INVESTIGATING INFORMATION ADOPTION TENDENCIES OF RESTAURANTS' USER-GENERATED CONTENT UTILIZING A HYPOTHESIZED INFORMATION ADOPTION MODEL

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INVESTIGATING INFORMATION ADOPTION TENDENCIES OF RESTAURANTS' USER-GENERATED CONTENT UTILIZING A HYPOTHESIZED INFORMATION ADOPTION (pp. 101)

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The internet and social media has boosted information sharing and user-generated content (UGC). As a result, many restaurant goers rely on online reviews for dining recommendations. The goal of this study is to add to the sparse literature on the influence of review extremeness, source credibility, website quality, and information usefulness on information adoption. Most notably, a hypothesized information adoption model with the addition of website quality will be tested in the context of restaurant review websites.

Data was collected through an online survey, the link for which was emailed to 10,000 students in a Midwestern university. Three hundred and two students completed the survey. Results showed that the more negative a review, the more useful it is perceived. Perceived source credibility of the review writer exerted a positive impact on the perceived information usefulness. The only component of website quality that played a significant role in determining information adoption tendency of the review readers was the quality of the information disseminated in the website. Lastly, information usefulness also exerted a positive influence on information adoption. Managerial implications are discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As the result of technological advancements and the extensive usage of the internet including Facebook, Twitter and other social media, instant messaging (customer chat support), organizational weblogs (Von Kortzfleisch, Mergel, Manouchehri, & Schaarschmidt, 2008) along with globalization, countries and societies have come closer to each other. One of the new trends in this technological-savvy epoch is the development of user-generated content (UGC) that people are taking advantage of in various ways when making decisions. For instance, people use the information provided on online platforms to decide on the car rental companies, flight tickets and hotel rooms (Bender, Gerdes, & Vanleeuwen, 2010; Lu, Tsaparas, Ntoulas, & Polanyi, 2010), or to choose a restaurant (Lu et al., 2010). In the past, people used to ask for the help of travel agencies and counselors, their friends and families (Bender et al., 2010), or even guidebooks to make their mind up. But, this trend has changed and currently many read reviews written by former patrons to decide where to dine and stay.

Online social media has been growing (Ayeh, Au, & Law, 2013; Li, Lv, Xie, Shang, Xia, Lu, & Gu, 2012) and the number of people using these online communities is on the rise (Li et al., 2012). One of the reason behind this rapid growth is the invention and introduction of web 2.0, which includes weblogs, organization sites, and review websites which consist of user-created reviews (Ayeh et al., 2013; Stoeckl, Rohrmeier, & Hess, 2007). These online review websites typically have the following features: a comment to summarize evaluation on the product, quantitative ranking of the product

(star rating), the number of times the reviews have been voted as helpful, and the reviewer's profile information (Burton & Khammash, 2010). UGC is generated by former consumers who write reviews for specific products and services (Ayeh et al., 2013). UGC not only provides former buyers with an opportunity to share their experience and thoughts on the purchase they have made but also let potential buyers look for recommendations (Li et al., 2012) and make the purchase decision (Lu et al., 2010).

The term UGC was first introduced in 2005 (Valcke & Lenaerts, 2010). It is suggested that UGC or UCC (user-created content) does not have a globally-accepted definition (Wardle & Williams, 2010; Östman, 2012) as it is novel and new (Stoeckl et al., 2007; Cox, Burgess, Sellitto, & Buultjens, 2009).

UGC can take on different forms; it can be a text, video, audio, or a combination of all of the above (Valcke & Lenaerts, 2010). According to Stoeckl et al. (2007) for information available online to qualify as UGC, the following conditions must be satisfied: (1) information about a product should be provided by a former user of the product, (2) the person's driving stimulus to write the review should not be financial motivation, and (3) the information should be available to the public. Östman (2012) suggested that UGC has two rudiments: (1) it is either generated from scratch or is built upon the existing data; and (2) it takes several people to share it.

One possible question is why is UGC even important? The answer is that UGC has significant impact on business performance, especially as more people are immersed with social media and are able to express their feelings and opinions publicly through

them (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2008). Although UGC has made it easier for companies and their customers to communicate and has enabled companies to better understand consumers' expectations (Valcke & Lenaerts, 2010), UGC has made it more difficult for businesses to convince people to buy their products or services. This is because millennials, compared to previous generations, seem to be more willing to open up and express their feeling, habits, and thoughts with the general public (Wilson, Murphy & Fierro, 2012). As a result, brands do not have any control over what is being shared and said in the review websites. Brand image can be deteriorated easily by negative/untrue reviews (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2008; Hills & Cairncross, 2011). Therefore, marketers are constantly looking for ways to minimize the effect of negative online reviews by keeping an eye on UGC related to their brand and responding to the review writers (Hills & Cairncross, 2011) to not lose their market share. This issue is said to be even more difficult for the established brands as brand names connote quality and exclusivity requiring a lot of effort to maintain brand integrity and image (Annie Jin, 2012).

People get involved with UGC for different reasons at different times. The intention to purchase a product is not always the motivation to read a product review (Burton & Khammash, 2010). Also, not everyone who buys a product would write a review (Hu, Pavlou, & Zhang, 2007). People read reviews so that they can minimize the risk (if not possible to eradicate it) associated with a product they have never used (Burton & Khammash, 2010). Also, the motivation behind reading a review could simply be a way to satisfy the sense of inquisitiveness or just for the sake of passing time

in a more pleasant manner (Burton & Khammash, 2010). Burton and Khammash (2010) found that some consumers engage in reading reviews as they feel obliged to keep the website dynamic and up-to-date by rating the content of the reviews. Another reason identified as the driving motivator to read and write reviews is the need to feel a sense of belonging (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010) with a specific group made up of people who share common interests, or the need to be given recognition, respect, and admiration (Stoeckl et al., 2007). In addition, Gretzel and Yoo (2008) found that reading reviews increased a potential buyer's confidence when deciding on several destination/accommodation alternatives.

Reviews vary in quality. Because everyone can provide online reviews (Rabjohn, Cheung, & Lee, 2008), the number of spam content and false information has increased. Therefore, the subject of content quality becomes prominent (Lu et al., 2010). Researchers have considered various and distinct components to measure information quality, commonly termed argument quality in literature. Delone and Mclean (2003) adopted the five dimensions of completeness, ease of use, personalization, relevance, and security to measure information quality, while Mudambi and Schuff (2010) consider review depth and review extremity as the two factors of information quality that predicts information usefulness. This study adopts the extremeness component of argument quality as Ganu, Elhadad, and Marian (2009) state "probably the most important metadata information in reviews is the user-input star rating" (p. 3).

Source credibility is important in online platforms as consumers are overwhelmed with abundant information generated from different communicators (Dou, Walden, Lee

& Lee, 2012). The recommendation source has been found to impact credibility of UGC (Burgess, Sellitto, Cox, & Buultjens 2009). Source credibility is related to trustworthiness and expertise (Wiener & Mowen, 1986; Dou et al., 2012). Trustworthiness and expertise impact how a message is perceived and judged (Dou et al., 2012). If the received message is from a highly credible source, the correspondent is seen as more trustworthy and skillful compared to a sender who is perceived as having low credibility (Sternthal, Dholakia & Leavitt, 1978). As Chen, Dhanasobhon, and Smith (2008) stated, credibility is about the perceived trustworthiness of the data as well as the propensity of the customers to trust. Perceived credibility affects how much review readers can rely on and trust the provided information (Cox et al., 2009) to make decision (Jeong & lambert, 2001). However, as identifying and accessing the review writer's identity is not always possible (Valcke & Lenaerts, 2010; Cox et al., 2009), judging the credibility of the reviews is an issue (Cox et al., 2009). Trust is one of the required factors to convince the reader to follow certain courses of action based on a review (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalíu, 2011). To alleviate the credibility concerns, on some sites reviewers can vote on recommendations noting how helpful the piece of information was so that the potential buyers can use those votes to make informed decisions. The more helpful votes a review gets the more credible and eventually the truer the review is perceived to be (Cao, Duan, & Gan, 2011).

Website quality has been recognized vital in the success of any online business (Bai, Law & Wen, 2008). Websites have revolutionized the traditional forms of communication between people who share similar interests (Yang et al., 2005). The

reasons people use a website is to either obtain information or to trade information (Yang et al., 2005; Chen & Barnes, 2007). The overall assessment of a website quality determines the perceived quality of the provided information (Kim & Niehm, 2009), and the final purchase decision (Bai et al., 2008).

Cheung, Lee, and Rabjohn (2008) concluded that perceived usefulness of UGC content is an antecedent of information adoption. Information usefulness is defined as "the individual's perception that using the new technology will enhance or improve his/her performance" (Cheung et al., 2008, p.233). Information adoption is defined as "the acceptance of information as being true, either consciously or subconsciously and applying that information to an online purchase decision" (Rabjohn et al., 2008, p3). Hence, if an online user perceives a review as useful, the chances that they will adopt the review increase.

The focus of majority of existing UGC research has been on the motivators that urge customers to write about their experience with the product/service in an online community (Park & Kim, 2008). Existing literature is sparse on issues related to customers' information needs regarding experience products whose quality cannot be assessed until after consumption (Racherla & Friske, 2012) as well as on how online environment can live up to the consumers' expectations and needs pertaining to experience goods (Varlander, 2007). There is also a dearth of research on the impact of UGC on customers' buying decisions and adoption of recommendations found in an online review website (Cheung et al., 2008; Cox et al., 2009). Moreover, abundant studies have focused on website quality and its assessment (Bai et al., 2008). There is not

enough research on the relationship between websites quality and its impact on online users' behavior is lacking (Bai et al., 2008; Kim & Niehm, 2009).

UGC adoption in tourism and hospitality industries has not been extensively studied (Cox et al., 2009). Former studies incorporated the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and Information Adoption Model to better understand how different aspects of information quality and perceived source credibility would impact customers' purchase decision. This research takes an additional step forward and extends the understanding of customers' purchase decisions based on reviews in online communities by integrating the ELM, Information Adoption Model, and the NetQual model which is a measure of website quality. This study focuses on online restaurant reviews while many prior studies have focused on UGC in the context of destinations and hotels. This study adds to existing literature by examining consumers' information needs and consumers' information adoption behavior in an online setting and by evaluating online reviews quality and source credibility. Moreover, this study examines how and which website quality dimensions impact users' evaluation of UGC.

The results of this study could assist website developers and managers in assimilating useful information so that they can draw more attention to their websites (Cheung et al., 2008). This study sheds light on how different aspects of a website in addition to the incorporated content would impact customers' evaluation of information usefulness and their overall intention to rely on the information provided for them. Specifically, this study expands the existing knowledge of the effect of website quality on information adoption in the context of online review websites. The practical relevance of

this research is especially applicable to website developers, managers and marketers of online retail establishments. Programmers and managers can use the results to design and manage the websites more effectively (Cheung et al., 2008); marketers can adopt the results to improve the image of their company (Rabjohn et al., 2008). As website quality plays a decisive role on consumers' purchase intention, service providers should pay close attention to it to distinguish themselves from their competitors and capitalize on their strengths (Fazli, Sam, & Tahir, 2009).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emergence of UGC

The traditional forms of media are changing fast, providing both customers and marketers with more efficient avenues of communication. The advent of Internet boosted information sharing which resulted in emergence of UGC (Daugherty, Eastin, & Bright, 2008). Impact and usage of UGC websites is the result of pleasure travelers' tendency to write and share their stories (Hills & Cairncross, 2011) via blogs and microbolgs (such as Blogger and Twitter), social photo and video sharing (such as Flickr and YouTube), social sharing of knowledge (such as Wikipedia), social bookmarking (such as Delicious) and many other forms of user-generated content (Parra-Lopez, Bulchand-Gidumal, Gutierrez-Tano, & Diaz-Armas, 2011, p.640).

UGC is defined as "media content created or produced by the general public rather than by paid professionals and primarily distributed on the Internet" (Daugherty et al., 2008, p.16). Hence, with the emergence of UGC, customers are able to speak up and manage the message, and it is no more a one way street of communication from marketers and the company to consumers (Berthon, Pitt, & Campbell, 2008). In other words, managers are not in control of what is being said on websites like Yelp or videos that are shared on sites like YouTube (Fader & Winer, 2012). On the other hand, UGC has provided marketers and academics with an opportunity to come up with better marketing decisions as they have access to marketing mix information and how consumers actually communicate with their peers and the company (Fader & Winer, 2012).

UGC Usage in Restaurants

Customers look up more information and advice about products and services they intend to buy, specifically when it comes to experience goods (Morrison & Cheong, 2008) as is the case with the tourism and hospitality industry (Zhang, Ye, Law & Li, 2010). This is due to the fact that hospitality and tourism products cannot be evaluated before consumption as the production and consumption do not happen simultaneously (Zhang et al., 2010) and therefore, they are considered riskier (Morrison, & Cheong, 2008). Online UGC is available on a variety of products and services like hotels, restaurants, destinations, books, etc. (Zhang et al., 2010), and the numbers of patrons taking advantage of online restaurant/travel review websites like Tripadvisor is growing fast (Pantelidis, 2010).

Many patrons do not solely rely on friends and families for recommendations on restaurants, but they utilize social media and online user reviews (Pantelidis, 2010). Online restaurant reviews connect diners with their peers. Online reviews have great importance as the varieties of products are on the rise and people now are facing more options to decide on similar products. Hence, there is ongoing competition among restaurateurs to entice online reviewers into paying more attention to their restaurants (Zhang et al., 2010).

This study utilizes Yelp in order to examine the impact of website quality on information adoption propensity. Below is a summary description of popular restaurant review websites where UGC is available.

Yelp

Yelp was established in 2004 (Yelp, 2013). Its objective is to connect people with local businesses (Yelp, 2013). Its value and influence is becoming more obvious as its number of online reviews is increasing (Hicks, Comp, Horovitz, Hovarter, Miki & Bevan, 2012). Yelp had an average of approximately 120 million monthly unique visitors in Q4 2013, and Yelpers have written over 53 million local reviews (Yelp, 2013).

With Yelp, potential consumers can write reviews and rate the companies they had purchased from. The reviewers write their likes, dislikes, and their opinions of businesses they had experience with. The reviews help potential customers make informed decision whether to visit or not visit the place. There are different ways to search for products on Yelp: consumers can search for specific name or by type of business they are looking for (Hicks et al., 2012).

What makes Yelp stand out from the rest of review websites is that companies do not operate the website and it is completely in the control of the customers who are not rewarded for writing/rating reviews (Luca, 2011; Hicks et al., 2012). "Yelpers" can express their thoughts on anything via reviews, and anyone who is searching for information on a particular business, has access to those reviews (Hicks et al., 2012). The prime motivation for using yelp is information-seeking rather than convenience, pass time, entertainment, and interpersonal utility respectively (Hicks et.al, 2012). Yelp.com is a straightforward and an easy online platform as all the browsers have to do is type the name of a particular restaurant or businesses they are searching for (Hicks et.al, 2012).

Urbanspoon

UrbanSpoon was founded in 2006 (Crunchbase, 2014). Urban spoon is an online website providing reviews from professional food critics, bloggers, and diners on local bars and restaurants. Reviewers can find reviews for restaurants in the United States, Canada, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand (Zomato, n.d.). Consumers can search based on cuisine, price, popularity, late night, happy hour, and more (Sporck, 2013). Urbanspoon also have mobile apps on Android and iPhone. iPhone offers a personal dinning timeline called Dineline. Dineline let patrons keep track of their dining history (Urbanspoon Staff, 2011). Moreover, Dineline gives customers a chance to share their moment with other diners on social media by providing them the opportunity to check-in the restaurant and provide details on the time and the place of the meal along with the picture of the meal and whether they like the food or not (Perez, 2011).

Zagat

Zagat introduces itself as the world's original provider of UGC, and has been in existence since 1979 (Zagat, 2015a). Zagat's primary purpose is to help diners decide where to dine, lodge, and shop (Zagat, 2015b). The website operates in the way that ratings provided by reviewers to questions on a 30-point scale are shown in tables. The reviews are summarized by the website's publishing supervisors (Zagat, 2015b).

TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor was introduced in 2000 (TripAdvisor, 2015) and it is the largest online network of travel consumers (O'Connor, 2008) with more than 260 million unique

monthly visitors in 2013, and more than 150 million reviews and opinions covering more than 3.7 million accommodations, restaurants, and attractions (TripAdvisor, 2015). Its initial purpose was to propagate UGC reviews, ratings, photos and videos (O'Connor, 2008, p.52). The reviews on TripAdvisor are created by consumers who can write and rate services and add photos and videos and participate in debates (Miguens, Baggio & Costa, 2008).

Dine.com

Dine.com initially launched as the "Bay Area Restaurant Guide" in April 1994, when its founder decided to discover Bay Area's restaurants. Other cities were added soon afterwards. The idea was to bring the reviewers together to share their opinions and comments with other diners. Dine.com recognizes itself as the world's largest restaurant review community (Dine.com, 2015). It provides the customers with information and reviews on restaurants by using a unique technique for the very first time. The website has embedded the feature of collaborative filtering so that it can anticipate and recommend the restaurants that the reviewers would possibly like based on the likes and dislikes they have provided in the list they have created and their relationship with other diners. Dine.com claims that all the reviews provided are from the people who actually have had dined in that specific restaurant. Therefore, the reviews are not written by paid reviewers (Dine.com, 2015).

Restaurant.com

Restaurant.com has existed since 1999 (Restaurant.com, n.d.a), and it presents itself as the nation's largest dining deals site, offering more than 50,000 deals at

thousands of restaurants all over the nation (Restaurant.com, n.d.d). Restaurant.com not only helps potential consumers but also helps small businesses and restaurants to market themselves and drive customers to their businesses (Restaurant.com, n.d.d). The way Restaurant.com works is that reviewers are able to search for restaurants by restaurant name, cuisine type, city, or zip code within the website. These filtering tabs along with the former consumers' ratings and reviews give the potential diners the chance to choose the best restaurant possible.

Gayot

Gayot released in 2002 with rated restaurant reviews; Gayot extended its data to include scores of hotels, spas, movies, wine, automobiles, cookbooks, aviation, fashion, and contemporary culture (Gayot, 2015a). Gayot introduces itself as "a leading worldwide authority on the good life" (Gayot, 2015b). Their restaurant ranking system works in a 20-point scale and the highest rate a restaurant could be assigned by professional reviewers is 20, with 19/20 being Exceptional, 17/20 & 18/20 being Excellent, 15/20 & 16/20 being Very Good, 14/20 & 15/20 being Good; 10/20, 11/20 & 12/20 being Average; a rating of Quick Bites (No table Service) for quick meals and No Rating are also options because the restaurant is either new or under renovation. This rating is based on the quality of food; however, the experience with décor, ambience, and wine list is also discussed in comments that come with reviews (Gayot, 2015c). Reviewers are also provided with a chance to see other diners' experiences and opinions in addition to the professional reviewers rating and comments (Gayot, 2015d).

CitySearch

Citysearch was established in 1995 and the idea was to bring businesses and customers together (Citysearch, 2015). It provides information on Arts and Entertainment, Health & Medical Services, Attorneys and Legal Services, Home & Garden, Construction & Remodeling, Personal Services, Food & Dinning, and Shopping. Citysearch no longer works with the star rating system and now practices bi-modal, thumbs up/down method as well as scorecard. The score Citysearch assigns to each business is based upon recommendations of both Citysearch reviewers and professional guides. Each reviewer can comment on a business once and is not able to write multiple reviews for the same business.

OpenTable

OpenTable was founded in 1998 and it finds restaurants for over 12 million clients every month. OpenTable provides various services for both restaurants and customers. It helps customers find the right restaurant and make reservations (OpenTable, 2014). With OpenTable, consumers are linked to more than 30,000 restaurants all over the world. It also benefits restaurants by providing them with hospitality tips and solutions. Over 400,000 restaurant reviews are written by OpenTable customers every month (OpenTable, 2014).

Fodor's

Fodor's has provided travel information for readers for more than 70 years (Fodor's Travel, 2015b). Fodor's' online review website recruits local reviewers as they believe they are experts since they live in the area. So far, they have 700 reviewers (Fodor's Travel,

2015a). Editors and writers check and choose all the recommendations on hotels and restaurants provided on Fodor's guidebooks and its website to assure the customers of the content quality. In other words, they try to provide customers with accurate and up-to-date information. In order to do so, reviewers visit hotels and restaurants that are undergoing renovations, new, or have been revamped. They also need to contact every single property and double check the statements provided to make sure of its truthfulness and accuracy. Fodor's also includes readers actively in the editorial procedure to ensure precision, truthfulness, and timeliness of the reviews. Fodor's actively assimilates the travelers' opinions and feedback of the place the experts are reviewing.

Motivations to read and write UGC

Online review websites give the consumers the opportunity to read the consumers' reviews and opinions on almost any products (Burton & Khammash, 2010). People get involved with user-generated content for different motives at different times. The intention to purchase a product is not always the motivation to read a product review (Burton & Khammash, 2010). Also, not everyone who buys a product would write a review (Hu, Pavlou, & Zhang, 2007). People read reviews so that they can minimize the risk (if not possible to eradicate it) associated with a product they have never used (Burton & Khammash, 2010). Minimizing search time could be another reason for reading online reviews. That said; some people believe it works the other way around; i.e. it increases the search time as they want to get more information about the product. They also read former consumers' reviews as they think they are more sincere and credible compared to the reviews provided on the company website (Burton &

Khammash, 2010). Findings of Cox et al. (2009) supports this view as the majority of the participants in their research on hotels said that they prefer to read former consumers' online reviews than just to rely on the description that the hotel provides online. However, Senecal and Nantel (2004) found that the nature of the website on which the review is posted does not matter. In other words, if a professional review writer comments on the company website, the perceived reliability of the reviews would not differ compared to if reviews were written by a professional on a third party website. In addition, the motivation behind reading a review could simply be a way to satisfy the sense of inquisitiveness or just for the sake of passing time in a more pleasant manner (Burton & Khammash, 2010). Burton and Khammash (2010) found that some consumers engage in reading reviews as they feel obliged to keep the website dynamic and up-to-date by rating the content of the reviews. Another reason identified as a motivator to read and write reviews is the need to feel a sense of belonging with a specific group made up of people who share common interests (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010) or the need to be given recognition, respect and admiration (Stoeckl et al., 2007). In addition, Gretzel and Yoo (2008) identified other motivations that increase the tendency toward reading reviews including an increase in confidence when deciding on several destination/accommodation alternatives by providing a more tangible image of the destination/accommodation.

Source Credibility

Few researches have studied source credibility of online reviews. This is probably due to the fact that most online reviews are anonymous and analyzing the

features of a message sender is difficult to scrutinize (Dou et al., 2012). Furthermore, natures of messages are complicated and researchers struggle to determine what aspects of a message impact people's evaluation of source credibility (Slater & Rouner, 1996).

Hovland, Janis, & Kelley (1953) state that there are three types of sources: the person who is communicating the message, the person whose name is mentioned in the messages as endorsers, or the network through which the message is communicated. The current study defines source as a person who initiates the message and expresses his/her opinion to people. Hovland et al. (1953) call these individuals communicators. They denote that being able to communicate the message clearly does not necessarily mean that the receiver of the message will accept the message because expertise and trustworthiness come into play if the message reader believes that the communicator has motivations to transmit and communicate a false message. Expertness is defined as "the extent to which the communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions", and trustworthiness is defined as "the degree of confidence in the communicator's intent to communicate the assertions he considers most valid (Hovland et al., 1953, p.21). Hovland et al. (1953) believe that the audience perception towards source depends on these two factors which they name credibility of the source.

Sternthal et al. (1978) state that when people receive a message from a highly credible source, they associate the communicator with more trustworthiness and expertise compared to when people receive a message from a moderately credible source. However, Rieh, Kim, Yang, & Jean (2010) believe that trustworthiness and expertise as the only two constructs of credibility should be substituted with the new sets of source

credibility components. They introduce the following 11 components to evaluate a message credibility: expertise, official, scholarly, unbiased, completeness, authorativeness, accuracy, currency, reliability, trustworthiness, and truthfulness.

Because several past studies (e.g. Dou et al., 2012; Rabjohn et al., 2008; Cheung et al., 2008; Lee, Law, & Murphy 2011) have considered expertise and trustworthiness to measure source credibility, the current study considers these two variables as well.

Alba, and Hutchinson (1987), and Shanteau, Weiss, Thomas, & Pounds (2002) believe that an increase in experience results in increase in expertise. Also, Shanteau et al., (2002) classify the participants with many years of experience as experts while naming the individuals with little experience as novice. Gretzel, Yoo, & Purifoy (2007) state that message's usefulness hinges upon the perceived level of experience of the review writer. However, it is noteworthy that review writer's experience matters more to frequent online review readers rather than occasional review readers when evaluating message usefulness; the frequent review readers perceive the message as higher quality when it is written by an experienced traveler (Gretzel et al., 2007). McAuley and Leskovec (2013) use the words experience and expertise interchangeably and define them as "some unobserved quantity of a user that increases over time as they consume and review more products." The terms experience and expertise are used interchangeably in the current study as well.

There is a dearth of research on the degree of trust people have in online reviews (Cox et al., 2009). However, Hovland et al. (1953) state that the general notion is that if a message reader believe that the message sender has specific intentions to convince

people, they believe that the message readers has some benefits in the issue, hence, the less trustworthy they perceive him/her.

There is some debate as to the role of expertise and trustworthiness on perceived information usefulness. Pornpitakpan (2004) stated that expertise and trustworthiness do not have equal influence on opinion change. He believes that trustworthiness is more influential compared to expertise, however, he also mentions that there are studies which oppose this notion and claim that trustworthiness is less important compared to expertise or is not sufficient solely. On the other hand, Rabjohn et al. (2008) had speculated that if the customers believe that the review and comment is highly credible (high in expertise and trustworthiness), they will place a higher emphasis on its usefulness, however, surprisingly, they found that source credibility did not have a major influence on the perceived message usefulness. Since people can write anything in the virtual environment of the internet anonymously, it is the review readers who shoulder the burden for analyzing the expertise and trustworthiness dimensions of the source (Rabjohn et al., 2008), hence, they believe that if more information on the identity of the message sender is available, then source credibility might be more helpful in deciding on message usefulness.

Information Quality and Information Usefulness

Information quality has been the subject of discussions in the information system literature for a very long time (Rabjohn et al., 2008). It is an important issue as it diminishes the purchase ambiguity (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). There are a number of factors associated with information quality that impact how useful a review is in the eyes

of a potential consumer making a purchase decision. Online vendors use the subjective instrument usefulness as the measurement of how reviewers assess a review (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). Helpful review is defined as "a peer-generated product evaluation that facilitates the consumer's purchase decision process" (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010, p.186). Review depth (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010; Rabjohn et al., 2008; Schindler & Bickart, 2012), review extremity (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010, p.4; Cao et al., 2011; Schindler & Bickart, 2012), accuracy (Rabjohn et al., 2008; Yang, Cai, Zhou, and Zhou, 2005; DeLone & McLean, 1992; Rieh et al., 2010; Fogg, Soohoo, Danielson, Marable, Stanford, & Tauber, 2003), relevance (Rabjohn et al., 2008; Davis, 1989; Jalilvand, Esfahani, & Samiei, 2011; Otterbacher, 2009), review dates (Lee, 2013; Cao et al., 2011; Rabjohn et al., 2008; Cox et al., 2009), are also significant factors of information quality that determine the usefulness of a review.

Review Depth

Review depth is the comprehensiveness and length of the reviews (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). Review depth's role becomes conspicuous when the reviewer has knowledge of a product but does not have the motivation and buoyancy to make the actual purchase. For instance, a potential consumer might have the willingness to buy a product, but may have not put the energy and effort to identify its merits and demerits. That is when an in-depth and thorough review becomes useful and helps the browsers make their mind up by giving them more confidence in their decision (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). Extended reviews usually are more detailed and give out information concerning how and in what setting the product was used.

Depending on whether the consumer intends to buy a search product or an experience product, the importance of review depth varies, and consequently, the perceived usefulness of reviews. Experience product is defined as a product where the quality is hard to evaluate prior to use because its key attributes are subjective and one's sense should be used to estimate the product's quality (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). Search product is one where the quality is not hard to be evaluated prior to use because its key attributes are objective and the need to use one's senses to evaluate the quality is not strongly felt (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). Length of review and perceived helpfulness are related regardless of the type of product. However, review depth is perceived to be more helpful for search goods compared to experience products (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). In fact, review helpfulness and review elaborateness are negatively related for experiential products in comparison with the search products (Racherla & Friske 2012).

Nevertheless, Schindler and Bickart (2012) found that reviews extensity influenced the perceived usefulness of a review positively up to a point. As long as the information is sufficient to make an informed decision, the review will be perceived helpful, but if it gets convoluted with too many details, then it gets difficult and has a negative effect on the review readers' value perception. With the above information, one can conclude that the role of the review extensity in determining the helpfulness of reviews before purchasing experience products is still controversial, and needs further examination.

Review Extremity

Review extremity categorizes reviews as positive, negative, or neutral (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). To indicate review extremity, a visual star rating is used. The common trend is that one star rating indicates a negative attitude towards the product and as the numbers of stars increase to the maximum of five, the attitude becomes more positive. Hence, one to five stars reflect the extremity of the attitudes when three stars indicate moderate attitude. Experience goods tend to have more extreme ratings and fewer moderate ratings because of their subjective nature (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). With review extremity, it is hard to decide on the usefulness of three-star reviews versus one or five-star reviews (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). Nevertheless, Cao, Duan, & Gan (2011) believe that extremity is important in determining how useful a review is, and that people are more attracted to extreme reviews compared to moderate ones. Mudambi and Schuff (2010), however, oppose Cao et al. (2011), and state that taste plays a very important role, and since everyone is so certain about their own evaluations and doubtful of extreme comments of others. They believe that moderate reviews are more helpful in review readers' eyes as they have more of an objective touch compared to when they are extremes. Also, Schindler and Bickart (2012) are in line with the findings of Mudambi and Schuff (2010), and believe that although a positive review raises the chance of basing the decision off of that review, at the same time, if the review is too extreme, then the reader might become suspicious of the motives of the writer.

Review Dates

Cox, Burgess, Sellitto & Buultjens (2009) found that review readers are concerned about the timeliness of reviews. Review timeliness is the amount of time that the review has been posted online (Lee, 2013).

O'Reilly (1982) in a study involving employees in four branch locations of a county welfare agency found that the timeliness of information influences the perceived information quality and as a result, information adoption. In other words, the more timely the information, the more useful the information is. This finding is supported by Lee (2013) who found, while analyzing online reviews in Amazon.com, that the information perceived to be most useful was the ones posted recently. This could be due to the notion that as the time passes; the usefulness of the review will decrease due to changes that might happen (Lee, 2013; Ghose & Ipeirotis 2007, 2011). However, Rabjohn et al. (2008) had a different notion. They believe that the date of the review does not play a significant role in how a person would evaluate the usefulness of a review. This is due to the reason that some general topics related to food and restaurants are not really time sensitive. In fact, they believe that the previous comments could be considered as evidence of the reputation of the restaurant.

Accuracy

Accuracy is another factor associated with information quality (Rabjohn et al., 2008; Yang et al., 2005; DeLone & McLean, 1992) but it is difficult to assess. Accuracy is defined as "the correctness of the output information" (Bailey & Pearson, 1983, p.541). While, Rieh et al. (2010) state that accuracy is among the most important qualities that

review readers pay attention to, Cheung et al. (2008) believe that accuracy does not play an important role in the perceived usefulness of information in the online platform; when people have knowledge about a part of the review they are reading, they are more inclined to view the review as more accurate (Rabjohn et al., 2008). Their belief is backed up by Fogg et al. (2003) who found that people approve the accuracy of a comment based on their previous knowledge.

Relevance

One dimension of information quality that has not received enough attention is relevancy which refers to how much an information item is related to consumers (Chen, & Xie, 2008). Relevancy is defined as "the degree of congruence between what the user wants or requires and what is provided by the information products and services" (Bailey & Pearson, 1983, p.542). According to Cheung et al. (2008), relevance is important as internet users are time conscious. Assessment of evaluation hinges upon the interaction among several factors such as requester's situation and goals, the requester's knowledge level and belief, the information being evaluated, the way in which the information is being represented, the availability of other information within the environment, and the time, effort, and cost involved in obtaining information (Barry,1994). Relevance exerts a lot of influence on perceived information helpfulness (Cheung et al., 2008; Davis, 1989), and information adoption (Jalilvand et al. 2011; Otterbacher, 2009). Otterbacher (2009) stated that the perceived connection between relevancy and perceived helpfulness of a review is most likely due to the belief that the relevant information is written by a well-

known review writer. Therefore, it increases the propensity of viewing a review as more useful.

Determinants of Website Quality

Bai, Law &, Wen (2008) believe that website quality is an important aspect to consider as businesses' survival depends on it, and it is the primary platform for looking up information or products (Kim & Stoel, 2004), or exchanging information (Yang et al., 2005).

There is no fixed method for measuring websites' quality, and there is no generally accepted opinion on what the tool should exactly measure (Loiacono, Watson, & Goodhue, 2007). Researchers have not compromised on just one set of paradigms that impacts the business' success (Webb & Webb, 2004). There is no established and universally accepted tool to measure website quality (Yang et al., 2005). Therefore, for instance, Yang et al. (2005) integrated different existing methods and devised their own method. According to them, usefulness of content, adequacy of information, usability, accessibility, privacy/security, and interaction are the website quality dimensions. Nevertheless, Bressolles, and Nantel (2008) state that although different measurements have been devised for assessing electronic service quality, there are main academically developed scalessuch as: NetQual, Webqual, EtailQ, Sitequal, and E.S.Qual.

NetQual

This scale was developed and revised using a sample of more than 1,200 people who were patrons of commercial websites such as "travel," "insurance," "digital products," and "energy" (Bressolles & Nantel, 2008, p.5). It examines five dimensions of

(a) Quality and Quantity of information available; (b) ease of site use; (c) design or aesthetic aspect of the site; (d) reliability or respect for commitment; (e) security/confidentiality of personal and financial data (Bressolles & Nantel, 2008).

WebQual

Researchers at Manchester School of Management came up with a measurement called WebQual that was developed primarily based on ServQual measurement tool for the online platform (Kim & Stoel, 2004, p.110). This scale mostly deals with the purchase intentions to purchase and intention to revisit the site (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003). WebQual includes 12 dimensions: informational fit-to-task, tailored information, trust, response time, ease of understanding, intuitive operations, visual appeal, innovativeness, emotional appeal, consistent image, on-line completeness, relative advantage. The measurement shows strong measurement validity (Loiacono et al., 2007). However, the problem with this scale is that it was originally developed for generating information for website designers rather than evaluating the experience of patrons with the electronic service quality. Also, the scale was developed employing students rather than actual potential customers (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Malhotra, 2005).

Barnes and Vidgen (2002) also have devised a scale to measure electronic service quality which they also have called WebQual, but it is completely different from the WebQual scale developed by Loiacono et al. (2007). Barnes and Vidgen (2002) have revised their scale several times starting from WebQual 1.0 to WebQual 4.0 which is the current form of the scale and is known as WebQual by using "quality workshops, factor analysis to identify question groupings, and literature from three core research areas:

information quality from mainstream IS research; service interaction quality from marketing (as well as some IS and e-commerce sources); and usability from human-computer interaction" (p.115). The WebQual scale developed by Barnes and Vidgen (2002) measures five dimensions of usability, design, information, trust, and empathy (Parasuraman et al., 2005). However, although their scale puts more importance on the customers' perception toward the website quality (Parasuraman et al., 2005), Bressolles and Nantel (2008) claim that WebQual is not a complete medium to measure electronic service quality and misses some aspects of online service life-cycle-navigation, selection, ordering, payment, delivery, and customer service. Moreover, Parasuraman et al., (2005) believe that the scale is designed to be answered without a respondent needing to complete the purchasing process and is therefore a transaction- specific assessment of a site rather than a comprehensive evaluation of the service quality of a site.

eTailQ

According to Wofinbarger and Gilly (2003), this measure encompasses four dimensions: Fulfillment/reliability is (a) the accurate display and description of a product so that what customers receive is what they thought they ordered, and (b) delivery of the right product within the time frame promised. Website design includes all elements of the consumer's experience at the website (except for customer service), including navigation, information search, order processing, appropriate personalization and product selection. Customer service is responsive, helpful, willing service that responds to customer inquiries quickly. Security/privacy refers to security of credit card payments and privacy of shared information.

The flaw with this measure is that it was developed using focus groups and not random sampling; hence, it is not a good indicator of the overall opinion of internet users (Bressolles & Nantel, 2008). In addition, Bai, Cui, and Ye (2012) believe that not all the four factors exhibited a consistent validity, and just the two factors, security/privacy and reliability/fulfillment showed strong validity, while the other two dimensions needed to be investigated more.

SiteQual

SITEQUAL is defined as an instrument that measures the quality of an internet shopping site based on consumers' evaluation and perception (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Internet shopping website is an online retail website in which consumers can navigate, evaluate, order, and make a purchase (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). In developing this scale, Yoo and Donthu (2001) let customers judge the quality of the site, and they did not restrict the concept of website quality to a certain definition. This scale encompasses four dimensions and nine items (a) Ease of use and capacity to obtain information; (b) design and creativity of site with multimedia content and colors; (c) speed of order process and reactivity to consumers' requests; and (d) security of financial and personal information (Bressolles & Nantel, 2008). The flaw with this scale is that it does not encompass all dimensions of the buying procedure (Bai, et al., 2012). For instance, it does not include customer service or delivery issues (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003). Moreover, Bressolles and Nantel (2008) believe that Yoo and Donthu (2001) entirely focused on the features of website experience and did not empirically verify their results on a sample of internet users.

E-S-Qual

E-S-Qual tries to capture all aspects of the communication between the consumers and the website. It is defined as "the extent to which a Web site facilitates efficient and effective shopping, purchasing, and delivery" (Parasuraman et al., 2005, P. 217). Parasuraman et al., (2005) tried to understand how different dimensions of electronic service quality (e-SQ) would influence overall customer perception of and loyalty. In order to do so, they chose two websites, Amazon.com and Walmart.com to confirm the psychometric properties of the two scales, E-S-Qual and Recs-Qual.

E-Recs-Qual was developed since some study participants had not ranked some of the items of the survey as they all pertained to nonroutine or recovery service encounters. Hence, E-Recs-Qual includes items for managing service problems and inquiries, and only pertains to consumers who had had nonroutine encounters with the sites. Parasuraman et al. (2005) state that E-S-Qual scale examines four dimensions including efficiency, fulfillment, system availability, and privacy containing 22 items

They also point out that E-Recs-Qual examines three dimensions including responsiveness, compensation, and contact containing 11 items.

Nevertheless, Bressolles and Nantel (2008) indicate that the scale they have developed mostly deals with the quality of the service rather than the quality of the website. In other words, they state that their scale mostly measures logistics, possibility to speak with someone.

Information Usefulness and Information Adoption

Cheung et al. (2008) define information adoption as a procedure in which people deliberately employ a piece of information. According to them, information adoption is a behavior and people consider this behavior as one of the main activities that users manifest in virtual platforms. Information is found in abundance in online communities; it is the consumers' responsibility to decide if any of these ideas are helpful for them in making a better decision. Hence, if customers view a message as helpful, they are most likely to intend to adopt the message (Cheung et al., 2008) implying that information adoption is predicted by information usefulness. For instance, in the context of governmental electronic services, Horst, Kuttschreuter, & Gutteling (2007) found that there is a direct and positive relationship between perceived usefulness and the intention to adopt the e-government services. In other words, they found that the perceived usefulness of e-government services determines the propensity to adopt e-government services.

Website Quality and Information Adoption

The impact of various website quality factors on purchase intentions have not been thoroughly studied (Kuan, Bock, & Vathanophas, 2008). Specifically in the context of information websites (as opposed to websites from which purchases can be made), and particularly those related to hospitality and travel, there is a need for further investigation as to the relationship between website quality and the tendency to adopt a message. According to Jeong, Oh, & Gregoire (2003), website quality does not have a globally-

accepted definition; but, they define it as the effectiveness of a website in conveying and delivering a certain message to its audience.

Existing research focuses on the role on website quality factors on purchase intentions from websites whose primary intention is purchase as opposed to information dissemination. As the website is the first platform that put the consumers in touch with the company, it makes up the very first impression and experience of the retailer for the consumers; hence, the website quality should have a strong impact on the primary purchase intention (Kuan et al., 2008; Fazli et al., 2009). For instance, if the website is not successful living up to the patrons' expectations, e.g. "searching for product information and purchasing" (p.11), then they would form a negative experience and perception towards the online vendor (Kuan et al., 2008). Website quality exerts influence on evaluating product quality especially when consumers do not have a lot of information about the product (Wells, Valacich, & Hess, 2011); therefore, website quality could determine the purchase intention by making it possible for the customers to evaluate the product quality.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Elaboration likelihood model (ELM) along with the Information Adoption Model are theoretical models which can be used to answer about questions such as what piece of information would impact a reader's intention to take action, or why different people would react to the same review differently. The ELM proposes that the impact of a message is different for different individuals depending on how closely they pay attention to the content of the message. ELM influences human behavior through two different

routes; central and peripheral. Central route applies when people care about the quality of the content and its pertinence when evaluating a message and coming to a judgment, while peripheral route applies when individuals take other things into consideration more than the content quality such as the number of previous consumers and their popularity (Sussman & Siegal, 2003; Sanford & Bhattacherjee, 2006).

Argument quality refers to the persuasive strength of arguments embedded in an informational message, while peripheral cues relate to meta-information about the message (e.g., message source) but not its embedded arguments (Sanford & Bhattacherjee, 2006. As detailed examination of a message's content involves individuals' mental effort and rational thinking to assess the content and quality of the message, not everyone analyzes every single message in detail (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). The ones who have higher degrees of elaboration take the central route while the ones with lower degrees of elaboration take the peripheral route (Sussman & Siegal, 2003; Sanford & Bhattacherjee, 2006). ELM has a positive relationship with central route and a negative relationship with the peripheral route. In other words, people differ in terms of their ability and eagerness to get involved with the quality of a message; this motivation and eagerness is embedded in the elaboration likelihood concept in the ELM model (Sanford & Bhattacherjee, 2006). The ones who either are not capable of analyzing the quality of an information item or simply do not have the enthusiasm to do it, would pay more attention to the peripheral inklings of a message. These clues would be sources, attractiveness, likeability, credibility (Sussman & Siegal, 2003), number of

messages, and number of message sources (Sanford & Bhattacherjee, 2006) with source credibility being the most popular peripheral sign (Sanford & Bhattacherjee, 2006).

Previous knowledge determines how much a person would hold on to the central or peripheral cues. People who have prior knowledge and experience with the message subject would be less likely to consider source credibility and more willing to critically think about the content as they have acquired the required evaluation ability. However, the ones with less expertise who do not have sufficient knowledge to assess the content quality rely on the peripheral signs like source credibility more (Sussman & Siegal, 2003; Sanford & Bhattacherjee, 2006). It is worth noting that being professional does not mean ignoring the available cues; there are times when due to lack of resources and time, even the experts rely on peripheral cues more than central, hence, routes are dependent on the situation (Sanford & Bhattacherjee, 2006).

The ELM shows how much various elements of a message affect people with different degrees of "elaboration likelihood" to pick up the information, but it misses the effect of "information usefulness" (p.51) factor on information adoption (Figure 1). The information adoption model takes the ELM model one step further and introduces the information usefulness aspect as the mediator factor between the information adoption and the message quality and source credibility (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). Information quality and source credibility influence perceived information usefulness more (Sussman & Siegal, 2003) as opposed to information acquisition. The ELM model supports this idea as it states that message quality and the peripheral signs influences attitude and behavior directly (Sanford & Bhattacherjee, 2006). However, message argument is

designed to affect the rational judgment instead of the attitude. Hence, message quality is in a close relationship with the perceived utilitarian aspect of information (perceived information usefulness) by improving the existing beliefs and notions, while peripheral cues such as source reliability are more related to attitude as it is more appealing to human effect and are less likely to influence the rational judgment (Sanford & Bhattacherjee, 2006). Nevertheless, taking different routes when assessing a message does not necessarily mean reaching different conclusions; assessors might come to the same conclusion although taking different evaluation methods (Sussman & Siegel, 2003).

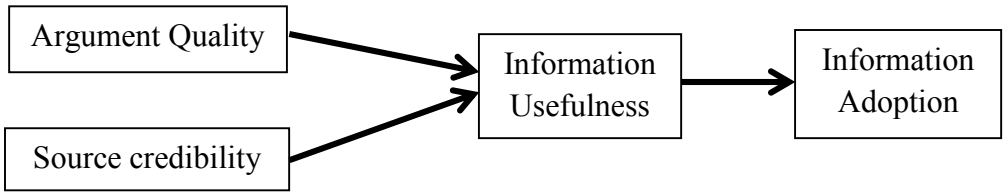


Figure 1. Model of Information Adoption. Adapted from "Informational Influence in Organizations: An Integrated Approach to Knowledge Adoption," by S.W. Sussman, and W.S. Siegal, 2003, *Information Systems Research*, *14*(1), p.52. Copyright

Study Rationale

Few studies have investigated how consumers make buying decisions on electronic platforms (Haubl, & Trifts, 2000; Bai et al., 2008). Specifically, the literature investigating the relationship between website quality and the intention to adopt a message in the context of information websites is sparse. Shopping websites are primarily for the purpose of purchase as Yoo and Donthu (2001) state "we define internet shopping sites as web retail sites in which customers can browse, evaluate, order, and

purchase a product or service" (p.32); while online review websites (termed information websites in the current study) are primarily for generating, sharing and transferring information to the review reader as Park, Lee, & Han (2007) state that online customer reviews play an important role in making purchase decisions and product sales as they function both as informants and recommenders.

Most of the current studies focus on the impact of perceived website quality on consumers' satisfaction or the impact of website quality on consumers' buying intention/behavior in context of the manufacturing industry, focusing on websites whose primary intent is revenue generation as opposed to information dissemination (e.g. Chen, Hsu, Lin, 2010; Poddar, Donthu, & Wei, 2009; Wells et al., 2011). The impact of website quality on the tendency to adopt a piece of information has been sparsely studied in the context of services with some notable exceptions. Cheung et al. (2008) conducted a study on Chinese restaurant review websites and found that various information quality components and source credibility influence the propensity to adopt a message. Also, Bai et al. (2008), who examined how Chinese consumers' purchase intention could be impacted by their assessment of online travel website quality, found that website quality influences consumers' satisfaction directly, which in turn impacts purchase intention; their study emphasizes the totality of website quality which has an important role on buying intention.

With the addition of website quality to the information adoption model, the first objective of this study is to examine the impact of website quality on the tendency to adopt a piece of information. It is essential to further explore the potential impact of

website quality on information adoption in the service industry because website quality has been found to play a significant role on information adoption in manufacturing industry. Moreover, it is worth probing what specific constructs of website quality would have the greatest impact on the tendency to adopt a piece of information as different components of website quality exert various levels of influence on buying intention (Kuan et al., 2008).

Few researchers have looked into the credibility within the web 2.0 and specifically those of online review websites (Rieh et al., 2010). Currently, studies focus on whether available information is believable, trustworthy, fair, accurate, complete, in-depth, unbiased, objective, reliable, and authoritative only in the context of newspapers, television news, online news and online political information (Rieh et al., 2010). Hence, the second objective of this study is to examine the impact of source credibility on perceived information usefulness.

Finally, the third objective of this study is to add clarity to the currently controversial literature on the impact of review extremeness on the perceived usefulness of online reviews. Current study focuses on extreme reviews as online reviews are more extreme rather than moderate (Hu et al., 2007), and also because people put more importance on extreme cues; in other words, they take more into consideration a piece of information which is either highly positive or negative (Fiske, 1980).

This study was designed to investigate how the extremity of a message, the message's perceived source credibility and information usefulness, and the website quality all

impact the information adoption of the review readers. The hypothesized Information Adoption research model utilized in this study is presented in Figure 2.

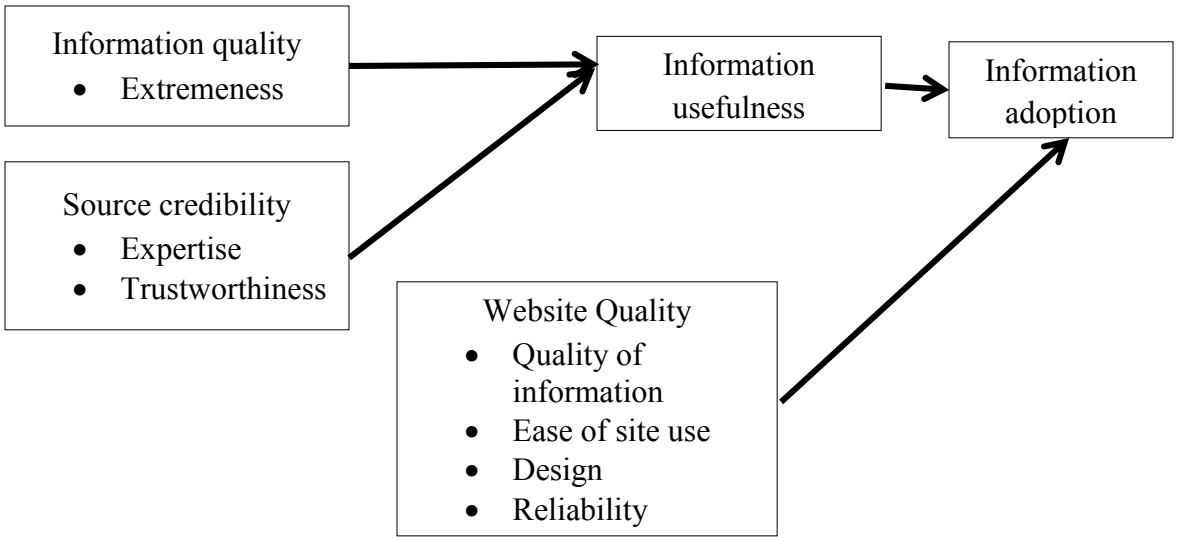


*Figure 2***.** Hypothesized Model of Information Adoption

Research Hypotheses

The purpose of this research was to examine the following hypotheses identified in Figure 2:

H1: Extremity of a message is positively related to the perceived information usefulness

H2: Reviewers' experience is positively related to the perceived information usefulness

H3: Reviewers' trustworthiness is positively related to the perceived information usefulness

H4: Website's quality of information is positively related to the tendency to adopt information

H5: Website's ease of use is positively related to the tendency to adopt information

H6: Website's design is positively related to the tendency to adopt information

H7: Website's security is positively related to the tendency to adopt information

H8: Perceived information usefulness is positively related to information adoption

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter starts with a discussion of how the variables incorporated in the hypothesized model of Information Adoption were measured and outlines the details of data collection procedures; namely: human subjects review, sample selection, instrument design, research design, pilot study, data collection, and data analysis techniques.

Human Subjects Research Review

The primary researcher has completed the human subjects training, and this research was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Kent State University (KSU) (Appendix A).

Sample Selection

Students at Kent State University were invited to participate in the study. Participants constituted a sample of email addresses obtained from the university and were requested to complete the survey via an email invitation on March 5, 2015. A total of 10,000 random email addresses of students was provided by the institution comprised the sample for the current investigation. Participation was voluntary and in compensation for participation, the first 250 respondents were given a voucher for a free cup of coffee at a local coffee shop which was valid until April 15, 2015. Based on the randomly selected email addresses of students, a range of race/ethnicity groups and genders was expected.

Instrument Design

The online survey (Appendix B) utilizing Qualtrics was developed during March 2015 and was provided to the participants containing the following sections: The first

page of the survey had questions that measured participants' perceptions of source credibility and reviews' usefulness based on Cheung et al. (2008); the second page had questions that measured participants' perceptions of a restaurant review website quality based on NetQual (Bressolles & Nantel, 2008) and participants' propensity towards adopting the reviews based on Cheung et al. (2008); and the final page of the survey consisted of six demographic questions including gender, age, ethnic background, annual household income, education level, and frequency of reading online restaurant reviews.

A simulated restaurant online review website was developed containing some common characteristics based on Sparks and Browning (2011) study such as: the name of the website , a photo (of a generic unrecognizable restaurant), links to other parts of the website (not active), and a brief description of the restaurant being reviewed (named Joe's Restaurant). On the simulated restaurant online review webpage, there were a number of reviews with numerical ratings for each review (indicated by stars).

Participants viewed one of eight pre-determined scenarios. Scenarios reflected reviews that were extremely negative, mildly negative, extremely positive, or mildly positive. Each scenario encompassed a combination of six positive, negative, and neutral reviews beginning and ending with a positive, negative, or neutral review based on the scenario. The reviews were built considering both technical and functional dimensions (Israeli & Barkan, 2004). An example of a technical issue is food and beverage preparation, and an example of a functional issue is the interaction with the restaurant staff (Israeli & Barkan, 2004). Comments in the extremely positive scenario included positive statements about both technical and functional elements (i.e. the waiter was

polite and friendly and the food was tasty) while comments in the extremely negative scenario included negative statements on functional and technical aspects (i.e. the waiter was rude and the food tasted bad). The mildly positive and negative scenarios included a positive or negative statement respectively, but only on one aspect (technical or functional). The numerical rating illustrated in the reviews was defined as follow: 1.5 stars were assigned for negative reviews, 3 stars were assigned for neutral reviews, and lastly, 4.5 stars were assigned for the positive reviews (Sparks & Browning, 2011). Appendix C includes all eight-scenario images.

Each participant was presented with one randomly selected scenario from the set of 8. Upon reviewing the scenario, each participant answered questions related to source credibility and usefulness of reviews. Then, the participant was asked to click on a link to an actual Yelp.com web site. Upon observing and navigating through the website, participants were asked to respond to questions related to website quality. Before answering questions to information adoption, participants were instructed to consider the quality of the reviews and source credibility presented in their scenario and the website features.

The constructs used in this study are explained below:

Extremity

The extremely positive scenario included four positive reviews, one negative and one neutral review each. The first and last reviews were positive consistent with the scenario overall setting. The mildly positive scenario included three positive reviews, two neutral reviews, and one negative review. Here too, the first and last reviews were

positive consistent with the scenario overall setting. The extremely negative scenario included four negative reviews, and one neutral and one negative review each. The first and last reviews were negative consistent with the scenario overall setting. Lastly, the mildly negative scenario included three negative reviews, two neutrals reviews, and one negative review. Here too, the first and last reviews were negative consistent with the scenario overall setting.

Source Credibility

In this study, source credibility consisted of expertise and trustworthiness (Hovland et al., 1953). Some review writers were titled "expert reviewer" while others were titled "reviewer." The "expert reviewer" and "reviewer" designations were added to each review in the four main scenarios which each was broken down as follows: In the first extremely positive scenario, expert reviewer status was assigned to the four positive reviews and reviewer status was assigned to the negative and neutral reviews. In the second extremely positively scenario, reviewer status was assigned to all reviews. In the first mildly positive scenario, expert reviewer status was assigned to the three positive reviews and reviewer status was assigned to the two negative and neutral reviews. In the second mildly positive scenario all reviews were assigned the reviewer status. The same source credibility treatments were applied to the extremely/mildly negative scenarios as well.

After participants read the reviews, they were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement with regards to source credibility construct based on their perception towards the reviews provided, using a seven-point

Likert-type scale of the survey. Scale items for source credibility were adapted from Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn (2008). In the Cheung et al. (2008) study, the Cronbach Alpha for these scale items were 0.84 for source expertise and 0.91 for source trustworthiness. Responses for the Likert-type scale were coded as 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Somewhat Disagree, 3=Disagree, 4=Neither Agree/Disagree, 5=Agree, 6=Somewhat Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree.

Information Usefulness

The information usefulness construct was generated from scales known in the literature which were adapted to fit this study. Scale items for information usefulness were adapted from Cheung et al (2008) where the Cronbach Alpha was 0.90. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement in the information usefulness construct, based on their perceptions towards the reviews provided using a seven-point Likert-type scale. Responses for the Likert-type scale were coded as 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Somewhat Disagree, 3=Disagree, 4=Neither Agree/Disagree, 5=Agree, 6=Somewhat Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree.

Website Quality

This study examined the available website quality scales, and based on the justifications described below, the decision was made to adopt the NetQual scale to measure the perception of customers towards the website quality on a 5 point Likert scale. SITEQUAL can be used as a tool to observe how site quality influences cyber users' behavior, such as their search patterns and their purchase decision making. (Yoo, & Donthu, 2001, SITEQUAL would not be the best fit for the current study as Yoo and

Donthu (2001) state that if the website is used for either promotional or informative purposes and is not a shopping website, then the definition of quality might differ. WebQual also does not examine all aspects of the purchasing behavior process and is not a holistic scale to measure the website service quality (Parasuraman et al., 2005). The same reasoning applies to E-S-Qual since Parasuraman et al., (2005) focused on websites that sell goods and did not consider the websites that provide service or information. Based on the findings of Bressolles, and Nantel (2008) who compared the four scales including Webqual, Sitequal, etailQ, and NetQual to predict which one would be a better fit for measuring the perceptions toward electronic service quality, it was deemed that NetQual would be the best fit for this study. NetQual scale items of website quality for this study were adapted from Bressolles (2006). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement using a seven-point Likert-type scale. Responses for the Likert-type scale were coded as 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Somewhat Disagree, 3=Disagree, 4=Neither Agree/Disagree, 5=Agree, 6=Somewhat Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree.

Information Adoption

The information adoption construct was generated from scales that appear in previous literature which were adapted to fit this study. Scale items for information usefulness were adapted from Cheung et al (2008) where the Cronbach Alpha was 0.93. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement in the information usefulness construct, based on their perceptions towards the reviews provided using a seven-point Likert-type scale of the survey. Responses for the

Likert-type scale were coded as 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Somewhat Disagree, 3=Disagree, 4=Neither Agree/Disagree, 5=Agree, 6=Somewhat Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree.

Research Design

The research design was a single-group exploratory design. Dependent variables were information usefulness and information adoption; the independent variables were the extremeness component of information quality, source credibility, website quality, and information usefulness. The study examined to what extent the perceived source credibility and extremeness components influenced the evaluations of information usefulness and how much the perceived information usefulness along with the website quality impacted the users' information adoption propensity.

Pilot Study

A pilot study of the survey instrument was conducted with students at Kent State University. Subject-matter experts also reviewed and offered feedback for revisions. The online version of the survey was sent to the personal e-mail addresses of five undergraduate and graduate students on March 4. The students participating in the pilot study were asked to provide specific feedback with regard to the clarity of the survey and offer specific suggestions for improvements. They were also asked to estimate the amount of time it took them to fill the survey out. Minor changes regarding questions clarity were highlighted and appropriate alterations were made to the survey based upon the participants' responses and suggestions.

Data Collection

A web survey was developed utilizing Qualtrics software and was administered to students at Kent State University. The web survey method was selected for its fast response time, high response rate, and low costs (Cobanoglu, Warde, & Moreo, 2001). Ten thousand students whose e-mail addresses were acquired from the University Registrar in March 2015 were invited to participate in the research and complete the survey. The online survey consisted of five pages of which the first two pages collected information on participants' perceptions of various constructs used in the study, page three had demographic questions, and last page included the coffee voucher for the first 250 participants. The survey was set up in such a way that participants could not access the next page of the survey until all the questions in a specific page were answered. In other words, it was not possible for participants to only partially answer the survey questions; this fact may have caused some participants to quit the survey mid-way, but it ensured that 100% of the completed surveys were usable.

A link to the survey was included in the body of the email. The email included a letter of consent detailing the benefits of the study, voluntary participation, and confidentiality (Appendix D). Participants consented to take the survey by clicking on the survey link. Each participant was assigned one scenario randomly. Respondents had one week to complete the survey online and submit their results. A reminder e-mail was sent after three days of the initial survey e-mail. After the one week deadline, the online survey was deactivated. At this time, responses were viewed only by the researcher.

Respondents were asked to disclose their names and provide electronic signatures at the conclusion of the survey in a separate page at the conclusion of the survey, if they opted to receive a free coffee voucher to a local coffee shop. If they did not wish to provide their personal information, they could click on the "opt out" button at the end of the page and be directed to the end of the survey. Only the first 250 participants who completed the survey and provided their personal information received a free coffee voucher. Qualtrics, was programmed to provide coupons to the first 250 participants who proceeded to the coffee voucher page.

Responses were linked directly to a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) database, eliminating the need for data entry. Eight hundred and twenty nine surveys were started. However, only 302 students completed the survey and out of the 302 students who completed the survey, only 233 claimed the voucher which means the rest (69) completed the survey but opted out of the free coffee option.

Data Analysis

SPSS for Windows Release 16.0 was used to analyze the data. Cronbach Alpha was calculated to determine the reliability of each scale used. As recommended by Nunnally (1978), a Cronbach Alpha of .70 was considered acceptable. Descriptive statistics calculated included means and standard deviations. Spearman correlation was used to test the relationships between the extremeness variable and perceived information usefulness measured in the study. Simple linear regression (SLR) and multiple regression analysis (MRA) were used to test the relationships between the source

credibility and perceived information usefulness; and website quality and information adoption measured.

In the first SLR, the relationship between extremeness and information usefulness was examined. Extremeness was the independent variable (IV) and information usefulness was the dependent variable (DV). In the first MRA, the relationship between source credibility and perceived information usefulness was examined. The two constructs that make up source credibility were the IVs and information usefulness was the DV. The second SLR tested the relationship between information usefulness and information adoption. Information usefulness was the IV and information adoption was the DV. The second MRA was tested the relationship between the various constructs that made up website quality and information adoption. Components of website quality were the IVs and information adoption was the DV.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study was designed to investigate how the extremity of a message, the message's perceived source credibility and information usefulness, and the website quality all impact the information adoption of the review readers. The message source's credibility and perceived information usefulness along with website quality and information adoption were examined through online Qualtrics surveys using a seven-point Likert type scale (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree) (Appendix A). E-mails were sent to approximately ten thousand students and 302 responses (response rate of 3%) were received.

Demographic Information and Descriptive Statistics

Participants' demographics are provided in Table 1. Majority (74.6%) of the 302 total were female. The predominant age range group was 18-25 (n=178, 58.7%), followed by the age range of 25-35(n=76, 25.1%) and 35- 45 (n=32, 10.6%). Ethnic background included Caucasian as the largest group with 252 respondents (83.2%) followed by Asian (n=23, 7.6%), other ethnic background (n=13, 14.3%), African-American (n=10, 3.3%) and Hispanic (n=4, 1.3%). One hundred thirty nine of the respondents (45.9%) had completed some level of college. Ninety respondents (29.7%) had completed their college/university diploma/degree. About a third of the respondents (30%) reported an annual household income of $10,000 - $29,999. Lastly, out of the 302 respondents, 131 (43.2%) stated that they occasionally visit restaurant online review website; 79 (26.1%) stated that they do so frequently, 78 (25.7%) claimed they rarely

visited a restaurant review website, and 14 (4.6%) respondents mentioned they very often visited a restaurant review website.

Descriptive statistics of all measured constructs are provided in Table 2. The reliability measure, Alpha coefficient, was .797 for the source credibility scale, .909 for information usefulness, .931 for website quality, and .800 for information adoption. All reliability measures were higher than Nunnaly's (1978) recommended level of .70.

The frequencies of the eight scenarios which were picked at random and presented to respondents were: extremely negative (n=67, 22.1%), mildly negative (n=86, 28.4%), extremely positive (n= 69, 22.8%), and mildly positive (n=80, 26.4%).

Hypotheses testing

To test the relationship between extremeness and information usefulness (H1), Spearman's rho correlation were used. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient is a nonparametric rank statistic which measures the strength of the connection between two variables that cannot be measured quantitatively (Hauke & Kossowski, 2011). Table 3 displays the Spearman's rho between the variables. Extremeness was considered negativity and high values of extremeness indicate more negative reviews. H1 (Extremity of a message is positively related to the perceived information usefulness) was tested; the conclusion was that the more negative the reviews, the higher the reviews' perceived usefulness ($r =. 089$, $p < 0.01$); hence, H1 is accepted.

Source credibility included reviewers' experience and trustworthiness and it was evaluated with two hypotheses. H2 proposed that reviewers' experience is positively related to the perceived information usefulness. H3 posited that reviewers'

trustworthiness is positively related to the perceived information usefulness. A multivariate regression model was used to examine the relationship between experience and trustworthiness as components of source credibility and perceived information usefulness. The first two questions of part A were about the review writer's perceived experience and the two latter were to measure the review writer's perceived trustworthiness; sum of the four questions of part A of the survey were used to measure source credibility. The regression equation was: perceived information usefulness = constant + (coefficient)*experience + (coefficient)*trustworthiness. The regression model was significant $F(1,300)=167.586$, $p<0.05$). The coefficient of experience was significant ($p<0.05$) with a mean of 0.42 and a standard error of 0.07. The coefficient of trustworthiness was also significant ($p<0.05$) with a mean of 0.56 and a standard error of 0.08. The regression model R^2 was 0.361 suggesting that 36.1% of the variance in perceived review usefulness is explained experience and trustworthiness of the reviewers (Table 4). The results support H2 and H3, suggesting that both experience and trustworthiness have a positive relationship with information usefulness.

Website quality and its impact on information adoption was included in 4 hypotheses. H4 proposed that the website's quality of information is positively related to the tendency to adopt information. H5 proposed that website's ease of use is positively related to the tendency to adopt information. H6 proposed that website's design is positively related to the tendency to adopt information, and H7 proposed that website security is positively related to the tendency to adopt information. A multivariate regression model was conducted to examine the relationship between website quality and

information adoption. The first three questions of part C of the survey were about website quality of information, the second set of questions were to measure perceived website's ease of use, the third set of questions were used to measure website design, and the last set of questions measured perceived website security. The regression equation was perceived information adoption = constant + (coefficient)*website quality of information + (coefficient)*website's ease of use + (coefficient)*website design + (coefficient)*security. The regression model was significant $F(4,297)=34.571$, $p<0.00$). The coefficient of website quality of information was significant ($p<0.05$) with a mean of 0.397 and a standard error of 0.050. The coefficient of website ease of use was not significant ($p>0.05$) with a mean of .003 and a standard error of .028. The coefficient of website design was not significant ($p>0.05$) with a mean of -.005 and a standard error of .046. The coefficient of website security was not significant ($p> 0.05$) with a mean of 0.65 and a standard error of .039. The regression model R^2 was 0.318 suggesting that 31.8% of the variance in information adoption is explained by the model (Table 5). The results support H4, but hypotheses H5-H7 were not supported. The findings suggest that only the quality of information provided in the website has a positive relationship with information adoption.

H8 proposed that perceived information usefulness is positively related to information adoption. A linear regression model was employed to test the relationship between the perceived information usefulness and information adoption tendency. The three statements of part B of the survey measured perceived information usefulness and the sum of the two statements of part D of the survey were used to measure information

adoption. The regression equation was: Information Adoption = constant + (coefficient)*information usefulness. The coefficient of information usefulness was significant ($p<0.05$) with a mean of 0.40 with a standard error of 0.037. Information usefulness provided a positive statistically significant explanation of variance for information adoption propensity. The regression model R^2 was 0.285 suggesting that 28.5 % of the variance in information adoption is explained by information usefulness (Table 6). The results support H8, suggesting that information usefulness can significantly predict information adoption.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The main objectives of this study was to investigate how extremity of online restaurant reviews and perceptions with respect to the source credibility of the review writer affect the usefulness of a review from the readers' perspective. The study also sought to determine the impact of perceptions of information usefulness and website quality on the intention to adopt information presented in a review. Results reveal that negativity of the review and perception of source credibility significantly predicted perceived information usefulness. Similarly, information usefulness and website quality were found to significantly predict intention to adopt a review.

For H1, findings of this study reveal that extremely negative ratings were positively associated with perceived usefulness of information, meaning extremely negative reviews were perceived as more useful compared to positives ones. The finding of this study contradicts the results of Sen and Lerman (2007) who found that review readers consider experience products' (i.e. hedonic product) negative reviews as less helpful compared to positive reviews. They believe that because experiences of hedonic products are subjective and differs from person to person, review readers perceive the negative reviews as less helpful. This study's findings also contradict the finding by Mudambi and Schuff (2010) who researched the reviews on Amazon.com on both search and experience products. They found that people consider moderate reviews as more useful compared to the two extremes. A possible explanation for the perceived usefulness of extremely negative reviews found by the current study is that review

readers are more suspicious of positive reviews as companies can manipulate online reviews. For instance, marketers can be hired to write profile-raising reviews or provide high ratings (Park et al., 2007).

For H2 and H3, this study's findings revealed that source credibility of the review writer, evaluated by the review writer's experience and trustworthiness, is a significant predictor of perceived information usefulness. These findings regarding the components of source credibility (trustworthiness and experience) are similar to that of Pornpitakpan (2004) who found that perceived trustworthiness of the review writer exerts more influence on perceived information usefulness compared to perceived experience of the review writer on perceived information usefulness. Similarly, Gretzel et al. (2007) also found that the message's usefulness depends on the perceived level of experience of the review writer. The current study found that there is a significant but weak correlation (ρ=.261) between the frequency of online review website visits and perceived information usefulness. This result is similar to the study of Gretzel et al. (2007) who found that review writer's experience matters more to frequent review readers than occasional review readers.

As far as determining the impact of website quality on review adoption tendency of the review readers, there is no established and globally accepted tool to measure website quality (Yang et al., 2005). However, based on the recommendations of Brossels and Nantel (2008) and given this study's focus on information websites, this study adopted NetQual. The impact of website quality on the final decision of the review readers has not been previously studied in the context of information websites which

could leave industry marketers and managers unfamiliar about its importance and effect on the readers review adoption propensity. Several studies (e.g., Fazli, Sam, & Tahir, 2009; Kuan et al., 2008) have found that website quality is a strong predictor of information adoption inclination. Nevertheless, as far as H4 to H7, this study found that while website information quality is a significant predictor of information adoption tendency, other components of website quality including website security, website ease of use, and website design did not play a significant role in information adoption. This could be attributed to the fact that the main purpose of the review readers visiting information websites such as the one used in this study is to find more information with regards to the product and service they intend to buy and read the previous users' opinions on the product as opposed to making a purchase.

The finding of this study concerning H8 revealed that information usefulness had a direct and positive relationship with information adoption. Cheung et al. (2008) also found that information usefulness predicts information adoption; Sussman and Siegal (2003) made similar conclusions and stated "higher levels of perceived usefulness will be significantly associated with higher levels of reported information adoption (p.57). Horst, Kuttschreuter, & Gutteling (2007) studied public intention to use government services and found the perceived usefulness of electronic services is the predictor of the intention to use e-government services.

Managerial Implications

UGC has provided marketers and academics with an opportunity to come up with better marketing decisions as they have access to marketing mix information and how

consumers actually communicate with their peers and the company (Fader & Winer, 2012).

This research provides several insights for restaurant marketers and managers as to what factors influence potential customers (i.e., review readers) to adopt reviews they read in review websites. Based on the conclusions of this study, it is recommend that restaurant managers provide visitors to their website with direct links to websites where their restaurant is reviewed. In addition, restaurant managers and marketers should also consider highlighting reviews from review writers who are deemed trustworthy and experienced in their website as these traits impacted perceptions of usefulness of information presented in the review.

This study also found that review readers are more inclined to see the extremely negative reviews as useful compared to extremely positive reviews. Based on this finding, it is crucial for restaurant managers to continue to read and respond to negative reviews and more importantly, make operational changes in their restaurant. Gregory (n.d.) confirms this managerial implication in her article on techniques for responding to negative online reviews. The author believes that an appropriate response to online negative reviews not only minimizes the potential damage to future customers but also increases the possibility that the review writer (i.e. existing customer) gives the company a second chance. Otherwise, not only is it possible that existing customers may not return, but potential new customers may not be inclined to visit the restaurant.

Utilizing the NetQual scale to measure the perceived website quality, the current study found that among the four dimensions that NetQual measured (website information

quality, website ease of use, website design, and website security), website quality of information played the most important role on the tendency of people to adopt a review. Based on this finding, it is crucial for the website managers of review websites to pay more attention to the quality of the information and disseminate useful information in their websites.

Given the important role of website information quality, it is important for website designers of restaurant review websites to provide specific directions on how reviews should be written. Whether a review writer is writing a positive or negative review, it should be constructive; in addition it should offer factual information and incorporate examples to support the praises or the criticism (Young, 2012). A review will be more useful to both review readers and restaurant managers, in the context of restaurants as it is an experience product, if it contains both technical and functional aspects of the review writer's experience. Review writers also need to be specific when giving feedback with regards to the issues with the technical or functional dimensions of the restaurant. Paul (n.d.) stated that a quality review is a helpful review. Hence, a helpful and quality review considers the review readers' needs and wants in terms of what the review readers are trying to get out of reviews by reading them (Paul, n.d.). Moreover, personalizing the review is important; this can be accomplished by explaining the experience in the context and situation of the review writer's lifestyle (Paul, n.d.). Lastly, including both negative and positive aspects of a product and suggesting solutions as what needs to be done to make the product better is necessary as it also helps the review to be perceived as more credible (Paul, n.d.). Willemsen, Neijens, Bronner, & De

Ridder (2011) also believe that review websites should reward the review writers whose reviews have received a lot of helpful votes.

Limitations

Due to the design of this research, this study has the following limitations:

1. Results might have low generalizability due to convenience sampling. The sample for this study was not randomly selected and is homogenous.
2. Because the survey questionnaires were sent electronically, it may be a less representative sample if not all participants had regular access to their e-mail.
3. Although the study generated 302 responses, the response rate was only 3%, potentially resulting in a less representative sample.
4. The data for this study was self-reported. There are two problems associated with self-reported data. First, when making correlations among variables, as several measures come from the same respondents, if any flaw or deficiency is detected in the source of response, it causes contamination in all measures (Podsakoff, & Organ, 1986). Second, "consistency motif" is a common problem as well (Podsakoff, & Organ, 1986, p. 534). With self-reported data, respondents have an urge to answer the questions based on their judgement consistent with the theories they practice in their daily lives known as lay theory (Podsakoff, & Organ, 1986).

Future Research

While this research examined the influence of the extremity component of information quality along with the impact of website quality on information adoption, future research should explore the impact of other components of information quality (i.e.

review depth, review timeliness, review accuracy, and review relevancy) along with the influence of website quality on information adoption for a more comprehensive analysis.

In addition, the mediating effect of trustworthiness of the website should be examined when studying the relationship between website quality and information adoption in the context of information websites. Sultan, Urban, Shankar, and Bart (2002) found that website quality impacts the perception of trust and in turn, trust serves as a determinant of customers' behavioral intention. Their finding regarding trust as a mediator between website quality and purchase intention is supported in the context of purchase websites, by Everard and Galletta (2006) who found that perceived online store quality exerts influence on the user's trust in the online store, and in turn, perceived trust in the online store will be the ultimate determinant of user's intention as to whether to purchase from the online store or not.

The mediating role of satisfaction of the consumers should be examined when studying the relationship between website quality and information adoption in the context of information websites. Bai et al. (2008) found the website satisfaction mediated the relationship between perceived website quality and purchase intention in the context of purchase websites. In addition, Jeong, Oh, and Gregoire (2003) found that information satisfaction plays a critical role in determining the users' purchase intentions and website quality perception. In contrast, Kim and Stoel (2004) stated that website quality had no relationship with website satisfaction.

Replication of this study with the inclusion of other demographic factors such as geographic location could improve generalizability of the findings.

Future research could also explore the opinion that review readers have towards the extremity of the reviews; in other words, it would be interesting to examine if different review readers would perceive the extremity of a review differently, and if so, what traits cause the perceived differences.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Frequencies	Percentage
Gender		
Female	226	25.1
Male	76	74.6
Age range		
18-25	178	58.7
>25-35	76	25.1
>35-45	32	10.6
>45-55	11	3.6
>55	5	1.7
Ethnic background		
Caucasian	252	83.2
African-American	10	3.3
Hispanic	4	1.3
Asian	23	7.6
Other: (please specify)	13	4.3
Average household income		
Less than 10,000	73	24.1
10,000 – 29,999	91	30.0
30,000-49,999	43	14.2
50,000-69,999	40	13.2
70,000-99,999	27	8.9
100,000 or more	28	9.2
Highest Education Level		
High School/GED	10	3.3
Some College	139	45.9
Completed College/University Diploma/Degree	90	29.7
Completed Postgraduate Degree	56	18.5
Other: (please specify)	7	2.3
Frequency of visit		
Rarely	78	25.7
Occasionally	131	43.2
Frequently	79	24.1
Very Often	14	4.6

Table2

Summary Descriptive Statistics of All Measured Constructs

Measurement	Reliability Coefficient	Mean	SD
Source Credibility	.797	15.36	4.037
Information Usefulness	.909	15.03	3.30
Website Quality	.931	68.51	13.39
Information Adoption	.800	9.47	2.53

Table 3

Summary of Spearman's Rho Correlation Analysis Testing Relationship between Review Extremeness on Information Usefulness

Construct	1	2
1.Extremity	.089	
2.Information Usefulness		

Note. $p < 0.001$

Table 4

Summary of Multiple Regression Model Testing Impact of Source Credibility on Information Usefulness

Dependent variable	Information usefulness			
R^2	0.361			
Model	Beta	Standard Error	t	Significance
Intercept	7.40	0.609	12.15	0.000
Experience	.421	0.075	5.58	0.000
Trustworthiness	.562	0.078	7.17	0.000

Table 5

Summary of Multiple Regression Model Testing the Impact of Website Quality on Information Adoption

Dependent variable	Information adoption			
R^2	0.318			
Model	Beta	Standard Error	T	Significance
Intercept	2.87	.655		0.000
Website quality of information	.397	0.50	.501	0.000
Website ease of use	.003	0.28	.006	0.930
Website design	-.007	0.48	-.007	0.917
Website security	.102	0.39	.102	0.93

Table 6

Summary of Linear Regression Model Testing the Impact of Information Usefulness on Information Adoption

Dependent variable	Information adoption			
R^2	0.285			
Model	Beta	Standard Error	t	Significance
Intercept	3.32	0.576	5.778	0.000
Information usefulness	0.40	0.037	10.93	0.000

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
KSU INSTUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM

APPENDIX A

Subject: IRB Level I, category 2 approval for Protocol application #15-143- please retain this email for your records

RE: Protocol #15-143 - entitled "Researching Consumers' Information Adoption Tendencies of Restaurants' User-Generated Content Utilizing a Modified Information Adoption Model"

We have assigned your application the following IRB number: **15-143**. Please reference this number when corresponding with our office regarding your application.

The Kent State University Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved your Application for Approval to Use Human Research Participants as Level I/Exempt from Annual review research. Your research project involves minimal risk to human subjects and meets the criteria for the following category of exemption under federal regulations:

- Exemption 2: Educational Tests, Surveys, Interviews, Public Behavior Observation

This application was approved on February 25, 2015.

****Submission of annual review reports is not required for Level 1/Exempt projects. We do NOT stamp Level I protocol consent documents.*

If any modifications are made in research design, methodology, or procedures that increase the risks to subjects or includes activities that do not fall within the approved exemption category, those modifications must be submitted to and approved by the IRB before implementation.

Please contact an IRB discipline specific reviewer or the Office of Research Compliance to discuss the changes and whether a new application must be submitted.
http://www.kent.edu/research/researchsafetyandcompliance/irb/index.cfm

Kent State University has a Federal Wide Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP); FWA Number 00001853.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us at Researchcomplaince@kent.edu or by phone at 330-672-2704 or 330.672.8058.

Tricia Sloan | Administrator |330.672.2181 | psloan1@kent.edu
Kevin McCreary | Assistant Director | 330.672.8058 | kmccrea1@kent.edu
Paulette Washko | Director |330.672.2704| pwashko@kent.edu

For links to obtain general information, access forms, and complete required training, visit our website at www.kent.edu/research.

APPENDIX B
RESEARCH STUDY SURVEY

Appendix B

To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statement? (Please circle your answer).

Part A

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Neither agree/Nor disagree Agree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

People who left comments are knowledgeable in evaluating quality of food and restaurants.

People who left comments are experts in evaluating quality of food and Restaurants.

People who left comments are trustworthy.

People who left comments are reliable.

Part B

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Neither agree/Nor disagree Agree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

The comments are valuable.

The comments are informative.

The comments are helpful.

The following link will direct you to the restaurant online review website called "Yelp". Please take a few minutes and navigate the website. Then, please answer the following questions pertaining to the quality of Yelp's website.

Part C

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Neither agree/Nor disagree Agree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

This site provides relevant information
This site provides accurate information
This site provides in-depth information about the product(s) or service(s) proposed

This site is easy to use
It is easy to search for information
This site is easy to navigate
The organization and layout of this site facilitate the search for information
The layout of this site is clear and simple

This site is colorful
This site is creative
This site has an attractive appearance

I am confident in the security on this site
I feel like my privacy is protected on this site
I trust the web site administrators will not misuse my personal information

Please consider the quality of the reviews you read, the source credibility of the reviews you read, and the features of the website you were directed to ALL TOGETHER when answering the following questions.

Part D

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Disagree Neither agree/Nor disagree Agree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

You closely followed the suggestions of the positive/ negative comments and went to the recommended restaurants/ not ever try the restaurants

The comments of the website motivate you to dine/not dine at the specified restaurants

Part E

Please answer the following question to the best of your ability.

Gender

Male □ Female □

What is your age range?

18-25 □ >25-35 □ >35-45 □ >45-55 □ >55 □

What is your ethnic background?

Caucasian □ African-American □ Hispanic □ Asian □ Pacific Islander □

Other: (please specify) ----------

What is your average household income?

Less than 10,000 □ 10,000 – 29,999 □ 30,000-49,999 □ 50,000-69,999 □

70,000-99,999 □ 100,000 or more □

Highest education level achieved:

High School/GED □ Some College □ Completed College/University Diploma/Degree □

Completed Postgraduate Degree □ Other: (please specify) ----------

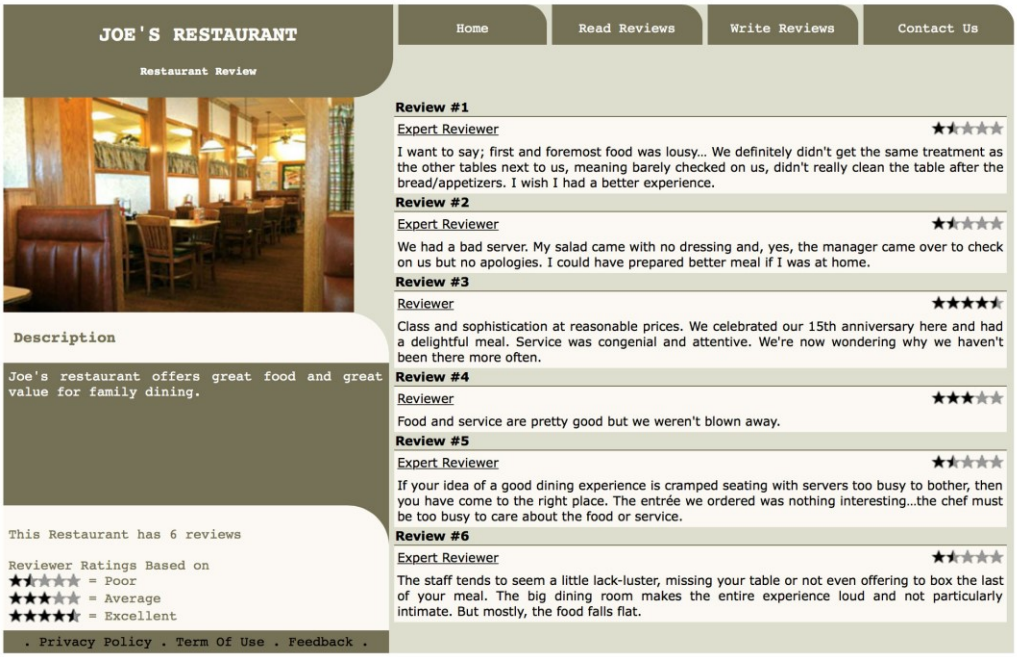
How frequently do you visit restaurant online review websites?

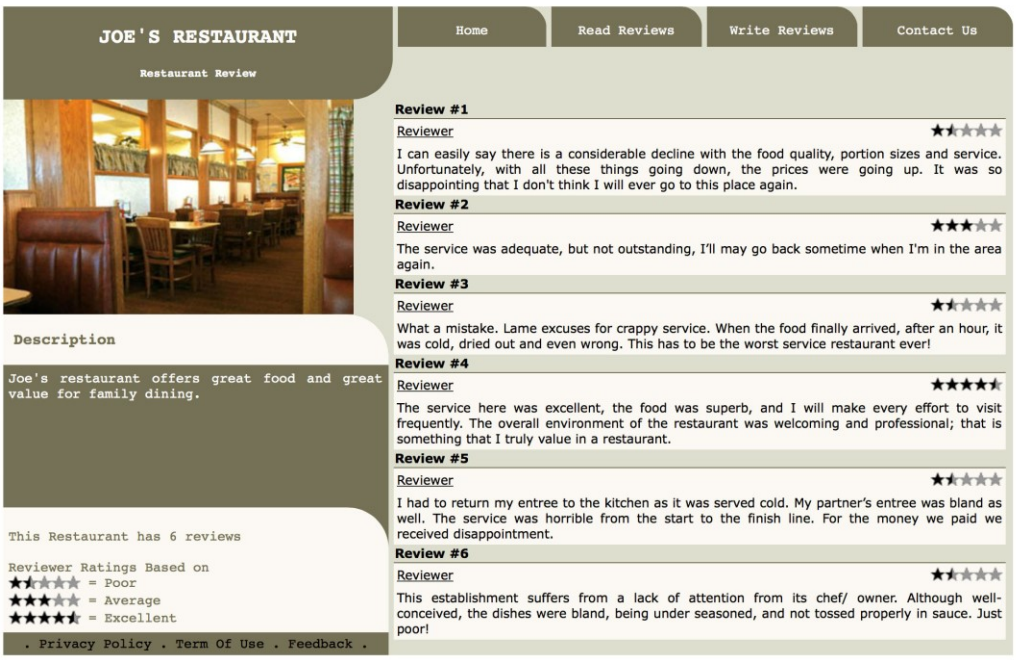
Rarely □ Occasionally □ Frequently □ Very Often □

APPENDIX C
SCENARIOS

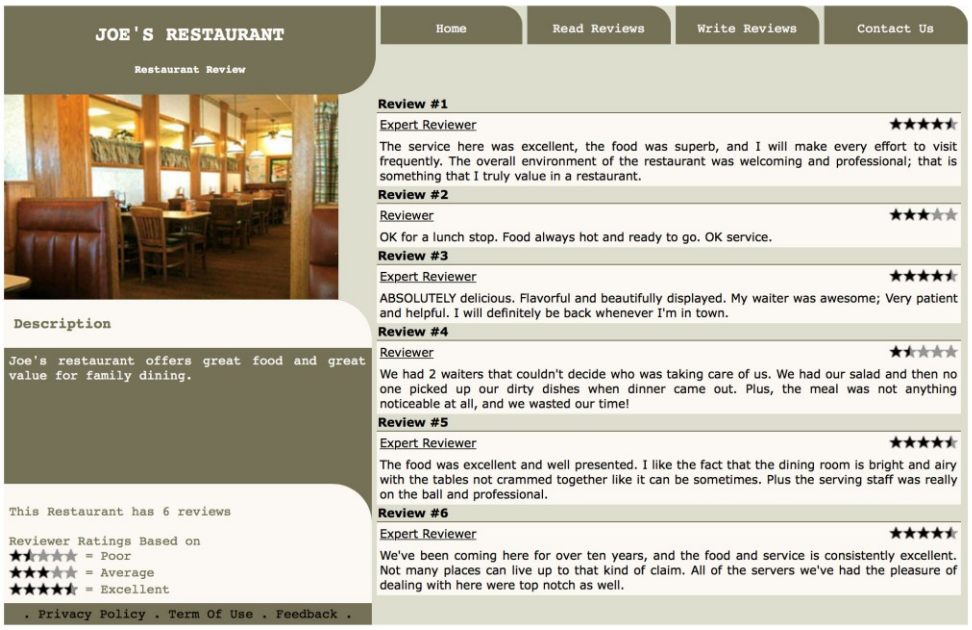
Appendix C

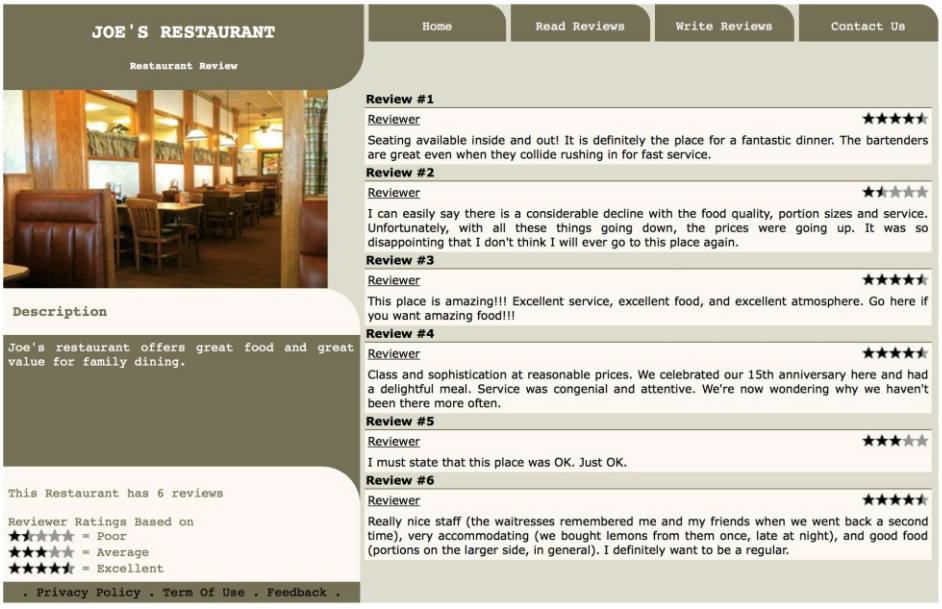
Extremely Negative



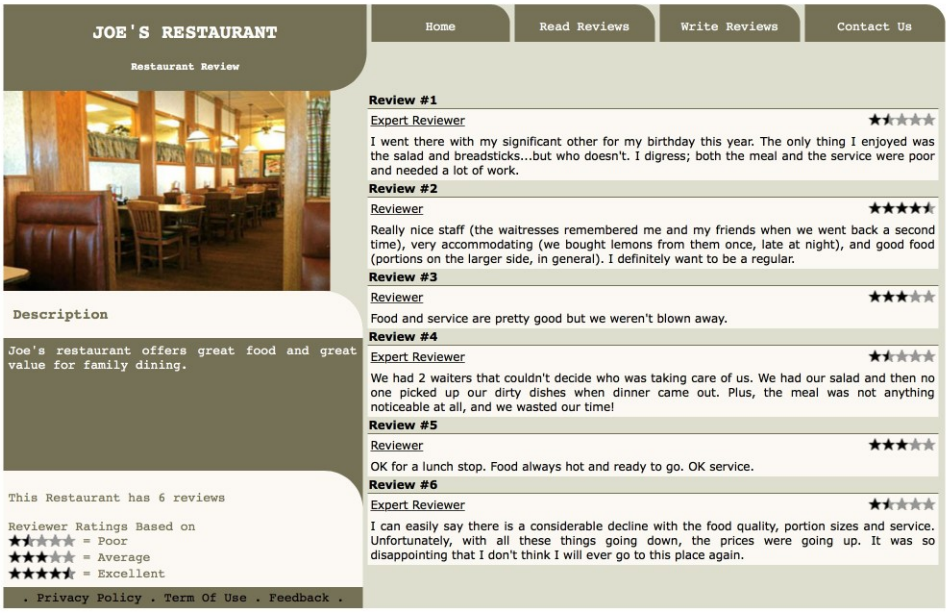


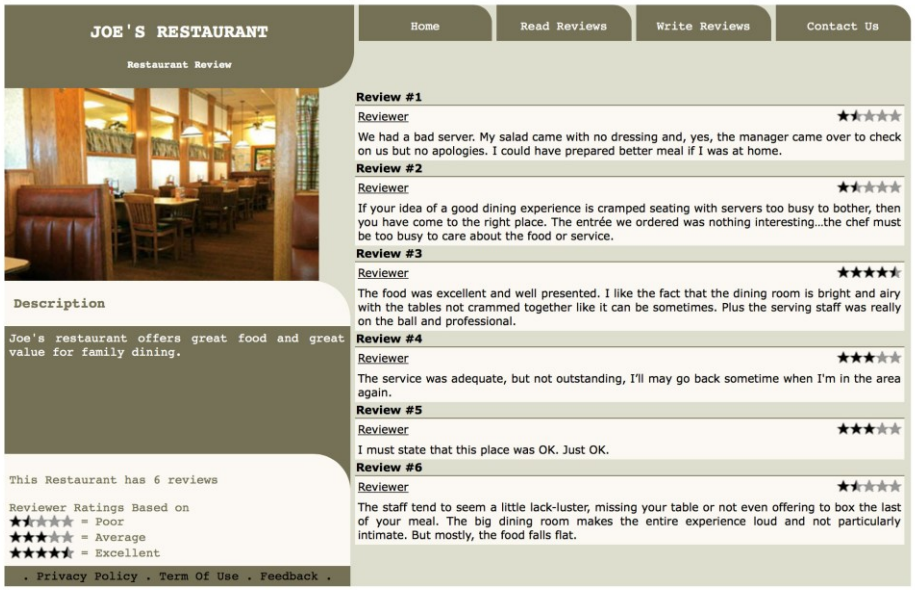
Extremely Positive



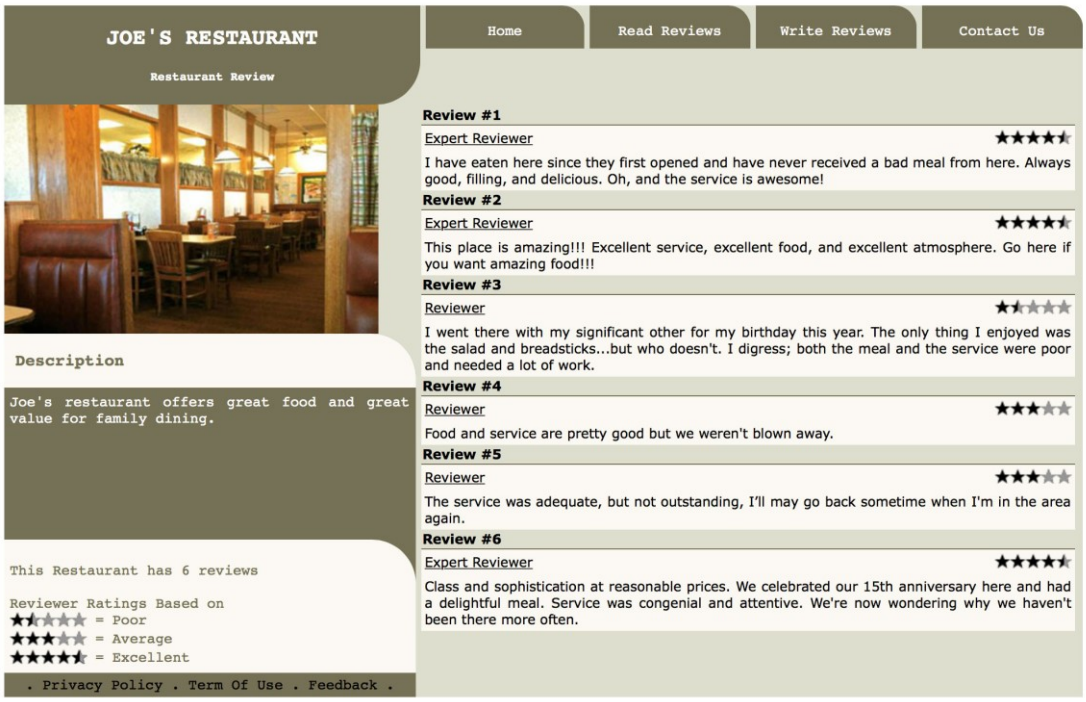


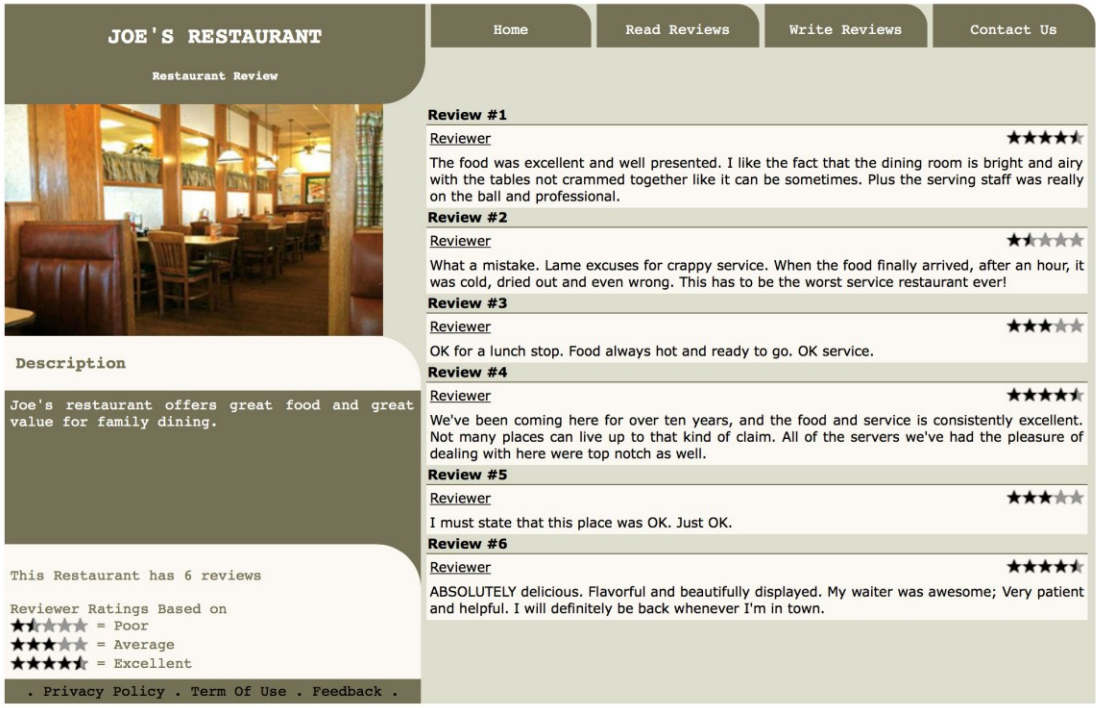
Mildly Negative





Mildly Positive





APPENDIX D
KSU CONSENT FORM

APPENDIX D

Dear Kent State University Students:

I am conducting research to better understand the consumers' tendency to visit a restaurant based on what they read on restaurant review websites. The data that you provide can help make your restaurant experience better because restaurant managers will be able to better understand the impact of online reviews.

If you consent to the survey, please click on this link:
Take the Survey

In appreciation for your participation, the first 250 participants will receive a FREE CUP OF COFFEE at Scribbles coffee shop in downtown Kent, Ohio. Please save and print the Completion Certificate on the last page of the survey and take it to the Scribbles coffee shop.

Please complete the survey by **March 20, 2015**. Completing the survey should take 5-10 minutes.

You must be at least **18 years old or over** to participate. Your participation in this study is voluntary and anonymous. **Your answers will not be reviewed by anyone but the researcher here at Kent State University, and individual responses will be kept completely confidential.**

If you want to know more about this research project, please call me at 330.968.5468, or my advisor, Dr. Swathi Ravichandran, at330.672.7314. This project has been approved by Kent State University. If you have questions about your rights as a participant or complaints about the research you may call the IRB at 330. 672. 2704.

Thank you for your time and assistance, it is much appreciated.

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You can copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
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