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The Rise of Budol Culture: A Study on How Electronic Word of Mouth and Online Communities Influence Unplanned Purchases for Members of the Home Buddies Facebook Group

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Abstract

This research probes into the degree of influence of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and online communities on purchase intention and unplanned purchase behavior. Online communities like Home Buddies Facebook Group provide a community for home enthusiasts to share ideas, insights, experiences, discoveries as the community's goal are to serve as a resource and inspiration for achieving people's dream home. Feedback and recommendations from the Home Buddies community somehow affect its members' purchase behavior. This study used convenience sampling to select 126 respondents' members of the Home Buddies Facebook Group.

Keywords: *eWOM, purchase intention, attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, TBP*

Introduction

Background

In the Philippines, the term "budol" is used when people find themselves taking action or purchasing anything unplanned because someone else influenced them. In a sense, "Budol" happens when a person becomes willing to break their intentions, plans, or budget in order to purchase something. While "budol" is not only applicable to buying behavior, in this study, we focus on its use in the context of buying intention that leads to unplanned purchases.

It is important to note that unplanned purchases are different from compulsive buying purchases, where a consumer makes an unplanned purchase due to an uncontrollable urge to buy to attain feelings of excitement and pleasure (Hudson, 2016). While they share similarities, unplanned purchases are defined as spontaneously purchasing products outside of shopping plans (Wang et al., 2019). It is described as an unintended, less deliberate, irresistible, and arousing form of purchase decision-making where buyers are less likely to be reflective and more emotionally attracted to items that deliver instant gratification. Thus, many researchers see unplanned purchases as behavior that strives to attain happiness instead of simply buying goods (Chien et al., 2018). This effort to attain happiness may be why many people sought out new forms of hobbies and entertainment while they were required to stay at home.

Just in time with this search for new activities, online communities like the Facebook group, Home Buddies, emerged as a platform that provides home improvement enthusiasts to find and share ideas, inspirations, insights, and experiences (Radovan, 2021).

This research by Nicole Marañon and Monika Ortega will examine how much the electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and online community found in Home Buddies influence buying intention for unplanned purchases among its members. Thus, this research will provide insights into consumers' purchase behavior within online communities and examine a phenomenon of unplanned purchases ("budol") among Filipino consumers driven by electronic word of mouth.

Relevance

Because unplanned purchase behavior creates considerable opportunities for businesses and increases revenue (Lu & Wu, 2019), this study is important for marketers to know if it is valuable and more effective to invest resources on building electronic word of mouth through online communities (perhaps compared to other marketing channels) in order to increase revenue.

The study will also serve as a support and guide for marketing teams from home improvement, lifestyle, furniture, or retail companies on the value of online communities (such as Home Buddies) on their customers' purchasing behavior and how to leverage the channel based on the results of the survey.

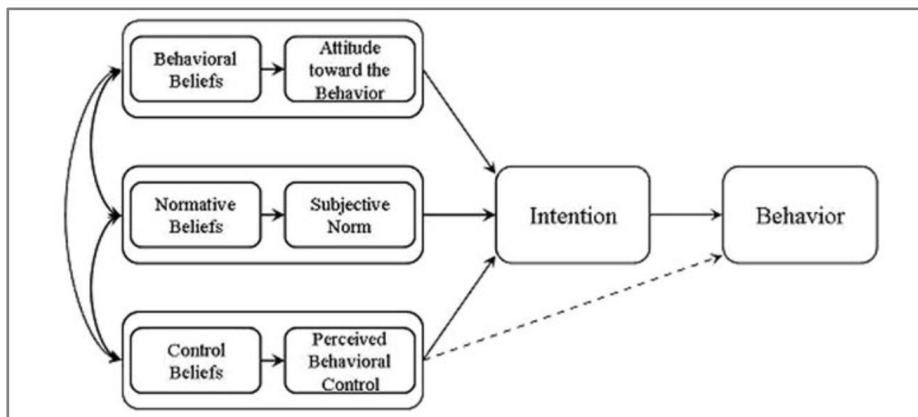
For consumers and members of the Home Buddies Facebook group, this study will provide insights into the degree of influence that the Facebook group has on their behavior to see possible vulnerabilities in their buying behavior.

Framework

Theory of Planned Behavior

This research will utilize Icek Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior which states that an individual's intentions to perform a given behavior are affected by various factors: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. As visualized in Figure 1, behavioral beliefs generate a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the conduct which affects subjective norm; normative beliefs establish perceived social pressure or subjective norm affects perceived behavioral control, and the perception of behavioral control significantly influences the impact of attitude toward the behavior and subjective norm on intention. The intention could refer to a desire to purchase a specific product or service when it comes to consumer behavior. Attitudes toward buying the product, subjective norms, and perceptions of behavioral control—all three primary variables of this behavior—are linked to similar sets of behavior-relevant beliefs. (Haugtvedt, C. P., et al., 2008). Some studies show that TPB affects purchase intention, specifically in sports team licensed merchandise (Jame & Kim, n.a.), well-being food (Lim, H., & An, S. (2021).

Figure 1
The Theory of Planned Behavior



Attitude

An individual's tendency to respond positively or negatively to an object, person, institution, or event is referred to as attitude (Ajzen, I., 1990). Individuals with positive attitudes can obtain stored judgments from memory based on previous experience with an attitude-object rather than being pushed to develop quick assessments of an object every time it is experienced (Haugtvedt, C. P., et al., 2008).

Subjective Norms

The perceived social expectations to engage or not to engage in behavior are the subjective norm (Ajzen, I. 1990). Consumer behavior is influenced by social elements such as small groups, social networks, family, and social roles and status. The effectiveness of group influence varies depending on the product or brand. (Kotler et al., 2018). Subjective norm was revealed to be a significant predictor of purchase intention in the study of James & Kim on TPB's effect on Sports Team Licensed Merchandise.

Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control is a person's perception of how easy or difficult it is to perform a specific behavior (Ajzen, I. 1990). In the context of our study, perceived behavioral control may be related to capabilities, willingness, and resources to purchase items. The capabilities and resources in terms of their financial situation have a significant impact on their purchase behavior and product or service choices. (Kotler et al., 2018). The study on well-being food (Lim, H., & An, S., 2021) also found that perceived behavioral control significantly predicts purchasing intention.

Buying Intention

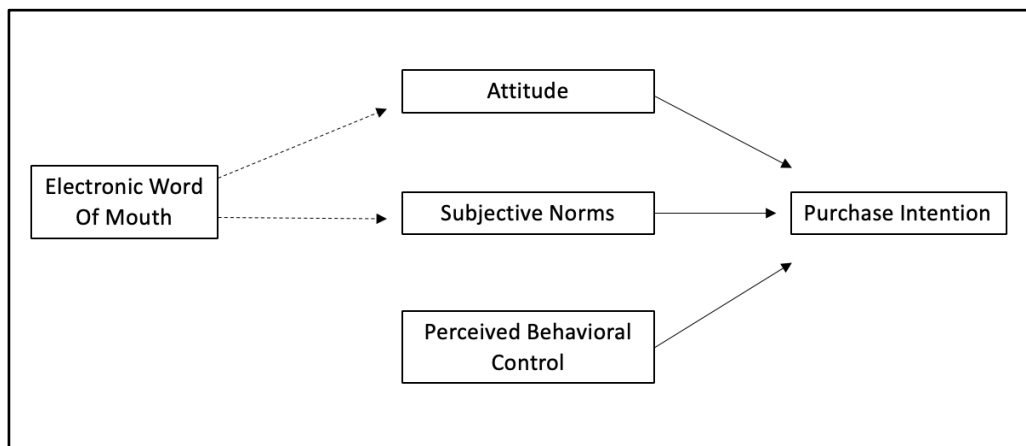
One of the immediate determinants of actual purchase behavior is intention. Its success will be influenced by the intentions to purchase and non-motivating variables such as resource availability (Ajzen, I. 1990). As stated by Kotler et al. (2018), a consumer's purchase intention may be influenced by factors such as projected income, pricing, and product attributes. Unexpected circumstances, on the other hand, may disrupt the buying intention.

eWOM

According to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), the Internet has transformed customers' opportunities to acquire adequate product information from other consumers and contribute their consumption-related recommendations by joining online discussions. Any statement made over the Internet by future, actual, or past customers about a business or service made available to a significant number of people and institutions is referred to as electronic word of mouth (eWOM).

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework adopted from Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior



Guided by the Theory of Planned Behavior and theoretical concepts from relevant research, the theoretical model we developed analyzes posits consumers' online unplanned purchase intention. The Theory of Planned Behavior supports many studies. The same findings were found in a comparable study done by Maichum et al. (2016) on factors influencing consumer purchasing intentions of green products among Thai Consumers.

The conceptual Framework (Figure 2) considers that electronic word of mouth (eWOM) is a moderating variable on attitude and subjective norm, which directly affects buying intention along with perceived behavioral control. Hence, we have arrived at the following hypotheses:

- H01: Home Buddies members' attitude affects their buying intention
- H02: eWOM moderates the member's attitude towards buying Intention
- H03: eWOM moderates subjective norms
- H04: Perceived behavioral control affects buying Intention
- H05: The perception of Home Buddies members to subjective norms affects their buying intention

Methodology

The study uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches to analyze the survey results to understand the degree of influence that electronic word of mouth and online communities have on unplanned purchase behavior.

The researchers wanted to examine the general population of the group. Thus, they targeted members of Home Buddies without limitation to activity level, age, location, income, educational attainment, or gender. The results showed that the respondents range from 22 to 40 years of age, male or female, with different educational attainments ranging from High School Diplomas, Undergraduate Degrees, postgraduate degrees, and Doctoral Degrees. Additionally, the respondents' monthly income ranges from PHP 7,000 to above PHP 60,000. The respondents also vary in their intention to join and stay in the group stating reasons that range from getting tips on how to make their home better, enjoying reading about tips and tricks found in the group, enjoying the conversations and insights that arise from the group, and even discovering discounts and promos given exclusively to members. While young professionals would seem to be the best profile of the study as they would be technology-savvy and have enough purchasing power to afford the recommendations in the group, it seems that even individuals with less than PHP 10,000 monthly income also like to purchase items based on recommendations from Home Buddies.

As of date (September 2, 2021), Home Buddies has a total of 2,775,707 members. From this number, the researchers were able to get 126 respondents, where it was agreed that for this academic exercise, the minimum number of respondents would be a minimum of 100. The researchers recognize that there may be improvements in this aspect of the study.

The sampling technique that the researchers used was convenience sampling, as the respondents come from different backgrounds.

The study involved asking the respondents questions about what influences their purchasing behavior. Using a 7-point Likert scale about the Conceptual Framework's variables which include: Electronic Word of Mouth, Attitudes, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioral Control, and Buying intention.

The questionnaire was encoded into a Google form which also collected the responses and create visualizations from the data. The collection of the respondents' consent to have their data collected and analyzed for the study was ensured before proceeding to the actual questionnaire.

For the distribution of the questionnaire, the researchers tried reaching out to the administrators and moderators of the Facebook Group "Home Buddies" via email, private messages, and referrals to reach more members of the group through a post blasted in the group's feed that invited and enticed participants to the study. Unfortunately, the researchers were not able to receive a response. Since most posts in the group - especially those soliciting engagements are filtered or generated by the administrators, the researchers opted to distribute the questionnaire by directly messaging members of the Home Buddies group who are in their immediate network and asking them to share the questionnaire with their friends who are also part of the group.

The data collected was then analyzed through SmartPLS3.0. This tool was used to calculate the effects of the variables and hypotheses from the conceptual Framework.

Upon completing the data collection, the researchers tested the conceptual Framework's applicability to understanding which factors affected consumers' purchase intentions. The Partial Least Squares Algorithm (PLS Algorithm) was used to calculate the Construct Reliability and Validity and the Discriminant Validity. Afterward, Bootstrapping was done to

test the PLS-SEM results' statistical significance, including the path coefficients and Cronbach's alpha.

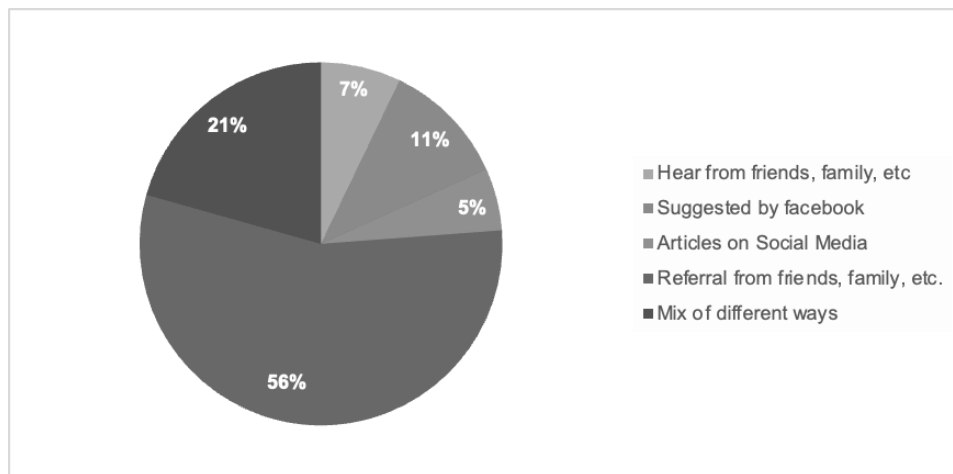
Discussion of Results

The study gathered 126 respondents. As seen in Table 1, 62% of the respondents are female, while 38% are male. Most respondents belong to the age group 31-25 years old. Figure 3 illustrates that from the total number of respondents, the majority at 56% discovered Home Buddies through referrals from friends, family members, and others.

Table 1
Summary of Respondents

Age Groups	Female	Male	Total
20 below	1	0	1
20-25	11	12	23
26-30	21	13	34
31-35	36	21	57
35 and up	9	2	11
Total	78	48	126

Figure 3
How did members discover Home Buddies



The composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and average variance extracted are used to assess the measurement model's reliability and validity. Cronbach's alphas that are greater than 0.70 are considered satisfactory. All of the variables have a Cronbach's alpha of at least 0.70, indicating that the variables are closely related. The model's reliability and validity assessment results are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2
Construct Validity and Reliability Analysis

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Attitude	0.74	1.221	0.772	0.472
Buying Intention	0.933	0.934	0.947	0.751
e-WOM	0.726	0.817	0.802	0.436
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.862	0.868	0.916	0.785
Subjective Norm	0.931	0.936	0.943	0.65

Table 3 illustrates the path model coefficients used to evaluate the model's hypothesized direct relationships. This shows that buying intention, attitude, eWOM, and subjective norms affect the unplanned purchase behavior of the members of Home Buddies.

The analysis discovered that attitude and subjective norm have substantial impacts on buying intention and subjective norm on eWOM, with a p-value less than 0.01. Meanwhile, eWOM has no significant effects on attitude and perceived behavioral control or substantial effect on buying intention, with p-values greater than 0.1.

Home Buddies members' attitude has a positive effect on their buying intention. Members purchase as a result of their thoughts and attitudes. They join the group to acquire insights, learn about others' experiences, and read reviews. According to the survey results, 27% of respondents frequently try to find a more exciting version of commonly offered or ordinary products. According to a prior study on well-being food (Lim, H., & An, S., 2021), attitude is positively connected to behavioral intention, suggesting that consumers who have a more positive attitude toward the habit are more likely to purchase.

Meanwhile, eWOM does not significantly impact members' attitudes towards buying intention. The opinions and recommendations of Home Buddies members about a product do not affect the members' attitudes. This means that group members can still find a unique version of the highly recommended things to develop their style and demonstrate their uniqueness.

Results show that eWOM is positively influential on subjective norms. The experience and engagement of members online are influenced by the reviews and recommendations of Home Buddies members about a product. The members influence other members regarding item recommendations and positive or negative feedback for home/lifestyle products.

In the case of our study, perceived behavioral control also does not have a significant relationship with buying intention. This could imply that Home Buddies members' purchasing abilities, willingness, and resources have no impact on their purchasing intentions. This highlights Ajzen's (1990) claim that purchase behavior will be influenced by the intentions to purchase and by non-motivating variables such as the availability of resources.

Home Buddies members' subjective norms positively affect their buying intention. This could imply that members of Home Buddies consider other members' remarks, referrals, and

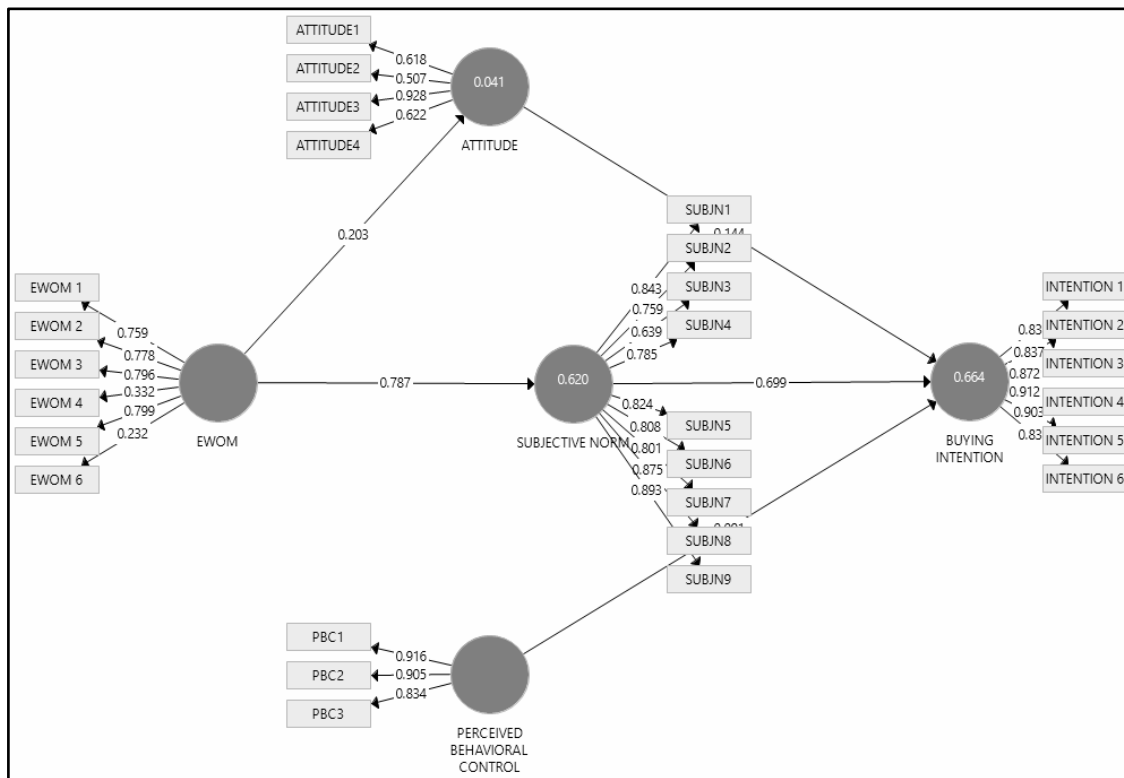
suggestions before making a purchase. Members' purchases are likely to be influenced by positive and negative online statements; hence, consumers may utilize the Facebook Group more frequently to seek recommendations and feedback before making purchases. According to a study conducted by Rahmani, S. et al. (2021), the intention to purchase poorly reviewed things was impacted by the negative electronic word of mouth. In the context of our study, a mean of 5.6 concludes that respondents will not buy products with negative feedback and recommendations about an item.

Table 3
Path Model Coefficients

	T Statistics	P Values	Results
H01: Attitude -> Buying Intention	2.122	0.034	Supported
H02: eWOM -> Attitude	1.384	0.166	Not Supported
H03: eWOM -> Subjective Norm	21.487	0.000	Supported
H04: Perceived Behavioral Control -> Buying Intention	1.134	0.257	Not Supported
H05: Subjective Norm -> Buying Intention	8.565	0.000	Supported

** $p < .01$

Figure 4
Path Model



Conclusions

The study provides insights into how online communities' electronic word of mouth affects the members' buying behavior. The results show that electronic word of mouth (eWOM) does not affect members' attitudes towards buying intention, but it does affect the subjective norms that influence members' attitudes towards a buying intention. Therefore, the researchers believe that the "budol" found in home buddies is more of a cultural influence than being compelled to purchase. In a study by Ha (2018), online communities provide members with "a feeling of belonging. A belief that members matter to one another and be the overall group. Moreover, a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to being together." Thus, members loyal to their community are led to organizational citizenship behaviors.

In this regard, eWOM does not necessarily trigger the immediate intent to purchase because members join the group to gain insights, recommendations and see reviews from other people. Thus, eWOM intends to push a consumer towards an immediate purchase (see Figure 5: Example of a sponsored post in Home Buddies) directly may not be very effective in developing purchase intention unless they are reviewed and discussed positively by other members of the group.

Figure 5
Example of a sponsored post in Home Buddies



In the group, “budol” through electronic word of mouth seems more evident for high involvement purchases such as appliances, gadgets, and electronics. However, this is also seen for typically low involvement products if they must adhere to a member's particular preference or style. Many of these can be found under the #budolisreal topic category.

Additionally, there are also instances when members report unplanned purchases for low involvement products when they encounter the items in a store. Sometimes the stores are also recommended in the group. The group is categorized under the topic #budolfinds (see figure 6).

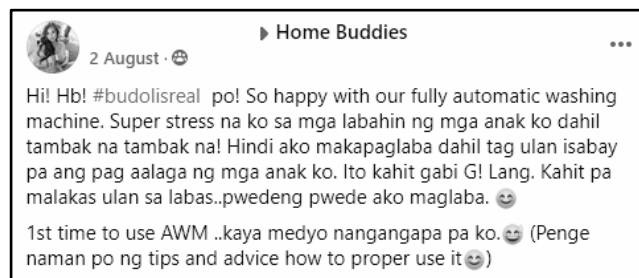
Figure 6
Example of a sponsored post in Home Buddies



While it is not always the case, the researchers believe that many members who developed buying intentions based on the subjective norms were in some way already and aware of their problem, need, or opportunity. Despite members calling the behavior "budol" or unplanned purchase (see Figure 7: Example of a Home Buddies member who was already aware of her problem or need). Many of the members who participate in the budol culture exhibit happiness and are often proud of their participation. So much so that they post their experience in the group thereby adding more electronic word of mouth influence towards a brand or product in the community.

Figure 7

Example of a Home Buddies member who was already aware of her problem or need



The researchers believe that marketers can maximize communities like Home Buddies for top to bottom-funnel marketing.

Brand value creation practices such as building a brand community, developing brand loyalty, improving the brand experience, or providing members with social identity (Ha, 2018) seem to be excellent potential in a community where subjective norms influence an individual's purchase intentions. Brands can execute activities or discussions that provide members a sense of influence over their brands. For example, collecting ideas and suggestions from the community and implementing them in the product design allows community members to feel that they matter. Additionally, providing members timely feedback about their suggestions allows them to realize the impact of their suggestions. The engagement would make the community member more loyal to the group and its direction (thereby increasing the influence of subjective norms) while the brand gains research and development to improve its products and services.

Since 59.9% of the respondents mentioned that they research the product, its benefits, and specifications before purchasing, the electronic word of mouth found in home buddies is perfect for nurturing potential buyers in the active research stage (mid-funnel) their journey.

According to Ha (2018), online communities participating in brand building should not reward their members with financial incentives. However, several respondents (15.2%) also mentioned that they joined and stayed in the group to receive coupons and discounts exclusive to Home Buddies. While these types of promotions may not effectively trigger an immediate unplanned purchase, the researchers recommend that the promotions and discounts be used for repeat purchases rather than enticing members to try a product for the first time.

Moreover, the researchers recommended that companies encourage members to find new ways of using their products to encourage purchase.

The results of this study also hold implications to the current situation of global businesses in customer experience, customer service, and increased customer retention.

As businesses were forced to transition to online channels, more brands have decided to increase their digital touchpoints. A study by Felix (2021), mentions that due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, numerous businesses had to close physical stores, which led to a noticeable increase in online businesses. Additionally, more than 51% of the businesses that had to stop in March 2020 also increased their online interactions with customers, specifically through e-commerce, to keep their businesses alive.

However, the emergence of new customer touchpoints naturally demanded increased online support. In terms of customer service, global or local businesses can benefit from working with existing online consumer communities like Home Buddies to provide high-quality digital services and after-sales support despite limited resources. In terms of online communities and conversations, according to Tran (2020), online reviews signify perceptual fluency and confidence in brand products, especially in today's online-driven purchase market. Online reviews are essential since they validate the consumers' initial expectations, increasing their trust. As a result of online-posted material, brand trust is extended to online trust in the brand.

In a study by Li-chun (2017) on online community members' purchase intention, it was found that digital communities provided a means for brand vendors to establish and maintain relationships with members in their brand fan communities. In line with this, members are also willing to provide voluntary services and support to other members, especially for low-level concerns (see Figure 8: Example of a Home Buddies member asking for help and hundreds of other members providing their assistance). Those with expert knowledge of the brands' products are effective community leaders who provide reliable information to other members. This, in turn, allows members to collaborate and help brands resolve problems through community platforms and ensures consumer confidence.

Figure 8

Example of a Home Buddies member asking for help and hundreds of other members providing their assistance



The consumer confidence brought about by online communities is critical for brands that want to retain customers. This is in line with a study conducted by Wang et al. (2017), which showed that reduced uncertainty and high involvement (in this case, community involvement) for customers also increase purchase intentions. Additionally, a robust online support community can also be a factor in a customer's consideration for products or services prior to purchase because of the reduced risk of uncertainty.

Rahmani et al. (2021) found that negative electronic word of mouth makes subjective norms less influential in mitigating the significant influence of subjective norms in the group. This is in line with the 34.9% of the respondents saying that negative feedback and recommendations about an item will make them not buy the product.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

One of the limitations of this research is the lack of studies regarding online communities such as Home Buddies and their effect on purchase intention. Another is the current pandemic. Due to the present situation, researchers have only conducted the survey using an online tool. Moreover, respondents are purely members of the Home Buddies community. The surveys are also limited to the researchers' networks; hence, we may not have targeted more active members who frequently purchase and seek recommendations from Home Buddies.

Future research and studies may open the survey to non-members and conduct a comparative examination of buying behavior of members in contrast to non-members. Our study did not investigate whether purchases are made online through e-commerce platforms or offline through traditional physical stores. As a result, future research and studies may delve deeper into and investigate where consumers purchase.

We propose that future research include more diverse individuals because the participants limit our study. Aside from Home Buddies in general, there are additional areas to examine, such as specific products and categories purchased by members. Future research might look into brand loyalty and discounts to see if those impact purchase intent.

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