In this article, we propose a research framework to explore the potential impact of these embedded IM tools on cultivating interactivity in an online exchange, and the sequential development of both trust and guanxi between C2C buyers and sellers. Trust and guanxi are posited as exerting an influence on the intention of a buyer to engage in an online C2C purchase. The potential implications and contributions of this research in progress are discussed.

Keywords: Instant Messenger (IM), social translucence, system design, interactivity, trust, guanxi