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The Effect of Online Consumer Reviews on Attitude and Purchase

Intention – The Role of Message and Source Characteristics

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The Effect of Online Consumer Reviews on Attitude and Purchase Intention – The Role of Message and Source Characteristics

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Abstract

The Effect of Online Consumer Reviews on Attitude and Purchase Intention – The Role of Message and Source Characteristics

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The objective of the study is to extend the emerging body and scope of research on consumer's attitudinal and behavioral responses to online consumer reviews by examining the role of both message content and source characteristics. That is, this study investigates how consumers process online consumer reviews within the context of message and source characteristics, and how these two factors influence consumer's attitudes toward the review, attitudes toward the product, perceived credibility of the reviewers, and purchase intention. From this perceptive, the study broadens the understanding and importance of message and source factors to the persuasiveness of online consumer reviews.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In today's marketplace, the evolving media environment has redefined media and the role of advertising in new media consumption. The media content creation sphere continues to shift towards a "user-centric model" led by user generated content (UGC) and away from the past model that has been characterized as "publisher-centric" (Morrissey 2005). As a relatively new type of user generated content, online consumer reviews are an emerging element of advertising and marketing communication. Recent studies show the increasing significance of online consumer reviews to consumers. For instance, according to Nielsen's Global Trust in Advertising report (2012), online consumer reviews are the second most trusted source of brand information and messaging, with 70% of global consumers indicating they trust messages on this platform, an increase of 15% since 2008 (Nielsen, 2012). Consistent with these data, approximately two-thirds of consumers read online consumer reviews when shopping online, and more than 80% indicated the reviews directly influenced their purchase decisions (Sullivan, 2008).

The rise of online consumer reviews has also received considerable attention in academic communities. Research has addressed the importance of online consumer reviews from different aspects: motivations to create the review (Hennig-Thurau,

Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004; Yoo & Gretzel 2008), the effect of online consumer

reviews on purchase intention (Park, Lee & Han 2007; Lee, Park & Han 2011), and

perceived helpfulness of online consumer reviews (Mudambi & Schuff 2012; Schindler

& Bickart 2012; Baek, Ahn & Choi 2012), just to name a few. Although several studies

have addressed the influential factors of online consumer reviews (Cheung, Lee &

Rabjohn 2008; Lee, Park & Han 2008; Park & Kim 2008; Park & Lee 2008; Sher & Lee

2009), little research has combined both message and source factors, when examining the

effect of online consumer reviews.

To this end, the objective of the present study is to extend the emerging body and

scope of research on consumer's attitudinal and behavioral responses to online consumer

reviews by examining the role of both message content and source characteristics. That

is, this study investigates how consumers process online consumer reviews within the

context of message and source characteristics, and how these two factors influence

consumer's attitudes toward the review, attitudes toward the product, perceived

credibility of the reviewers, and purchase intentions. From this perceptive, the study

integrates principles from different domains, and thus, broadens the understanding and

importance of message and source factors to the persuasiveness of online consumer

reviews.

The paper is structured as follows. First, the user generated content is defined and online consumer reviews are positioned as a new form of eWOM. Second, a review of prior online consumer review research is explored and from this literature hypotheses are stated. Then, the experimental design and procedures are outlined. And, finally, the results of the study are presented and discussed, along with the limitations to the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Hypotheses

UER GENERATED CONTENT (UGC)

At the end of 2006, *Time Magazine* selected YOU, especially those people who contribute to user generated content, as its esteemed Person of the Year. When stating the reason for singling YOU out, Lev Grossman writes with an inspiring style:

> Look at 2006 through a different lens and you will see another story, one that is not about conflict or great men. It is a story about community and collaboration on a scale never seen before. It is about the cosmic compendium of knowledge Wikipedia and the million-channel people network YouTube and the online metropolis MySpace. It is about the many wresting power from the few and helping one another for nothing and how that will not only change the world, but also change the way the world changes (Grossman 2006).

In today's marketplace, the evolving media environment and new technological innovations have redefined the media environment and the role of advertising in new media consumption. The emergence and widespread creation of Web 2.0 technologies allows consumers to increase their control over media exposure. Consumers are focusing on creating a media environment instead of simply relying on traditional channel to receive information. Media fragmentation, consumer interactivity, and the ability to personalize content are all outcomes of technological advancements leading to the empowerment of the consumer (Bright 2011).

User Generated Content (UGC), also known as consumer-generated media (CGM), refers to media content primarily distributed on the Internet and created or produced by

the general public rather than by a paid professional (Daugherty, Eastin, & Bright 2008).

In the UGC environment, consumers are not passive information receivers; they are in greater control of their media consumption than ever before and have the freedom to produce, edit, and distribute content on the Internet. The media content creation sphere continues to shift toward a "user-centric model" and away from the past model that has been characterized as "publisher-centric" (Morrissey 2005). Notably, the majority of active users are not primarily attracted by monetary incentives, as most UGCs are not produced to generate direct profits (Benkler 2006).

With the advent of Web 2.0 technology, UGC has not only become one of the fastest growing forms of content on the Internet, but also created some of the most successful digital brands. Some examples of prominent Web 2.0 websites and web-based applications supporting the creation, distribution, and consumption of UGC include, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flicker, Instagram, Wikipedia, LinkedIn, Pinterest, MySpace, Blogger, and personal web pages. During 2013, 134.9 million unique consumers visited Facebook each month in the U.S., and 128 million Americans viewed video content on YouTube monthly (Nielsen 2013). According to Pew Research Center (2014), 12% of social media users have posted their own videos of news events to social networking sites. Moreover, 11% of all online new consumers have submitted their own content (including videos, photos, articles or opinion pieces) to blogs or news

organizations. That amounts to 7% of U.S. adults posting their own news videos on social media and 7% submitting their own content to news sites. One great example of a news organization trying integrate user generated content was NBC's 2013 purchase of Stringwire, a company that helps consumers shoot live video and send it directly to NBC news facilities.

ONLINE CONSUMER REVIEWS AS ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH

Online consumer reviews, defined as a type of product or service information created by users based on experience, can serve as a new element in advertising and marketing communication and work as an online seller's free "sales assistants" to help consumers identify products that best match their needs (Chen & Xie 2008). This type of review is now established as a common type of online user generated marketing communication. Further, an online consumer review is in the form of an open-ended consumer-authored comment about a product or service and usually contains a numerical star rating (usually ranging from 1 to 5 stars). As a new type of user generated content, online consumer reviews are an emerging element of advertising and marketing communication, playing an increasingly significant role in the consumer purchase process. According to Nielsen's Global Trust in Advertising report (2012), 92% of consumers worldwide say they trust earned media, such as word-of-mouth or recommendation from friends and family, above all other forms of advertising – an increase of 18% since 2007. Moreover, online

consumer reviews are the second most trusted source of brand information and messaging, with 70% of global consumers surveyed online indicating they trust messages on this platform, an increase of 15% since 2008 (Nielsen 2012).

Consumer reviews are increasingly available online for a wide range of products and services such as electronics, games, videos, movies, books, clothes, automobile, and music. As the leading online retailer, Amazon.com has enabled consumers to post product comments on its website since 1995, and these reviews have been regarded as one of the most popular and successful features of Amazon (*New York Times* 2004). Considered a leader in the innovation of consumer reviews, Amazon.com encourages multi-modality reviews such as video and audio, compared to the standard text reviews. In recent years, an increasing number of websites offering similar types of consumer reviews have emerged in specialty areas, such as electronics (CNet.com), automotive (Edmunds.com), and tourism (TripAdvisor.com).

Numerous studies have been conducted to examine the impact of online consumer reviews. Generally, this research can be classified into two levels: individual level and market level. From consumer's perspective, studies suggest that consumer reviews have become a key element in influencing consumer purchase decisions (Cheung, Xiao & Liu 2012; Duan, Gu & Whinston 2008, Forman Ghose & Wiesenfeld 2008; Mudambi & Schuff 2010; Park, Lee & Han 2007). Here, online consumer reviews are immersed in

each stages of the process by providing diagnostic value. The purchasing decision process includes five stages: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation (Kotler & Keller 2005). When consumers browse through online consumer reviews, they may find some useful comments about a product and realize the need for it. Once the need is recognized, consumers are able to search for more information about the product by seeking other's comments and recommendations from online reviews. They can also use online consumer reviews to compare and evaluate the alternatives. In the post-purchase evaluation stage, some consumers are inclined to post their product evaluations based on their purchasing and using experience.

Online consumer reviews not only become very important for consumer purchase decisions, but also greatly influence product sales. At the market level, researchers have focused on examining the impact of online consumer reviews on product sales based on the data extracted from websites or online product review platforms (Chen & Xie 2005; Cheung, Xiao & Liu 2012; Chevalier & Mayzlin 2006; Clemons, Gao & Hitt 2006; Duan, Gu & Whinston 2008; Zhu & Zhang 2010). According to data from Amazon.com and BN.com, Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) suggest that online book reviews have a significant impact on book sales. Also Liu (2006) finds that consumer reviews on the Yahoo Movies website greatly influence box office revenue.

DUAL-PROCESS THEORY

Dual-process theory suggests that people who have the motivation and ability are more likely to process information via the central route (Chaiken 1980; Chaiken, Liberman & Eagly 1989; Eagly & Chaiken 1993). The dual-process theory of human information processing such as Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and the Heuristic-Systematic Model (HSM) is the most commonly used theoretical foundation in the study of the impact of eWOM communication (Cheung, Lee & Rabjohn 2008; Chu & Kamal 2008; Gupta & Harris 2005). In this study, the dual-process theory works as a theoretical foundation by examining the role played by both message content and source factors affecting the ways individuals process online consumer reviews.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) provides a significant theoretical perspective for understanding the information adoption process of online consumer reviews. ELM posits two information-processing routes in which people utilize to process persuasive information: a central route and a peripheral route (Petty & Cacioppo 1986). According to Petty and Cacioppo (1986), the central route entails careful scrutiny of the information, whereas the peripheral route uses environmental cues of the message to ultimately decide the acceptance of the message. ELM has been widely applied to understand how information processing by individuals leads to their decision outcomes in online environments (Lee, Park & Han 2008; Park & Kim 2008;Park, Lee & Han 2007;

Sher & Lee 2009; Sussman & Siegal 2003; Zhang & Watts 2003). In addition, an

individual's characteristics, such as prior knowledge or product involvement, affect the

likelihood of elaboration and moderate the impact of eWOM messages on a consumer

purchase decision (Lee, Park & Han 2008; Park & Lee 2008).

Adapted from the ELM, the information adoption process refers to the internalization

phase of knowledge transfer where explicit information is transformed into internalized

knowledge and meaning (Nonaka 1994). Information adoption is one of the principal

activities that consumers are likely to do in the online context. The actual impact of the

information received may vary person to person, which means the same content may lead

to very different responses in different recipients, depending on the recipient's

perceptions, experience and sources (Chaiken & Eagly 1976). The information adoption

model is widely used to explain how people are influenced to adopt the information

posted in computer-mediated communication (CMC) contexts. For example, Internet

users will browse product review and comments posted by others before they make a

purchase decision (Pitta & Fowler 2005). Similarly, they solicit a virtual community for

help by posting questions when they have queries (Sussman & Siegal 2003).

Therefore, in order to examine factors influencing information adoption of online

consumer reviews, this study considers the review content (message sidedness and review

type) as the central influence and the source characteristic as the peripheral cue to investigate consumers' responses (attitudes and purchase intentions).

ATTRIBUTION THEORY

Attribution theory explains how consumers think about explanations for behaviors, or what causes such behavior (Heider 1958; Hoyer & Macinnis 2008). Simply, attribution theory formalizes the observation that humans tend to ask "why?" (Crowley & Hoyer 1994). For example, if an individual is exposed to an advertisement, the message in the advertisement can be regarded as an observable effect that can be attributed to an underlying cause, such as the advertiser's desire to sell the product, or actual features of the product being advertised (Settle & Golden 1974). This may result from the fact that when presented with a message, individuals will make an effort to assess whether the message provides an accurate representation and/or whether the source of the message lacks credibility (Kelly 1967). To some extent, the individual's attitude and purchasing behavior toward the product may be influenced by the way they attribute the perceived message to actual characteristics of the product or service. Also, consumers tend to look for an explanation based on the event's stability, focus, and control ability (Hoyer & Macinnis 2008). Namely, consumers are more likely to be satisfaction if they perceive the cause as temporary, consumer focused, and in the consumers' control (Hoyer & Macinnis 2008).

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In word-of-mouth communication (WOM), attribution theory is of great significance to help a receiver understand interpretations of a sender's motivations for communicating such information, and attributions mediate an interpersonal message's effect on a receiver's evaluation of the focal objective (Hilton 1995). Attribution theory has been widely used to understand the causal inferences that consumers make when they recommend products to others or why they complain about problems about products (Hunt, Domzal & Kernan 1981; Kamins & Assael 1987). Similarly, according to the attribution theory, consumers who evaluate whether or not to adopt an online consumer review, will make their decision based on the casual inferences they make regarding the reviewer's motivation for posting the review (Sen & Lerman 2007). Prior studies suggest that different types of consumers' attributions have a different impact on the perceived usefulness of the message and attitudes towards the product and source (Laczniak et al. 2001; Sen & Lerman 2007). On the one hand, if consumers attribute the communicator's review about a product to its actual performance, they not only are more likely to perceive the communicator as credible, but also have more confidence in the accuracy of the review and a stronger belief that the product actually has the attributes mentioned in the review. As a result, consumers will become more likely to be persuaded by the review (Mizerski & Green 1978; Mizerski 1982; Sen & Lerman 2007). On the other hand, when consumers attribute the review to the incentives given to the communicator, they will

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discount the product's actual performance, and perceive the communicator as biased. As

such, they become less likely to be persuaded by that review (Mizerski 1982; Sen &

Lerman 2007).

MESSAGE FRAMING

The message in the communication process can be framed either positively or

negatively. Similarly, the message in online consumer reviews can be divided into

positive, negative, and two-sided or unbiased (both positive and negative). Positive

reviews emphasize a product's advantages or potential gains to consumers if they

purchase and use this product; nevertheless, negative reviews focus on a product's

disadvantages or potential losses that are related to the consumer's dissatisfaction because

of the purchase or use of the product. The two-sided review consists of a message that not

only provides positive information, but also voluntarily includes negative information

about attributes of a product or service.

Researches have investigated the effects of WOM valence on persuasiveness.

Previous studies have found that consumers perceive positive messages to be more

persuasive than negative ones. For example, Arndt (1967) posit that respondents who

receive positive WOM about a new food product are much more likely to purchase it

compared to those who receive negative WOM. East, Hammond, and Lomax (2008)

suggest that the impact of positive WOM is generally greater than negative WOM on

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consumer's purchase probability. Furthermore, a moderate proportion of positive

evaluative statements are associated with helpful reviews. Positive evaluations could

support the reader's further consideration of an alternative. However, too much positive

information might lead the reader to question the reviewer's motives, which may hider

their trust in the review (Schindler & Bickart 2012). Also, the inclusion of negative

information (especially important negative information) leads the receiver of the message

to conclude the advertiser is "telling the truth", and in turn, it strengthens beliefs

regarding positive attributes the advertiser claims are associated with the product

(Crowley & Hoyer 1994).

Conversely, other studies show that negative information is more attention grabbing

in general (Ditto & Lopez 1992; Homer & Yoon 1992). Smith and Petty (1996) argue

that negatively framed messages are processed more carefully than positively framed

message, and therefore, people weight negative information more heavily than positive

information in the information-processing and decision-making tasks (Feldman 1966;

Zajonc 1968; Kanouse & Hanson 1972; Sen & Lerman 2007; Doh & Hwang 2009;

Weinberger & Dillon 1980). This negative effect may result from the fact that the

individual's social environment contains more positive cues than negative ones.

Perceived as counter normative, negative cues attract more attention and are more heavily

attributed to the stimulus object, compared to positive cues (Feldman 1966; Zajonc 1968;

Kanouse & Hanson 1972). This underestimation of important contextual factor is an attributional phenomenon observed from both a laboratory setting (Jones & Nisbett 1971) and the societal level (Lazer 1980).

From an information-processing perspective, Kanouse and Hanson (1972) assert that people tend to have negative bias, wherein they put more emphasis on the negative than on positive information, so a negative review acts as a more powerful message than a positive review, and thus exerts higher persuasive power. Sen and Lerman (2007) also found that for at least some products, consumers perceive negative reviews as more accurate, informative, and useful than positive. Within an eWOM context, when a review site contains only positive reviews, readers may doubt the authenticity and credibility of the review (Doh & Hwang 2009).

Beside positive-only and negative-only messages, online consumer reviews also can be framed as two-sided, which not only provide positive information, but also includes negative aspects about features of a product or service. Attribution theory has guided a majority of the existing two-sided message studies, which state that two-sided messages reduce the receiver's skepticism and enhances the message acceptance (Belch 1981). Kamins and Marks (1988) suggest that an increase in information sidedness reduces the number of counterarguments and the amount of source derogation, which in turn increases the information acceptance and believability. Furthermore, two-sided messages

elicit respondent's attributions that the positive claims are likely to show actual features

of the product because of their validity, rather than the advertiser's desire to sell the

product (Smith &Hunt 1978). Here, research suggests that two-sided product information

is more persuasive than its positive-only (one-sided) counterpart (Allen 1993; Hastak &

Park 1990; Pechmann 1992). Two-sided messages enhance source credibility and exert

positive effects on attitudes (Crowley & Hoyer, 1994).

Although there are numerous studies that explore the persuasiveness of positive

versus negative eWOM and the persuasiveness of one-sided versus two-sided message,

there is a dearth of research systematically integrating the three perspectives of message

in eWOM: positive, negative, and two-sided. Thus, the current study will examine each

persuasive effect on consumer's attitude towards both the review and product, as well as

purchasing intention. The following hypotheses are proposed:

H1$_a$: Message sidedness will have an effect on attitude towards the review, where a two-

sided message will have the greatest effect followed by negatively-sided and

positively-sided.

H1$_b$: Message sidedness will have an effect on attitude towards the product, where a

two-sided message will have the greatest effect followed by negatively-sided and

positively-sided.

H1$_c$: Message sidedness will have an effect on perceived credibility of the reviewer,

where a two-sided message will have the greatest effect followed by negatively-sided

and positively-sided.

H1$_d$: Message sidedness will have an effect on purchase intention, where a two-sided

message will have the greatest effect followed by negatively-sided and positively-

sided.

COGNITIVE FIT THEORY

In addition to attribution theory, cognitive fit theory informs hypotheses.

According to information processing theory, human problem solvers seek ways to reduce

their problem solving effort, since they are limited information processors (Newell &

Simon 1972). One of the ways to reduce processing effort is to facilitate the problem-

solving processes in completing a task, which can be achieved by matching the problem

representation to the task - an approach that is known as cognitive fit (Vessey 1991).

Cognitive fit theory indicates that individuals' information processing is more efficient

and effective when they are able to use appropriate cognitive processes from given

information (Vessey 1991). Performance of a decision-making task will be enhanced

when the information is given in a form that an individual is likely to process because the

match between the information type and decision-making task minimizes cognitive effort

(Hong et al. 2004). However, when there is a mismatch occurred, cognitive fit will not

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take place. Individuals will then need to transform some of their mental effort to process the information, resulting in relatively low performance. Cognitive fit theory has been empirically validated by other studies in several industries (Agarwal & Tanniru 1996; Smelcer & Carmel 1997; Dunn & Grabski 2001). These studies collectively suggest that cognitive fit may provide a useful theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between the review type and the effect on consumer's attitude and purchase intention.

Individuals tend to seek information that fits their needs best in order to minimize their cognitive effort. If the information of online consumer reviews matches the consumer's shopping task, consumers are able to process the information more efficiently and have a better recall of product information (Hong, Thong & Tam 2004). Based on the content of information, the information of online consumer reviews can be divided into two types: the attribute-centric reviews and the benefit-centric reviews. Attribute-centric reviews focus on describing technical attributes of products, such as numbers representing attribute levels, which are supported by objective data and description (Park & Kim 2008). By contrast, benefit-centric reviews are composed of subjective evaluations and interpretations based on personal own feelings and perceptions towards products. In order to evaluate the product, reviewers subjectively interpret benefits of each attribute in their own way (Park & Kim 2008).

Given the same information content, varying the information format can influence consumers' online shopping behavior (Hong, Thong & Tam 2004). Characteristics of the reviewer such as their experience or knowledge have an impact on their cognitive fit. Park and Kim (2009) find that consumers with different levels of expertise prefer different types of review messages – novices are more sensitive to benefit-focused reviews, while experts are more sensitive to attribute-focused reviews. The results also show that the effect of cognitive fit on purchase intention is stronger for experts than for novices (Park & Kim 2009).

When consumers process online product reviews presented in a way that fits the users cognitively, they are able to more efficiently process the review, and thus have a positive impact on their purchase intention (Park & Kim 2008). This study focuses on the persuasive effect of review type on consumer's attitude and purchase intention from a cognitive fit perspective. Based on prior research, attribute-centric reviews provide factual information that leads consumers to process using their own knowledge. Benefit-centric reviews present more direct and intuitive messages that directly indicate advantages and disadvantages of the product compared to attribute-centric reviews, enabling a review reader to process the review in a faster and easier way (i.e., cognitive fit). In that way, benefit-centric reviews are more likely to minimizing cognitive effort

compared to attribute-centric reviews, which will better fit consumer's needs and enhance

their decision making. Thus, we hypothesize:

H2$_a$: A benefit-centric review will have a more positive effect on attitude toward the

review compared to an attribute-centric review.

H2$_b$: A benefit-centric review will have a more positive effect on attitude toward the

product compared to an attribute-centric review.

H2$_c$: A benefit-centric review will lead to greater purchase intention compared to an

attribute-centric review.

SOURCE CREDIBILITY

In addition to message characteristics such as one-sided versus two-sided and

attribute-centric versus benefit-centric, source characteristics are also important when

looking to understand attitudinal and behavioral effects from messages. According to

Eagly and Chaiken (1993), communicators (i.e., sources) with positive attributes are more

persuasive than communicators with less positive attributes. Fiske and Taylor (1991) also

posit that the characteristics of the message source heavily influence the process and

outcomes of persuasion.

The term "source" in the eWOM literature often refers to the person who originated

the message (Dou et al. 2012). Credibility is usually defined as how expert the

communicator is perceived to be in the area of concern, and also as how trusted by the

individual receiving the communication (Freedman et al. 1981). Source credibility

describes a perception of the credibility of a message source, reflecting nothing about the

message itself (Chaiken 1980). Two key dimensions of source credibility are

trustworthiness and expertise (Hovland et al. 1953). Trustworthiness refers to the

audience's confidence that the source will provide information in an objective and honest

manner (Ohanian 1991), while expertise refers to the degree to which audience feels that

the source is capable of making correct and valid assertions (Hovland et al. 1953). The

credibility literature suggests that a communicator's positive characteristics enhance the

value of information in a message, and this therefore influences the receiver's acceptance

of a message (Anderson, 1971; Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953; Ohanian, 1990;

Pornpitakpan, 2004).

As one of the most often examined variables in persuasion studies (Nan 2009),

source credibility has been shown to play an important role in online as well as offline

persuasion (Brown et al. 2005; Cheung et al. 2009). Offline, research suggests that a

highly credible source has stronger effects on product evaluation than a message from a

less credible source (Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold, 2013). Additionally, a highly

credible source is more influential and more likely to induce attitudinal changes (Hovland

et al. 1953; Johnson & Izzett, 1969), and a persuasive message from a credible source has

stronger effects on product evaluation than a message from a less credible source

(Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold, 2013). Online, prior research has found that source

credibility is an important predictor of the persuasiveness of online review as well

(Cheung, Luo, Sia & Chen, 2009; Hu, Liu & Zhang, 2008). Furthermore, source

credibility positively influences perceived review credibility on online consumer

discussion forum, and determines the degree to which individuals adopt the online review

(Cheung et al. 2009).

Given the importance of source credibility, evaluation of eWOM source credibility

differs from the evaluation of traditional WOM. One possible explanation is that in an

online commerce environment, people are able to freely express their feelings and publish

their comments without disclosing their "real" identities, which makes it hard for

consumers to discern the source's identity. Even though an environment is thought to be

anonymous, consumers still judge the credibility of original sources through situational

cues (i.e., visible source) (Dou et al. 2012). Three primary sources appear to dominate

today's online consumer reviews landscape: regular Internet users who produce online

consumer reviews with the real-disclosure and anonymously, professional gatekeeper

companies who prepare material for "third-party" editorial websites, advertisers and

marketers who generate reviews for promotional purpose (Dou, Walden, Lee & Lee

2012). Through research the impact of online product reviews by third-party companies is

now better understood (Chen, Iyer & Padmanabhan 2002; Shaffer & Zettelmeyer 2002;

Shugan & Winner 2003).

Therefore, the source is a critical variable to consider when studying how people

evaluate the source and how source evaluation influences perceptions of online reviews

and attitude towards the product, even if the identity of the source is anonymous or

ambiguous. In sum, the following hypothesis is proposed:

$H3_a$: *The source of the review will have an effect on attitude towards the review, where a*

real-name reviewer will have the greatest effect followed by company and anonymous

reviewer.

$H3_b$: *The source of the review will have an effect on attitude towards the product, where*

a real-name reviewer will have the greatest effect followed by company and

anonymous reviewer.

$H3_c$: *The source of the review will have an effect on perceived credibility of the reviewer,*

where a real-name reviewer will have the greatest effect followed by company and

anonymous reviewer.

$H3_d$: *The source of the review will have an effect on purchase intention, where a real-*

name reviewer will have the greatest effect followed by company and anonymous

reviewer.

Chapter 3: Methods

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

Three hundred and sixty-seven subjects participated in the study via the advertising participant pool website at the University of Texas at Austin. Participants who are currently undergraduate students and enrolled in advertising courses at the University of Texas at Austin would receive an extra course credit for their participation. Participants were primarily female (67%) and ranged in age from 18 to 26 (96%). Four percent indicated being 27 years old or older. In terms of ethnicity, 53% of participants are white or European decent, following by 25% Asian and 16% Hispanic or Latino.

DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

Experimental Design

The hypotheses were tested using 3 (sidedness of reviews) × 2 (types of reviews) × 3 (sources of reviewers) experimental design. The three independent variables were sidedness of reviews (positive-only vs. negative-only vs. positive and negative), types of reviews (attribute-centric vs. benefit-centric), and sources of reviews (consumer vs. company vs. anonymous). The experiment and survey were conducted online.

The experimental product in the study was Apple MacBook Pro 13.3 inch with Retina display (newest version). The first reason for choosing a laptop as the experiment product is that electronic products are frequently purchased in online shopping websites

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(Park & Lee 2009). Secondly, consumers tend to rely on comments and reviews from

previous users due to the fact that electronic products are generally complicated (Park &

Lee 2009).

Based on real product reviews from online shopping websites (Amazon.com) and

professional third-party electronic review websites (CNET.com, Macworld.com,

Digitaltrends.com, and Appleinsider.com), eight features of MacBook Pro were

concluded, including four pros (high-resolution screen display, lightweight, long battery

life, and high speed-processing performance) and four cons (problematic black level

performance on screen display, connectivity issue, keyboard and trackpad

unresponsiveness, RAM memory upgrade issue). Reviews were presented as screenshots

on Amazon.com in order to create a realistic feeling when subjects read the review (See

Appendix). In order to avoid other factors influencing the evaluation of review, the length

of each review was controlled to 126 characters, and all reviews addressed four features

of the product.

Independent Variables

Three key independent variables have been identified in the current study: sidedness

of information on review (positive-only vs. negative-only vs. positive and negative),

types of review (benefit-centric vs. attribute-centric), and sources of review (consumer

vs. company vs. anonymous).

In terms of the sidedness of review, positive reviews address four features of the MacBook Pro: it has high-resolution screen display, is lightweight, has a long battery life, and has high speed-processing performance. Negative reviews show four other aspects; it has a problematic black level performance on screen display, a connectivity issue, a keyboard and trackpad unresponsiveness, a RAM memory upgrade issue. The mixed reviews contain two positive features of the product (i.e. high-resolution screen display and long battery life) and two negative dimensions (i.e. connectivity issue and keyboard and trackpad unresponsiveness) as well.

The types of review can be divided into two aspects: benefit-centric and attribute-centric. According to Park and Kim (2009), attribute-centric reviews focus on describing technical attributes of products, such as numbers representing attribute levels, which are supported by objective data and description, while benefit-centric reviews tend to show subjective evaluations and interpretations based on personal own feelings and perceptions towards products. In this study, with the premise of delivering the same feature of MacBook Pro – high quality of screen display, an attribute-centric review will be, "With Retina display, MacBook is the world's highest-resolution notebook - the 13-inch models feature LED backlit screens with 2560-by-1600-pixel resolution and a pixel density of 227 pixels per square inch. Also, the Retina display reduces glare up to 75 percent, and it has a 29 percent higher contrast ratio than a standard MacBook Pro display." Meanwhile,

a benefit-centric review will be, "The Retina display makes me see everything in a vibrant, detailed, and sharp way. The screen has a so high density of the pixels so that I can see more high-resolution images. The extremely high resolution makes the individual pixels in an image virtually undetectable. Also, the color on the screen is rich and vibrant."

The third independent variable is the source of review. The review discloses reviewer's identity as three types: a real-name consumer, a company, and an anonymous Internet user. These three types of reviewers were chosen as they appear to be three primary sources dominating today's online product reviews (CITE). In this study, a consumer with a "Real Name" badge (an official symbol given by Amazon) under the name is created to the identity of a verified real-name consumer on Amazon.com. The company here is represented as "Amazon Official" to show that the review is written by an official Amazon representative. The anonymous Internet user is shown as "Anonymous" in the review.

Experimental Procedure

All subjects (*N*=376) were randomly assigned to one of eighteen conditions. Each participant was sent a link via email that would take them to their assigned condition. After agreeing to the informed consent, all participants would be directed to the online

questionnaire. Then, participants were presented an online product review about Apple

MacBook Pro 13.3 inch with Retina display (newest version).

After reading through the online product review, subjects were asked to indicate their

attitudes toward the review, attitudes toward the product, attitude towards reviewer, and

purchase intentions. On the following page, subjects were asked a serious of questions

about their Internet usage and online shopping habits.

Measures

Attitude Towards the Review

Attitude refers to one's cognitive and affective orientations with respect to some

stimulus object or behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975). Thus, attitude towards the review is

defined as the reviewer's overall evaluation of the information in the review. Based on

Bailey and Pearson (1983), attitude was measured using six items on a seven-point scale

($M = 4.95$, $SD = 1.10$, $\alpha = .85$). Sample items include, not at all informative/very

informative, not at all helpful/very helpful, not at all useful/very useful, not at all

trustful/very trustful, not at all valuable/very valuable, does not make me very confident

in purchasing this product at al/makes me very confident in purchasing this product.

Attitude Towards the Product

Attitude towards the product refers to the reviewer's overall evaluation of the

product. To assess the attitude toward the product five semantic differential items

(dislike/like, unfavorable/favorable, negative/positive, bad/good, not at all useable/very usable) on a seven-point scale, were adapted from Holbrook and Batra (1987) ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 1.40$, $\alpha = .96$).

Source Credibility

Source credibility refers to the perceived credibility of the reviewer. Based on Ohanian's previous research (1990), the present study measured source credibility via seven-point semantic differential scales using a series of seven adjectives (unreliable/reliable, untrustworthy/trustworthy, undependable/dependable, not expert/expert, unknowledgeable/knowledgeable, inexperienced/experienced, biased/unbiased) by asking subjects: "How do you describe the reviewer?" ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 1.06$, $\alpha = .89$)

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is a personal action tendency relating to the brand (Bagozzi et al. 1979; Ostrom 1969). Intentions are distinct from attitude since attitudes are summary evaluations, whereas intentions represent "the person's motivation in the sense of his or her conscious plan to exert effort to carry out a behavior" (Eagly & Chaiken 1993, p. 168). Therefore, purchase intention is defined as the person's willingness to purchase a product in the future (Bickart & Schindler 2001; Doh & Hwang 2009; Lee & Youn 2009; Kumar & Benbasat 2006). In the current study, a single item on a seven-point scale

ranging from very unlikely (score = 1) to very likely (score = 7) was adapted from the

study of Bearden et al. (1984) to measure subjects' purchase intention ($M = 4.12$, $SD =$

1.46, $\alpha =$). Participants responded to the single question "Given the information shown

on the review, how likely would you be to purchase this product?"

Chapter 4: Data Results and Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS. All hypotheses were tested using an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Supporting $H1_a$, data indicate that sidedness significantly influence attitude toward the review as predicted, $F(2,315) = 5.093$, $p < .05$. That is, the unbiased review (positive and negative) was reviewed more positively ($M = 5.12$, $SE = .11$) than the positive review ($M = 5.06$, $SE = .11$), and negative review ($M = 4.69$, $SE = .10$).

Turning to $H1_b$, data indicate that sidedness significantly influenced attitude toward the product, $F(2,315) = 56.80$, $p < .05$. However, the results were not in the predicted direction and thus $H1_b$ is only partially supported. Here, the positive review resulted in greater attitude toward the product ($M = 5.41$, $SE = .12$), followed by the unbiased review (positive and negative) ($M = 4.58$, $SE = .11$) and negative review ($M = 3.66$, $SE = .11$).

As significant effect was detected by the data for source credibility by message sidedness, $F(2,315) = 5.86$, $p < .05$. However, the results were not in the predicted direction and thus $H1_c$ is only partially supported. Data demonstrate that while the positive review ($M = 4.73$, $SE = .11$) and unbiased review (positive and negative) ($M = 4.570$, $SE = .10$) did not differ from each other, they both were greater for source credibility than the negative review ($M = 4.15$, $SE = .10$).

A significant main effect for purchase intent for message sidedness was detected by the data, F (2,315) = 23.46, p < .05. However, data were not as predicted in H1$_d$ and thus, only partial support is offered. Here, the positive review resulted in greater purchase intention (M = 4.83, SE = .14), followed by the unbiased review (positive and negative) (M = 4.13, SE = .13) and negative review (M = 3.51, SE = .13).

Data indicate no significant main effect for H2$_a$ ($F(1,315)$ = .101, p >.05), H2$_b$ ($F(1,315)$ = .754, p >.05), and H2$_c$ ($F(1,315)$ = .010, p >.05), That is, message type did not influence attitude toward the review, attitude toward the product, source credibility, or purchase intention.

Data indicate no significant main effect for H3$_a$ ($F(2,315)$ = .231, p >.05), H3$_b$ ($F(2,315)$ = 2.232, p >.05), H3$_c$ ($F(2,315)$ = .386, p >.05), and H3$_d$ ($F(2,315)$ = 1.540, p >.05), That is, message source did not influence attitude toward the review, attitude toward the product, source credibility, or purchase intention.

Chapter 5: Discussion

APPLICATION

The present study explores how the message and source characteristics of online consumer reviews impact an individual's attitude and purchase behavior. Key findings from this study provide a solid look at the message and source characteristics that are associated with a persuasive online consumer review. Data indicated that message sidedness of online consumer reviews has a persuasive effect on consumer's attitude towards the review, attitude towards the product, perceived source credibility, and their purchase intention. That is, the two-sided review (unbiased review) has the greatest impact on consumer's attitude toward the review, followed by the positive-only and negative-only review. However, different from the aforementioned hypotheses, the positive-only review has the greatest persuasive effect on consumer's attitude toward product and purchase intention, followed by two-sided and negative-only review. Although not as predicted, this finding is also supported by East, Hammond, and Lomax who suggest that the impact of positive WOM is generally greater than negative WOM on consumer's purchase probability (2008). Additionally, participants perceive higher reviewer credibility when they read the two-sided and positive-only review, compared to the negative-only review. Overall, both a positive-only review and a two-sided review have a greater effect on consumer's attitude and purchase behavior than negative- only

review, which contradict the prior studies suggesting a negative WOM message has a stronger impact influence on the consumer's brand evaluation.

Based on the results, this study makes several theoretical contributions to the areas of user generated content, especially eWOM and e-commerce. First, the study calls attention to the importance of both message content and source characteristics in examining the persuasiveness of online consumer reviews, which is a topic that has been overlooked in previous research. Regarding the importance of online consumer reviews to consumer's attitudinal and behavioral responses, prior research has focused on several facets of online consumer reviews: the argument quality of reviews (Cheung et al. 2008; Zhang & Watts 2008), the quality of reviews (Lee et al. 2008; Park et al. 2007; Sher & Lee 2009), the quantity of reviews (Lee et al. 2008; Park et al. 2007; Park & Lee 2008; Sher & Lee 2009), and the source credibility (Cheung et al. 2008; Chu & Kamal 2008; Zhang & Watts 2008). However, very little research has combined both message and source factors in online consumer reviews, and interactively taking them together into consideration when examining the effect of online consumer reviews on consumers' attitude and purchase intention.

Another theoretical contribution of this study is the use of Attribution Theory, Cognitive Fit Theory, and Dual Process Theory as foundations to investigate individual's information processing of online consumer reviews with the moderation of involvement.

The results reveal positively framed reviews addressing the potential benefits and advantages of product is an information format that cognitively fits individual's needs, which has a positive impact on an individual's attitude toward the product and their purchase intention. This finding may result from the fact that when consumers process online consumer reviews represented in a way that fits cognitively, they are able to efficiently process because the match between the review type and individual's needs minimizes their cognitive effort (Hong et al. 2004), thereby having a positive impact on purchase intention (Park & Kim 2008). To this end, findings of this study signify that cognitive fit theory explains a consumer's product evaluation in such context. This finding bolsters prior literature that given the same information content, varying information format can influence consumer's online shopping behavior (Hong et al. 2004). In addition, from an attribution theory perspective, positively framed reviews with benefit-centric information may allow consumers to attribute the product in the review to its actual performance, thereby increasing message persuasion (Mizerski & Green 1978; Mizerski 1982; Sen & Lerman 2007).

Finally, the study highlights the significant role that different message sidedness of plays in influencing consumers, and also identifies an interrelationship between the review sidedness and review type and their effect on the persuasion process. The results suggest the positive online consumer review with benefit-centric information has the

greatest positive effect on consumer's product attitudes and purchase intentions.

Although this study is situated in the context of online reviews, the theoretical

conceptualization and classification of message and source characteristics can be adopted

to other contexts, such as online news and health information websites.

From the practical perspective, findings in this study provide implications of how to

manage online consumer reviews for both advertisers and marketers in today's e-

commerce business. The major contribution of this study is to emphasize the importance

of properly managing consumer reviews on online shopping sites. Unlike traditional

WOM communications, eWOM communications provide the possibility of controlling

online consumer reviews because of characteristics such as observability and

controllability. Since review sidedness plays a leading role in changing consumer's

attitudes and purchase intentions, the study offers rationale for online shopping site

managers and marketers to closely examine the quality and the number of positive,

negative, and unbiased online consumer reviews. Although a marketer cannot selectively

filter online consumer reviews to manipulate content, the marketer can control the display

of those reviews in some situations. Providing summary information of online consumer

reviews is an effective way to feature the proportion of positive, negative and unbiased

reviews. For example, Amazon.com shows an average rating information and total

number of reviews for consumers to get a firsthand evaluation of the product. Also,

online shopping website managers can categorize online consumer reviews based on the review's sidedness. For instance, Amazon.com categorizes consumer reviews by two aspects: "The most helpful favorable review" and "The most helpful critical review", which presents a spotlight of reviews. Given the importance of positive and unbiased reviews to consumer's attitudinal and behavioral changes, we suggest the interactive webpage management system for marketers and managers. When a product has a high proportion of positive online consumer reviews, the system will automatically emphasize this information (Lee et al. 2008).

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study has several limitations. First, purchase intention was measured with only one item. Since the construct indicated adequate reliability and validity, this limitation did not have a serious impact on the results, but more items measuring purchase intention are encouraged for future research in order to enhance construct reliability. Second, the study did not take consumer's prior knowledge of the product into consideration. The product Apple MacBook Pro used in the study was familiar to some participants who used it before, and such familiarity might affect their perceptions of evaluating the online consumer review.

Additionally, moderating the role of individual's involvement is another important direction for future research. This type of moderation will enable researchers to see

whether the level of involvement with a review influences the information adoption

process if online consumer reviews. As a moderating function, involvement exerts a

significant influence on consumer's information process. The ELM suggests the same

information can be processed in different ways depending on consumer's involvement.

Involvement is defined as "an individual, internal state of arousal with intensity,

direction, and persistence properties" (Andrews, Durvasula & Akhter 1990). The

motivational state as "felt involvement" derives from either enduring personal relevance

to the individuals (intrinsic involvement) or transitory environmental cues (situational

involvement) (Houston & Rothschild 1978). Based on the framework of the ELM, Petty,

Cacioppo, and Schumann (1983) suggest people low on involvement are more likely to

process information through the peripheral route rather than the central route, while

highly involved people are more likely to use the central route to process information

instead of the peripheral route. Furthermore, ELM maintains a notion that persuasion is a

joint function of the recipients' involvement in the outcome and the communicator's

credibility (Hass 1981). Hass (1981) proposes that uninvolved recipients respond with

more negative thoughts to a low credibility communicator than a high credibility

communicator, while involved recipients respond with more negative thoughts to a high

credibility communicator. Since involvement is associated with information processing,

prior studies have empirically shown how involvement moderates the eWOM effect in

the consumer decision process (Lee et al. 2008; Park & Lee 2008; Park et al. 2007). Therefore, future research should include involvement as a moderating factor when investigating the relationship between message attributes and consumer's responses such as attitudes and purchase intention.

Finally, the results of the study might have been different if other product categories had been used. In this study we only consider the electronic product (Apple MacBook Pro) and corresponding consumer reviews. Since there are a considerable number of product categories in today's online shopping websites, further research may need to take more product categories (e.g. clothes, books or cosmetics) into consideration to generalize our findings. A last area to extend this work is to consider the message and source factors in online reviews as they impact e-shopping cart abandonment. Research on e-shopping abandonment suggests that the consumer's motivation (both hedonic and utilitarian) is a key indicator of e-cart abandonment (Close & Kukar-Kinney 2010).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In conclusion, the current study investigates how message and source characteristics of online consumer reviews impact consumer's attitude and purchase behavior. The findings of this study not only increase the understanding of online consumer reviews, but also provide implications to other eWOM contexts such as online discussion forums, social networking sites, and online travel review sites. This study provides a potentially important step in gaining a better and deeper understanding of how eWOM works as a powerful tool to influence consumers in this era of consumer power.

Appendix A
Survey Questions

Q1 Based on the review you just read, what best describes the content of the review?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)
Not at all informative:Very Informative (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Not at all helpful:Very Helpful (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Not at all useful:Very Useful (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Not at all trustful:Very Trustful (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Not at all valuable:Very Valuable (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Does NOT make me very confident in purchasing this product at all:Makes me very confident in purchasing this product (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q2 Based on the review you just read, what best describes your attitudes towards the product?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)
Dislike:Like (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Unfavorable:Favorable (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Negative:Positive (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Bad:Good (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Not at all usable:Very Usable (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q3 How do you describe the reviewer?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)
Unreliable:Reliable (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Untrustworthy:Trustworthy (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Undependable:Dependable (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Not Expert:Expert (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Unknowledgeable:Knowledgeable (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Inexperienced:Experienced (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Biased:Unbiased (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q4 Given the information shown on the review, how likely would you be to purchase this product?
○ Very Unlikely (1)
○ Unlikely (2)
○ Somewhat Unlikely (3)
○ Undecided (4)
○ Somewhat Likely (5)
○ Likely (6)
○ Very Likely (7)

Appendix B
Screen shot of Online Consumer Reviews in Survey

POSITIVE ATTRIBUTE-CENTRIC REVIEW BY CONSUMER

★★★★★ **Best of the best**, November 13, 2013

By **F. Hua** (San Diego, CA USA) - See all my reviews
REAL NAME

Amazon Verified Purchase (What's this?)
This review is from: Apple MacBook Pro ME866LL/A 13.3-Inch Laptop with Retina Display (NEWEST VERSION) (Personal Computers)

With Retina display, MacBook is the world's highest-resolution notebook - the 13-inch models feature LED backlit screens with 2560-by-1600-pixel resolution and a pixel density of 227 pixels per square inch. Also, the Retina display reduces glare up to 75 percent, and it has a 29 percent higher contrast ratio than a standard MacBook Pro display. The biggest changes are to the 13-inch model, which is now just 0.71 inches thick and weighs 3.46 pounds. That's slightly thinner and lighter than the outgoing model. Even with all those pixels, the 13-inch MacBook Pro still lasts 10 hour, 7 minutes on the Verge Battery Test. The 13-inch Retina Pro features 2.4 GHz dual-core Intel Core i5 processor (Turbo Boost up to 2.9 GHz) with 3MB shared L3 cache.

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Was this review helpful to you? [Yes] [No]   Comment

POSITIVE ATTRIBUTE-CENTRIC REVIEW BY COMPANY

★★★★★ **New MacBook Pro Retina**, January 1, 2014

By **Amazon Official**   - See all my reviews

This review is from: Apple MacBook Pro ME866LL/A 13.3-Inch Laptop with Retina Display (NEWEST VERSION) (Personal Computers)

With Retina display, MacBook is the world's highest-resolution notebook - the 13-inch models feature LED backlit screens with 2560-by-1600-pixel resolution and a pixel density of 227 pixels per square inch. Also, the Retina display reduces glare up to 75 percent, and it has a 29 percent higher contrast ratio than a standard MacBook Pro display. The biggest changes are to the 13-inch model, which is now just 0.71 inches thick and weighs 3.46 pounds. That's slightly thinner and lighter than the outgoing model. Even with all those pixels, the 13-inch MacBook Pro still lasts 10 hour, 7 minutes on the Verge Battery Test. The 13-inch Retina Pro features 2.4 GHz dual-core Intel Core i5 processor (Turbo Boost up to 2.9 GHz) with 3MB shared L3 cache.

Help other customers find the most helpful reviews   Report abuse | Permalink
Was this review helpful to you? [Yes] [No]   Comments (2)

POSITIVE ATTRIBUTE-CENTRIC REVIEW BY ANONYMOUS

★★★★★ **Amazing Machine**, March 2, 2013

By **Anonymous** - See all my reviews

This review is from: Apple MacBook Pro ME866LL/A 13.3-Inch Laptop with Retina Display (NEWEST VERSION) (Personal Computers)

With Retina display, MacBook is the world's highest-resolution notebook - the 13-inch models feature LED backlit screens with 2560-by-1600-pixel resolution and a pixel density of 227 pixels per square inch. Also, the Retina display reduces glare up to 75 percent, and it has a 29 percent higher contrast ratio than a standard MacBook Pro display. The biggest changes are to the 13-inch model, which is now just 0.71 inches thick and weighs 3.46 pounds. That's slightly thinner and lighter than the outgoing model. Even with all those pixels, the 13-inch MacBook Pro still lasts 10 hour, 7 minutes on the Verge Battery Test. The 13-inch Retina Pro features 2.4 GHz dual-core Intel Core i5 processor (Turbo Boost up to 2.9 GHz) with 3MB shared L3 cache.

Help other customers find the most helpful reviews

Was this review helpful to you? [Yes] [No]   Report abuse | Permalink

💬 Comments (2)

POSITIVE BENEFIT-CENTRIC REVIEW BY CONSUMER

★★★★★ **Best of the best**, November 13, 2013

By **F. Hua** (San Diego, CA USA) - See all my reviews
REAL NAME

Amazon Verified Purchase (What's this?)

This review is from: Apple MacBook Pro ME866LL/A 13.3-Inch Laptop with Retina Display (NEWEST VERSION) (Personal Computers)

The Retina display makes me see everything in a vibrant, detailed, and sharp way. The screen has a so high density of the pixels so that I can see more high-resolution images. The extremely high resolution makes the individual pixels in an image virtually undetectable. Also, the color on the screen is rich and vibrant. In terms of lightweight, I barely feel the 3.46 pounds floating around in my backpack, and it fits perfectly on the tray table of a coach airline seat. The battery is enough to last me a cross-country flights worth of movies or through a daylong meeting. In addition, the 13-inch Retina Pro woke from sleep nearly instantaneously, and launched applications and files at a faster-than-Air level. Indeed, faster than ever before!

Help other customers find the most helpful reviews

Was this review helpful to you? [Yes] [No]   Report abuse | Permalink

💬 Comment

POSITIVE BENEFIT-CENTRIC REVIEW BY COMPANY

★★★★★ **New MacBook Pro Retina**, January 1, 2014

By **Amazon Official**   - See all my reviews

This review is from: Apple MacBook Pro ME866LL/A 13.3-Inch Laptop with Retina Display (NEWEST VERSION) (Personal Computers)

The Retina display makes you see everything in a vibrant, detailed, and sharp way. The screen has a so high density of the pixels so that you can see more high-resolution images. The extremely high resolution makes the individual pixels in an image virtually undetectable. Also, the color on the screen is rich and vibrant. In terms of lightweight, you barely feel the 3.46 pounds floating around in your backpack, and it fits perfectly on the tray table of a coach airline seat. The battery is enough to last you a cross-country flights worth of movies or through a daylong meeting. In addition, the 13-inch Retina Pro woke from sleep nearly instantaneously, and launched applications and files at a faster-than-Air level. Indeed, faster than ever before!

Help other customers find the most helpful reviews

Was this review helpful to you? [Yes] [No]   Report abuse | Permalink

💬 Comments (2)

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POSITIVE BENEFIT-CENTRIC REVIEW BY ANONYMOUS

★★★★★ **Amazing Machine**, March 2, 2013

By **Anonymous** - See all my reviews

This review is from: Apple MacBook Pro ME866LL/A 13.3-Inch Laptop with Retina Display (NEWEST VERSION) (Personal Computers)

The Retina display makes me see everything in a vibrant, detailed, and sharp way. The screen has a so high density of the pixels so that I can see more high-resolution images. The extremely high resolution makes the individual pixels in an image virtually undetectable. Also, the color on the screen is rich and vibrant. In terms of lightweight, I barely feel the 3.46 pounds floating around in my backpack, and it fits perfectly on the tray table of a coach airline seat. The battery is enough to last me a cross-country flights worth of movies or through a daylong meeting. In addition, the 13-inch Retina Pro woke from sleep nearly instantaneously, and launched applications and files at a faster-than-Air level. Indeed, faster than ever before!

Help other customers find the most helpful reviews   Report abuse | Permalink
Was this review helpful to you? [Yes] [No]   ▭ Comments (2)

NEGATIVE ATTRIBUTE-CENTRIC REVIEW BY CONSUMER

★☆☆☆☆ **WARNING - READ THIS BEFORE YOU BUY APPLE**, September 5, 2013

By **A. R. Impallomeni** (Cape May, NJ) - See all my reviews
REAL NAME

Amazon Verified Purchase (What's this?)

This review is from: Apple MacBook Pro ME866LL/A 13.3-Inch Laptop with Retina Display (NEWEST VERSION) (Personal Computers)

The 13-inch Retina MacBook Pro does not have Gigabit Ethernet or Firewire. The Thunderbolt port can be used with HDMI and DVI displays via an adapter at an additional cost. The screen has a great contrast ratio of 1,118:1, but it lost some areas of dark shadow detail in the high contrast test images. I also have issues with my built-in keyboard and Multi- Touch trackpad not working properly. Both input and navigation options are constantly suffering from freezing and locking up at random during my usage. Most importantly, 4 GB RAM is soldered in place and cannot be upgraded after purchase at all! Current Retina MacBook Pro models can be upgraded to as much as 16 GB of RAM at the time of purchase only.

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Was this review helpful to you? [Yes] [No]   ▭ Comments (2)

NEGATIVE ATTRIBUTE-CENTRIC REVIEW BY COMPANY

★☆☆☆☆ **WARNING - READ THIS BEFORE YOU BUY APPLE**, September 5, 2013

By **Amazon Official**   - See all my reviews

This review is from: Apple MacBook Pro ME866LL/A 13.3-Inch Laptop with Retina Display (NEWEST VERSION) (Personal Computers)

The 13-inch Retina MacBook Pro does not have Gigabit Ethernet or Firewire. The Thunderbolt port can be used with HDMI and DVI displays via an adapter at an additional cost. The screen has a great contrast ratio of 1,118:1, but it lost some areas of dark shadow detail in the high contrast test images. Some users had issues with their built-in keyboard and Multi- Touch trackpad not working properly. Both input and navigation options are constantly suffering from freezing and locking up at random during their usage. Most importantly, 4 GB RAM is soldered in place and cannot be upgraded after purchase at all! Current Retina MacBook Pro models can be upgraded to as much as 16 GB of RAM at the time of purchase only.

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Was this review helpful to you? [Yes] [No]   ▭ Comments (2)

NEGATIVE ATTRIBUTE-CENTRIC REVIEW BY ANONYMOUS

★☆☆☆☆ **Dnt Buy Mac Book Pro Retina Display**, March 11, 2013

By **Anonymous**

This review is from: Apple MacBook Pro ME866LL/A 13.3-Inch Laptop with Retina Display (NEWEST VERSION) (Personal Computers)

The 13-inch Retina MacBook Pro does not have Gigabit Ethernet or Firewire. The Thunderbolt port can be used with HDMI and DVI displays via an adapter at an additional cost. The screen has a great contrast ratio of 1,118:1, but it lost some areas of dark shadow detail in the high contrast test images. I also have issues with my built-in keyboard and Multi- Touch trackpad not working properly. Both input and navigation options are constantly suffering from freezing and locking up at random during my usage. Most importantly, 4 GB RAM is soldered in place and cannot be upgraded after purchase at all! Current Retina MacBook Pro models can be upgraded to as much as 16 GB of RAM at the time of purchase only.

Help other customers find the most helpful reviews   Report abuse | Permalink

Was this review helpful to you? [Yes] [No]   💬 Comments (2)

NEGATIVE BENEFIT-CENTRIC REVIEW BY CONSUMER

★☆☆☆☆ **WARNING - READ THIS BEFORE YOU BUY APPLE**, September 5, 2013

By **A. R. Impallomeni** (Cape May, NJ) - See all my reviews
REAL NAME

Amazon Verified Purchase (What's this?)

This review is from: Apple MacBook Pro ME866LL/A 13.3-Inch Laptop with Retina Display (NEWEST VERSION) (Personal Computers)

Since the RAM is soldered to the motherboard and is not upgradable after the fact, unlike non-Retina MacBook Pros, the 4GB is skimpy, especially if you plan to run memory-hungry apps like imaging software (such as Photoshop). Though blacks have a deep, inky look, some details on the screen are lost in shadowy scenes. When viewing the trailer for *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*, for example, areas which should be visible, like the background of Smaug's lair, were rendered as a smooth shade of black. Also, the connective device support remains somewhat limited. You should pay extra money to buy an adapter in order to connect to a high-performance Gigabit Ethernet network. The keyboard and trackpad are unresponsive including brightness keys and volume control keys.

Help other customers find the most helpful reviews   Report abuse | Permalink

Was this review helpful to you? [Yes] [No]   💬 Comments (2)

NEGATIVE BENEFIT-CENTRIC REVIEW BY COMPANY

★☆☆☆☆ **WARNING - READ THIS BEFORE YOU BUY APPLE**, September 5, 2013

By **Amazon Official**   - See all my reviews

This review is from: Apple MacBook Pro ME866LL/A 13.3-Inch Laptop with Retina Display (NEWEST VERSION) (Personal Computers)

Since the RAM is soldered to the motherboard and is not upgradable after the fact, unlike non-Retina MacBook Pros, the 4GB is skimpy, especially if you plan to run memory-hungry apps like imaging software (such as Photoshop). Though blacks have a deep, inky look, some details on the screen are lost in shadowy scenes. When viewing the trailer for *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*, for example, areas which should be visible, like the background of Smaug's lair, were rendered as a smooth shade of black. Also, the connective device support remains somewhat limited. You should pay extra money to buy an adapter in order to connect to a high-performance Gigabit Ethernet network. The keyboard and trackpad are unresponsive including brightness keys and volume control keys.

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Was this review helpful to you? [Yes] [No]   💬 Comments (2)

NEGATIVE BENEFIT-CENTRIC REVIEW BY ANONYMOUS

★☆☆☆☆ **Dnt Buy Mac Book Pro Retina Display**, March 11, 2013

By **Anonymous**

This review is from: Apple MacBook Pro ME866LL/A 13.3-Inch Laptop with Retina Display (NEWEST VERSION) (Personal Computers)

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Was this review helpful to you? [Yes] [No]   💬 Comments (2)

UNBIASED ATTRIBUTE-CENTRIC REVIEW BY CONSUMER

★★★☆☆ **Good But...**   October 1, 2013

By **A. R. Impallomeni** (Cape May, NJ) - See all my reviews
REAL NAME

Amazon Verified Purchase (What's this?)

This review is from: Apple MacBook Pro ME866LL/A 13.3-Inch Laptop with Retina Display (NEWEST VERSION) (Personal Computers)

With Retina display, MacBook is the world's highest-resolution notebook - the 13-inch models feature LED backlit screens with 2560-by-1600-pixel resolution and a pixel density of 227 pixels per square inch. The Retina display reduces glare up to 75 percent, and it has a 29 percent higher contrast ratio than a standard MacBook Pro display. Even with all those pixels, the 13-inch MacBook Pro still lasts 10 hour, 7 minutes on the Verge Battery Test. However, it does not have Gigabit Ethernet or Firewire. The Thunderbolt port can be used with HDMI and DVI displays via an adapter at an additional cost. Besides, the built-in keyboard and Multi- Touch trackpad are not working properly. Sometimes input and navigation options suffer from freezing and locking up at random.

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Was this review helpful to you? [Yes] [No]   💬 Comments (2)

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Was this review helpful to you? [Yes] [No]   💬 Comments (2)

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UNBIASED BENEFIT-CENTRIC REVIEW BY ANONYMOUS

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