



## Internet Research

Intimate knowledge initiators: Bonding the suppliers and buyers in the online group-shopping environment

Wu-Chung Wu Edward C. S. Ku HsinJou Liao

### Article information:

To cite this document:

Wu-Chung Wu Edward C. S. Ku HsinJou Liao , (2015), "Intimate knowledge initiators", Internet Research, Vol. 25 Iss 1 pp. 67 - 84

Permanent link to this document:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IntR-12-2013-0270>

Downloaded on: 09 November 2016, At: 20:35 (PT)

References: this document contains references to 53 other documents.

To copy this document: [permissions@emeraldinsight.com](mailto:permissions@emeraldinsight.com)

The fulltext of this document has been downloaded 455 times since 2015\*

### Users who downloaded this article also downloaded:

(2015), "Combined effects of valence and attributes of e-WOM on consumer judgment for message and product: The moderating effect of brand community type", Internet Research, Vol. 25 Iss 1 pp. 2-29 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IntR-09-2013-0199>

(2015), "Consumer attitudes towards online shopping: The effects of trust, perceived benefits, and perceived web quality", Internet Research, Vol. 25 Iss 5 pp. 707-733 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IntR-05-2014-0146>

Access to this document was granted through an Emerald subscription provided by emerald-srm:563821 []

### For Authors

If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald for Authors service information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission guidelines are available for all. Please visit [www.emeraldinsight.com/authors](http://www.emeraldinsight.com/authors) for more information.

### About Emerald [www.emeraldinsight.com](http://www.emeraldinsight.com)

Emerald is a global publisher linking research and practice to the benefit of society. The company manages a portfolio of more than 290 journals and over 2,350 books and book series volumes, as well as providing an extensive range of online products and additional customer resources and services.

Emerald is both COUNTER 4 and TRANSFER compliant. The organization is a partner of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and also works with Portico and the LOCKSS initiative for digital archive preservation.

\*Related content and download information correct at time of download.

# Intimate knowledge initiators

## Bonding the suppliers and buyers in the online group-shopping environment

Intimate  
knowledge  
initiators

67

Wu-Chung Wu  
*Graduate Institute of Hospitality Management,  
National Kaohsiung University of Hospitality and Tourism,  
Kaohsiung City, Taiwan*

Edward C.S. Ku  
*Department of Travel Management,  
National Kaohsiung University of Hospitality and Tourism,  
Kaohsiung City, Taiwan, and*

HsinJou Liao  
*Graduate Institute of Hospitality Management,  
National Kaohsiung University of Hospitality and Tourism,  
Kaohsiung City, Taiwan*

Received 23 December 2013

Revised 4 March 2014

17 March 2014

Accepted 17 March 2014

### Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to investigate how marketing capability, dysfunctional conflict, and relationship value affect relational benefits through the relational proclivity between suppliers and initiators in a group-buying web site.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The initiators selected were those who conducted group buying more than ten times in the group-buying web site. In total, 9,000 invitation e-mails were sent to initiators, of which 389 were returned; the model and hypotheses were tested by using structural equation modeling.

**Findings** – In online group buying, initiators can know about a new product only through the web site; the marketing capability of suppliers and the relationship value of initiators are positively associated with the relational proclivity between suppliers and initiators. And, the results indicate that the dysfunctional conflict of initiators is not positively associated with the relational proclivity between suppliers and initiators. Finally, The relational proclivity between suppliers and initiators is positively associated with the relational benefit between initiators and buyers.

**Practical implications** – The supplier and the initiator can work together in brainstorming new products; moreover, initiators can assist suppliers by helping them identify buyers' demands and giving them relevant feedback.

**Social implications** – The suppliers' marketing capability is important for initiators because it can help increase the latter's ability to catch buyers' attention. In addition, the initiator and supplier together can think about product innovation and new product designs.

**Originality/value** – Initiators, as key persons in the group-buying process, serve as a bridge between suppliers and buyers and have a positive impact on group buying. The findings suggest that certain facets of initiators are helpful in explaining the expected product performance of buyers.

**Keywords** Consumer marketing, Buying behaviour, Community networks

**Paper type** Research paper



### 1. Introduction

The initiator is the key person in the consumptive process of group buying (Cheng and Huang, 2013; Hsu *et al.*, 2013; Ku, 2012). On the buyers' side, the initiators need to connect with their supplier to get the product that buyers want, ensure the product's

quality, and negotiate prices. On the suppliers' side, the initiators should help obtain a sufficient quantity of products and provide information about the buyers' real demand. Thus, initiators have a big responsibility because they serve as a bridge between suppliers and buyers in the group-shopping environment. Previous researches have discussed the characteristics of initiators (Chung, 2013), their trust (Weisberg *et al.*, 2011; Ku, 2012) and perceived risk (Kauffman *et al.*, 2010; Yen, 2010), and their bargaining power (Ku, 2012; Janssen and Sol, 2000). Because there is a lot of uncertainty in group buying, initiators need to have adequate knowledge of how to get the buyers' trust and reduce their risk. However, few researches talk about the relationship between suppliers and initiators and how this affects the relational benefit.

The first specific gap in the literature is that, although most studies talk about group buying (Huang, 2012), few researches explore the role of initiators in this process; this study will examine the role of initiators from the signaling perspective. Second, although initiators play an important role in the whole group-buying process, few studies mention how initiators connect with suppliers and buyers; this study will explore the role of the relational proclivity between suppliers and initiators. Third, although a few researches mention that initiators increase the buyers' trust (Ku, 2012; Lee *et al.*, 2011); few studies analyze how initiators cooperate with suppliers to increase buying intention. This study will examine how the relationship between suppliers and initiators affects the buyers' buying intention in the virtual environment.

Signaling refers to actions taken by a signaler to influence the views and behaviors of receivers. From the perspective of signaling, suppliers can increase the exposure rate of a product and then promote its popularity (Vijayarathy, 2002). Accordingly, the network externality, and there are the same benefits among people; for that reason, there are more and more people buy products online, invisibly buyers and merchandise will bring the value that will make buyers expect satisfaction of the product. Besides, when products promote the popularity, there will have lots of people pay attention on them and have supervisory mechanism. Hence, suppliers should pay more attention to their marketing capability to attract buyers' interest.

From the signaling perspective, initiators stand for a signal in the group-buying process, and they send out different signal strengths. The suppliers' willingness to expose product information to initiators will be based on trust (Hsiao *et al.*, 2012); meanwhile, buyers will catch the signal of initiators and make the buying decision. Therefore, initiators should send out a stronger signal, for example, supplier or product information, number of buyers, etc. to compete with other initiators. Beyond dysfunctional conflicts, some initiators may overstate the needs and some information to try to influence buyers.

Initiators can launch group buying more easily, but they can also have a negative influence. Because there is a certain amount of risk in group buying, some initiators may cover a fact to attract buyers into making a purchase so as to reduce risk. On the other hand, this can increase the initiators' bargaining power with suppliers, which may enable them to obtain bulk discounts and freebies. Consequently, buyers can get extra benefits or lower prices on their product purchase, which can in turn improve the consumptive satisfaction.

Moreover, because buyers cannot trade face-to-face in the virtual environment, they will evaluate the service quality of initiators based on the latter's trading record and accomplishments in group buying (Francisco *et al.*, 2010); thus, the relationship value is very significant for suppliers and initiators. In addition, suppliers will consider the rating of initiators, which can affect the cooperation between suppliers and initiators.

From the signaling theory, rating and recommendation are very important signals for initiators because suppliers will consider cooperation with initiators according to the signals (Lu and Su, 2009). To transfer information between suppliers and buyers, initiators should establish a good communication channel with suppliers. Initiators should maintain a relationship with suppliers so that the latter can keep up with buyers' demands and new buying trends. In turn, initiators can maintain a stable quality of products and thus earn the buyers' trust and improve their purchase intention. Therefore, having a good relationship with initiators can help suppliers in product innovation because the initiators are the closest to buyers.

In the group-buying process, buyers will consider the volume of trade of initiator doing the signaling based on the reputation of the products, whereas suppliers will evaluate the efficiency of the cooperation based on the rating (Pan *et al.*, 2013). Buyers can also look at the purchase history and the feedback of other buyers. Both the initiators and buyers care about the group-buying volume; thus, they should promote efficiency together. From the signaling perspective, the relationship of cooperation can be considered as a significant signal from suppliers and initiators (Mario *et al.*, 2009). The partnership between suppliers and initiators also offer some advantages, for example, in the form of rebates or bonuses. This can increase the buyers' faith in the consumptive process because it can reduce the uncertainty and risk involved. In addition, a good relationship can also make the cooperation more effective. Initiators can easily launch group buying, and group-buying web sites provide scores that inform buyers as to whether the initiator is good or not. A high-score results in a higher buying volume and increases buyers' willingness to support group buying. Accordingly, suppliers and initiators should maintain their partnership to make the cooperation effective.

In the online group-shopping environment, suppliers and initiators should have a good relationship and understand each other. This will enable the initiator to convey the correct information to buyers, who in turn act according to the information they receive. The relationship between suppliers and initiators affect buyers' purchase intentions (Hwang *et al.*, 2011). If the initiators have a good partnership with the suppliers, buyers will be encouraged to buy the product because they believe the product is of good quality. The aim of this study is to examine the relational benefits from initiators perspective in the online group-shopping relationship; suppliers will do some marketing to increase the exposure the volumes of trade that may make buyers feel they can purchase the product which is greater value than it worth. To sum up, initiators and buyers expect satisfaction from the merchandise.

The goal of this study was to investigate how marketing capability, dysfunctional conflict, and relationship value affect relational benefits through the relational proclivity between suppliers and initiators in a group-buying web site, for example, Ihergo ([www.ihergo.com.tw/](http://www.ihergo.com.tw/)) and AHHA ([www.ahha.com.tw/index.asp](http://www.ahha.com.tw/index.asp)). In this study, a relational benefits model was formulated from the perspective of signaling, and respondent samples from the Ihergo and AHHA web sites were collected through a mailed questionnaire survey to those who agreed to participate. The model and hypotheses were tested by using structural equation modeling. This report first describes the motivation for the study. Section 2 then describes the theoretical background, followed by a review of previous researches in Section 3. The research design is presented in Section 4. Finally, the research findings and conclusions are reported in Section 5.

## 2. Theoretical background and literature review

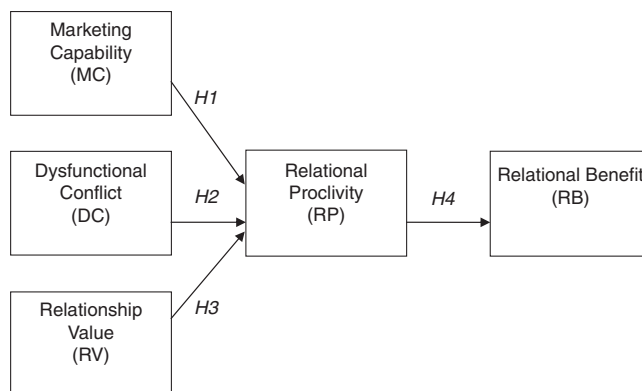
From the perspective of signaling, and based on the information that the initiator delivers in online group buying, a research model of the advantages of the cooperation between initiators and suppliers in an online shopping environment was developed in this study, as shown in Figure 1. Based on signaling theory, a particular act will pass on other importation information, and a sign can be spread in many ways through different activities. In this study, the initiator plays the role of issuing orders. The initiator can provide supplier information to buyers and also serve as a communication channel between suppliers and buyers. Therefore, in the whole group-buying process, the relationship between the initiator and supplier is very important.

### 2.1 Signaling theory

Signaling theory is commonly used to explain how an applicant's attraction to a recruiting organization may, in part, be influenced by information, or signals, about the organization's characteristics as revealed during recruitment activities (Mavlanova *et al.*, 2012). The core of signaling theory consists of the analysis of various types of signals and the situations in which they are used. Signals convey information about a seller's characteristics, and buyers examine these signals to evaluate the credibility and validity of a seller.

Signaling theory explains environments with incomplete information and analyzes the relationship between signals and qualities (Xu *et al.*, 2010), showing reliability signals to customers (Hsiao *et al.*, 2012). Applying signaling theory to explaining the relationship among suppliers, initiators, and buyers in online shopping, signaling refers to the display of certain web site features that buyers will consider to catch the group depending on the information that initiator give. In the group-buying environment, initiators provide the signals that buyers consider in purchasing products; besides, suppliers are also thoughtful to cooperate for long term depend on the initiators' credit that buyers gave. Thus, initiators may overstate some information to try to influence buyers.

From the perspective of suppliers, a marketing signal is a marketing activity that provides information beyond the activity itself and reveals insights into the unobservable messages (Law and Hsu, 2006), and customers are advised that market signaling can be illustrated as conspiring activities. Initiators provide signals to suppliers and buyers, so the marketing of suppliers should attract the initiators' eyes



**Figure 1.**  
Research model

(Sigala, 2001). Initiators are both buyers in group buying and endorsers of the product; that is to say, suppliers should do some positive marketing activities and help initiators understand the feature of their products so that the latter can determine how to introduce the product and convince buyers to make a purchase.

Buyers should believe that high-quality sellers can afford a signaling mechanism, which is too costly for low-quality sellers to use, and that a seller will incur a cost in the form of forfeited wealth or reputation in case the signal is false (Fang *et al.*, 2011). In the virtual environment, the relationship between suppliers and initiators is one important index that buyers pay attention to. Suppliers and initiators who attach importance to their partnership can enjoy some advantages (Ku *et al.*, 2013). If suppliers are willing to engage in long-term cooperation and listen to the initiators' advice, they can come up with new product designs that meet the consumers' requirements.

Initiators control the information that their suppliers provide and thus are able to exaggerate or overstate quality (Gan *et al.*, 2007). The partnership between suppliers and initiators is itself a signal in online group buying that can make the cooperation more efficient. Besides, initiators can negotiate more easily with suppliers because they have a number of followers. In addition, the partnership between suppliers and initiators can increase trust among buyers. In contrast, e-stores are characterized by a time lag between product selection and the purchase and product delivery. There is also a distance gap that prevents buyers from directly examining the products; thus, the buyer has incomplete information about the product until it is delivered.

## 2.2 Marketing capability

Marketing capability is defined as the capability of a firm to utilize its knowledge, technology, and resources to satisfy the needs of the market or its customers (Day, 1994). Marketing capability refers to a firm's ability to use its resources in competitively advantageous ways (Song *et al.*, 1996). The success of a firm comes from the value it creates for its target customers by developing appropriate products and services. Thus, marketing capability is critical for new product development because information about customer needs and competitors need to be considered in the process of developing new products.

Marketing capability can help improve the performance of companies producing hard goods and services and might significantly influence a firm's product and service competitiveness (Day, 1994; O'Driscoll *et al.*, 2000). Previous research has provided a greater understanding of the role of relationship building in the buying decision through the marketing capability of firms (Rui *et al.*, 2002). The basis of company exchanges have gone from transactional to relational capital, built on trust and commitment; marketing has typically been responsible for implementing these relationships. Therefore, the capabilities of a firm are firmly embedded in the emerging paradigm of relationship marketing and contribute directly to developing collaboration for a network relationship.

In the online group-buying environment, suppliers develop their marketing capabilities by bridging initiators' skills and knowledge along with the unique skill. Suppliers that invest more resources into their interaction with initiators can enhance their market-sensing abilities, which, once established, are very difficult for competing firms to imitate. Thus, marketing capability is considered to be an important resource in enhancing the competitive advantage of suppliers.

### 2.3 Relational proclivity

Relational proclivity refers to the strength of the general tendency of a firm to seek out, engage in, and make close partner-style interorganizational relationships, as opposed to conducting interorganizational interaction at arm's length (Johnson and Sohi, 2001). In the organizational context, relational proclivity is the advantage that accrues through interorganizational relationships and plays a vital role in relationship building among companies (Cheng and Sheu, 2012). Relational proclivity exists independent of any specific partner or any prior information specific to any potential partner. From an organizational point of view, relational proclivity is taken as the benefits and advantages it brings about in interorganizational relationships.

A high level of relational proclivity enables tasks to be shared effectively and consensus to be reached in shared decision making, whereas greater trust in partners enables the building of stronger interorganizational relationships (Johnson and Sohi, 2001; Larson, 1992). Customer relational proclivity plays a vital role when the customer is building up a relationship with a company (Wulf *et al.*, 2001); it is a relatively stable and conscious tendency of the relationship a customer is establishing with retailers of a particular product category. These relationally predisposed partners will be more inclined to commit managerial resources to interorganizational relationships in terms of time and effort. With relational proclivity, interorganizational relationships that begin with a central or primary exchange may often develop into diverse aspects, with an array of advantages and benefits.

Previous research has suggested that a firm's competency in marketing intelligence and its tendency to engage in partner-style relationships have both direct and interactive effects on new product development capability. This capability has been further shown to be positively related to organizational performance, and this relationship is moderated by technological uncertainty (Cheng, 2011; Trainor *et al.*, 2013). Relational proclivity plays a vital role when a company is building a relationship with other companies. From an organizational point of view, relational proclivity refers to benefits and advantages that accrue while companies are in an interorganizational relationship.

Similar to online shopping, the value of a product in group buying is merely shown on web sites (Law and Hsu, 2006; Mortensen and Arlbjörn, 2012). Therefore, how to increase the value of the product depends on the suppliers' marketing capability. To attract buyers' eyes, suppliers first need to identify the demand and then develop the corresponding product and service. Nowadays, people often use the internet to search for the product they want. Suppliers can promote their products by means of information technology; for example, Facebook, blogs, Twitter, etc. (Shen and Chiou, 2009; Wu *et al.*, 2013). In addition, suppliers can discuss with the initiators which merchandise buyers really need; because the initiator is closest to the buyers, the supplier, and initiator can work together in brainstorming new products. On the other hand, it can offer the advantage in cooperation. The following hypothesis is thus proposed:

- H1. The marketing capability of suppliers is positively associated with the relational proclivity between suppliers and initiators.

### 2.4 Dysfunctional conflict

Conflict in interorganizational relationships refers to the disagreements that occur in the cooperative relationship or the incompatibility of activities, shared resources, and

goals between partners (Campbell *et al.*, 2009). Dysfunctional conflict constitutes unhealthy behaviors, such as distorting information to harm other decision makers, interacting with each other with hostility and distrust, or forming barriers during the process of decision making (Ruekert and Walker, 1987). In the conventional sense, dysfunctional conflict is unhealthy and associated with dysfunctional behaviors, dissatisfaction, and poor individual and/or group performance.

Dysfunctional conflict reduces performance and member satisfaction because it produces tension and antagonism, distracting people from their task performance (Cheng, 2011; Massey and Dawes, 2007). It has an opportunistic side because many members place an emphasis on needs when influencing others (Kwun and Oh, 2007) and on information gatekeeping. Dysfunctional conflict and the typically unhealthy behaviors that precede and proceed from it lower cooperation and decrease the quality of strategy planning and implementation, which requires a coordinated effort to be successful. In addition, relational conflict, especially dysfunctional conflict, has negative implications on team and organizational functioning because the practices of assessing new information (Pelled, 1996) and processing complex information (Panteli and Sockalingam, 2005) are inhibited. Dysfunctional conflict negatively affects effective decision making and the processes that inform it; that is, it is an impediment to effective interorganizational information sharing.

In the group-buying environment, buyers can choose the initiator that they want to follow based on their area of residence and preferred merchandise. The credence of the initiator is very important because it affects the launch of group buying. Buyers will choose the initiator with a higher evaluation because this implies that group buying will be easier to initiate. Meanwhile, suppliers will consider whether or not to cooperate with the initiator. If the initiator succeeds in having the group confirmed, the supplier will be more willing to engage in long-term cooperation or to give extra benefits, such as trying a new product or giving additional discounts. Some initiators may overstate their needs or some other information to try to influence buyers so as to initiate group buying more easily and get extra benefits from suppliers. This leads to the following hypothesis:

- H2.* The dysfunctional conflict of initiators is negatively associated with the relational proclivity between suppliers and initiators.

### *2.5 Relationship value*

Relationship value has been defined as a trade-off between the multiple benefits and sacrifices of a supplier's offering, as perceived by key decision makers in the customer's organization and taking into consideration the available alternative suppliers' offerings in a specific use situation (Chang, 2009; Ulaga and Eggert, 2006). Relationship value is an antecedent to relationship quality and behavioral outcomes in the network of relationship marketing (Daosheng, 2013; Ulaga and Eggert, 2006). It displays a stronger impact on satisfaction than on commitment and trust (Kau and Loh, 2006). Therefore, the evaluation of relationship value goes beyond the short-term performance to include a longer run and less intangible outcomes of the relationship.

Empirical research has evidenced that the value of a relationship can originate in numerous elements, such as product quality, delivery performance, service support, personal interaction, time to market, supplier know-how, direct acquisition, and operation costs (Chang, 2009). The value reflects not only the hardware and software components exchanged but also the employees and their response capacity, flexibility,



reliability, and competencies. Moreover, circumstances external to the relationships (e.g. the level of interconnectedness among network entities, the number of interfirm ties, the authority in the contact portfolio, and the interaction among relational drivers) are important factors of relationship value as well.

The relationship value in group buying is built between suppliers and initiators because it is the foundation of the whole group-buying process (Ku *et al.*, 2013); enhancing cooperation between the supplier and the initiator depends on past experiences, trust, and an unspoken consensus. If the initiator wants to engage in long-term cooperation, it should maintain a relationship with the supplier. The initiator can give some advice to the supplier or find out the drawbacks of the product. Then, the initiator and supplier together can think about product innovation and design a new product. This illustrates the importance of their relationship. Once the initiator has gained the supplier's trust, it will be easier to initiate group buying and there will be more flexibility in product development. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

- H3.* The relationship value of initiators is positively associated with the relational proclivity between suppliers and initiators.

### *2.6 Relational benefit*

Relational benefit is defined as the benefits that a customer receives beyond the core service (Xu *et al.*, 2010). Relational benefit is a crucial factor in determining the relationship commitment (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Ulaga and Eggert, 2006). As such, it dominates when deciding on which supplier to name first among a set of available suppliers. Relational benefit refers to the benefits that customers receive either from the core product or from the relationship itself as a result of having cultivated a mutual long-term relationship.

A company will take relational benefits into consideration when deciding on whether or not to link with other companies (Ulaga and Eggert, 2006). Thus, a relationship will be established only if the company stands to benefit from it. In a supply chain, organizations tend to band together if they believe their cooperation will bring about benefits that will add value to their interorganizational relationships. In other words, relational benefits indeed affect the customers' willingness to build and maintain a long and positive relationship with a company. Relational proclivity is thus a vital factor in determining the commitment of customers or partners to their relationship with the company.

Based on the relational proclivity, suppliers and initiators can have friendly cooperation and reduce buyers' catch other group buying (Xu *et al.*, 2010). In whole group-buying process, initiators play the role of endorsers. Buyers receive information from initiators. Thus, if there is a good relationship between initiators and suppliers, the whole group-buying process will be more successful. Moreover, because of the credence of the seller, a greater number of people will be willing to follow the group in the belief that the quality of the product is good and its value is more than its worth. Hence, buyer can trust initiators for this reason no matter buyers or initiators will expect and satisfy the product performance. It is therefore hypothesized that:

- H4.* The relational proclivity between suppliers and initiators is positively associated with the relational benefit between initiators and buyers.

### 3. Research methodology

#### 3.1 Data collection and sample characteristics

The goal of this study was to investigate how initiators affect online buying intentions in an online buying web site in Taiwan. Empirical data were collected by conducting a field survey among the initiators of the online group-shopping web site. A survey program was developed to handle the data collection process using Google Forms (<http://spreadsheets.google.com/newform>). The e-mail sent to initiators stated the purpose of the study and provided a hyperlink to the survey form.

Ihergo and AHHA are the two well-known online group-buying web sites (Market Intelligence Center, 2012), they are provided an aggregate purchase ways to help members gather discount among shopping environment, from the role of intimates, and members can buy the valuable goods easily. The initiators selected were those who conducted group buying more than ten times in the group-buying web site. First, we collected the e-mail addresses of initiators that appeared in the web site. Then, we sent an e-mail to those initiators to invite them to join our survey; the questionnaire was hyperlinked to the invitation message in the e-mail. In total, 9,000 invitation e-mails were sent to initiators found on the Ihergo and AHHA web sites, of which 389 were returned (return rate of 4.3 percent). The characteristics of the sample (15.2 percent male and 84.8 percent female) are shown in Table I.

#### 3.2 Measures

We first conducted a literature review on related topics to examine the external validity of our research model. We then developed the questionnaire items based on the literature. The measures used to operationalize the constructs in the research model were mainly adopted from related studies conducted in the past, with minor wording changes tailored to the interviewees. This resulted in the identification of 13 potential research items. The scales, along with the related literature, are summarized in Table II. The different opinions are indicated as follows: 1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree to some extent; 3, uncertain; 4, agree to some extent; and 5, strongly agree. The constructs of the study were measured with a multi-item scale, as indicated in Table V.

To measure marketing capability, four items were adopted from the study by O'Cass and Ngo (2012). The dysfunctional conflict scales were based on the study by Cheng and Sheu (2012), and three items of the relationship value construct were adopted and modified from the study by Ngo and O'Cass. To measure relational proclivity, two items were taken from the study by Johnson and Sohi (2001). Finally, to measure relational benefit, two items were adopted from the study by Morgan and Hunt (1994).

### 4. Results

Internal consistency reliability refers to the accuracy or precision of a measuring instrument; it has to do with the extent of unidimensionality, that is, that the detailed items (questions) measure the same thing. In this study, the internal consistency reliability was assessed by calculating Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values. The internal consistency of the construct was 0.868, which is above the acceptable threshold.

Construct validity is established by relating a measuring instrument to a general theoretical framework to investigate whether the instrument is tied to the concepts and theoretical assumption being used. This can be analyzed by correlation with the detailed items and scale. However, a more powerful method for analyzing the construct

INTR  
25,1**76**

Samples	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	59	15.2
Female	330	84.8
<i>Age (years)</i>		
< 20	23	5.9
21-30	91	23.4
31-40	178	45.8
41-50	89	22.9
> 51	8	2.1
<i>Profession</i>		
Government employee	56	14.4
Service industry	91	23.4
Self-employment	23	5.9
Student	56	14.4
Housewife	88	22.6
Job seeking	18	4.6
Office worker	23	5.9
Others	34	8.7
<i>Education</i>		
Senior high school	37	9.5
University/college	288	74.0
Graduate school	64	16.5
<i>The seniority of participating in group buying (year)</i>		
< half	36	9.3
Half-1	17	4.4
1-2	21	5.4
2-3	65	16.7
> 3	250	64.3
<i>Minimum people of establishing group tour (people)</i>		
1	86	22.1
3	180	27.8
5	121	31.1
> 10	74	19.0
<i>Residence</i>		
Taipei	78	20.1
New Taipei	77	19.8
Yilan	23	5.9
Hsinchu	13	3.3
Taoyuan	22	5.7
Taichung	58	14.9
Changhua	2	0.5
Chiayi	10	2.6
Yunlin	5	1.3
Tainan	26	6.7
Kaohsiung	72	18.5
Pingtung	3	0.8

**Table I.**

Sample description

**Note:** *N* = 389

validity is factor analysis. The convergent and discriminant validity of the remaining items and scales were tested with confirmatory factory analysis by using the LISREL 8.50 software. The range of factor loadings was from 0.50 to 0.73. Table III shows the results of factor analysis.

Constructs	Items	Reference
<i>Marketing capability</i>	(MC)	
MC1	Suppliers' incorporation of my needs into marketing of products and services has been better than competitors	O'Cass and Ngo (2012)
MC2	Suppliers' distribution systems have been better than competitors	
MC3	Suppliers' marketing planning skills have been better than competitors	
MC4	Suppliers' implementation of marketing activities has been better than competitors	
<i>Dysfunctional conflict</i>	(DC)	
DC1	I will overstate my needs to try to influence my buyers	Menon <i>et al.</i>
DC2	I will overstate some information or facts to try to influence my buyers	
<i>Relationship value</i>	(RV)	
RV1	I ensure that suppliers have easy access to the business at any time	Ngo and O'Cass
RV2	I have continuing relationships with suppliers	
RV3	I maintain long-term relationships with suppliers	
<i>Relational proclivity</i>	(RP)	
RP1	Closer partner-type relationships with suppliers offer a major advantage in doing business	Johnson and Sohi (2001)
RP2	Teaming up and working closely with suppliers allow one to be more effective	
<i>Relational benefit</i>	(RB)	
RB1	On average, the expected product performance of buyers and I is good	Morgan and Hunt (1994)
RB2	On average, the expected satisfaction of buyers and I is good	

**Table II.**  
Scale development

Constructs variables	MC	DC	RV	RP	RB
Suppliers' incorporation of my needs into marketing of products and services has been	0.76				
Suppliers' distribution systems have been	0.76				
Suppliers' marketing planning skills have been	0.85				
Suppliers' implementation of marketing activities has been	0.90				
I will overstate my needs to try to influence my buyers		0.58			
I will overstate some information or facts to try to influence my buyers		0.96			
I ensure that suppliers have easy access to the business at any time			0.45		
I have continuing relationships with suppliers			0.97		
I maintain long-term relationships with suppliers			0.59		
Closer partner-type relationships with suppliers offer a major advantage in doing business				0.84	
Teaming up and working closely with suppliers allow one to be more effective				0.90	
On average, the expected product performance of buyers and I is good					0.94
On average, the expected satisfaction of buyers and I is good					0.91

**Table III.**  
Confirmatory factor  
analysis

We estimated and re-specified the measurement model before incorporating the structural restrictions. An AVE estimate of 0.50 or higher indicates acceptable validity for a construct's measure. As shown in Table IV, all AVE estimates are well above the cutoff value, thus suggesting that all measurement scales have convergent validity. To assess the discriminant validity among the constructs, the square root of AVE was calculated for each construct, and the resulting value was compared with inter-construct correlations for each pair of constructs. The results show that the square root of all AVE estimates for each construct is greater than the inter-construct correlations; thus, the discriminant validity is supported.

We used the LISREL 8.50 software for this analysis. Structural equation modeling was done to test the hypothesized model presented in Figure 1. The overall goodness-of-fit was assessed in terms of the following eight common model fit measures: GFI, 0.91; AGFI, 0.82; RMR, 0.046; RMSEA, 0.093; NFI, 0.92; CFI, 0.94, PNFI, 0.53; and PGFI, 0.45. Thus, overall, the data indicate a favorable fit for our hypothesized model. The direct model shows an acceptable fit except for  $\chi^2$  and CFI, but the full model seemed superior to the direct model in explaining relational benefit between initiators and buyers. As presented in Table V, the results of this hypothesized full virtual community participation model indicate a favorable fit for the model.

The significance and relative strength of individual links specified in the research model were also evaluated. The results provide meaningful support for our research hypotheses, all four of which are fully supported (Figure 2).

As our analysis results show, the marketing capability of suppliers is positively associated with the relational proclivity between suppliers and initiators. In online group buying, initiators can know about a new product only through the web site; thus, the suppliers' marketing capability is important for initiators because it can enhance the advantages of cooperation.

	Mean	SD	MC	DC	RV	RP	RB	AVE
MC	4.02	0.69	<i>0.81</i>					0.66
DC	1.91	1.02	0.18	<i>0.71</i>				0.51
RV	3.77	0.75	0.40	0.42	<i>0.79</i>			0.62
RP	4.05	0.77	0.51	0.13	0.38	<i>0.83</i>		0.69
RB	3.87	0.75	0.16	-0.09	0.12	0.43	<i>0.93</i>	0.86

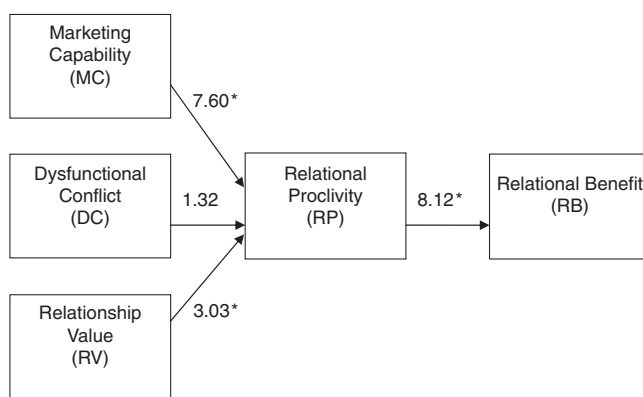
**Table IV.** Measurement model estimation

**Notes:** MC, marketing capability; DC, dysfunctional conflict; RV, relationship value; RP, relational proclivity; RB, relational benefit. The main diagonal shows the square root of the AVE (averaged variance extracted). Significant at  $p < 0.05$  level is shown in italics

**Table V.** Hypothesis and results

Hypothesis	<i>t</i> -value	Standard coefficient	Results
<i>H1.</i> Marketing capability > relational proclivity	7.60*	0.84	Supported
<i>H2.</i> Dysfunctional conflict > relational proclivity	1.32	0.05	Not supported
<i>H3.</i> Relationship value > relational proclivity	3.03*	0.19	Supported
<i>H4.</i> Relational proclivity > relational benefit	8.12*	0.93	Supported

**Note:** \* $p < 0.05$



Note: \* $p < 0.05$

**Figure 2.**  
Hypothesis and  
testing

With regard to  $H2$ , our results indicate that the dysfunctional conflict of initiators is not positively associated with the relational proclivity between suppliers and initiators. Although there is tough competition among initiators, dysfunctional conflict can give some initiators more advantage over others. Since the trust, most of initiators will tell the trust to buyers to make them do the decision.

Our analysis results support  $H3$ ; that is, the relationship value of initiators is positively associated with the relational proclivity between suppliers and initiators. Although online shopping takes place in a virtual environment, the relationship between suppliers and initiators remains of great importance because of its potential to bring about considerable benefits for both parties involved.

$H4$  is also supported: the relational proclivity between suppliers and initiators is positively associated with the relational benefit between initiators and buyers. A good partnership between suppliers and initiators greatly affects the relational benefit because initiators can bring about more benefits to buyers and increase the possibility of a successful launch. This will in turn strengthen the partnership of suppliers with initiators.

## 5. Conclusions and implications

In the virtual online shopping environment, the initiators become more important as a criterion for attracting and retaining buyers; thus, many firms are increasingly focussing on building a relationship with initiators to increase their performance. This study focussed on the signaling of initiators in group buying and discussed the partnership between suppliers and initiators as another important factor for consideration.

We utilized a reliable multidimensional measure of factors that influence the purchase satisfaction of buyers that is both intuitively appealing and reliable. The results of the analysis of the measurement model indicated that the proposed metrics have an acceptable degree of validity and reliability. Overall, the results of the study provided reliable instruments for operationalizing the key effect constructs in the analysis of the partnership between suppliers and initiators.

### 5.1 Implication for research

This study used a reliable multidimensional measure of factors that influence the relational benefit of initiators and buyers. From a theoretical perspective, we found that

the suppliers' marketing capability, dysfunctional conflict, and relationship value affect the relational proclivity and, consequently, influence the relational benefit of initiators and buyers.

Initiators, as key persons in the group-buying process, serve as a bridge between suppliers and buyers and have a positive impact on group buying. Our findings suggest that certain facets of initiators are helpful in explaining the expected product performance of buyers. The results imply that the initiator is a signal for buyers. The use of structural equation modeling to test the theoretical model could lead to a greater understanding of the nature and determinants of relational benefit.

### *5.2 Implications for practice*

According to the research findings, this study proposes some managerial implications for the collaboration between suppliers and initiators, as well as the strategies that can be adopted.

First, the suppliers' marketing capability is important for initiators because it can help increase the latter's ability to catch buyers' attention. The initiator is not only the communication channel between suppliers and buyers but also the consumer of suppliers. Therefore, the initiator knows the products that buyers need and can collaborate with suppliers toward creating a new product or enhancing an existing one. The findings of this study provide interesting insights for initiators interested in the group-buying business. That marketing capability is positively associated with relational proclivity is supported by the results of this study. From the marketing of suppliers, initiators, and buyers can better recognize the features of a product, thus making the cooperation more efficient. A high level of relational proclivity enables tasks to be shared effectively and consensus to be reached in shared decision making, whereas greater trust in partners enables the building of stronger interorganizational relationships (Larson, 1992). That is, increasing the value of the product depends on the suppliers' marketing capability. To attract buyers' attention, suppliers first need to identify the demand and then come up with the appropriate product and service.

In practice, the supplier and the initiator can work together in brainstorming new products. On the other hand, it can offer the advantage in cooperation. Initiators play the role of assisting suppliers toward enhancing the products' attraction in the online shopping environment. For example, if a supplier is promoting a new type of cake that is unique and attractive to children, the initiator can help launch this new product. The study results indicate that if a food product will catch customers' attention, suppliers can let the initiators try the food first; once the initiators have tasted the product, they may be more willing to promote the cake positively.

Second, with regard to cooperation, relationship is the first thing that we need to consider. The value of the relationship depends on how both sides seek to maintain it. The findings of the study suggest that relationship value is positively associated with relational proclivity; that is, the value reflects not only the hardware and software components exchanged but also the employees and their response capacity, flexibility, reliability, and competencies. That is, the relationship value is very important in group buying. For example, if a buyer has a problem with a product, the initiator can connect with the supplier to provide a guarantee to the buyer and thus increase the purchase intention. The initiator has a strong impact on the whole selling process, creating value for the product and playing the role of endorser. In addition, the initiator and supplier together can think about product innovation and new product designs. Suppliers who

want to get feedback on their new products can also seek the assistance of initiators in convincing buyers to try the new items.

It is hard to be an intimate knowledge initiator; there are lots of competitors, the relationships are enhanced initiators have motive power to keep going and having the achievability. In practice, initiators should maintain a good relationship with suppliers. Initiators can assist suppliers by helping them identify buyers' demands and giving them relevant feedback. This will enable suppliers to come up with products that are more closely aligned to buyers' demands and to keep up with new trends in the market. Besides, suppliers can explore their ability and knowledge of the market.

Third, the cooperation between suppliers and initiators involves buyers' satisfaction and anticipation. The results suggest that relational proclivity is positively associated with relational benefit; that is, relational benefits indeed affect the customers' willingness to build and maintain a long and positive relationship with the company (Gwinner *et al.*, 1998). Likewise, based on the credence of the seller, more people will be willing to follow the group; that is, initiators can have more advantages in negotiating with suppliers once they obtain the buyers' trust. Because initiators hold a considerable quantity of products, they can bargain with suppliers to get bulk discounts or freebies. They can also help improve product quality and innovation because buyers will be more willing to give feedback about the products. This is another reason why initiators should maintain a relationship with buyers: so that they can gather buyers' reactions regarding the products. Thus, the partnership with suppliers and buyers will be irreplaceable.

In practice, a collaborative design for products is adopted between initiators and their suppliers. Initiators cannot only give feedback to suppliers but also work with them toward creates new products; this is because initiators are also buyers to suppliers. Because suppliers and initiators have different points of view regarding the products, their collaboration can bring about new ideas.

Final, group buying is a competitive field for initiators, many of whom sell the same products. To prevent buyers from following other group-buying sites, dysfunctional conflict may emerge. Our findings point out that dysfunctional conflict is not positively associated with relational proclivity. From the perspective of online shopping, buyers will choose the initiator with a higher evaluation, so initiators with dysfunctional conflict will have lower credence. If the initiator succeeds in having the group confirmed, the supplier will be more willing to engage in long-term cooperation or to give extra benefits.

In practice, dysfunctional conflict enhances competitive signaling in the virtual environment, allowing initiators to launch the group buying more easily; however, initiators should be aware of the negative evaluation from suppliers and buyers.

### 5.3 Limitations

The first limitation of this study is that the products' scopes of operation were not compared; perhaps different products have different signals and online strategies. Second, the customers included in the study were not selected according to age and gender, which may classify them into different categories.

### References

Campbell, J., Fletcher, G. and Greenhill, A. (2009), "Conflict and identity shape shifting in an online financial community", *Information Systems Journal*, Vol. 19 No. 5, pp. 461-478.



- Chang, H.L. (2009), "The business value of process sharing in supply chains: a study of RosettaNet", *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 115-145.
- Cheng, H.-H. and Huang, S.-W. (2013), "Exploring antecedents and consequence of online group-buying intention: an extended perspective on theory of planned behavior", *International Journal of Information Management*, Vol. 33 No. 1, pp. 185-198.
- Cheng, J.-H. (2011), "Inter-organizational relationships and information sharing in supply chains", *International Journal of Information Management*, Vol. 31 No. 4, pp. 374-384.
- Cheng, J.-H. and Sheu, J.-B. (2012), "Inter-organizational relationships and strategy quality in green supply chains – moderated by opportunistic behavior and dysfunctional conflict", *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 41 No. 4, pp. 563-572.
- Chung, S. (2013), "The role of online intermediaries for consumers: a dual perspective about price comparison and information mediation", *Internet Research*, Vol. 23 No. 3, pp. 338-354.
- Daosheng, L. (2013), "An effect of relationship quality on China railway logistics company's performance base on trust, commitment and satisfaction", *Research Journal of Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology*, Vol. 6 No. 24, pp. 4536-4540.
- Day, G.S. (1994), "The capabilities of the market – driven organization", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 58 No. 4, pp. 37-51.
- Fang, Y.-H., Chiu, C.-M. and Wang, E.T.G. (2011), "Understanding customers' satisfaction and repurchase intentions: an integration of IS success model, trust, and justice", *Internet Research*, Vol. 21 No. 4, pp. 479-503.
- Francisco, J.M.-L., Inma, R.-A., Juan, C.G.-A., Manuel, J.S.-F. and Cabal, C.-C. (2010), "Psychological elements explaining the consumer's adoption and use of a website recommendation system: a theoretical framework proposal", *Internet Research*, Vol. 20 No. 3, pp. 316-341.
- Gan, L., Sim, C.J., Tan, H.L. and Tna, J. (2007), "Online relationship marketing by Singapore hotel websites", *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 20 Nos 3/4, pp. 1-19.
- Gwinner, K.P., Gremler, D.-D. and Bitner, M.-J. (1998), "Relational benefits in services industries: the customer's perspective", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 26 No. 2, pp. 101-114.
- Hsiao, C.-C., Yen, R.H.-J. and Li, E.Y. (2012), "Exploring consumer value of multi-channel shopping: a perspective of means-end theory", *Internet Research*, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 318-339.
- Hsu, C.-L., Lin, J.C.-C. and Chiang, H.-S. (2013), "The effects of blogger recommendations on customers' online shopping intentions", *Internet Research*, Vol. 23 No. 1, pp. 69-88.
- Huang, E. (2012), "Online experiences and virtual goods purchase intention", *Internet Research*, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 252-274.
- Hwang, J., Yoon, Y.-S. and Park, N.-H. (2011), "Structural effects of cognitive and affective responses to web advertisements, website and brand attitudes, and purchase intentions: the case of casual-dining restaurants", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 30 No. 4, pp. 897-907.
- Janssen, M. and Sol, H.-G. (2000), "Evaluating the role of intermediaries in the electronic value chain", *Internet Research*, Vol. 10 No. 5, pp. 406-417.
- Johnson, J.L. and Sohi, R.S. (2001), "The influence of firm predispositions on interfirm relationship formation in business markets", *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, Vol. 18 No. 4, pp. 299-318.
- Kau, A. and Loh, E.W. (2006), "The effects of service recovery on consumer satisfaction: a comparison between complainants and non-complainants", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 20 No. 2, pp. 101-111.
- Kauffman, R.J., Lai, H.C. and Lin, H.C. (2010), "Consumer adoption of group-buying auctions: an experimental study", *Information Technology & Management*, Vol. 11 No. 4, pp. 191-211.

- Ku, E.C.S. (2012), "Beyond price: how does trust encourage online group's buying intention?", *Internet Research*, Vol. 22 No. 5, pp. 569-590.
- Ku, E.C.S., Yang, C.-M. and Huang, M.-Y. (2013), "Partner choice: adaptation of strategic collaboration between travel agencies", *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, Vol. 37 No. 4, pp. 516-536.
- Kwun, D.J.-W. and Oh, H. (2007), "Consumers' evaluation of brand portfolios", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 26 No. 1, pp. 81-97.
- Larson, A. (1992), "Network dyads in entrepreneurial settings: a study of the governance of exchange relationships", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 37 No. 1, pp. 76-104.
- Law, R. and Hsu, C.H.C. (2006), "Importance of hotel website dimensions and attributes: perceptions of online browsers and online purchasers", *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, Vol. 30 No. 3, pp. 295-312.
- Lee, J., Park, D.-H. and Han, I. (2011), "The different effects of online consumer reviews on consumers' purchase intentions depending on trust in online shopping malls: an advertising perspective", *Internet Research*, Vol. 21, pp. 187-206.
- Lu, H.-P. and Su, P.Y.J. (2009), "Factors affecting purchase intention on mobile shopping web sites", *Internet Research*, Vol. 19 No. 4, pp. 442-458.
- Mario, C.-V., Ma de los Angeles, O.-G., Roldán, J.-L. and Veerapermal, N. (2009), "The employee-customer relationship quality: antecedents and consequences in the hotel industry", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 21 No. 3, pp. 251-274.
- Market Intelligence Center (2012), "Consumer online shopping behavior report", available at: [www.mic.eee.org.tw](http://www.mic.eee.org.tw); [http://mic.iii.org.tw.erm.lib.mcu.edu.tw:81/aisp/reports/reportdetail\\_itdb.asp?sesd=489927863&docid=7974&doctype=IT&cate=&smode=1&countrypno](http://mic.iii.org.tw.erm.lib.mcu.edu.tw:81/aisp/reports/reportdetail_itdb.asp?sesd=489927863&docid=7974&doctype=IT&cate=&smode=1&countrypno) (accessed January 18, 2014)
- Massey, G.R. and Dawes, P.L. (2007), "Personal characteristics, trust, conflict, and effectiveness in marketing/sales working relationships", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 41 No. 9, pp. 1117-1145.
- Mavlanova, T., Benbunan-Fich, R. and Koufaris, M. (2012), "Signaling theory and information asymmetry in online commerce", *Information & Management*, Vol. 49 No. 5, pp. 240-247.
- Morgan, R.M and Hunt, S.D. (1994), "The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 58 No. 3, pp. 20-38.
- Mortensen, M. and Arlbjørn, J. (2012), "Inter-organisational supplier development: the case of customer attractiveness and strategic fit", *Supply Chain Management: An International Journal*, Vol. 17 No. 2, pp. 152-171.
- O'Cass, A. and Ngo, L.V. (2012), "Creating superior customer value for B2B firms through supplier firm capabilities", *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol 41 No. 1, pp. 125-135.
- O'Driscoll, A., Carson, D. and Gilmore, A. (2000), "Developing marketing competence and managing in networks: a strategic perspective", *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 183-196.
- Pan, M.-C., Kuo, C.-Y., Pan, C.-T. and Tu, W. (2013), "Antecedent of purchase intention: online seller reputation, product category and surcharge", *Internet Research*, Vol. 23 No. 4, pp. 507-522.
- Panteli, N. and Sockalingam, S. (2005), "Trust and conflict within virtual interorganizational alliances: a framework for facilitating knowledge sharing", *Decision Support Systems*, Vol. 39 No. 4, pp. 599-617.
- Pelled, L.H. (1996), "Demographic diversity, conflict, and work group outcomes: an intervening process theory", *Organization Science*, Vol. 7 No. 6, pp. 615-631.

- Ruekert, R.W. and Walker, O.C. (1987), "Marketing's interaction with other functional units: a conceptual framework and empirical evidence", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 51 No. 1, pp. 1-19.
- Rui, F.S.D.G. and Naudé, P. (2002), "Assessing the influence of retail buyer variables on the buying decision-making process", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 36 Nos 11/12, pp. 1327-1343.
- Shen, C.-C. and Chiou, J.-S. (2009), "The effect of community identification on attitude and intention toward a blogging community", *Internet Research*, Vol. 19 No. 4, pp. 393-407.
- Sigala, M. (2001). "Modelling e-marketing strategies: internet presence and exploitation of Greek hotels", *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 11 Nos 2/3, pp. 83-103.
- Song, X.M., Neely, S.M. and Zhao, Y. (1996), "Marketing R&D – marketing integration in the new product development process", *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 25 No. 6, pp. 545-553.
- Trainor, K.J., Krush, M.T. and Agnihotri, R. (2013), "Effects of relational proclivity and marketing intelligence on new product development", *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, Vol. 31 No. 7, pp. 788-806.
- Uлага, W. and Eggert, A. (2006), "Relationship value and relationship quality: broadening the nomological network of business-to-business relationships", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 40 Nos 3/4, pp. 311-327.
- Vijayasathy, L.-R. (2002), "Product characteristics and internet shopping intentions", *Internet Research*, Vol. 12 No. 5, pp. 411-426.
- Weisberg, J., Te'eni, D. and Arman, L. (2011), "Past purchase and intention to purchase in e-commerce: the mediation of social presence and trust", *Internet Research*, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 82-96.
- Wu, C.-H., Kao, S.-C. and Lin, H.-H. (2013), "Acceptance of enterprise blog for service industry", *Internet Research*, Vol. 23 No. 3, pp. 260-297.
- Wulf, K.D., Odekerken-Schroder, G. and Lacobucci, D. (2001), "Investments in consumer relationships: a cross-country and cross-industry exploration", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 65 No. 4, pp. 33-50.
- Xu, B., Lin, Z. and Shao, B. (2010), "Factors affecting consumer behaviors in online buy-it-now auctions", *Internet Research*, Vol. 20 No. 5, pp. 509-526.
- Yen, Y.-S. (2010), "Can perceived risks affect the relationship of switching costs and customer loyalty in e-commerce?", *Internet Research*, Vol. 20 No. 2, pp. 210-224.

### Further reading

- Chiang, W.-Y. (2012), "To establish online shoppers' markets and rules for dynamic CRM systems: an empirical case study in Taiwan", *Internet Research*, Vol. 22 No. 5, pp. 613-625.
- Sabiote, C.-M., Frías, D.-M. and Castañeda, J.-A. (2012), "The moderating effect of uncertainty-avoidance on overall perceived value of a service purchased online", *Internet Research*, Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 180-198.

### Corresponding author

Edward C.S. Ku can be contacted at: [edwardku@mail.nkuht.edu.tw](mailto:edwardku@mail.nkuht.edu.tw)

---

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

[www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm](http://www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm)

Or contact us for further details: [permissions@emeraldinsight.com](mailto:permissions@emeraldinsight.com)

**This article has been cited by:**

1. Nuan Luo, Mingli Zhang, Mu Hu, Yu Wang. 2016. How community interactions contribute to harmonious community relationships and customers' identification in online brand community. *International Journal of Information Management* 36:5, 673-685. [[CrossRef](#)]
2. Mingli Zhang School of Economics and Management, Beihang University, Beijing, China  
Nuan Luo School of Economics and Management, Beihang University, Beijing, China . 2016. Understanding relationship benefits from harmonious brand community on social media. *Internet Research* 26:4, 809-826. [[Abstract](#)] [[Full Text](#)] [[PDF](#)]