



Social shopping website quality attributes increasing consumer participation, positive eWOM, and co-shopping: The reciprocating role of participation



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ABSTRACT

This study examined the reciprocating role of participation in the social shopping website context. Drawing upon [Foa and Foa \(1974\)](#)'s resource exchange theory, this study examined social shopping website attributes as drivers of reciprocity, and positive electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) and co-shopping were positioned as behavioral outcomes of reciprocity. The results support the conclusion that entertainment and community drivenness attributes were significant drivers of reciprocity increasing consumer participation (i.e., reciprocity) and eWOM/co-shopping. Implications for designing a social shopping website that increases consumer participation and positive behavioral outcomes are discussed.

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1. Introduction

The social shopping website is an innovative online business model accelerated by online social networking ([Shen, 2012](#)), enabling retailers to reach consumers in a new way ([Lee and Lee, 2012](#)). Distinct from the traditional e-commerce technologies that focus solely on improving the efficiency of online shopping, the latest social e-commerce technologies focus on supporting exclusively the social aspect of an online shopping experience ([Shen, 2012](#)). As online social networking has deeply penetrated our daily lives, social shopping websites have emerged rapidly and competition among them has become fierce as well. In considering a social shopping website as an alternative consumer contact point for retailers, understanding consumer behavior on social shopping websites is a timely task in order to maximize positive marketing and retailing outcomes.

A traditional definition of social shopping is that social shopping occurs when a consumer “needs attention, wants to be with peers, desires to meet people with similar interests, feels a need to exercise, or simply has leisure time” ([Tauber, 1972](#), p. 48), not only during shopping, but also before and after actual purchasing through a retailer's website. This study's definition, grounded upon the traditional definition, is that social shopping is consumers' collaborative activities including verbal and nonverbal interactions with others through online shopping. The social

shopping website is a new e-commerce model designed to provide an online consumer community along with a combination of online shopping and social networking tools to consumers ([Shen, 2012](#)). To facilitate online social shopping, social shopping websites (e.g., Pinterest, Kaboodle, Stylehive, Crowdstorm, Shoppisphere, and ThisNext) have been developed to enable consumers to browse, discover, and trace products they like; share shopping recommendations with friends, family, and likeminded individuals; and find reviews by trustworthy experts ([Shen, 2012](#); [McCarthy, 2007](#)). The online social shopping platforms enable consumers to engage in the marketing and transactional shopping activities ([Stephen and Toubia, 2010](#); [Wang, 2011](#)), yielding a synergistic relationship between consumers and retailers ([Kim et al., 2014](#); [Lee and Lee, 2012](#)).

Given the nature of the social shopping website, consumer participation in a social shopping website is crucial since consumer participation can enrich consumer-generated contents, motivating more interaction among consumers. Furthermore, consumer participation in a social shopping website can be a salient criterion of website performance and its quality, leveraging the positive social shopping outcomes; thus, it can be represented as a form of reciprocating behavior. Given the consideration of consumer participation as a reciprocating behavior mediating the relationships between the quality of a social shopping website and behavioral outcomes, [Foa and Foa \(1974\)](#)'s resource exchange theory was adapted in this study. Social shopping website attributes were identified for the purpose of measuring website quality, which affects consumer participation, thereby generating positive electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) and co-shopping. The

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