



The Effect of Social Media on Affective Trust in Customer- Supplier Relationships

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Goal of the study

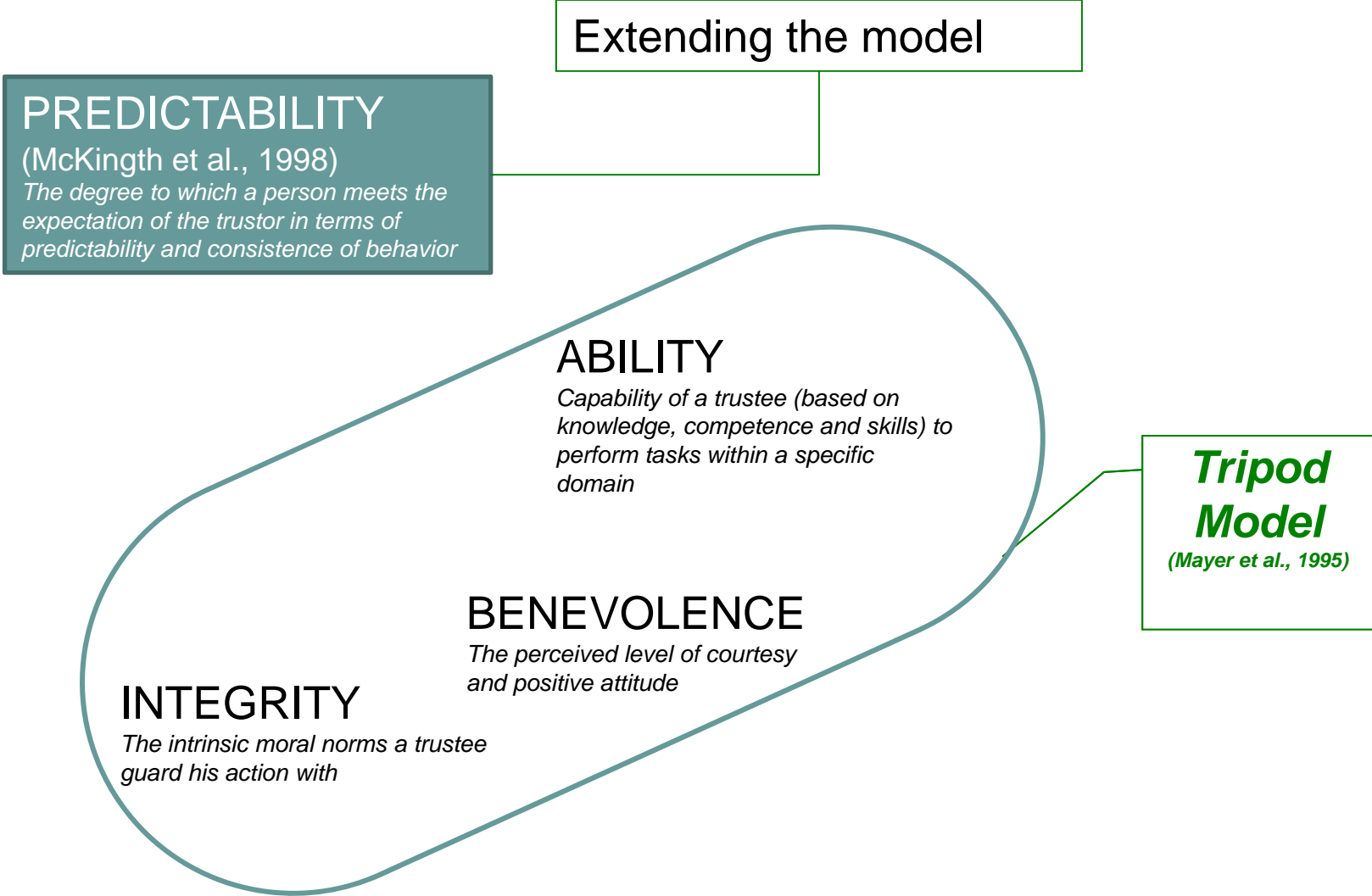
- Understanding the process of trust building towards a SME based on its web presence
 - Perception based on first impression
 - Role of the traditional websites vs. social media in trust building



Trust

- The belief that the trustee will behave according to our expectation
- Key issue in human relationships
 - Virtual teams [Rusman et al., 2010, Hung et al., 2004, Al-Ani et al., 2009]
 - E-commerce [Büttner and Göritz, 2008, Riegelsberger et al., 2003]
- Needs to be established as soon as possible
 - Importance of first impression and information provision on the trustee [Schumann et al., 2012]

Trust Antecedents





Bidimensional model

- **Cognitive Trust:** ‘cognition-based trust results from deliberate assessment of other’s characteristics and the process of weighting benefits of trusting over risks’
- **Affective Trust:** ‘affect-based trust involves one’s emotional bonds and sincere concern for the well being of the others’

Trust Model



Cognitive Trust

(Schumann et al., 2012)

PREDICTABILITY

The degree to which a person meets the expectation of the trustor in terms of predictability and consistence of behavior

ABILITY

Capability of a trustee (based on knowledge, competence and skills) to perform tasks within a specific domain

BENEVOLENCE

The perceived level of courtesy and positive attitude

INTEGRITY

The intrinsic moral norms a trustee guard his action with

Affective Trust

(Schumann et al., 2012)



Research Hypothesis

- H1- Traditional websites (***content-oriented***) and social media (***interaction-oriented***) have a different effect on trust building in customer-supplier relationships.
 - **H1a** – As compared to traditional websites, ***social media*** enhance ***affective trust*** building in customer-supplier relationships.
 - **H1b** – As compared to social media, ***traditional websites*** enhance ***cognitive trust*** building in customer-supplier relationships.

Assessing the perceived trustworthiness



- Questionnaire based on Likert scale (1 to 5)
 - integrates guidelines provided by previous studies about trust elicitation and perception based on first impression [Büttner and Göritz, 2008; Rusman et al., 2010]
- 21 Questions related to the ***antecedents***
 - Cognitive trust: 7 items for ability and 3 for predictability
 - Affective trust: 11 items for benevolence
 - We do not assess Integrity as it is peculiar of long-term relationships [Schumann et al., 2012; Rusman et al., 2010]

Assessing the perceived trustworthiness



- Self reporting about perceived trustworthiness
 - Which company do you perceive as the more reliable? Why
 - Which company would you choose for the catering service? Why?
 - Which company seems to be more concerned about the wellbeing and needs of its customers?
 - ...
- Final (exit) discussion between participants and experimenter



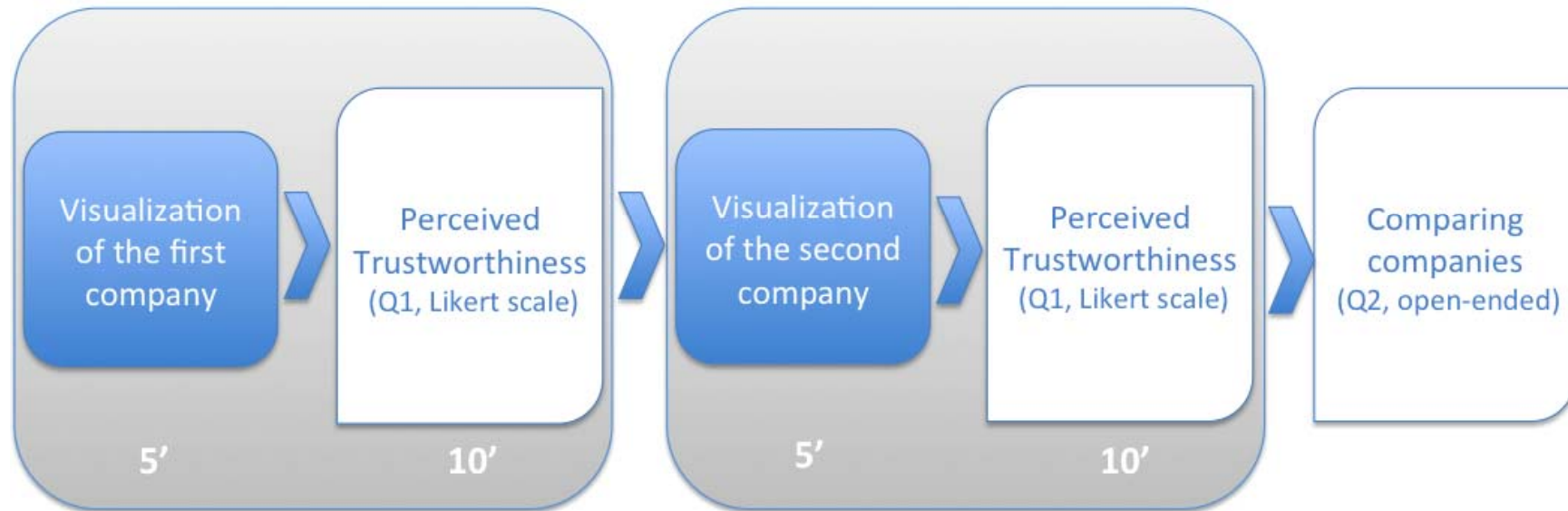
Study design

| | Company A | Company B |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Traditional Website | Group 1 | Group 2 |
| Social Media | Group 2 | Group 1 |

- Dependent variables
 - Cognitive trust
 - Affective trust
- Catering scenario
 - Involves social aspects

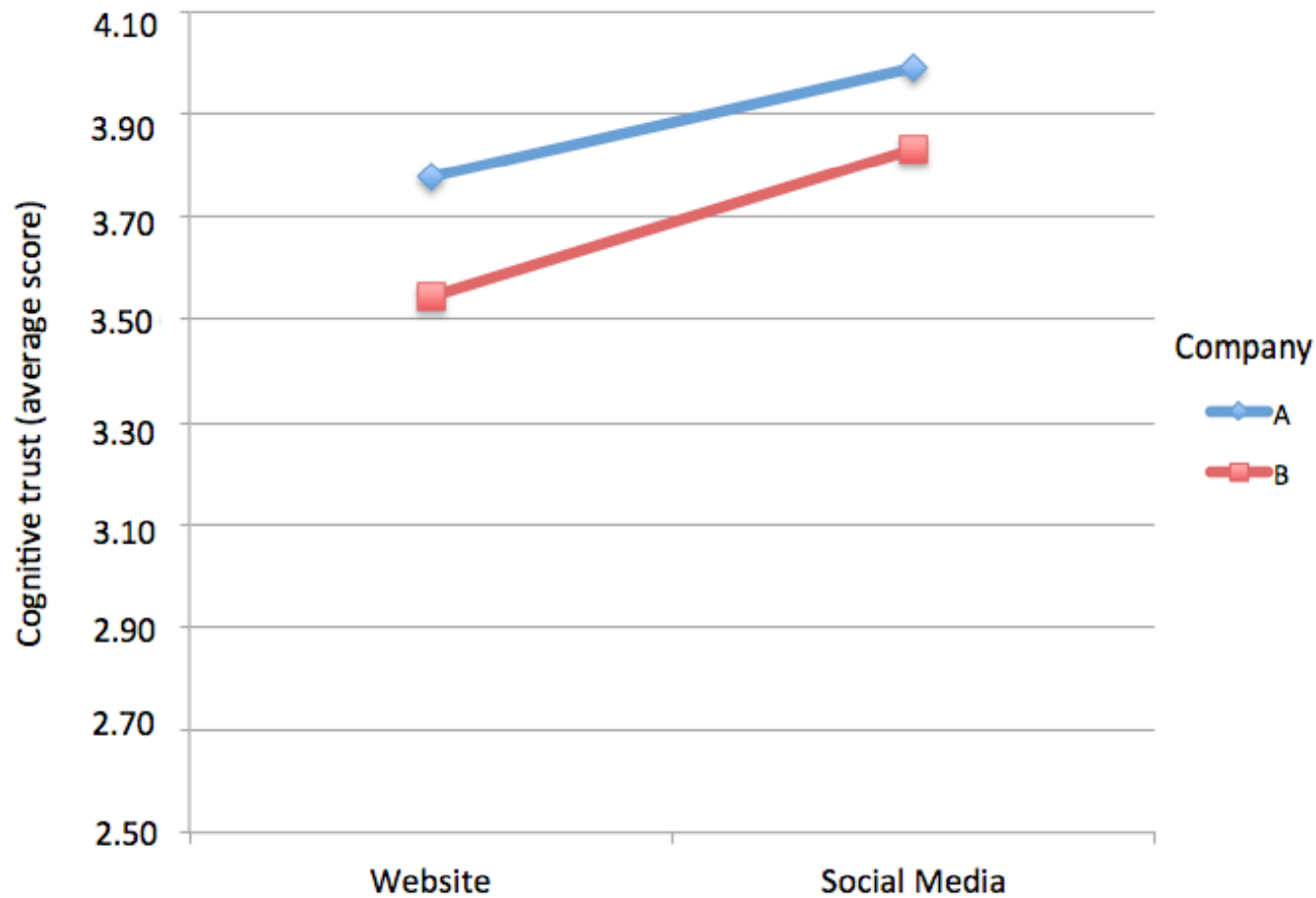


Procedure

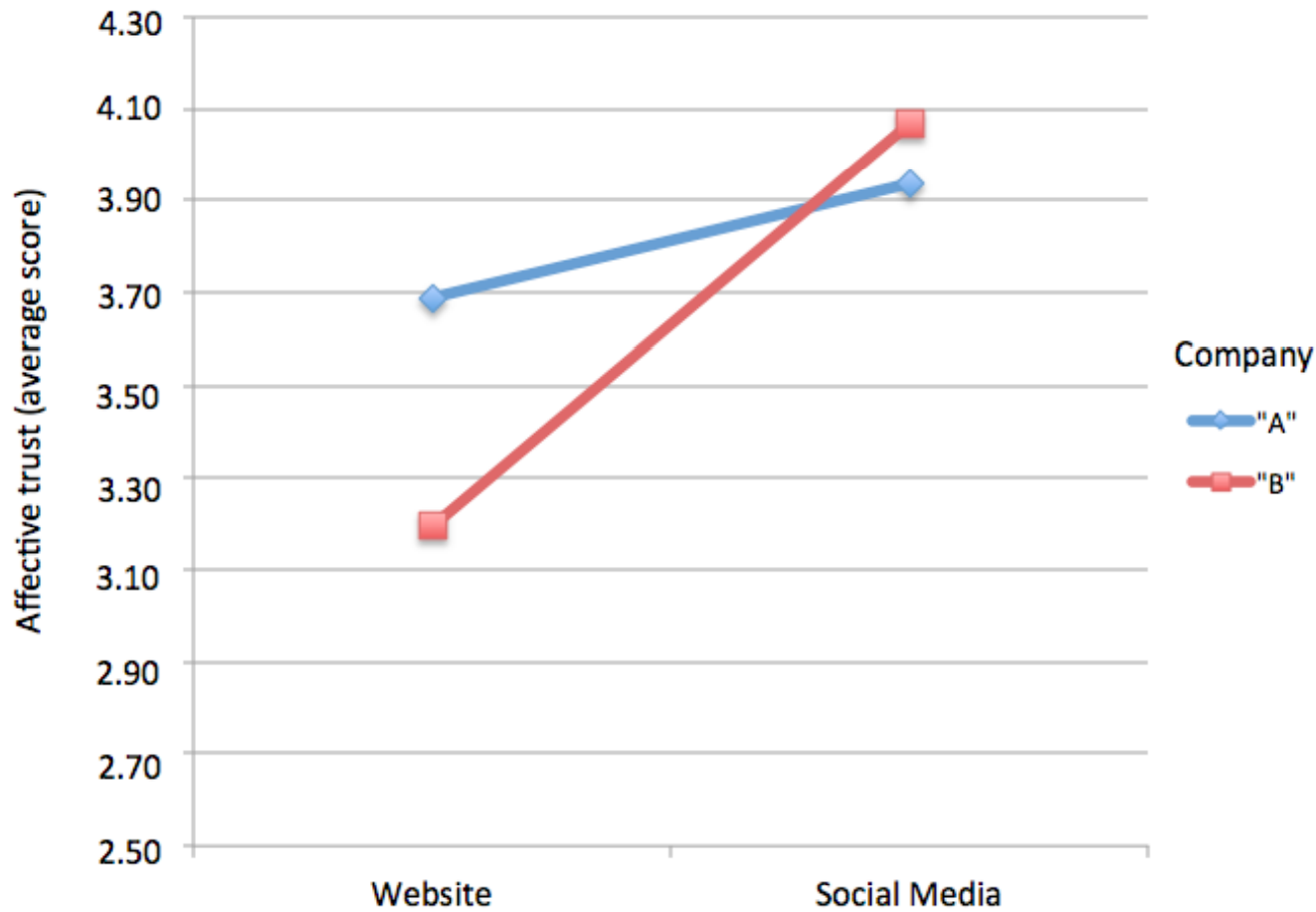


- 19 students from M.Sc. Course in CS
 - 16 males
 - 25 years old (avg)
 - Facebook users on a daily basis
 - They often use the Internet for their purchases

Combined effect of factors on Cognitive Trust



Combined effect of factors on Affective Trust





ANOVA on affective trust for the two companies

| Company | Effect of Web Mode | |
|---------|--------------------|--------------|
| | F | P |
| A | 1.211 | 0.287 |
| B | 22.152 | <i>0.000</i> |

- Need for controlling the equivalence of information elements for the two companies in the two web settings in future replications of the study



Replication of the study

| | Dependent Variable (TRUST) | F | p |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| <i>Web Mode</i> | Cognitive | 0,003 | 0,954 |
| | Affective | 7,263 | 0,009 |
| <i>Company</i> | Cognitive | 1,52 | 0,221 |
| | Affective | 0,287 | 0,594 |
| <i>Web Mode * Company</i> | Cognitive | 0,982 | 0,325 |
| | Affective | 2,797 | 0,098 |

- 44 participants
 - Computer Science master courses and the undergraduate degree in Physics
 - 66% male
 - 24 as average age

| Affective Trust | Website | Social Media |
|-----------------|---------|--------------|
| Company A | 3,65 | 3,79 |
| Company B | 3,36 | 3,83 |



ANALYSIS OF SELF REPORTING QUESTIONNAIRES AND INTERVIEWS

Impact of social media on affective trust



- 58% of subjects indicated as ***more benevolent*** the company for which they examined the Facebook page
- ***Openness*** to customers' suggestions and feedback is regarded as a sign of interest in their satisfaction
- Social media used to catch the 'atmosphere' of a work environment
 - i.e. the mood and courtesy of staff
 - the disposition of the owners towards the customers

Impact of social media on cognitive trust



- Presence of social media is perceived as an implicit statement of quality of goods/services
 - The company is directly exposed to customers' feedback
 - The company provides pictures of goods, location and staff

Different roles of websites and social media



- Traditional website is considered as the ‘**business card**’ of a website while Social media are regarded as the way of fostering **customer loyalty**
 - Establishing personal relationship
 - Openness to customers’ feedback
 - Huge amount of material available

Different roles of websites and social media



- Subjects declare they need both source of information to form their own opinion about unknown companies
 - Social media are accessed first
 - In case of positive opinion the website is accessed
- Social media as a new version of word-of-mouth [Blanchard, 2011]
 - First impression based on social media
- Traditional websites are used to retrieve business related information
 - which goods/services, prices, locations, purchase conditions



Threats to study validity

- External validity: limited possibility of generalizing the findings
 - Same background, same level of familiarity with e-commerce and social media
- Conclusion validity
 - Minimal pool of participants
- Internal validity: study design
 - Both groups evaluated both web conditions but on different companies

Conclusions and Future Work



- Partial support to H1a about social media influencing affective trust building
 - Social media might have a significant role in enhancing affective trust building based on first impression
 - Larger and more varied pool of participants (age, background, gender)
 - Different domains, more control of the information elements
- Call for replications!



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Thanks!
