Antecedents of Generation Y consumers' usage frequency of online consumer reviews

Antecedentes de la frecuencia de uso de las revisiones de consumidores online por los consumidores de la Generación Y

Ayesha Lian Bevan-Dye

School of Management Sciences, North-West University Vaal Triangle Campus, Vanderbijlpark, South Africa

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the influence of perceived information and entertainment value, perceived credibility and perceived value on Generation Y consumers' usage frequency of online consumer reviews.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper proposes and tests, with structural equation modelling analysis of moment structures, a research model using data from a large sample of Generation Y consumers.

Findings – The results confirm that Generation Y consumers perceive online reviews to be informative, entertaining, credible and valuable, and that they frequently consult such reviews. More specifically, the empirical analysis confirms that perceived information value, perceived entertainment value and perceived credibility significantly influenced the perceived value that Generation Y attach to online consumer reviews, which, in turn, was a significant predictor of their usage frequency of such reviews.

Practical implications – The results highlight the strategic importance of integrating online consumer reviews into the marketing communication mix when targeting Generation Y, together with the necessity of having filtering mechanisms to ensure that only authentic reviews are published and the need to implement tactics to ensure that such reviews are informative and entertaining and, consequently, of value.

Originality/value – This study contributes to marketers' comprehension of strategically using online consumer reviews when targeting the Generation Y segment.

Keywords Generation Y, Perceived value, Online consumer reviews, Usage frequency

Paper type Research paper

Resumen

Propósito – El objetivo de esta investigación es examinar la influencia del valor de la información, del valor del entretenimiento, la credibilidad y el valor percibido en la frecuencia de uso de las revisiones online de los consumidores por parte de los consumidores de la Generación Y.

Diseño/metodología/enfoque – Este documento propone y contrasta, a través de los modelos de ecuaciones estructurales (AMOS), un modelo de investigación que utiliza datos de una gran muestra de consumidores de la Generación Y.

Resultados – Los resultados ponen de relieve la importancia estratégica de integrar las reseñas de consumidores en línea en la combinación de comunicaciones de comercialización al dirigirse a la Generación Y, junto con la necesidad de disponer de mecanismos de filtrado para garantizar que sólo se publiquen reseñas auténticas y la necesidad de aplicar tácticas para asegurar que dichas reseñas sean informativas y entretenidas y, por consiguiente, de valor.

Implicaciones prácticas – Los resultados destacan la importancia estratégica de integrar las revisiones de los consumidores en línea en el mix de comunicación de marketing cuando se dirigen a la Generación Y, junto con la necesidad de contar con mecanismos de filtrado para garantizar que solo se publiquen revisiones auténticas y también se implementen tácticas para garantizar que las reseñas sean informativas y entretenidas y, en consecuencia, de gran valor.

Originalidad/valor – Este trabajo ayuda a los especialistas de marketing a comprender como pueden utilizar estratégicamente las opiniones de los consumidores online para dirigirse a los consumidores de la Generación Y.

Palabras clave Comentarios de consumidores en línea, Valor percibido, Frecuencia de uso, Generación Y

Tipo de artículo Artículo de investigación

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to ascertain the influence of perceived information and entertainment value, perceived credibility and perceived value on Generation Y consumers' usage frequency of online consumer reviews. As a particular form of electronic word-of-mouth communication, online consumer reviews are becoming popular amongst an increasing number of consumers as a way of assessing the quality and performance of products and services across a range of industries prior to purchase (Filieria *et al.*, 2018). Word-of-mouth communication or *vica voce*, has been around, as the dawn of human existence and refers to the informal exchange of information between individuals or groups of individuals. Consumption-related activities are a frequent topic in such social communication exchanges and this type of *vica voce* refers to consumers informally giving or seeking advice amongst each other concerning consumption-related behaviour (Flynn *et al.*, 1996), leading to the behavioural consequence of product/service information sharing (Sun *et al.*, 2006). In the fields of marketing and consumer behaviour, *vica voce* takes on a special relevance as it has a powerful influence on consumers' purchase behaviour in that it is the most persuasive form consumption-related communication that exists (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010; Kotler, 2003).

In the pre-digital age, the spread of consumption-related *vica voce* was slow, confined to two or a few individuals (Cheung and Lee, 2012), occurred in a spontaneous fashion and lacked longevity (Stern, 1994). However, the commercialisation of the internet in 1991 and the rapid advances in the World Wide Web changed the fundamental characteristics of word-of-mouth communication. These digital technologies have resulted in electronic consumption-related *vica voce*, including online consumer reviews, having significantly greater reach (Kucukemiroglu and Kara, 2015) by extending consumers' options of gathering and disseminating unbiased consumption-related experiences amongst each other on a global scale and across time zones (Park and Lee, 2009). As a manifestation of digital word-of-mouth communication, online consumer reviews (Filieria *et al.*, 2018) can be dispersed at an accelerated velocity, have longevity beyond a single conversation as they

can be archived indefinitely and are accessible 24/7 to anyone with an internet connection, regardless of their geographical location (Cheung and Lee, 2012; Park and Lee, 2009).

Debuting in the 1990s, with Amazon.com (Ante, 2009), rateitall.com, deja.com and Epinions.com (Notess, 2000) being amongst the first, online consumer review sites have grown exponentially (Filieria *et al.*, 2018). Today, such reviews encompass an ever-growing range of industries (Wang *et al.*, 2018) and have become relevant to organisations regardless of size (Bowman, 2019). The abundance of online consumer-generated reviews available for a diverse range of products, services and organisations, coupled with their accessibility has contributed to their significant and growing popularity (Cheung *et al.*, 2012), and accounts for them fast becoming the most important source of consumption-related information for many contemporary consumers (Bowman, 2019; Kim *et al.*, 2018; Wang *et al.*, 2019). This is particularly true amongst the Youth (Fertik, 2019; Hall, 2018; Kats, 2018), who are currently classified as being members of Generation Y (individuals born between 1986 and 2005) (Markert, 2004).

As the first generation to grow up in the digital age of internet connectivity, mobile telephony and, for the later cohort of Generation Y, social media (Taylor and Keeter, 2010), these technologically-astute individuals harness the power that their digital devices give them as consumers and regularly share their consumption-related experiences across digital platforms, thereby relying on each other to make informed purchase decisions (Gailewicz, 2014). A study conducted in Portugal concluded that, in comparison to the previous generation, Generation Y individuals are more likely to read consumer-generated product reviews and comments on company Facebook pages (Bento *et al.*, 2018). In a 2016 study across 50 countries, KPMG (2017) confirms that Generation Y individuals have a marked tendency towards consulting online consumer reviews while shopping. A study in the UK found that eight out of ten members of Generation Y never make a purchase without first reading online consumer reviews (Hall, 2018). Another study in the USA indicates that 37.3% of Generation Y individuals almost always consult online consumer reviews prior to purchase and 42.9% often consult such reviews (Kats, 2018). A more recent survey in the USA suggests that 50% of Generation Y always read online consumer-generated reviews of local businesses prior to purchasing and that 91% of them trust those reviews as much as they do personal recommendations (Murphy, 2018). A similar picture emerges in Africa, with reports indicating that online consumer reviews are Generation Y individuals' most trusted source of consumption-related information (Zinkevych, 2018).

This generation's propensity to consult and contribute to online consumer reviews (Fertik, 2019; Hall, 2018; Kats, 2018; Zinkevych, 2018) highlights the value of marketers integrating such reviews into their marketing communication strategy, especially when targeting Generation Y. While there is an abundance of research on online consumer reviews (Srivastava and Kalro, 2019; Filieria *et al.*, 2018; Elwalda *et al.*, 2016; Liu and Park, 2015; Cheung *et al.*, 2012; Mudambi and Schuff, 2010; Park and Lee, 2009), few studies seek to understand a specific generation's usage frequency of such reviews in terms of the uses and gratifications (U&G) theory. The benefit of the U&G theory is that it takes a consumer-level approach in determining media usage (Lin *et al.*, 2017). Specifically, this study applies the advertising value model developed by Ducoffe (1996), which is derived from the U&G theory and extends it to include perceived credibility to model the antecedents of Generation Y consumers' usage frequency of online consumer reviews. The strategic success of online consumer reviews as part of a marketing communication strategy targeting generation Y consumers depends on their perceived value and usage frequency of such reviews, which, in turn, are dependent on certain factors that influence that perceived value. Understanding the factors that influence Generation Y consumers' perceived value and

usage frequency of online consumer reviews will contribute to marketers' ability to leverage such reviews to their advantage.

In light of this, this study focussed on determining Generation Y university students' usage frequency of online consumer reviews and the extent to which they perceive such reviews as being informative, entertaining, credible and of value. In addition, the study sought to determine the influence of perceived information and entertainment value, perceived credibility and perceived value on Generation Y students' usage frequency of online consumer reviews. The focus on university students as the study's target population is deliberate and based on the assumption that a tertiary qualification is typically associated with a higher future earning potential and a higher social standing, thereby rendering graduates as trend setters and opinion leaders amongst their peers (Bevan-Dye and Akpojivi, 2016).

2. Theoretical background

Online consumer reviews refer to consumer-generated product or service evaluations that are electronically uploaded to a company or third-party website (Mudambi and Schuff, 2010). Online consumer review content may be in the form of text, images, videos or a combination thereof, and ranges from informal discussions about products, services and/or organisations to more structured reviews in text or on video (Berthon *et al.*, 2012). Examples of websites that publish more structured consumer reviews include platform-specific sites such as product review videos on YouTube.com, general reviews on Google.com, travel reviews on industry-specific sites such as on TripAdvisor.com and restaurant reviews on Zomato.com. Online consumer reviews are also available on retail store-specific sites such as Amazon.com, product category-specific sites such as fragrance reviews on Fragrantica.com and service category-specific review sites such as medical practitioner reviews on RateMDs.com. Generally, the text-based online consumer reviews take the format of open-ended evaluations of a product, service or organisation, together with a numerical star rating that usually ranges from one to five stars (Mudambi and Schuff, 2010).

The usage frequency of consumption-related communication, whether formal or informal, is generally dependent on the extent to which such communication is perceived to be of value in consumption-related decision-making (Park and Lee, 2009). This perceived value refers to the overall representation of the worth of consumption-related communication (Zeng *et al.*, 2009; Ducoffe, 1996), where consumption-related communication that is perceived as being of value is associated with a positive attitude towards that communication (Bakr *et al.*, 2019), and therefore, the active use of that communication (Bailey *et al.*, 2018; Park and Lee, 2009).

A potentially useful model to help understand the usage frequency of online consumer reviews is the Ducoffe (1996) advertising value model. This model is derived from the U&G theory that seeks to explain individuals' media consumption in terms of why they use certain media and the gratifications they derive from that consumption (Katz *et al.*, 1973). The Ducoffe model has been used to explain consumers' perceived value of web advertising (Zha *et al.*, 2015; Brackett and Carr, 2001; Ducoffe, 1996), email advertising (Chang *et al.*, 2013), mobile advertising (Martins *et al.*, 2019; Kim and Han, 2014; Tsang *et al.*, 2004) and social media advertising (Shareef *et al.*, 2019; Saxena and Khanna, 2013). Ducoffe (1995) explains the perceived value of consumption-related communication as being consumers' subjective evaluation of the relative worth or utility of that communication. The U&G theory suggests that communication is goal-directed behaviour and that individuals' choice to engage with a particular media, as well as their level of participation with that media depends on the degree to which it satisfies their needs; that is, their perceived value of that media (Rubin, 1993).

In accordance with the U&G theory, Ducoffe (1996) identifies perceived informativeness and entertainment as salient factors that account for how consumers appraise the value of consumption-related communication. More recent studies confirm the positive influence that perceived information and entertainment value have on the overall perceived value of online advertisements (Saxena and Khanna, 2013; Wang and Sun, 2010), mobile advertising (Wang and Genç, 2019), advertising on social networking sites (Hassan *et al.*, 2013) and electronic word-of-mouth communication (Lien and Cao, 2014). In replicating the Ducoffe (1996) study, Brackett and Carr (2001) added another salient predictor of advertising value, namely, perceived credibility, which, in addition to perceived informativeness and entertainment, they found to be a significant positive antecedent of the perceived value of web advertisements. Subsequent studies have confirmed the role of credibility in accounting for a target audience's assessment of the value of advertisements (Martins *et al.*, 2019; Zha *et al.*, 2015; Kim and Han, 2014).

2.1 Perceived information value

Ducoffe (1996) explains the perceived information value of consumption-related information as being the completeness, currency and quality of the information provided. In terms of online consumer reviews, the quality of the information provided relates to the cogency of the review content, where rational, concrete and objective reviews are perceived as being more informative than abstract ones of an emotional nature (Park and Lee, 2009). This infers that reviews that indicate both the pros and cons of the consumption-related experience will be viewed as being more complete, and thus, of a better quality (Yang *et al.*, 2016). Flavián *et al.* (2009) add that the format in which the information is presented on websites also influences the perceived quality and usability thereof. To improve the cogency, and hence, the quality of the information offered up in the review, Cheung *et al.* (2012) suggest providing a review template that has demarcated sections requesting specific usage experience, and a section encouraging reviewers to mention not only their positive experience with the product or service under review but also to mention any negative experiences or views.

Typically, consumers do not perceive reviews older than three months as being particularly relevant; something that highlights the importance of marketers encouraging a constant stream of up-to-date reviews (Rose, 2017). Possibly the most intuitive way of encouraging customers to write reviews is to make it easy for them to do so. This entails providing easy to locate review buttons on the organisation's site that direct the customer to the review section or to a third-party review site (Millwood, 2018; Akalp, 2014). Alternatively, set up a system that directs the customer to the review section/site immediately after purchase or a system whereby an automatic email gets sent out after a purchase inviting the customer to provide a review (Greene, 2019). Regardless of the system, it is essential that these review features are easy to use on either a computer or a mobile device (Millwood, 2018; Akalp, 2014). While care should be taken not to create the impression of buying positive reviews, it is acceptable to ask a customer to leave an authentic review in exchange for coupons or discount codes (Hawlk, 2017). Rather than financial incentives, sites such as TripAdvisor.com incentivise reviews using a badge system, where a greater number of reviews by an individual earns a higher badge status.

2.2 Perceived entertainment value

According to the U&G theory, perceived enjoyment/entertainment refers to the intrinsic or hedonic motive of consuming media content (Luo *et al.*, 2011). In terms of online consumer reviews, the dimension of perceived enjoyment relates to the pleasure derived from perusing

such content (Elwalda *et al.*, 2016). Mathwick and Rigdon (2004) posit that for many consumers, online product information search is a leisure activity, associated with the intrinsic benefits of pleasure and enjoyment. Flavián-Blanco *et al.* (2011) indicate that this affective state of enjoyment is heightened when an online product information search is perceived as being successful in terms of being pertinent to the consumption-related decision-making process. An important aspect of the perceived enjoyment of reading online consumer reviews is the readability of such reviews, where understandable rather than complicated and excessively long reviews are viewed as being more pleasurable (Liu and Park, 2015). Grammar and spelling errors have empirically been proven to hamper the readability of online consumer reviews (Ghose and Ipeirotis, 2011), thereby detracting from their reading enjoyment. Furthermore, lengthy and overly complicated reviews have also been found to influence the enjoyment of reading such reviews negatively (Park and Lee, 2009). This suggests that it is advisable for marketers to put a word-count limit on online consumer reviews to prevent information overload (Kim *et al.*, 2018) and to provide a spell-and-grammar check tool on the review site.

2.3 Perceived credibility

Despite not having being part of Ducoffe's (1996) original model, the perceived credibility of consumption-related communication is possibly the most important predictor of its value and usage frequency. The persuasiveness of consumption-related *vica voce* is rooted in its inherent credibility; that is, its quality of being both trustworthy and believable (Cheung *et al.*, 2009; Bone, 1995). In a seminal qualitative study, Dichter (1966) uncovered two primary factors that account for the perceived credibility of consumption-related word-of-mouth communication, namely, the opinion receiver perceiving the opinion giver as being motivated by a genuine desire to help rather than by any material gain, and the opinion receiver perceiving the opinion giver as having a certain level of experience with and knowledge of the product category being recommended.

In the case of online consumer reviews, this perceived credibility becomes even more important given that such reviews are typically provided by anonymous consumers (Park and Lee, 2009). Unfortunately, the illegal practice of organisations' posting fake positive reviews to promote their own product/service/organisation or fake negative reviews aimed at sullying their competitors' reputations (Elliott, 2018; Zhang *et al.*, 2016), together with the legal but unethical practice of only publishing positive reviews have brought the authenticity of online consumer reviews into question (Kim *et al.*, 2018; O'Neil, 2015). As a case in point, Fakespot.com, an artificial intelligence platform that analyses online reviews, concluded that up to 70% of the reviews on Amazon.com are fake (Elliott, 2018). There are strong motives that drive sellers to engage in the practice of posting fake reviews and/or only posting reviews that show their goods in a positive light. Basically, the incentive for sellers to cheat by manipulating consumer reviews is high, while the probability of getting caught doing so is low (Vedantam, 2012).

Owing to website algorithms, products and pages with positive reviews show up at the top of search results, while those with negative reviews get pushed further down the search results. Furthermore, positive reviews have a powerful influence on consumers' purchasing behaviour and are an important part of the formula in driving sales (Heinzman, 2019). Sadly, unless consumer review sites take swift action to root out these illegal and unethical practices, the very thing that makes online consumer reviews so persuasive and valuable is likely to be the very thing that will lead to their demise and render them obsolete. Possible actions include only allowing identified customer to post a review immediately after a purchase, using software such as that used by Fakespot.com to identify perpetrators,

releasing the names of consumer review sites that only post positive reviews to the media and for third-party review sites to impose harsh penalties on any of their vendors caught engaging in such behaviour.

Moreover, when confronted by negative reviews, rather than hide them, organisations are encouraged to offer a timely response, whereby they acknowledge the complaint, express empathy with the complainant, thank the reviewer and, where possible, describe the actions to be taken to rectify the problem – this will enhance the credibility of the organisation (Ho, 2017).

To this end, whether the reviews are positive or negative, it is advisable to have a dedicated reputation marketer(s), whose sole focus is on monitoring reviews and responding accordingly, whether it is to thank someone for a positive review or to address any issues in a negative review (Pitman, 2019).

In accordance with the literature, this study theorises that Generation Y students' perceived information and entertainment value, together with their perceived credibility of online consumer reviews contributes to their overall perceived value and usage frequency of such reviews.

3. Methodology
A descriptive research design, using the single cross-sectional sampling approach informed the research methodology applied in this study.

3.1 Sampling and data collection
As per the primary objective of the study, the target population was defined as Generation Y university students registered at South African public higher education institutions (HEIs), who were years of age between 18 and 24 years. The sampling frame was limited to HEI campuses in South Africa's Gauteng province and judgement sampling was used to select one campus from a traditional university, one from a university of technology and one from a comprehensive university, thereby ensuring that the sample comprised participants from each of South Africa's three types of public HEIs. The choice of these specific institutions' campuses was based on previous research findings that indicate that these three HEIs typically attract students from across South Africa's nine provinces (Synodinos, 2017; Bevan-Dye and Akpojivi, 2016). Data collection took place at the three selected universities' campuses. Using the mall-intercept survey approach, fieldworkers distributed 600 questionnaires across the selected three campuses (200 per campus) to a convenience sample of students.

3.2 Research instrument
The self-reporting survey questionnaire used to gather the required data included a cover letter describing the aim of the study and providing a guarantee of the anonymity of the sample participants. This was followed by a section requesting demographic information and a section containing scaled-response items that were adapted from published studies.

Perceived information value included the seven items of online consumer reviews "are a good source of product information", "supply relevant product information", "provide timely product information", "are a good source of up-to-date product information", "make product information immediately accessible", "are a convenient source of product information" and "supply complete product information". Perceived entertainment value consisted of the five items of online consumer reviews are "entertaining", "enjoyable", "pleasing", "fun to use" and "exciting". Perceived value was measured using the three items of online consumer

reviews are "useful", "valuable" and "important". These three scales were adapted from the scales developed by Ducoffe (1996).

The perceived credibility of online reviews was measured using a scale developed by Ohanian (1990) and comprised five items, namely online consumer reviews are "dependable", "honest", "reliable", "sincere" and "trustworthy".

Usage frequency was measured using a scale developed by Park and Lee (2009), which included the three items of "I read online consumer reviews frequently", "I often search consumer reviews on the internet" and "I refer to online consumer reviews whenever I need information on companies or goods". A six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6) was used to measure responses to these 23 scaled items.

3.3 Data analysis

The gathered data were analysed using of IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences and analysis of moment structures (AMOS), Versions 26. Data analysis included descriptive statistics and a one-sample t-test, collinearity diagnostics, structural equation modelling, with confirmatory factor analysis, including internal-consistency and composite reliability analysis, nomological, convergent and discriminant validity analysis and path analysis.

As a starting point, the descriptive statistics, including the means and standard deviations were computed, along with a one-sample t-test. Given that scaled-responses were recorded on a six-point Likert-type scale, the expected mean for the t-test was set at 3.5.

Next, to assess nomological validity, a matrix of Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients was calculated. Nomological validity is inferred when there are statistically significant relationships in the theoretically correct direction between pairs of latent factors proposed for inclusion in a model (Hair *et al.*, 2010). As excessively high correlation coefficients between latent factors may cause problems in interpreting the results of multivariate statistical analysis methods, a screening for multi-collinearity was undertaken by computing the tolerance values (TV) and the variance inflation factors (VIF). TV less than 0.10 and an average VIF above 10 are warning indications of multi-collinearity (Pallant, 2010).

Following this, SEM, including confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis was carried out using the maximum likelihood method. For the confirmatory factor analysis, a five-factor measurement model was specified for testing. As per convention, the first loading on each of the five latent factors was fixed at 1.0, which resulted in 276 distinct sample moments and 56 distinct parameters to be estimated, which equates to 220 degrees of freedom (df) based on an over-identified model and a χ^2 value of 539.274, with a probability level equal to 0.000. While a statistically significant χ^2 is indicative of poor model fit, the literature indicates that this statistic is vulnerable to large sample sizes, which is why the use of other model fit induces is advised (Byrne, 2010). In this study, the model fit indices computed included the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), the incremental-fit index (IFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), where GFI, IFI and TLI values above 0.90, together with SRMR and RMSEA values below 0.08 are indicative of acceptable model fit (Malhotra, 2010).

Composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were computed using the formulae advocated by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Standardised loading estimates and an AVE value of 0.50 or higher, together with a CR value of 0.70 or above are required to conclude convergent validity for a latent factor. Discriminant validity necessitates that the square root of the AVE ($\sqrt{AVE}$) value of the latent factor exceeds the correlation estimates between the relevant latent factors (Hair *et al.*, 2010; Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

An additional measure of discriminant validity proposed by Henseler *et al.* (2015), namely, the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT), was also used, whereby a HTMT value below 0.85 is recommended. While HTMT was originally intended as a criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based SEM, its superior performance and the fact that its calculation is reliant on inter-item correlations rather than model estimates has led to some advocating its universal use across latent variable methods (Franke and Sarstedt, 2019; Voorhees *et al.*, 2016). Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha (*a*) and CR, where values of 0.70 and above are indicative of acceptable reliability (Malhotra, 2010). A structural model was then specified based on the validated measurement model to test the theorised paths that Generation Y students' perceived information and entertainment value, and perceived credibility of online consumer reviews have a direct positive influence on their perceived value of such reviews, which, in turn, was theorised to have a direct positive influence on their usage frequency of such reviews. The level of statistical significance was set at $p \leq 0.01$ throughout.

4. Results
Following data collection, 538 complete questionnaires were received back of the 600 distributed (90 % response rate). This sample size of 538 was deemed adequate for conducting SEM, given that the proposed measurement model comprised five constructs, each with three or more observed variables (Malhotra, 2010), that there was a 23:1 ratio of cases to observed variables, a 9:1 ratio of cases to estimated parameters (Ullman, 2014) and 220 df (MacCallum *et al.*, 1996). A description of the sample participants is summarised in Table 1.

Descriptive statistics, together with a one sample *t*-test, were computed to assess the extent to which Generation Y students perceive online consumer reviews as being informative, entertaining, credible and valuable, as well as their usage frequency of such reviews. The means, standard deviations, *t*-values and *p*-values for the five latent factors are reported in Table 2.

As indicated in Table 2, the means of the responses recorded on the six-point Likert-type scale were all significantly ($p \leq 0.01$) above the expected mean of 3.5, thereby suggesting that Generation Y students perceive online consumer reviews favourably. The highest means were returned for perceived value (mean = 4.47), perceived information value (mean = 4.33) and perceived entertainment value (mean = 4.17), which infers that Generation Y students view online consumer reviews as important, useful and valuable, as a convenient and good source of relevant, timely and up-to-date information and as pleasing and fun to use. While still significantly in the agreement area of the scale, lower means were computed on usage frequency (mean = 3.87) and perceived credibility (mean = 3.61), which is somewhat surprising given the high mean recorded for perceived value. Marketers need to remain vigilant regarding the authenticity of their online consumer reviews, as this will affect both Generation Y members' perceived value and usage frequency of such reviews. Moreover, the statistically significant means recorded on all of the latent factors emphasises the importance of marketers integrating online consumer reviews into their marketing communication strategy when targeting Generation Y consumers.

Prior to conducting confirmatory factor analysis on the proposed model, pairwise correlation analysis was carried out to assess the nomological validity of the latent variable planned for inclusion in the model. Thereafter, collinearity diagnostics were run to ascertain if the proposed model had any serious multi-collinearity issues. The correlation matrix and collinearity diagnostic results are reported in Table 3.

Variables	Frequency	(%)
Gender		
Female	251	46.7
Male	280	52.0
Missing	7	1.3
Age		
18	153	28.4
19	165	30.7
20	86	16.0
21	67	12.5
22	35	6.5
23	21	3.9
24	11	2.0
Province of origin		
Eastern Cape	20	3.7
Free State	23	4.3
Gauteng	288	53.5
Kwazulu-Natal	37	6.9
Limpopo	92	17.1
Mpumalanga	50	9.3
North West	16	3.0
Northern Cape	1	0.2
Western Cape	7	1.3
Missing	4	0.7
Language		
Afrikaans	8	1.5
English	126	23.4
Ndebele	16	3.0
Xhosa	36	6.7
Zulu	97	18.0
Northern Sotho	67	12.5
Southern Sotho	56	10.4
Tswana	38	7.1
Swati	29	5.4
Venda	27	5.0
Tsonga	37	6.9
Missing	1	0.2
Institution		
Traditional	181	33.6
UoT	170	31.6
Comprehensive	187	34.8

Table 1.
Sample description

Latent factors	Means	SD	*t*-values	*p*-values
Perceived information value	4.33	0.761	25.235	0.000
Perceived entertainment value	4.17	1.083	14.285	0.000
Perceived credibility	3.61	0.957	2.531	0.012
Perceived value	4.47	0.892	25.236	0.000
Usage frequency	3.87	1.321	6.571	0.000

Table 2.
Descriptive statistics,
t-values and *p*-values

Note: Statistically significant at $p \leq 0.01$

As is shown in Table 3, the correlation coefficients between each of the pairs of latent factors proposed for inclusion in the model were in the correct direction and were statistically significant ($p \leq 0.01$), which suggests nomological validity. Concerning the collinearity diagnostics run, with tolerance values ranging from 0.559 to 0.766 and an average VIF 1.486 there were no multi-collinearity issues worth noting.

Following on from this, confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement model was run using AMOS. Table 4 reports on the estimates for the measurement model, including the standardised loading estimates and their corresponding error variance estimates (R^2), Cronbach's alpha (α), CR, AVE and the $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ values.

Latent factors	F1	F2	F3	F4	TV	VIF
Perceived information value (F1)					0.646	1.548
Perceived entertainment value (F2)	0.324*				0.766	1.306
Perceived credibility (F3)	0.522*	0.352*			0.616	1.622
Perceived value (F4)	0.495*	0.346*	0.525*		0.611	1.636
Usage frequency (F5)	0.313*	0.396*	0.303*	0.397*	0.559	1.318

Note: *Significant at $p \leq 0.01$

Table 3.
Correlation matrix and collinearity diagnostic results

Latent factors	Standardised loading estimates	R^2	a	CR	AVE	$\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$
Perceived information value (F1)	0.544	0.296	0.775	0.78	0.34	0.58
	0.657	0.431				
	0.550	0.303				
	0.609	0.371				
	0.557	0.309				
	0.530	0.281				
	0.594	0.353				
Perceived entertainment value (F2)	0.801	0.642	0.910	0.91	0.67	0.82
	0.873	0.762				
	0.782	0.612				
	0.832	0.693				
	0.815	0.665				
Perceived credibility (F3)	0.540	0.292	0.847	0.85	0.54	0.74
	0.742	0.551				
	0.809	0.655				
	0.735	0.540				
	0.826	0.682				
Perceived value (F4)	0.738	0.545	0.788	0.79	0.56	0.75
	0.820	0.672				
	0.683	0.467				
Usage frequency (F5)	0.774	0.599	0.827	0.83	0.62	0.79
	0.858	0.737				
	0.728	0.530				
Correlations	F1↔F2: 0.378	F1↔F3: 0.598	F1↔F4: 0.632	F1↔F5: 0.383	F2↔F3: 0.384	F2↔F4: 0.409
	F2↔F5: 0.446	F3↔F4: 0.626	F3↔F5: 0.355	F4↔F5: 0.462		

Table 4.
Estimates for measurement model

The results outlined in Table 4 indicate that the Cronbach's alpha (α) and CR values for each of the latent factors exceed 0.70, thereby indicating both internal-consistency and CR. Furthermore, with standardised loading estimates all exceeding 0.50 and CR values exceeding 0.70 there are indications of convergent validity. With the exception of one latent factor, namely, perceived information value, the AVE values exceed 0.50, thereby providing further evidence of the convergent validity of four of the five latent factors. Similarly, discriminant validity is evident for all but one latent factor in Table 4, in that the $\sqrt{AVE}$ values for four of the five latent factors exceed their respective correlation coefficients.

The low AVE of 0.34 and $\sqrt{AVE}$ of 0.58 computed for the perceived information value latent factor was of serious concern for both convergent and discriminant validity. In an effort to ascertain where the problem with this latent factor lay, the mean inter-item correlation coefficient was computed and the item-total statistics were inspected. No underlying problem was evident. The computed mean inter-item correlation coefficient of 0.33 suggests the homogeneity of the seven items in the scale (Briggs and Cheek, 1986; Clark and Watson, 1995). Furthermore, the corrected item-total correlation values where all above 0.30, ranging from 0.45 to 0.58, suggesting that each of the seven indicators correlate well with the information value latent factor (Pallant, 2010). Moreover, deletion of any of the seven items would result in the Cronbach's alpha value for that latent factor decreasing rather than increasing. Therefore, the decision was taken to conclude convergent validity tentatively for the perceived information value latent factor, based on the standardised loading estimates, the mean inter-item correlation coefficient, the corrected item-total correlation values, the Cronbach's alpha value and the CR value.

Given the importance of establishing discriminant validity (Franke and Sarstedt, 2019) and in light of the $\sqrt{AVE}$ of 0.58 for the perceived information value latent factor being below two of its relevant correlation coefficients, the HTMT ratio values were also calculated, as reported in Table 5.

As is evident in Table 5, the computed HTMT values range from 0.362 to 0.643, thereby providing evidence of discriminant validity between the latent factors in the measurement model. As such, discriminant validity was concluded between all of the five latent factors proposed for inclusion in the measurement model, including between perceived information value and the other four latent factors. Having established the reliability and construct validity of the model, attention was then turned to evaluating the model fit indices returned by AMOS.

The computed model fit indices all suggested acceptable model fit with a GFI of 0.919, an IFI of 0.943, a TLI of 0.934, a SRMR of 0.047 and a RMSEA of 0.052. Taken together, this suggests that usage frequency of online consumer reviews amongst Generation Y students is a five-factor model that exhibits construct validity, reliability and acceptable model fit.

Based on the validation of this measurement model, a structural model was specified to test the theorised paths that Generation Y students' perceived information and entertainment value and perceived credibility of online consumer reviews have a direct

Latent factors	F1	F2	F3	F4
Perceived information value (F1)				
Perceived entertainment value (F2)	0.381			
Perceived credibility (F3)	0.640	0.405		
Perceived value (F4)	0.637	0.413	0.643	
Usage frequency (F5)	0.391	0.457	0.362	0.491

Table 5.
Heterotrait–
Monotrait ratio
values (HTMT)

positive influence on their perceived value of such reviews, which, in turn, has a direct positive influence on their usage frequency of online consumer reviews. This structural model is illustrated in Figure 1.

With both the SRMR (0.06) and the RMSEA (0.05) below 0.08, together with a GFI (0.914), an IFI (0.937) and a TLI (0.928) above 0.90, the structural model in Figure 1 exhibited acceptable model fit. Table 6 presents the un-standardised and standardised regression coefficients, standard error estimates and p-values estimated by AMOS for the structural model.

The estimates reported in Table 6 indicate that all of the regression paths tested were positive and statistically significant. In terms of the standardised regression estimates, perceived information value ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.01$), perceived credibility ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$) and, to a lesser extent, perceived entertainment value ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.01$) are statistically significant predictors of Generation Y students' perceived value of online consumer reviews. With a squared multiple correlation coefficient (R^2) of 0.54, these three factors explain 54% of the variance in Generation Y students' perceived value of online consumer reviews. Perceived value ($\beta = 0.50$, $p < 0.01$), in turn, is a statistically significant predictor of Generation Y students' usage frequency of online consumer reviews and, together with its predictors, explains 25% of the variance in their usage frequency of such reviews.
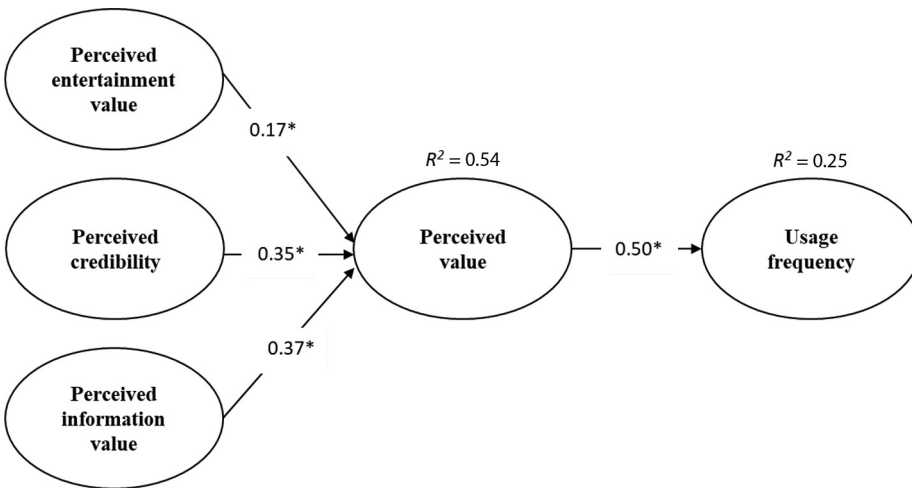

Note: *Significant at $p \leq 0.01$

Figure 1.
Structural model

Paths	Un-standardised β	Standardised β	SE	p
Perceived information value → perceived value	0.44	0.37	0.079	0.00
Perceived entertainment value → perceived value	0.11	0.17	0.031	0.00
Perceived credibility → perceived value	0.40	0.35	0.071	0.00
Perceived value → usage frequency	0.78	0.50	0.085	0.00

Notes: β: beta coefficient; SE: standardised error; p: two-tailed statistical significance

Table 6.
Structural model
estimates

5. Discussion and implications

The study contributes to the literature by applying the U&G approach to explaining the usage frequency on online consumer reviews. The study empirically determined the factors that contribute to the usage frequency of online consumer reviews, with specific reference to Generation Y consumers. Following the U&G approach, the Ducoffe (1996) advertising value model comprising perceived information, entertainment and overall value was extended to include perceived credibility as predictors of Generation Y consumers' usage frequency of online consumer reviews. The findings of this study confirm that Generation Y students' usage frequency of online consumer reviews is a five-factor model that exhibits acceptable model fit, construct validity, internal-consistency reliability and CR. This model, which comprised the latent factors of perceived information and entertainment value, perceived credibility, perceived value and usage frequency of online consumer reviews, provides marketing academics and practitioners with a starting point for better understanding Generation Y's use of online consumer reviews.

Based on the evidence in the sample, the results intimate that Generation Y individuals view online consumer reviews as important, useful and valuable, as a convenient and good source of relevant, timely and up-to-date information, as pleasing and fun to use, and as trustworthy. Furthermore, there are indications that they frequently consult such reviews. These findings, in conjunction with reports in the media, underscore the importance of marketers integrating online consumer reviews into their marketing communication strategy when targeting Generation Y consumers.

The results of the path analysis infer that perceived information and entertainment value, and perceived credibility have a significant positive influence on Generation Y students' perceived value of online consumer reviews, which, in turn, has a significant positive influence on their usage frequency of such reviews. The implications of these findings for marketers is that to leverage the persuasiveness of online consumer reviews to their strategic advantage when targeting Generation Y necessitates using tactics that will ensure that these reviews are comprehensive yet readable and authentic. This will contribute to their perceived value and usage frequency amongst the Generation Y segment. To encourage the cogency of consumer-generated review content, a template with demarcated sections requesting specific usage experience and a section requesting reviewers to mention both their positive experience with the product or service under review and any negative experiences or views they may have should be provided. The entertainment value of online consumer reviews relates to their readability and, as such, suggests that there should be a word-count limit set in the review template and that a spell-and-grammar check tool should be provided on the review site. Arguably, the most important aspect that relates to the persuasive power of online consumer reviews is their perceived credibility, which highlights the importance of review sites earning a reputation for only publishing authentic customer reviews. For third-party review sites, this necessitates using software tools to monitor and identify fake reviews, and to use punitive measures against those vendors caught engaging in such practices. Company-owned consumer review sites need to be educated as to the long-term negative consequences of indulging in the practice of cherry-picking reviews or disguising paid-for product endorsements as real consumer reviews. Here, mass media has an important role to play by publishing reports on sites that engage in unethical consumer review practices.

Given the important role that online consumer reviews play in the consumer decision-making process, companies, whether large, medium, small or micro, are advised to use the services of a dedicated reputation marketer(s) with strong written communication skills

whose sole focus is on monitoring reviews and responding accordingly, whether it be to thank someone for a positive review or to address any issues in a negative review.

The findings of this study also have implications for consumers, including Generation Y consumers. Blind trust in online consumer reviews is not prudent. Online consumer review sites that only have positive reviews are in all probability either censoring negative reviews or disguising paid-for product endorsements as authentic consumer reviews. The same is likely to hold true for vendors on third-party review sites that attract only positive reviews. Reviews that are overly enthusiastic and use superlatives should also be viewed with a degree of scepticism. It is advisable for consumers to consult multiple review sites before making a decision. An internet browser search, which may turn up contradictory consumer reports, is also advised.

6. Limitations and suggestions for future research

In interpreting the findings of this study, marketing academics and practitioners are advised to take cognisance of certain methodological limitations in the study. The most important limitation is the use of convenience sampling, which hampers the extent to which the results can be generalised to the target population. Unfortunately, the use of a convenience sample was unavoidable as the South African Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 prevents HEIs from supplying certain information, including lists of registered student names.

Another noteworthy limitation is that the data were collected using a cross-sectional approach, which means that the perceptions captured in the findings are dependent on the mood of the sample participants at that specific point in time. As mass media publishes more reports on the extent to which certain sites publish fake reviews or do not adequately police their sites for such fake reviews, so a different picture may emerge. Therefore, periodic new research into Generation Y individuals' perceived credibility on online consumer reviews is important. Moreover, it would be valuable to determine empirically the degree to which perceived information and entertainment value, perceived credibility, perceived value and usage frequency of online consumer reviews influence Generation Y students' purchase intentions towards goods reviewed.

The study was also country-specific, focussing only on the South African market. Even though international travel, global media channels and social media are increasingly leading to a more global consumer physiognomy, cross-cultural differences do still exist. Considering online consumer reviews in particular, individualistic and collective cultures are likely to differ in both their contribution to and consultation of such reviews. Future research exploring the effect of such differences on the usage frequency of online consumer reviews will be of value, both academically and practically.

Consideration also needs to be given to other generations' usage frequency of online consumer reviews. The oldest members of Generation Z (individuals born after 2005) (Markert, 2004) turn 18 in 2023 – are such reviews relevant to them and, if so, will they continue being relevant to them in the foreseeable future? The same holds true for Generation X (individuals born between 1966 and 1985) (Markert, 2004). Applying the model tested in this study to Generations X and Z will provide important insights for marketers targeting these two generational segments.

7. Conclusion

Using an extended version of the advertising value model, this study investigated the antecedents of Generation Y students' usage frequency of online consumer reviews. The findings confirm that perceived information and entertainment value, perceived credibility

and perceived value have a positive influence on Generation Y students' usage frequency of online consumer reviews. The findings highlight the importance of ensuring that only authentic reviews are published and of not censoring negative reviews, and suggest the need to implement tactics to ensure that such reviews are informative and entertaining.

References

Akalp, N. (2014), "6 Simple ways to get customers to review your business online", available at: www.forbes.com/sites/allbusiness/2014/08/28/6-simple-ways-to-get-customers-to-review-your-business-online/#10ac582414c5 (accessed 22 June 2015).

Ante, S.E. (2009), "Amazon: turning consumer opinions into gold", available at: www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2009-10-15/amazon-turning-consumer-opinions-into-gold/ (accessed 19 November 2019).

Bailey, A.A., Bonifield, C.M. and Arias, A. (2018), "Social media use by young Latin American consumers: an exploration", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 43, pp. 10-19.

Bakr, Y., Tolba, A. and Meshreki, H. (2019), "Drivers of SMS advertising acceptance: a mixed-methods approach", *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 96-118.

Bento, M., Martinez, L.M. and Martinez, L.F. (2018), "Brand engagement and search for brands on social media: comparing generations X and Y in Portugal", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 43, pp. 234-241.

Berthon, P.R., Pitt, L.F., Plangger, K. and Shapiro, D. (2012), "Marketing meets web 2.0, social media, and creative consumers: implications for international marketing strategy", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 55 No. 3, pp. 261-271.

Bevan-Dye, A.L. and Akpojivi, U. (2016), "South African generation Y students' self-disclosure on facebook", *South African Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 46 No. 1, pp. 114-129.

Bone, P.F. (1995), "Word-of-mouth effects on short-term long-term product judgments", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 32 No. 3, pp. 213-223.

Bowman, M. (2019), "Online reviews and their impact on the bottom line", available at: www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2019/01/15/online-reviews-and-their-impact-on-the-bottom-line/#2ee1a1335bde (accessed 21 November 2019).

Brackett, L.D. and Carr, B.N. (2001), "Cyberspace advertising vs other media: mature student attitudes", *Journal of Advertising Research*, Vol. 41 No. 5, pp. 23-32.

Briggs, S.R. and Cheek, J.M. (1986), "The role of factor analysis in the development and evaluation of personality scales", *Journal of Personality*, Vol. 54 No. 1, pp. 106-148.

Byrne, B.M. (2010), *Structural Equation Modelling with AMOS: basic Concepts, Applications, and Programming*, Routledge, New York, NY.

Chang, H.H., Rizal, H. and Amin, H. (2013), "The determinants of consumer behavior towards email advertisement", *Internet Research*, Vol. 23 No. 3, pp. 316-337.

Cheung, C.M.K. and Lee, M.K.O. (2012), "What drives consumers to spread electronic word of mouth in online consumer-opinion platforms", *Decision Support Systems*, Vol. 53 No. 1, pp. 218-225.

Cheung, C.M.Y., Sia, C.L. and Kuan, K.K.Y. (2012), "Is this review believable? A study of factors affecting the credibility of online consumer reviews from an ELM perspective", *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, Vol. 13 No. 8, pp. 618-635.

Cheung, C.M.Y., Luo, C., Sia, C.L. and Chen, H. (2009), "Credibility of electronic word-of-mouth: informational and normative determinants of online consumer recommendations", *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, Vol. 13 No. 4, pp. 9-38.

Clark, L.A. and Watson, D. (1995), "Constructing validity: basic issues in objective scale development", *Psychological Assessment*, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 309-319.

Dichter, E. (1966), "How word-of-mouth advertising works", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 44 No. 6, pp. 147-160.

Ducoffe, R.H. (1995), "How consumers assess the value of advertising", *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 1-18.

Ducoffe, R.H. (1996), "Advertising value and advertising on the web", *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 21-35.

Elliott, C. (2018), "This is why you should not trust online reviews", available at: www.forbes.com/sites/christopherelliott/2018/11/21/why-you-should-not-trust-online-reviews/#a00912422185 (accessed 21 November 2019).

Elwalda, A., Lü, K. and Ali, M. (2016), "Perceived derived attributes of online customer reviews", *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol. 56, pp. 306-319.

Fertik, M. (2019), "How to get millenials to trust and respond to your advertising", available at: www.forbes.com/sites/michaelfertik/2019/02/14/how-to-get-millenials-to-trust-and-respond-to-your-advertising/#927f0826c81e (accessed 21 November 2019).

Filieria, R., McLeayc, F., Tsuid, B. and Lin, Z. (2018), "Consumer perceptions of information helpfulness and determinants of purchase intention in online consumer reviews of services", *Information and Management*, Vol. 55 No. 8, pp. 956-970.

Flavián, C., Gurrea, R. and Orús, C. (2009), "The effect of product presentation mode on the perceived content and continent quality of web sites", *Online Information Review*, Vol. 33 No. 6, pp. 1103-1128.

Flavián-Blanco, C., Gurrea-Sarasa, R. and Orús-Sanclemente, C. (2011), "Analyzing the emotional outcomes of the online search behavior with search engines", *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol. 27 No. 1, pp. 540-551.

Flynn, L.R., Goldsmith, R.E. and Eastman, J.K. (1996), "Opinion leaders and opinion seekers: two new measurement scales", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 24 No. 2, pp. 137-147.

Fornell, C. and Larcker, D.F. (1981), "Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 39-50.

Franke, G. and Sarstedt, M. (2019), "Heuristics versus statistics in discriminant validity testing: a comparison of four procedures", *Internet Research*, Vol. 29 No. 3, pp. 430-447.

Gailewicz, J. (2014), "Marketing to millennials: the consumers to change the market landscape", available at: http://thenextweb.com/entrepreneur/2014/03/29/meet-millennials-consumers-change-marketing-landscape/#gref (accessed 22 June 2015).

Ghose, A. and Ipeirotis, P.G. (2011), "Estimating the helpfulness and economic impact of product reviews: mining text and reviewer characteristics", *IEEE Transactions on Knowledge and Data Engineering*, Vol. 23 No. 10, pp. 1498-1512.

Greene, J. (2019), "14 Proven ways to encourage customers to write reviews", available at: https://databox.com/how-to-encourage-customers-to-write-reviews (accessed 27 November 2019).

Hair, J.F., Black, W.C., Babin, B.J. and Anderson, R.E. (2010), *Multivariate Data Analysis: A Global Perspective*, Pearson Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Hall, A. (2018), "Most millennials only purchase items with online reviews, study finds", available at: www.independent.co.uk/news/business/millennial-online-review-products-research-internet-trusted-recommendations-a8245781.htm (accessed 20 March 2018).

Hassan, M.U., Fatima, S., Akram, A., Abbas, J. and Hasnain, A. (2013), "Determinants of consumer attitude towards social-networking sites advertisement: testing the mediating role of advertising value", *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 319-330.

Hawlk, K. (2017), "How to encourage customer reviews (and why you should)", available at: www.shopify.co.za/retail/how-to-encourage-customer-reviews-and-why-you-should (accessed 27 November 2019).

Heinzman, A. (2019), "How fake reviews are manipulating you online", available at: www.howtogeek. com/407521/how-fake-reviews-are-manipulating-you-online/ (accessed 28 November 2019).

Henseler, J., Ringle, C.M. and Sarstedt, M.J. (2015), "A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modelling", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 43 No. 1, pp. 115-135.

Ho, V. (2017), "Giving offense and making amends: how hotel management attempts to manage rapport with dissatisfied customers", *Journal of Pragmatics*, Vol. 109, pp. 1-11.

Kats, R. (2018), "Surprise! most consumers look at reviews before a purchase", available at: https://retail. emarketer.com/article/surprise-most-consumers-look-reviews-before-purchase/5a94768debd400074 4ae413eook (accessed 20 March 2018).

Katz, E., Blumler, J.G. and Gurevitch, M. (1973), "Uses and gratifications research", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 37 No. 4, pp. 509-523.

Kim, Y.J. and Han, J. (2014), "Why smartphone advertising attracts customers: a model of web advertising, flow, and personalization", *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol. 33, pp. 256-269.

Kim, S.J., Maslowska, E. and Malthouse, E.C. (2018), "Understanding the effects of different review features on purchase probability", *International Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 37 No. 1, pp. 29-53.

Kotler, P. (2003), *Marketing Management*, Pearson Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ.

KPMG (2017), "The truth about online consumers: 2017 global online report", available at: https://assets. kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/xx/pdf/2017/01/the-truth-about-online-consumers.pdf (accessed 26 March 2019).

Kucukemiroglu, S. and Kara, A. (2015), "Online word-of-mouth communication on social networking sites: an empirical study of Facebook users", *International Journal of Commerce and Management*, Vol. 25 No. 1, pp. 2-20.

Lien, C.H. and Cao, Y. (2014), "Examining WeChat users' motivations, trust, attitudes, and positive word-of-mouth: evidence from China", *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol. 41, pp. 104-111.

Lin, Y., Hsu, C., Chen, M. and Fang, C. (2017), "New gratifications for social word-of-mouth spread via mobile SNSs: uses and gratifications approach with a perspective of media technology", *Telematics and Informatics*, Vol. 34 No. 4, pp. 382-397.

Liu, Z. and Park, S. (2015), "What makes a useful online review? Implication for travel product websites", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 47, pp. 140-151.

Luo, M.M., Chea, S. and Chen, J.S. (2011), "Web-based information service adoption: a comparison of the motivational model and the uses and gratifications theory", *Decision Support Systems*, Vol. 51 No. 1, pp. 21-30.

MacCallum, R.C., Browne, M.W. and Sugawara, H.M. (1996), "Power analysis and determination of sample size for covariance structure modelling", *Psychological Methods*, Vol. 1 No. 2, pp. 130-149.

Malhotra, N.K. (2010), *Marketing Research. An Applied Orientation*, Pearson Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Markert, J. (2004), "Demographics of age: generational and cohort confusion", *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, Vol. 26 No. 2, pp. 11-25.

Martins, J., Costa, C., Oliveira, T., Gonçalves, R. and Branco, F. (2019), "How smartphone advertising influences consumers' purchase intention", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 94, pp. 378-387.

Mathwick, C. and Rigdon, E. (2004), "Play, flow, and the online search experience", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 31 No. 2, pp. 324-332.

Millwood, A. (2018), "How to get more reviews: the ultimate guide", available at: www.yotpo.com/blog/ how-to-get-more-reviews/ (accessed 18 May 2018).

Mudambi, S.M. and Schuff, D. (2010), "What makes a helpful review? A study of customer reviews on Amazon.com", *MIS Quarterly*, Vol. 34 No. 1, pp. 185-200.

Murphy, R. (2018), "Local consumer review survey: online reviews statistics and trends", available at: www. brightlocal.com/research/local-consumer-review-survey/#local-business-review-habits (accessed 20 November 2019).

Notess, G.R. (2000), "Web wanderings. Consumers' revenge: online product reviews and ratings", available at: https://notess.com/write/archive/200004ww.html (accessed 7 January 2019).

O'Neil, T. (2015), "Survey confirms the value of reviews, provides new insights", available at: www. powerreviews.com/blog/survey-confirms-the-value-of-reviews/ (accessed 20 February 2018).

Ohanian, R. (1990), "Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness", *Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 19 No. 3, pp. 39-52.

Pallant, J. (2010), *SPSS Survival Manual*, McGraw Hill, New York, NY.

Park, C. and Lee, T.M. (2009), "Antecedents of online reviews' usage and purchase influence: an empirical comparison of US and Korean consumers", *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, Vol. 23 No. 4, pp. 332-340.

Pitman, J. (2019), "How to monitor and respond to online reviews", available at: www.brightlocal.com/ learn/how-to-monitor-and-respond-to-online-reviews/ (accessed 29 November 2019).

Rose, K. (2017), "Why customer reviews can help drive sales success", available at: https:// socialmediaweek.org/blog/2017/11/importance-customer-reviews-sales-success/ (accessed 18 May 2018).

Rubin, A.M. (1993), "Audience activity and media use", *Communication Monographs*, Vol. 60 No. 1, pp. 98-105.

Saxena, A. and Khanna, U. (2013), "Advertising on social network sites: a structural equation modelling approach", *Vision: The Journal of Business Perspective*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 17-25.

Schiffman, L.G., Kanuk, L.L. and Wisenblit, J. (2010), *Consumer Behavior*, Pearson Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, USA.

Shareef, M.A., Mukerji, B., Dwivedi, Y.K., Rana, N.P. and Islam, R. (2019), "Social media marketing: comparative effect of advertisement sources", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 46, pp. 58-69.

Srivastava, V. and Kalro, A.D. (2019), "Enhancing the helpfulness of online consumer reviews: the role of latent (content) factors", *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, Vol. 48, pp. 33-50.

Stern, B.B. (1994), "A revised communication model for advertising: multiple dimensions of the source, the message, and the recipient", *Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 23 No. 2, pp. 5-15.

Sun, T., Youn, S., Wu, G. and Kunttaraporn, M. (2006), "Online word-of-mouth (or mouse): an exploration of its antecedents and consequences", *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Vol. 11 No. 4, pp. 1104-1127.

Synodinos, C. (2017), "Validating a green purchase behaviour model amongst African generation Y students", in Delener, N. and Schweikert, C. (Eds), *The Global Business and Technology Association (GBATA) Nineteenth Annual International Conference Readings Book*, Global Business and Technology Association, pp. 922-930.

Taylor, P. and Keeter, S. (2010), "Millennials: a portrait of generation next", available at: www. pewsocialtrends.org/files/2010/10/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change.pdf (accessed 30 October 2012).

Tsang, M.M., Ho, S. and Liang, T. (2004), "Attitudes toward mobile advertising: an empirical study", *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, Vol. 8 No. 3, pp. 65-78.

Ullman, J.B. (2014), "Structural equation modelling", in Tabachnick, B.G. and Fidell, L.S. (Eds), *Using Multivariate Statistics*, Pearson, Essex, pp. 731-836.

Vedantam, S. (2012), "Five ways to spot a fake online review, restaurant or otherwise", available at: www.npr.org/people/137765146/shankar-vedantam (accessed 21 November 2019).

Voorhees, C.M., Brady, M.K., Calantone, R. and Ramirez, E. (2016), "Discriminant validity testing in marketing: an analysis, causes for concern, and proposed remedies", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 44 No. 1, pp. 119-134.

Wang, F., Menon, K. and Ranaweera, C. (2018), "Dynamic trends in online product ratings: a diagnostic utility explanation", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 87, pp. 80-89.

Wang, Y. and Genç, E. (2019), "Path to effective mobile advertising in Asian markets: credibility, entertainment and peer influence", *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, Vol. 31 No. 1, pp. 55-80.

Wang, Y. and Sun, S. (2010), "Assessing beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral responses toward online advertising in three countries", *International Business Review*, Vol. 19 No. 4, pp. 333-344.

Wang, Y., Wang, Z., Zhang, D. and Zhang, R. (2019), "Discovering cultural differences in online consumer product reviews", *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, Vol. 20 No. 3, pp. 169-182.

Yang, J., Sarathy, R. and Lee, J. (2016), "The effect of product review balance and volume on online shoppers' risk perception and purchase intention", *Decision Support Systems*, Vol. 89, pp. 66-76.

Zeng, F., Huang, L. and Dou, W. (2009), "Social factors in user perceptions and responses to advertising in online social networking communities", *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 1-13.

Zha, X., Li, J. and Yan, Y. (2015), "Advertising value and credibility transfer: attitude towards web advertising and online information acquisition", *Behaviour and Information Technology*, Vol. 34 No. 5, pp. 520-532.

Zhang, D., Zhou, L., Kehoe, J.L. and Kilic, I.Y. (2016), "What online reviewer behaviors really matter? Effects of verbal and nonverbal behaviors on detection of fake online reviews", *Journal of Management Information Systems*, Vol. 33 No. 2, pp. 456-481.

Zinkevych, D. (2018), "5 Expectations of the African millennial consumer", available at: www. bizcommunity.africa/Article/410/458/179653.html (accessed 26 March 2019).

Corresponding author
Ayesha Lian Bevan-Dye can be contacted at: 12426156@g.nwu.ac.za