



Promoting Shop Local Movement via Digital Platforms

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Small business retailers are struggling to survive in this economic downturn and intense competition with the national chains by highlighting their "localness" as a way to promote their services and products to customers in the competitive business environment. The "shop local" or locavore movement seeks local residents' commitments for a sustainable community and examines the way to promote the socially responsible action. In examining a venue that promotes the shop local movement, the growing popularity of digital platforms (i.e., social and mobile media) can provide a great opportunity for promoting locavore products regardless of temporal and spatial constraints. However, there is a lack of study regarding the development and fostering of the "shop local" movement utilizing the capabilities of the digital platforms. Thus, this study aims to identify contextual variables of the digital media that can foster users' intrinsic motivations for socially responsible action to support local vendors and businesses, based on Self-Determination Theory (SDT).

Rationale and Significance: Small local retailers rely on the prosperity and strong norm of the community while providing economic contribution to local communities. Therefore, there have been many efforts between the local businesses and communities to jointly promote the local retail sector. One of these efforts would be the "shop local" movement and the "locavore" motion, which started in consumption of locally grown food (Cummins, 2011). Consumers choose to buy local because of the intangible benefits such as vibrant downtown areas, stores with local character, and business owners who know their names (Tozzi, 2009). Individual action is the crux of the "shop local" and locavore movement and hence it can be inferred that consumers opting to shop locally are behaving in a socially responsible manner.

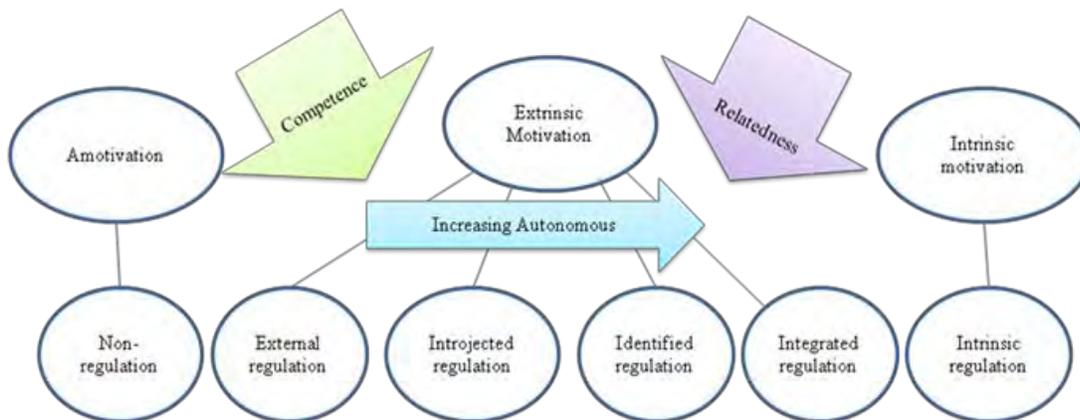
The impact of digital media is increasingly pervasive, with activities ranging from the economic activities (e.g., shopping) and marketing (e.g., brand building) to the social engagement (e.g., MySpace) and educational support (e.g., distance education) (Teo et al., 2003). The powerful digital platforms are great vehicles for individuals to make a positive contribution to society both locally and globally (Dash, 2010). Considering the profound effects of digital media on consumers in current days, promoting small, local retailers' social actions through the two digital platforms can be highly effective to encourage consumers to take their actions for sustainable community virally.

Theoretical Framework-Self-Determination Theory (SDT): Self-determination theory suggests that ones' inherent growth tendencies for moving to a certain action are based on their self-motivation and personality integration, as well as the conditions that foster those positive processes (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When local retailers attempt to drive support via digital media, digital media users' motivations can range from amotivation (i.e., the state of lacking the intention to act), to passive compliance, to active personal commitment. Amotivation results from not valuing an activity (Ryan, 1995) and it will be more apparent in a place where there is a lack of constructed sets of norms and regulation to move people engage in the activity. Extrinsic

motivation process differs in the degree of individuals' interaction between their needs and the structures in social environment conditions. People will be intrinsically motivated only for activities that hold intrinsic interest for them, activities that have the appeal of novelty, challenge, or aesthetic value. In self-determination continuum, the needs for competence, the needs for relatedness, and the needs for autonomy will facilitate the positive growth of socially responsible action internalization and integration in a social environment.

The need for competence is defined as the need to be effective in interactions with the social environment. When consumers in digital platforms recognize their socially responsible actions for locavore as being effective in contributing to the economy of local communities, the need for competence will be increased and people will be likely to engage in locavore movement voluntarily. *The need for autonomy* refers to acting out of volition, will or by choice (Jang et al., 2009). People act according to an integrated sense of self with the source of their behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2002). When consumers in digital platforms are self-motivated to do the activity with interest for their causes, they will be likely to get involved with locavore movement. *The need for relatedness* is defined as the psychological need to feel related to others. People can be motivated and feel like they belong to the groups and get involved in the action when important others promote locavore movement. The model (see Figure 1) below depicted the corresponding process for types of motivation and the three needs.

Figure 1. Self-Determination Continuum Showing Types of Motivation and Corresponding Processes



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