Title: The Reviewer Matters: Two Studies on Online Pictorial Reviews

Speaker: Ms Yang Lu

Date/Time: 3 December 2015, Thursday, 10:30 AM to 12:00 PM

Venue: Executive Classroom, COM2-04-02

Supervisor: Dr Bernard Tan, Professor, School of Computing

Abstract:

With the emergence of online pictorial reviews, the image of reviewers is new information to prospective consumers. But whether and how these images may influence consumer purchase decision remains unclear. This thesis investigates how reviewer attractiveness (a key aspect of reviewer image) may influence online consumers' purchase decision making in two studies.

In Study One, we investigate the effect of reviewer attractiveness from the Self-Congruity perspective and examine how reviewer attractiveness would influence consumers' decision making through the mechanism of reviewer-self image congruity. We also look into how the surrounding review commentary (i.e., content orientation) would interact with reviewer attractiveness and jointly influence consumers' purchase intention. A lab experiment is designed to collect the data. And the results provide important theoretical and practical implications.

In Study Two, we continue to investigate the effect of reviewer attractiveness from the Source Effect perspective. We carefully examine how reviewer attractiveness would interact with review valence and review depth (two key attributes of reviews) in influencing consumers' product evaluation and purchase intention. Drawing on the source effect model, the set of hypotheses predict the combined effects of reviewer attractiveness, review valence, and review depth on consumer purchase intention. The hypotheses are tested using data collected from scenario based field experiments and are largely supported. In addition, the results reveal interesting gender differences and provide useful theoretical and practical implications.

In general, this thesis contributes to the online review literature by demonstrating that the image of online reviewer does matter and it exerts important influence on consumers' decision making through interesting underlying mechanisms. With the studies, we provide important theoretical and practical implications.