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Communicating While Distributing: Little Things That Matter to Consumers' Trust and Confidence in E-Commerce

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Abstract

Purpose: As a modern distribution channel, the growth of e-commerce has brought more competitive pressures on e-marketplace, making trust and loyalty become top priority. As one of many sources of trust and loyalty issues, understanding the effect of careless marketing communications on consumers' perception is critical. This study examines the effect of careless marketing communications (e.g. misspellings, incomplete information) in website on consumers' trust toward and confidence in purchasing a product from an e-commerce. **Research design and methodology:** An experimental research design (with two experimental studies) was used in to test the hypotheses. Study 1 employs a single-factor design and study 2 employs a 2x2, full-factorial, between-subjects design. **Results:** Results of the two experimental studies (Study 1, n = 60; Study 2, n = 140) demonstrate that simple mistakes significantly decrease consumers' trust toward an e-commerce and their confidence to purchase from the e-commerce. The effect is found to be significant in the case of high-involvement products; whereas no effect is found in low-involvement products. **Conclusions:** E-commerce relies heavily on carefully crafted marketing communications to establish consumers' trust and confidence. These studies confirm the equal importance of distribution and communication in maintaining consumers' trust and sustainability of the business.

Keywords: E-Commerce, E-Distribution Strategy, Careless Marketing Communication, Perceived Trustworthiness, Consumer Confidence, Product Involvement, Online Shopping Behavior.

JEL Classification Code: M31, M37

1. Introduction

Digital marketing, as a sophisticated form of distribution strategy, has dramatically revolutionized the way companies and brands reach out and communicate with potential markets. The rapid growth of e-commerce provides consumers with easier access to a wide array of sellers that enables them to switch between sellers easily back and forth – making relationships, loyalty, and trusts building become more challenging than ever. Trust is perhaps one of many issues arise in accordance with the rising popularity of internet use (Koehn, 2003). A research of 6000 customers by Ernst & Young in 2000 highlighted the great importance of trust – above price - toward an e-commerce.

Antecedents to e-trust come from various sources, such as customer, seller, environment, and technology (Soleimani, 2021). From the seller's side, source of mistrust may come from communications and interactions – beside reputations. Communication

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mistakes as simple as bad grammar or misspellings can hurt the brand as research results by Global Lingo – a company specializing in professional translation and transcription – revealed. In a survey to 1,029 UK consumers, 59 percent claimed they would not buy from an e-commerce site with communication mistakes as they indicate signs of service quality problems, carelessness, and unprofessionalism. Another study by Survey Monkey also revealed that more than 75 percent of the US respondents stated they were less likely to purchase something advertised with misspellings and grammar mistakes (Thackston, 2020).

Customers receive information about products and services offered by companies through controlled and uncontrolled communications. Controlled communications include advertisement, magazine, newspapers, website information, whereas uncontrolled communications include word-of-mouth. Controlled communication tools may contain several mistakes in delivering the messages to the customers and thus, may create trust issues. Adequate information should provide consumers with clear understanding about the products or services (Sultan & Wong, 2012). From the seller's perspective, therefore, controlled communications should be carefully delivered since this is the area where sellers have the power to design and tailor their messages before coming across to the market.

Careless behavior in marketing can occur in any of the marketing mix elements, such as products or services, pricing, marketing communication and many others. Misspellings and bad grammar are obviously examples of careless behaviors in marketing communication (we name this situation as careless marketing communication). Careless marketing communication is deemed very critical because any poor communication that occurs prior to transactions by customers may lead to weakened consumer confidence and lower perceived trustworthiness towards the brand and the e-commerce, especially when the product/service involvement is high.

This research aims to examine the impact of careless marketing communication of e-commerce on consumers' perceptions toward the e-commerce. Mistakes that appear in websites may include typos, misspelling, bad grammars, inappropriate information about the products or services, wrong contact person or email address, missing links, etc. This study has significance in terms of the first to investigate the effect of careless marketing communication on consumer confidence and consumer perceived trustworthiness by considering the level of product/service involvement through an experimental study setting. Therefore, this research does not only attempt to examine the direct effect of careless marketing communication on consumers' perception, but also to see how the effect is moderated by product/service involvement level.

2. Literature Review

In general, trust is defined as the willingness to accept risk and to be vulnerable to others (Mayer et al., 1995). In this definition, a party (as a trustor) is in the position of being vulnerable to another party's action, based on his or her expectation that the other party will conduct a certain action important to the trustor. It implies that the trustor may or may not have the ability to control the other party (as the trustee). Trust is, therefore, seen as a construct of a willingness to rely on business partner's behavior as well as to assume risks (Nguyen & Khoa, 2019). In electronic commerce context, trust is defined as a belief that a seller will perform some activities in accordance with consumers' confidence (Wu & Liu, 2007). The application of these definitions of trust can be seen in the context of e-commerce, where consumers (the 'trustor') would provide their sensitive information such as credit card numbers, email address, and so on, in the hope that the e-commerce (the trustee) would protect the information from any misuse. Since consumers are less likely to have the ability to monitor the use of such private information, consumers face risk and uncertainty – hence, they need to build trust. Trust is central to online marketplace in that it helps to build sense of comfort in consumers as well as to build long lasting relationship between sellers and buyers (Khoa & Khanh, 2019). Online trust was found to drive higher preference toward the online marketplace, increased interaction with the provider, and increased willingness to disclose personal information.

Mayer et al. (1995) also conceptualized trust as a set of beliefs that the trustee would perform an action as expected – thus, trust is also understood as a perceived construct, knowns as perceived trustworthiness. Perceived trustworthiness incorporates four dimensions: ability, benevolence, integrity and predictability. Ability dimension refers to trustee's competence to fulfill promises to the trustor. Thus, an e-commerce site's ability to perform expected activities and the accuracy of the information in the website will enhance customers' perceived trustworthiness of the website (Koufaris & Hampton-Sosa, 2004). In the context of e-commerce, companies should help consumers to overcome perceived risk and uncertainty by building trust in their e-commerce sites (Nijite & Parsa, 2005). Many ways are available to build consumers' trust toward companies' e-commerce site, ranging from assurance of transaction security, to accuracy of information, as well as to providing human connection with consumers.

Trust helps consumers build confidence to perform transaction with sellers or companies. The term "consumer confidence" is commonly used in the economics literature as it measures the consumer spending or ability to buy products or services

(Dominitz & Manski, 2004). It is defined as psychological construct that measures customers' expected changes and variance of their household finances and the economic situation (Ou et al., 2014). However, in the marketing literature, consumer confidence is conceptualized as a belief related to the degree of certainty that someone holds toward an object (Stajkovic, 2006).

Consumer confidence can be categorized into knowledge and choice confidence (Urbany et al., 1989). While knowledge confidence is related to how certain consumers are towards what is known of the product in terms of attributes and performance, choice confidence refers to how certain consumers are toward their choice of product, as a result of familiarity toward the product (Park & Laessig, 1981) and it reflects consumer's judgment about the quality of product or brand (Howard, 1989). Consumers' choice confidence can be measured by confidence in decisions when choosing among alternatives (Gillison & Reynolds, 2018).

The role of consumer confidence is especially critical in the online distribution context. Despite the provided informational benefits, the inherent characteristics of the Internet and e-marketplace raises uncertainty, especially for the missing opportunity to inspect the product physically (Santos & Goncalves, 2019). Choice confidence is also built on consumers' meta-cognition toward the information acquired (Andrews, 2016). Flavian et al. (2016) identified antecedents to choice confidence which include adequacy and clarity of information. As consequence, consumers would build higher confidence to purchase the product when they have sufficient information and knowledge about the product. Intensive information search is critical to consumers to reduce the perceived uncertainty. As the uncertainty decreased, confidence level to purchase the product would eventually increase. Therefore, in order to be more familiar with the quality of the product or brand, consumers should have sufficient information and knowledge about the product and brand. Customers are more optimist to buy new products or services when they have adequate and accurate information. In a similar vein, customers with lower consumer confidence level would focus on value for money; whereas customers with higher confidence level tend to be more impulsive and more willing to purchase from the company (Ou et al., 2014).

As information becomes an important cue for consumers before deciding to make a purchase, accuracy and quality of information must become the center of attention. Accuracy in news reporting has been the center of research in journalism as readers' perception toward the news source's credibility is significantly affected when information of presented is inaccurate (Maier, 2002). Simple typos, misspellings, grammatical errors, inaccurate reporting of dates and places, are enough to command lower perceived credibility towards the news source (Maier, 2005). Extending this logic to the domain of marketing communications, mistakes on information presented on the company's website may reduce the quality of consumers' impression towards the company; which will make consumers feel less confident to purchase the product by the service seller. Indeed, lack of consumer confidence is named to be one of the major impediments for consumers to purchase through online marketplace (Moon et al., 2021).

With relatively small amount of language to form perception, people rely on verbal cues when forming impressions about others, making language a powerful tool in impression formation (Markowitz et al., 2023). Past research has shown how quick people can form impressions with limited informational cues. Borrowing an idea from consumer psychology on first impression theory, where people can actually make a good judgment toward an individual just within the first 100 milli-seconds of the first encounter (Wills & Todorov, 2006), we believe that this can be extended to the domain of information processing as well. In Wills and Todorov's (2006) study, exposure time as short as 1/10 second is enough for respondents to judge individuals' trustworthiness and competence, among other variables. When applied in the buyer-seller relationships, in other words, it only takes a split second for consumers to spot mistakes that may lead to reduced trustworthiness toward the seller. Building on this theory, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H1a: Consumers will express lower confidence level in purchasing a service or product from an e-commerce when the e-commerce commits careless marketing communication than when it does not commit any careless marketing communication.

H1b: Consumers will express lower perceived trustworthiness toward an e-commerce when the e-commerce commits careless marketing communication than when it does not commit any careless marketing communication.

Product or service involvement can be understood as a consumer's recognition toward a specific product or service. More specifically, product or service involvement is defined as a consumer's enduring perceptions of the importance of the product or service category based on the consumer's inherent needs, values, and interests (Bian & Moutinho, 2011). When product or service involvement is high, buyer decision processes are thought to proceed through extended decision making, a series of sequential stages involving information search and evaluation of criteria (Browne & Kaldenberg, 1997). This is due to the higher perceived risk consumers attach to the acquisition of the product itself. Therefore, to reduce the higher perceived risk, consumers would spend more effort in searching for information.

Information serves as a cue to consumers in evaluating how trustworthy a seller is. In the context of high involvement product, consumers' trust towards the seller is challenged when the information provided does not seem to signal quality and reliability. This is because consumers use inferential process when making judgment towards the quality and reliability of a certain product (Brewer et al., 2005); thus, making the case of high involvement product as more critical in consumers judgment process that relies on information. Similar to our previous argument, we argue that simple mistakes in information provided by the seller would have stronger effect on consumer confidence level and perceived trustworthiness of the service seller in the context of high involvement product. Thus, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H2a: In the case of careless marketing communication practice by the e-commerce, consumers will express lower confidence level to purchase when the product is a high-involvement product than when the product is low-involvement product.

H2b: In the case of careless marketing communication practice by the e-commerce, consumers will express lower perceived trustworthiness towards the e-commerce when the product is high-involvement product than when the product is low-involvement product.

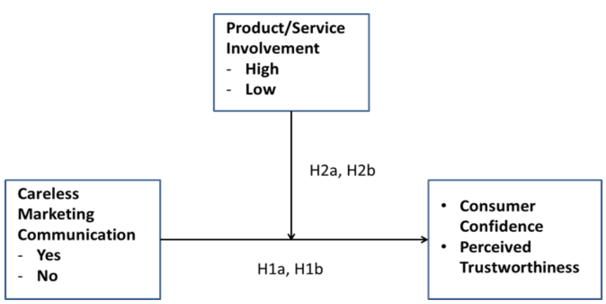

Figure 1: Research Model

3. Research Methods and Materials

To test our hypotheses, we ran two experimental studies. Study 1 was performed to test the main effect of careless marketing communications on perceived trustworthiness and consumer confidence (H1a and H1b); whereas study 2 was performed to test the moderation effect of service involvement level on the relationship between careless marketing communication and perceived trustworthiness and consumer confidence (H2a and H2b).

3.1. Study 1

3.1.1. Design and Participants

Study 1 was designed as a single-factor (communication message: careless vs. non-careless) experimental research design. Sixty participants (55% male, 45% female) were randomly assigned to any of the two conditions. Participants were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk, a crowdsourcing Internet marketplace that enables researchers to collect data from respondents in exchange for monetary value.

3.1.2. Procedures

Upon agreement to participate as respondents, participants were directed to a website that contains the stimuli for the experiment. On the first page of the site, participants were informed that the aim of the research was to evaluate a website design of *a online retailer*. Participants in the 'careless' condition were presented a website of an online marketplace, that looks similar to popular online marketplaces such as Tokopedia, Shopee, etc. The content of the mock online marketplace was designed as such that many typos (e.g. multiple misspellings of regular words) and incomplete information (e.g. incomplete phone number, missing address information, incomplete product information, etc.) were present. Participants in the 'non-careless' condition were also presented a mock online marketplace that is well-designed, error-free, and full of important information.

Participants in both conditions were asked to examine the design of the website carefully and then rate how attractive and easy the website is to navigate. This question is only to divert the attention of participants toward the real aim of the research. For manipulation check purposes, participants were asked the name of the mock online marketplace. We distinguish the careless vs. non-careless website by the name of the URLs, in which the careless website URL was named www.thingstopurchase.com and the non-careless website was named www.thingstobuy.com (see Appendix). After answering the manipulation check and mask question, participants were then presented with the real measure of the study and asked to provide their responses. Afterwards, participants were thanked and debriefed.

3.1.3. Measures

The dependent variables of this study were consumer confidence and perceived trustworthiness. Consumer confidence refers to the extent to which consumers are confident to purchase the product or service. Consumer confidence in purchase decision is conceptualized as the certainty that consumers perceived that the outcome of their purchase decision would be satisfactory for them

(Soesilo et al., 2020). We also preliminary tested these measures to 40 respondents and found high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.821). Perceived trustworthiness refers to the extent to which consumers perceive the seller of the service is reliable in performing and delivering their services. We used a 6-items, 5-points Likert scale measures for this construct, which were adapted from Morgan and Hunt (1994). Complete measures of the study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Measures of Variables

Variables	Items of Measurements	Sources
Consumer Confidence	1. "I am certain that the decision to purchase a product from this seller is a right decision" 2. "If I purchase a product from this seller, I will not be disappointed with my decision" 3. "I am certain that the decision to purchase a product from this seller will bring benefit to me" 4. "The decision to purchase a product from this seller will bring pleasure experience to me" 5. "I will not regret my decision to purchase a product from this seller" (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree).	Soesilo, et al. (2020)
Perceived Trustworthiness	1. "This online seller can generally be trusted" 2. "I trust this online seller" 3. "I have great confidence in this online seller" 4. "This online seller has high integrity" 5. "I can depend on this online seller to do the right thing" 6. "This online seller can be relied upon" (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree).	Morgan & Hunt (1994)

3.2. Study 2

3.2.1. Design and Participants

We suggest that the effect of careless marketing communication on perceived trustworthiness and consumer confidence is moderated by the level of involvement. More particularly, in the case of careless marketing communication, perceived trustworthiness and consumer confidence will be lower when the product is considered as high-involvement product than when the product is considered as low-involvement product. To test this effect, we used an experimental 2(careless marketing communications: yes vs. no) X 2(involvement level: high vs. low involvement) between-subjects, full-factorial design, of which one hundred and forty participants were randomly assigned to any one of the four conditions. Participants were recruited from the Amazon Mechanical Turk.

We ran a stimuli development test for this study to determine the stimuli to be used for high vs. low involvement service category. Based on the product category, the stimuli development test revealed that consumers tend to see fashion products as low-involvement and health products as high-involvement. Therefore, in study 2, we used fashion e-commerce as low-involvement stimuli and drugstore e-commerce as high-involvement stimuli.

3.2.2. Procedures and Measures

Similar to study 1, upon arrival at the URL link provided to the participants, participants were told that they were going to examine the attractiveness of an e-commerce website. Participants in each of the four conditions were exposed to different stimulus. For example, participants in the condition of careless marketing communications by drugstore e-commerce were primed with a mock website of an online drugstore containing typos, missing information, etc.; while those in the condition of non-careless marketing communications were presented a mock website of an online drugstore that was well-designed, free of errors, and full of important information. The same treatment also applies to the low-involvement service category: the fashion e-commerce. Again, as applied in study 1, each condition was identified by different URL names for different conditions, in order to check the manipulation effect. The URL for non-careless drugstore e-commerce was named www.drugstobuy.com; while for careless drugstore e-commerce was named www.drugstopurchase.com. In the non-careless fashion e-commerce condition, the URL was named www.fashiontobuy.com; whereas in the careless fashion e-commerce condition, the URL's name was www.fashiontopurchase.com. The rest of the procedure followed that of study 1. Measures used in study 2 were also similar to study 1.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Study 1

4.1.1. Manipulation Checks

Manipulation check was performed to ensure whether participants were distributed to the right condition and received the treatments accordingly. The manipulation checks confirmed that 100% participants in each condition could name the website URL accordingly. Therefore, we concluded that our manipulation was successful.

4.1.2. Consumer Confidence and Perceived Trustworthiness

An independent samples t-test was performed to test H1a and H1b. The t-test revealed a main significant effect of the marketing communications on consumer confidence to purchase decision, in which scores of consumer confidence were significantly lower in the case of careless marketing communications (M=2.33, SD=.29), than in the case of non-careless marketing communications (M=3.85, SD=.25), t(60) = 22.141, p < .01. This confirms that consumers would be less confident to purchase when the e-commerce commits careless marketing communications. Thus, we found support for H1a.

The independent samples t-test also revealed significant main effect of marketing communications on perceived trustworthiness toward the seller, in which scores were significantly lower in the case of careless marketing communications (M=2.01, SD=.35), than in the case of non-careless marketing communications (M=3.94, SD=.29), t(60) = 23.87, p < .01. This confirms that consumers perceive lower trust in the seller when they commit careless marketing communications; therefore, H1b is supported. Results of study 1 are presented in Table 2a, 2b, 3, and Figure 2.

Table 2a: Independent Samples T-Test for Consumer Confidence

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-Test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Consumer Confidence	Equal variances assumed	1,606	.210	22,141	60	.000	151,563	.06845	137,870	165,255
	Equal variances not assumed			22,028	57,218	.000	151,563	.06880	137,786	165,339

Table 2b: Independent Samples T-Test for Perceived Trustworthiness

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-Test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Perceived Trustworthiness	Equal variances assumed	.379	.541	23,866	60	.000	193,160	.08094	176,970	209,349
	Equal variances not assumed			23,724	56,578	.000	193,160	.08142	176,853	209,466

Table 3: Group Statistics T-Test

DV	IV: Marketing Communications	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Consumer Confidence	Careless	30	2.33	0.29033	0.05301
	Non-Careless	32	3.85	0.24814	0.04387
Perceived Trustworthiness	Careless	30	3.94	0.28901	0.05109
	Non-Careless	32	2.01	0.34722	0.06339

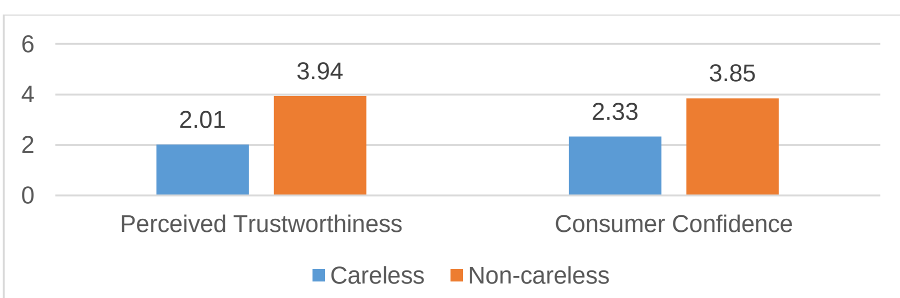

Figure 2: Results of Study 1

4.2. Study 2

4.2.1. Manipulation Checks

Similar to the result of study 1, the manipulation checks confirmed that 100% participants in each condition could name the website URL accordingly. Therefore, we concluded that our manipulation in study 2 was successful.

4.2.2. Consumer Confidence and Perceived Trustworthiness

A 2-way ANOVA was used to test the moderating effect of product involvement level on the dependent variables through interaction effect. The 2-way ANOVA results revealed that there was a significant main effect of marketing communications ($F(1,136) = 775.73$, $p<.01$, $\eta = .851$) and involvement level ($F(1,136) = 38.005$, $p<.01$, $\eta = .218$) on consumer confidence. Further, these main effects were qualified by an interaction effect of marketing communications and involvement level of service, ($F(1,136) = 16.59$, $p<.01$, $\eta = .109$), on consumer confidence to purchase decision, in that, in the case of careless marketing communications, consumers expressed lower consumer confidence level when the product is considered as high involvement product than when the product is considered as low involvement product (M careless/high = 2.362 vs. M careless/low = 2.805, $p < .01$). In the case of non-careless marketing communications, no significant difference in consumer confidence level was found between the high involvement and low involvement product (M non-careless/high = 3.74 vs. M non-careless/low = 3.83, $p = .141$). Thus, we found support for H2a.

The 2-way ANOVA results revealed that there was a significant main effect of marketing communications ($F(1,136) = 1085.74$, $p<.01$, $\eta = .889$) and product involvement level ($F(1,136) = 71.338$, $p<.01$, $\eta = .344$) on perceived trustworthiness. Further, these main effects were qualified by an interaction effect of marketing communications and product involvement level, ($F(1,136) = 86.125$, $p<.01$, $\eta = .388$), on perceived trustworthiness, in that, in the case of careless marketing communications, consumers expressed lower perceived trustworthiness when the product is considered as high involvement product than when the product is considered as low involvement product (M careless/high = 2.062 vs. M careless/low = 2.871, $p < .01$). In the case of non-careless marketing communications, no significant difference was found in perceived trustworthiness between the high involvement and low involvement product (M non-careless/high = 3.99 vs. M non-careless/low = 3.95, $p = .556$). Thus, we found support for H2b. Results of test of between-subjects, estimates, and pairwise comparisons for consumer confidence are presented in table 4a and 4b; whereas all results for perceived trustworthiness are presented in table 5a and 5b. The interaction effect results for study 2 are also depicted in figure 3 (consumer confidence) and figure 4 (perceived trustworthiness).

Table 4a: Test of Between-Subjects Effects on Consumer Confidence

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	54.376[a]	3	18,125	276,775	.000	.859
Intercept	1,420,829	1	1,420,829	21,696,060	.000	.994
Marketing Communications (Careless vs. Non Careless)	50,801	1	50,801	775,728	.000	.851
Product Involvement (High vs. Low)	2,489	1	2,489	38,005	.000	.218
Marketing Communications * Product Involvement	1,087	1	1,087	16,591	.000	.109
Error	8,906	136	.065			
Total	1,484,111	140				
Corrected Total	63,283	139				

a. R Squared = .859 (Adjusted R Squared = .856)

Table 4b: Estimates and Pairwise Comparisons for Consumer Confidence

Marketing Communications	Product Involvement	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Not Careless	Low	3,833	.043	3,748	3,919
	High	3,743	.043	3,657	3,828
Careless	Low	2,805	.043	2,719	2,890
	High	2,362	.043	2,276	2,447

Marketing Communications	(I) Product Involvement	(J) Product Involvement	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.**	95% Confidence Interval for Difference**	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Not Careless	Low	High	.090	.061	.141	-.030	.211
	High	Low	-.090	.061	.141	-.211	.030
Careless	Low	High	.443*	.061	.000	.322	.564
	High	Low	-.443*	.061	.000	-.564	-.322

Based on estimated marginal means
* The mean difference is significant at the .050 level.
** Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Least Significant Difference (equivalent to no adjustments).

Table 5a: Test of Between-Subjects Effects on Perceived Trustworthiness

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	90.744[a]	3	30,248	414,401	.000	.901
Intercept	1,450,717	1	1,450,717	19,874,876	.000	.993
Marketing Communications (Careless vs. Non-Careless)	79,251	1	79,251	1,085,738	.000	.889
Product Involvement (High vs. Low)	5,207	1	5,207	71,338	.000	.344
Marketing Communications * Product Involvement	6,287	1	6,287	86,125	.000	.388
Error	9,927	136	.073			
Total	1,551,389	140				
Corrected Total	100,671	139				

a. R Squared = .901 (Adjusted R Squared = .899)

Table 5b: Estimates and Pairwise Comparisons for Perceived Trustworthiness

Marketing Communications	Product Involvement	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Not Careless	Low	3,952	.046	3,862	4,043
	High	3,990	.046	3,900	4,081
Careless	Low	2,871	.046	2,781	2,962
	High	2,062	.046	1,972	2,152

Marketing Communications	(I) Product Involvement	(J) Product Involvement	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.**	95% Confidence Interval for Difference**	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Not Careless	Low	High	-.038	.065	.556	-.166	.090
	High	Low	.038	.065	.556	-.090	.166
Careless	Low	High	.810*	.065	.000	.682	.937
	High	Low	-.810*	.065	.000	-.937	-.682

Based on estimated marginal means
* The mean difference is significant at the .050 level.
** Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Least Significant Difference (equivalent to no adjustments).

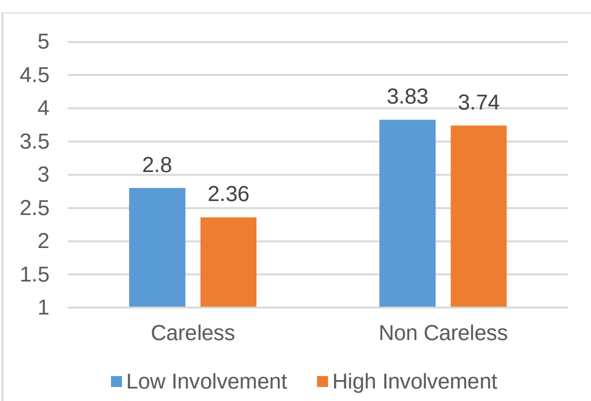

Figure 3: Consumer Confidence Results

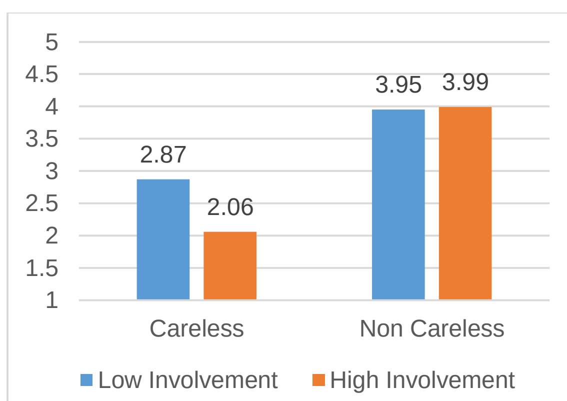

Figure 4: Perceived Trustworthiness Result

4.3. Discussions

In this paper, we examine the effect of marketing communications on consumer confidence to purchase from and perceived trustworthiness towards an e-commerce. Specifically, we investigate how careless marketing communications yield negative impacts on consumers' perceived trustworthiness toward and confidence to purchase from an e-commerce, especially in the context of high-involvement products or services. Through a series of experimental studies, we successfully demonstrate that consumer confidence level to purchase a product from an e-commerce decreases as the e-commerce commits careless marketing communications. Simple mistakes, such as typos or misspellings and incomplete information are sufficient to drive lower confidence in consumers to purchase from the retailer. At the same time, trustworthiness of the retailer is also tarnished as consumers express lower trust in the retailer.

In line with Everard and Galleta's (2005) findings, consumers place less value to a website that contains typographical errors. Such errors drive consumers to perceive the website as having lower quality than that without errors. Further, Koehn (2003) also found such errors lower consumers' purchase intention as their confidence towards the organization committing errors was altered. Kelton et al.'s (2008) stated that trustworthiness was seen as an extension of quality as it reflected the perceived likelihood that the information would preserve consumers' trust in it. Thus, when the information quality is high, then the perceived likelihood to preserve consumers' trust will also be high. Simple mistakes in marketing communication materials reduce the quality of the information, and consequently, reduce the trustworthiness toward the seller itself.

In addition, our findings are also in support of Maier's (2002) findings on the importance of accuracy of information on readers' perception towards the newspaper's credibility, in that a statistically significant relationship was found between perceived errors and newspaper credibility. Accuracy and credibility are critical as polls of public opinion in the US show that trust in U.S. news media has been declining for at least two decades due to inaccuracy and simple mistakes of information (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2004). Our experiments therefore support and confirm previous studies, even in different disciplines.

Findings also show that when consumers perceive the product or service to be purchased as highly involving, such as drugs or medicines, careless marketing communications by the online retailer lead them to have less confidence to purchase from and perceive lower trust in the retailer. Conversely, when the marketing communications are well and carefully designed, consumers express higher confidence to purchase from and perceived trustworthiness towards the e-commerce, regardless of the involvement level of the product to the consumers as shown by similarly high scores of consumer confidence and perceived trustworthiness with no significant difference between the case of low vs. high involvement level. As consumers see more risks in the product they plan to purchase, they pay more attention to the presentation of information details as this would be their reference to help them making the right decision. This research proves that simple errors in the marketing communication materials (i.e. information on the website) are enough to prove the reduced trust and confidence in consumers.

5. Conclusions

This study examines the effect of careless marketing communications on consumers' evaluation and judgment toward an e-commerce. Specifically, this study investigates how mistakes as simple as misspellings, bad grammar, or incomplete information in website affect consumers' trust toward and confidence to purchase from the e-commerce. Findings of this study confirm all of our hypotheses, providing evidence that the role of distribution strategy in the digital world cannot stand alone on its own without the accompanying role of marketing communications. Distribution and marketing communication are inseparable integration in today's digital marketing world. In fact, consumer confidence must be fostered in the context of cross-channel shopping involving online and offline marketing channel in order to preserve positive purchase journey (Flavian et al., 2019).

The implications of our study are threefold for businesses. First, while we believe that a good product will sell itself, our study shed more lights on the importance of communications. In general, businesses should not neglect the importance of careful marketing communications, even at the atomic level, such as spelling of words, typos, or missing alphabets, and the likes. In today's digital world, website becomes the main gate for consumers to find and compare information. As one of the firm's faces to interact with potential customers, information provided should be clear, accurate, and error-free. Borrowing the theory of first impression, businesses should carefully establish their image to create a good, memorable first impression that will last long.

Further, businesses that specialize in high involvement products or services, inherit extra efforts to reduce consumers perceived risk and increase their confidence and trust. Therefore, the implications of simple mistakes in the marketing communications are more powerful in this context. Through carefully crafted marketing communications, sellers of high involvement products or services must improve consumer confidence to make purchase decision of their products as well as perceived trustworthiness in the businesses.

Third, findings of this study are generalizable to e-commerce of any size which implies that new startups and small business owners must design their marketing communications carefully since the beginning of their business journey. Similar to sellers of high involvement products, new startups and small businesses are often facing challenges of building consumer confidence and improve perceived trustworthiness. Thus, marketing communications should not be neglected at all cost as they must compete with existing competitors with better position already.

Hiring a professional website copywriter would be an option to look at in achieving error-free marketing communications in the context of e-marketplace. Similar to ad copywriting, website copywriting is a process of writing digital content for a website, which varies from product pages to blog posts. Website architecture and development is critical to seamless customer journey in e-marketplace. However, without perfect website copywriting, the customer journey fails to achieve perfection.

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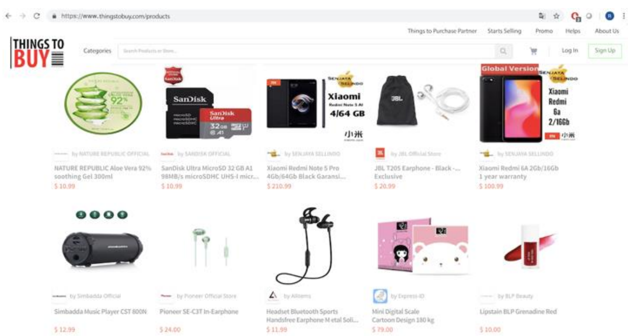
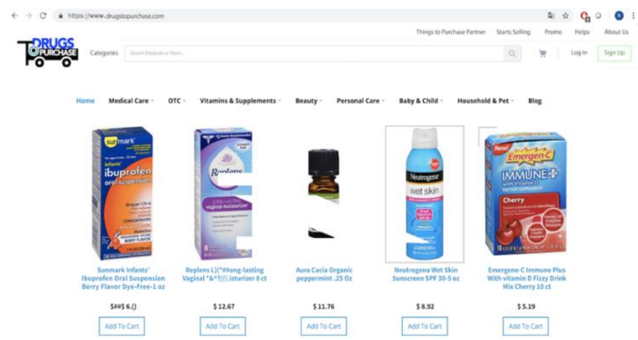
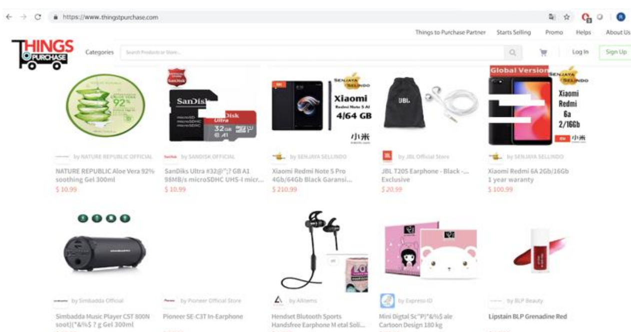
Appendixes



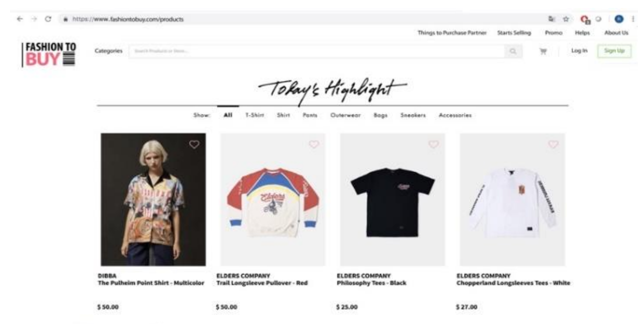
Stimuli 1A: Online Shop with No Errors



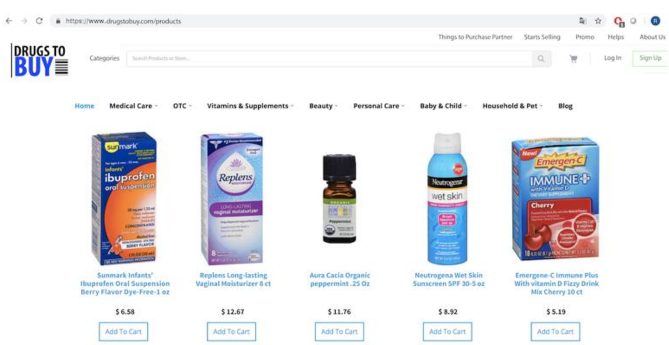
Stimuli 2B: Online Drugstore with Errors



Stimuli 1B: Online Shop with Errors



Stimuli 3A: Online Fashion Store without Errors



Stimuli 2A: Online Drugstore Without Errors

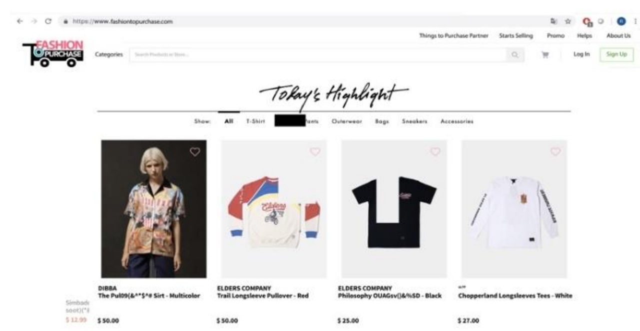


Figure 3B: Online Fashion Store with Error