ABSOLUTELY LOVIN' IT VS. LIKING IT:

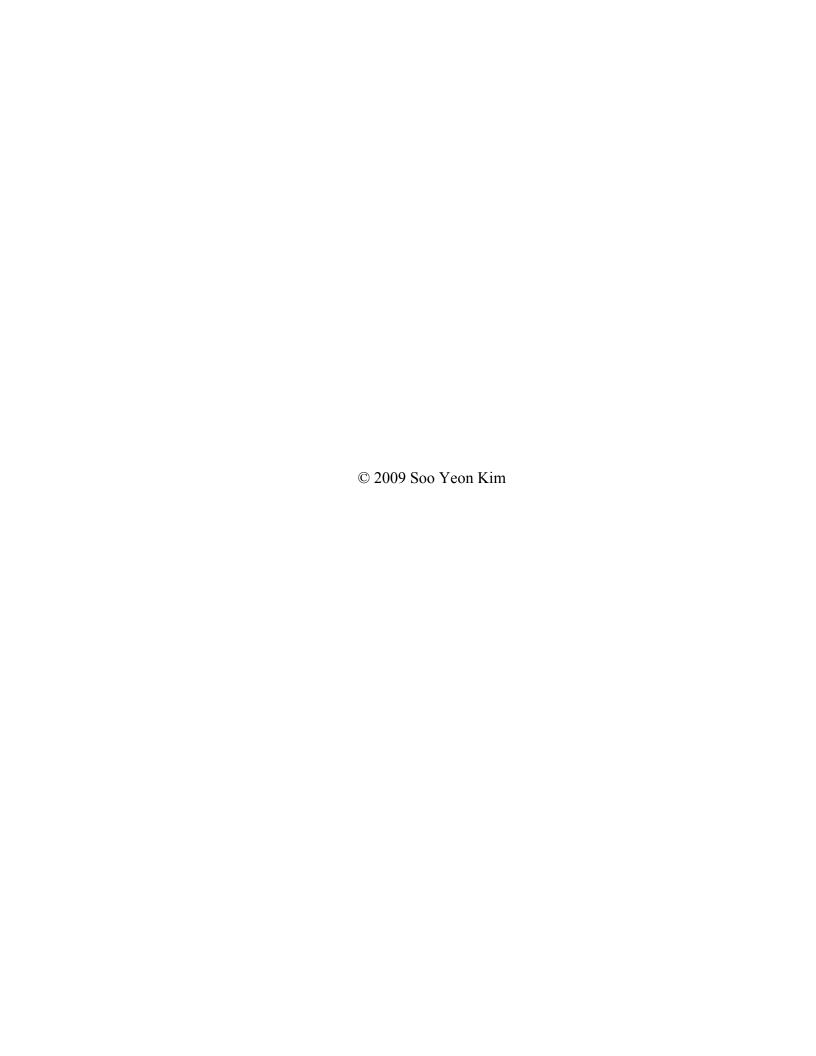TEST OFINFORMATION PROCESSING THEORY AND LANGUAGE

EXPECTANCY THEORY

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of Cornell University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science

by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how different levels of language intensity and source credibility in online reviews influence online consumers' purchase intensions for the reviewed product. A 2 (language intensity) x 2 (reviewer credibility) experiment was conducted with 125 undergraduate students in order to test the competing predictions of two language intensity theories – Information Processing Theory (IPT) and Language Expectancy Theory (LET) – in the domain of online consumer reviews. The results indicate that the intensity of the reviewers' emotional expressions and their credibility levels matter. In line with the predictions of IPT and contrary to those of LET, online consumers were more likely to show interest in purchasing the reviewed product when the reviewers used high language intensity and were of high credibility rather than when the reviewers used the language intensity level that matched their credibility level. In addition, online consumers were more likely to identify with highly credible reviewers than low credibility reviewers. Theoretical implications of these findings and their applicability to online consumer behavior research settings are provided.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Soo Yeon Kim was born in Seoul, Korea in 1984. She received her Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Ewha Womans University in 2007. In August of 2007, she started her Master's program in the Department of Communication at Cornell University. Her research interests were mainly in the area of social psychology of communication, specifically on emotion, persuasion, and language. Finishing her two Master years of research and TA-ship in the summer of 2009, she will be joining the doctoral program in Marketing at Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University in September, 2009.

TO

THE CHERISHED MEMORY OF

MY GRANDFATHER

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INTRODUCTION

Since the advent of the Internet, e-commerce has grown considerably. Jupiter Research (2008) revealed that online retail sales in the U.S. are expected to reach between $215 billion and $335 billion by 2012. If more and more people are purchasing products online, what kinds of information do they pay most attention to when shopping online? What do online consumers consider the most reliable sources of information when making purchase decisions, and which characteristics of such information lead potential consumers to purchase a product?

A survey done by Jupiter Research and Bazaarvoice (2007) showed that 70% of those surveyed considered online reviews most useful when gaining information online for a product they intend to purchase, while 97% of those who search for product information online said they were willing to trust online reviews. Such results were also evident in academic findings. A recent research project by Chen (2008) provided evidence that online consumers of books were highly influenced by the customer ratings indicated by stars. This result was also true of book recommendations posted online by other consumers, despite the finding that online consumers perceived other consumers to have less expertise than professional book reviewers (Chen, 2008).

As shown above, online consumers make judgments based on series of online reviews, which are at most times short without much information contained. So what is it in online reviews that make them reliable to online consumers? The current study posits that one characteristic of reviews that may influence their reliability is the intensity of emotional expression. A quick glance at any retailing website's online reviews reveals that online reviewers use various means (e.g. emotional vocabulary, exclamation marks, capitalization, etc.) to express the intensity of their feelings regarding the product and try to deliver their message to other potential consumers for the product. However, it is still unclear if a certain level of language intensity makes a

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review more or less credible or persuasive. Would online consumers be persuaded by online reviewers' intense enthusiasm about the reviewed product or would they dismiss such highly intense language as puffery by either manufacturers submitting fake positive reviews for their own products or their competitors writing fake negative reviews for their rival products? Would the reviewers' credibility level influence such effects?

To provide some answers for the above questions, the current study examines how the interaction between the reviewers' language intensity and their credibility level influences the persuasiveness of the reviews, which in turn affects consumers' purchase intent for the reviewed product. Specifically, within the domain of online consumer reviews, the current study tests the competing predictions of two language intensity theories – Language Expectancy Theory (LET) and Information Processing Theory (IPT) – and looks at the theories' applicability to online consumer review narratives. By theoretically testing the two prominent language intensity theories, the current study seeks to add to the scientific discourse of language intensity, credibility, and persuasion. In addition, the current study further investigates the relationship between consumer identification with the reviewer and reviewer characteristics.

In order to understand the predictions of such language intensity theories, however, it is important to know some things about source credibility.

Source Credibility

Credibility has long been acknowledged as a distinctive peripheral cue that leads to heuristic thinking and decision making in persuasion settings (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984). Chaiken and Maheswaran (1994) noted that when individuals are unmotivated or are in circumstances that do not allow them to go through a thorough analysis of persuasive messages, they are more likely to make decisions based on the credibility of the message source.

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According to Maathuis, Rodenburg, and Sikkel (2004), credibility is "a concept which is linked to the sender and refers to the degree to which an object is considered to be a reliable source of information about products, services, and other matters" (Maathuis, Rodenburg, Sikkel, 2004, p. 2). Numerous studies indicate that source credibility consists of two dimensions: perceived expertise and perceived trustworthiness of the source (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Perloff, 1993). Hovland, Janis, and Kelley's (1953) defined source expertise as associated with the receivers' perception that the communicator is a source of valid assertions and source trustworthiness as associated with the receivers' degree of confidence in the communicator's intentions to deliver the assertion he/she considers most valid. Perceptions of both source expertise and source trustworthiness are determined by perceived characteristics of the communicator. Source expertise is assessed by the perceived knowledge and experience of the communicator whereas source trustworthiness relates to the receiver's perceptions of the communicator's honesty and unbiased motive regarding the message topic (Dillard & Pfau, 2002). Specifically, when message sources demonstrate that their motivations for delivering the message are not intended to change the receivers' attitudes and serve their own interest, they are perceived to be trustworthy (Campbell, 1995)

Hovland and Weiss (1951) noted that such source characteristics play significant roles in receivers' perceptions of the persuasiveness of a message. In fact, according to Ohanian (1990), considerable research has provided evidence that high source credibility increases message persuasiveness and behavioral compliance from the audience. For instance, Gilly, Graham, Wolfinbarger, and Yale (1998) found evidence that heightened source expertise and source trustworthiness increase consumers' attitudinal and behavioral change toward a certain brand of product. According to Goldsmith, Lafferty, and Newell (2000), perceptions of credibility can

also affect individuals' purchase intents. The authors found that enhanced credibility of the product or company endorser increased consumers' intent to purchase the product (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000). Pornpitakpan (2003) found similar evidence that the perceived credibility of celebrity endorsers increases consumers' purchase intent for the product that the celebrity figures endorse.

Ohanian (1990) noted that because source credibility actively interacts with other audience and source factors, the positive correlation between source credibility and persuasiveness may be more complicated. One example may become evident from Biggers and Pryor's (1982) research where they found that emotion-eliciting qualities, especially the feelings of pleasure increased as the perceived source credibility increased, which in turn heightened individuals' positive attitudes toward the sources' message.

The above findings suggest that in online persuasion, another factor other than source credibility may be important. As in Biggers and Pryor's (1982) research, the current study examines how the emotion-eliciting qualities of online reviews interact with source credibility. Specifically, the current study looks at emotional language intensity used by online reviewers as an additional factor that affects the persuasiveness of the reviews they have written. The significance of language intensity has been discussed by various researchers in past academic literature.

Language Intensity and Source Credibility on Persuasion

Language Intensity

According to Hamilton, Hunter, and Burgoon (1990), one feature of language is intensity, which is conveyed through the degrees of language emotionality and language specificity. The authors describe language emotionality as the level of affective wording used by the message source, and language specificity as how precisely the language used pinpoints a semantic topic (Hamilton, Hunter, & Burgoon,

1990). Both language emotionality and language specificity can range from mild to intense which, in turn, affect the persuasiveness of the source through variations in how dense the inclusion of such words or phrases are and/or how intense or powerful these expressions are in a given persuasive message. Example excerpts from Hamilton et al.'s high and low intensity message texts are shown below. For high intensity message, Hamilton et al.'s text begins with the following paragraph:

> The laws regulating the sale of heroin in this country have frequently done more harm than good, both to society and to the individual who must use heroin. The public is confronted with an astronomical number of crimes committed each year in every major city by addicts desperate for money to support their habit. The addict suffers not from heroin, but from painful secondary complications which are promoted by the drug's continued illegality (p. 253).

For low intensity message, the text begins like the following.

> The laws regulating the sale of heroin in this country have sometimes done more harm than good, both to society and to the individual who must use heroin. The public is faced with a large number of crimes committed each year in most major cities by addicts searching for money to support their habit. The addict suffers not from heroin, but from unpleasant secondary complications which are associated with the drug's continued illegality (p. 254).

Language intensity has been noted to elicit receiver attitude change via interaction with the characteristics of the message source, such as source credibility or the extremity of the source's position within the persuasion process (Dillard & Pfau, 2002). In fact, two prominent language intensity theories – Information Processing Theory (IPT) and Language Expectancy Theory (LET) – offer competing predictions

regarding the message sources' persuasiveness and the receivers' attitude change when the sources' initial credibility is low.

Information Processing Theory

IPT was developed by Hamilton (1997) to assess the causal relationship between language intensity and receiver evaluation of message, message source, and topic. The theory also made predictions on the effects of language intensity on receiver attitude change. Hamilton's IPT modeling work included re-analyses of individual studies' data and meta-analyses of previous findings (Hamilton & Hunter, 1998). The prediction of IPT model is that language intensity, source credibility (perception based on source competence, source trustworthiness, and source liking), and discrepancy between message sources' position and that of message receivers interact multiplicatively on receiver attitude change (Hamilton et al., 1990). In other words, if discrepancy between the position of the source and the receiver of information is held constant, attitude toward the source or the message would change in line with the level of both the initial source credibility and the language intensity.

In the context of testing Bradac, Courtright, and Bower's (1979) axioms of language intensity effect, Hamilton et al. (1990) in fact found support for this prediction. Bradac et al.'s axioms' prediction was that if source-receiver valence discrepancy is small, high intensity messages will be more persuasive than low intensity messages whereas if the discrepancy is large, low intensity messages will be more persuasive than high intensity messages. Contrary to Bradac et al.'s prediction, however, Hamilton et al. found in their study, in which they looked at receiver attitude change after reading high or low intensity messages that advocated legalizing heroin, that attitude change is a linear function of language intensity, source-receiver discrepancy, and source credibility. Specifically, increase in credibility and language intensity enhanced attitude change. Hamilton and Hunter (1998) found similar support

for IPT in their meta-analysis of previous language intensity studies that for source-receiver attitude discrepant messages, high language intensity enhanced attitude change of message receivers, especially those of low involvement. Hence, based on the above support for IPT, it can be noted that persuasion is heightened when perceived source credibility increases and when language intensity increases. In other words, high credibility sources are more persuasive than low credibility sources. Also, it is most effective for both high credibility sources and low credibility sources to use high intensity language than low intensity language to elicit receivers' attitude change when the distance between the sources' propositions and the receivers' opinions remain the same.

For the current research, if IPT's predictions extend also to the domain of online consumer reviews, online consumers will be more likely to be persuaded by high credibility sources than low credibility sources and when reviewers use high language intensity rather than low language intensity in their reviews.

H_1: Online consumers would show a higher level of purchase intent for the reviewed product when online reviewers use high language intensity than low language intensity in their reviews.

H_2: Online consumers would show a higher level of purchase intent for the reviewed product when online reviewers are of high credibility than of low credibility.

The current study seeks to test the above hypotheses based on the predictions of IPT with online reviews. However, alternative hypotheses can also be constructed, based on the contradicting predictions of another language intensity theory: LET.

Language Expectancy Theory

LET is a theory that explains why certain linguistic strategies influence the persuasiveness of messages (Burgoon, 1995). In a seminal article by Burgoon, Jones,

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and Stewart (1975) the impact of language strategies in persuasion was introduced, providing the basis of LET. Burgoon et al. found that for some individuals such as low credibility sources and females, it was presumed by receivers that they would use low intensity language in their persuasive messages. If such message sources violated receivers' presumptions, post-message receiver attitude change was inhibited. Based on this finding, Burgoon et al. proposed that initial source characteristics such as source credibility is a moderating factor for the impact of language intensity on receiver attitude change. Specifically, the basic idea of LET is that people hold expectations for the appropriate level of language use according to the message sources' initial credibility level. Violations of these expectations result in reduced persuasiveness of the source and the message and even cause the occurrences of negative boomerang effects in persuasion (Burgoon & Miller, 1985).

Burgoon (1990) argued that high credibility sources are allowed to use higher language intensity whereas low credibility sources were restricted to use lower language intensity. An earlier work by Miller and Baseheart (1969) also provide evidence that highly trustworthy communicators are more privileged with greater freedom to use a wider range of language appeals. In line with Burgoon's (1990) idea, LET predicts that high credibility sources should use high intensity language and low credibility sources should use low intensity language to be more persuasive. In fact, M. Burgoon and J. Burgoon (1990) found that individuals perceived male physicians to be more credible than their female counterparts and therefore were more persuaded by male physicians using high intensity messages than female physicians using high intensity messages. Female physicians were expected to use lower intensity messages and violating such expectations by using high intensity messages resulted in decreased persuasiveness and increased noncompliance (Burgoon & Burgoon, 1990).

Hence, LET would predict that when online reviewers are perceived as being highly credible, they should speak with high language intensity whereas when they are perceived as being less credible, they should speak with low language intensity. In other words, for low credibility sources, it would be more persuasive to use low intensity language, which matches the receivers' expectations for the source, and vice versa for high credibility sources (Burgoon & Miller, 1985). Based on this idea, the following alternative hypotheses can be derived:

H_{1A}: Online consumers would show a higher level of purchase intent for the reviewed product when highly credible online reviewers use high intensity language than when they use low intensity language in their reviews.

H_{2A}: Online consumers will show a higher level of purchase intent for the reviewed product when less credible online reviewers use low intensity language than when they use high intensity language in their reviews.

The main difference in the predictions between the two theories is that while IPT argues that even for low credibility sources high intensity of language would be more effective in persuasion, LET states that for low credibility sources, low intensity of language would be more effective because it matches the message receivers' expectation level of the source.

Identification with Source Credibility

Being persuaded by a message source is a complex process of understanding a message and making decisions based on that understanding. There is evidence that identification of the self with others plays a role in this process of persuasion (Basil, 1996). According to Oatley (1999), identification occurs when "readers take on the protagonist's goals and plans" and "experiences emotions when these plans go well or

badly." In identification, Oatley notes, "we do not merely sympathize with a person, we become that person" (Oatley, 1999, pp. 445-446).

Basil's research provided evidence that an important factor underlying the persuasiveness in changing consumer attitude and behavior is the audiences' identification with the product endorser or a message source (Basil, 1996). Zillmann (1995) also noted that identification enables the audience to internalize and share the message source's emotions which in turn allows the audience to be empathic of the source.

Following the above findings, the current research also posits that identification is closely linked to the message sources' characteristic, reviewer credibility to be specific. Based on the above proposition, the present study hypothesizes the following:

> H3: Online consumers will show higher level of identification with the online reviewer when the reviewer is of high credibility than of low credibility.

METHOD

Participants

One hundred and twenty five participants were recruited on campus at a large Eastern university in the United States. The participants were awarded extra credit in exchange for their participation in the study. Among these 125 participants, 55 were males and 70 were females. 56.7% indicated their ethnicity as White, 24% as Asian, 9.6% as Hispanic or Latin American, 7.2% as Black or African American, and 1.6% as other race/ethnicity.

Materials

The target reviews used in this study were modified from actual online customer reviews posted on Amazon.com. These were customer reviews of various touch-screen cell phones and MP3 players. Four reviews for touch-screen cell phones and 4 reviews for MP3 players were selected. These reviews were chosen because they initially contained words or phrases that described the reviewers' emotional states such as love, like, excellent, good, etc. in a relatively short paragraph, which was similar in length across all 8 reviews. The 8 reviews served as templates which were modified into what was represented in the study as customer reviews of another product from each of the two categories: LG Arena from the cell phone category and Sony X series Walkman from the MP3 player category. These were selected because they are both high tech products that young adults desire but that were still unfamiliar due to their recent introduction in the market. The actual Amazon.com reviews contained most of the information typical of online customer reviews, such as emotional expressions regarding the product that used capitalized letters and/or exclamation marks to deliver intense opinions. Except for the manipulations within each template review necessary for the purpose of this study, message contents remained the same across all conditions.

Four conditions of each review were generated to manipulate two independent variables: language intensity (high/low) and reviewer credibility (high/low).

Independent Variables

Language intensity. Target reviews were created by inserting words or phrases with varying language intensity into template reviews extracted from Amazon.com. To manipulate language intensity, high or low intensity verbs and verb forms, adjectival and adverbial words or phrases were used to show different levels of emotional expressions. Most of the replaced words or phrases were selected from Burgoon and Miller's (1971) word intensity value table, which contains three lists of words or phrases created with words or phrases taken from the Jones and Thurstone Scale (Jones & Thurstone, 1955). The Jones and Thurstone scale provides scale values that indicate words or phrases' magnitude of deviations from neutrality. Burgoon and Miller's three lists contain words or phrases with word/phrase mean intensities that differ significantly (Burgoon & Miller, 1971). The high intensity list contains words or phrases with mean intensity values ranging from 2.53 to 4.16, moderate intensity list, from 1.38 to 2.36, and low intensity list, from .69 to 1.35. In this study, for high language intensity condition, words or phrases with scale values higher than 2.88 were inserted into the template reviews whereas for low language intensity condition, words or phrases with scale values lower than 1.91 were inserted. In addition, for high language intensity condition, capital letters and exclamation marks were used to indicate strongly opinionated expressions often used in online settings. For example, the high language intensity version of the review text reads as follows:

> This is my fifth cell phone and I have had this phone for about 3 weeks now. And I ABSOLUTELY Love it. The Keyboard is the best for sending text messages. I love how it's all touchscreen. Oh and the camera takes some amazing pictures, crystal clear and I extremely love how you can edit them

too. It does take some time to figure out how to use all the wonderful features but well worth the time. A mighty fun phone to have. LOVE, LOVE this phone and you will too.

The low language intensity/low credibility version of the target review reads:

This is my fifth cell phone and I have had this phone for about 3 weeks now. And I like it. The Keyboard is good for sending text messages. I like how it's all touch screen. Oh and the camera takes some nice pictures, clear and I like how you can edit them too. It does take some time to figure out how to use all the good features but worth the time. A fun phone to have. I like this phone and you may too.

Reviewer credibility. Two credibility dimensions – source trustworthiness and source expertise – were manipulated. However, there was no attempt for the current study to manipulate source trustworthiness and source expertise independently. The high credibility condition's manipulations were both high trustworthiness and high expertise while the low credibility condition's manipulations were low in both.

Source trustworthiness was manipulated by adding information in the reviews that indicates whether the reviewer has significant financial interest in the product company or not. If the reviewer had checked "Yes" in the Financial Conflict of Interest Disclosure box at the top of each review it indicated that the reviewer may have or had significant financial interest in the company of the product. Significant financial interests included:

- Salary, royalties, or other payments
- Product company stocks or subsidies
- Current or past employment from the product company.

In addition, the names of the reviewers were changed to indicate whether the reviewers used their real names or pretentious online nicknames or IDs. For example,

a high credibility real name would be "Susan Zapp" whereas a low credibility online ID would be "X FAN." In the high credibility condition, reviewers indicated "No" in the financial interest disclosure checkbox and used their real names, whereas in the low credibility condition, reviewers indicated "Yes" in the financial interest disclosure checkbox and used fictitious nicknames or IDs.

Source expertise was manipulated by adding information about the reviewers' experience with the product. Each review contained information about how many times the reviewer had used a product of this category. For high credibility condition, reviewers indicated either "3-4 times" or "5 times or more" in the experience checkbox and stated this again in words within their reviews whereas for low credibility condition reviewers indicated "Never" in the experience checkbox and stated that they had never used a product of this category within their reviews (see APPENDIX for full review texts).

Other than the above manipulations, the texts of the 8 reviews in each of the 4 versions remained the same. Also, the valence of the review contents was all positive.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables for this study were consumer purchase intent for the product being reviewed and consumer identification with the reviewer. To measure the above dependent variables, 11 target questionnaire items in addition to 2 manipulation check items were formulated.

Purchase intent. Of the 11 target questions, 6 asked the participants' purchase intentions and commitment to purchase the product for themselves or for others as a gift. Three of these questions asked participants to rate how likely it was for them to "inquire about," "consider purchasing," and "purchase" the product for themselves while the other 3 questions asked how likely it was for them to "inquire about," "consider purchasing," and "purchase" the product as a gift to others (Ohanian, 1990).

Participants were to answer these questions on a 5-point scale ranging from "Not at all likely" to "Very likely."

The three purchase intent for self items were highly correlated with one another but not as highly correlated with the other three purchase intent as gift items (see Tables 1 - 4 for bivariate correlations). Such observation was the same for the three purchase intent as gift items. Presumptively, participants interpreted and answered differently the questions asking them to rate their purchase intent for the product as a personal possession or a gift. Therefore, 3 items – "How likely are you to inquire about the product for yourself?" "How likely are you to consider purchasing the product for yourself?" and "How likely are you to purchase the product for yourself?" – were combined to from a purchase intent for self scale (Cronbach's alpha for high language intensity/high credibility narratives =.95; Cronbach's alpha for high language intensity/low credibility narratives =.95; Cronbach's alpha for low language intensity/high credibility narratives =.95; Cronbach's alpha for low language intensity/low credibility narratives =.95). The other 3 items – "How likely are you to inquire about the product as a gift to others?" "How likely are you to consider purchasing the product as a gift to others?" and "How likely are you to purchase the product as a gift to others?" – were combined to form a purchase intent for others as gift scale (Cronbach's alpha for high language intensity/high credibility narratives =.96; Cronbach's alpha for high language intensity/low credibility narratives =.95; Cronbach's alpha for low language intensity/high credibility narratives =.96; Cronbach's alpha for low language intensity/low credibility narratives =.96).

Table 1

Pearson Correlations for High Language Intensity/High Credibility Narratives

	Purchase Intent for Self Items			Purchase Intent as Gift Items		
	Inquire	Consider	Purchase	Inquire	Consider	Purchase
	PI1	PI2	PI3	PI4	PI5	PI6
			$n = 125$			
PI1	--	.844	.832	.478	.513	.497
PI2		--	.909	.546	.569	.585
PI3			--	.606	.602	.633
PI4				--	.891	.883
PI5					--	.925
PI6						--

PI indicates the purchase intent question item (see APPENDIX for actual items)

Table 2

Pearson Correlations for High Language Intensity/Low Credibility Narratives

	Purchase Intent for Self Items			Purchase Intent as Gift Items		
	Inquire	Consider	Purchase	Inquire	Consider	Purchase
	PI1	PI2	PI3	PI4	PI5	PI6
			$n = 125$			
PI1	--	.841	.846	.582	.551	.497
PI2		--	.920	.613	.599	.606
PI3			--	.617	.599	.609
PI4				--	.846	.858
PI5					--	.900
PI6						--

PI indicates the purchase intent question item (see APPENDIX for actual items)

Table 3

Pearson Correlations for Low Language Intensity/High Credibility Narratives

	Purchase Intent for Self Items			Purchase Intent as Gift Items		
	Inquire	Consider	Purchase	Inquire	Consider	Purchase
	PI1	PI2	PI3	PI4	PI5	PI6
			n = 125			
PI1	--	.869	.823	.647	.581	.588
PI2		--	.915	.636	.631	.650
PI3			--	.664	.653	.661
PI4				--	.880	.867
PI5					--	.913
PI6						--

PI indicates the purchase intent question item (see APPENDIX for actual items)

Table 4

Pearson Correlations for Low Language Intensity/Low Credibility Narratives

	Purchase Intent for Self Items			Purchase Intent as Gift Items		
	Inquire	Consider	Purchase	Inquire	Consider	Purchase
	PI1	PI2	PI3	PI4	PI5	PI6
			n = 125			
PI1	--	.813	.840	.611	.533	.511
PI2		--	.904	.606	.553	.572
PI3			--	.628	.561	.576
PI4				--	.870	.871
PI5					--	.911
PI6						--

PI indicates the purchase intent question item (see APPENDIX for actual items)

Identification with reviewer. Also, participants answered 5 questions measuring their identification with the reviewer in each review. Participants were asked if they "can really identify with the reviewer in the message," "are not much different from the reviewer in the message," and if they "felt the same feelings expressed by the reviewer" while reading the reviews. These 3 items were adopted from Campbell and Babrow's (2004) identification measure. In addition, participants answered two questions measuring the identification with their actual self and ideal self with the reviewer. The questions asked participants to note how similar the attributes they "actually possess" and "would like ideally to possess" were to the attributes of the reviewer (Shapiro, Porticella, & Hancock, 2007). All identification questions were answered on a 5-point scale that began with 1 being "Not at all" to 5 being "Very." An overall identification scale (Cronbach's alpha for high language intensity/high credibility narratives =.90; Cronbach's alpha for high language intensity/low credibility narratives =.88; Cronbach's alpha for low language intensity/high credibility narratives =.87; Cronbach's alpha for low language intensity/low credibility narratives =.91) was created using the five items that measured participants' levels of identification with the online product reviewers.

Manipulation checks. Additional two questions were manipulation checks for the trustworthiness and the expertise of the reviewer. Participants were asked to rate the product reviewer by selecting the number that best represents their opinion about the reviewer. The trustworthiness manipulation check ranged from 1 being "Untrustworthy" to 5 being "Trustworthy" while the expertise manipulation check ranged from 1 being "Not an expert" to 5 being "Expert."

Procedure

All materials were presented to participants on a laptop computer using MediaLab software (Jarvis, 2008). After participants signed the informed consent

form, they were given brief instructions about how to use MediaLab. The overall design was a 2 (language intensity) x 2 (reviewer credibility) within-subjects design. Each participant was assigned to one of four orders. In each order the participant saw 2 reviews in the high intensity/high credibility condition, 2 reviews in the high intensity/low credibility condition, 2 reviews in the low intensity/high credibility condition, and 2 reviews in the low intensity/low credibility condition. Across orders, each of the reviews was in each of the four conditions (see Table 5 for review orders).

The experiment began with a cover story that led participants to believe that the purpose of this study was to test the effectiveness of the new format of online product reviews. This cover story contained a short welcoming message and a simple direction guiding them to the next page in addition to some explanations about the new features of the tested product review system. The features included: online reviewers' name, their financial conflict of interest, the date that the review was posted, their experience with similar products, and information regarding the product provided by the reviewers. Participants were informed from the cover story that the reviewers indicated their times of experience with similar products and their possible financial conflict of interest by checking the appropriate box included within each review (see APPENDIX for exact text). A picture and some factual information for the first product (LG Arena) being reviewed were presented in the next page followed by 4 reviews for the first product. When participants were done reading the first 4 reviews and answering questions following each review, they saw a picture and some information about the second product (Sony X Series Walkman), again followed by 4 reviews. In the end, each participant read 8 reviews total, 4 reviews for a touch-screen cell phone and 4 reviews for an MP3 player.

Table 5

Contents and Order of Target Reviews

	Cell Phone Reviews		MP3 Reviews	
	Order 1	Order 2	Order 3	Order 4
Review 1	HighLI	HighLI	LowLI	LowLI
(Cell Phone)	HighCR	LowCR	HighCR	LowCR
Review 2	HighLI	HighLI	LowLI	LowLI
(Cell Phone)	LowCR	HighCR	LowCR	HighCR
Review 3	LowLI	LowLI	HighLI	HighLI
(Cell Phone)	HighCR	LowCR	LowCR	HighCR
Review 4	LowLI	LowLI	HighLI	HighLI
(Cell Phone)	LowCR	HighCR	HighCR	LowCR
Review 5	HighLI	HighLI	LowLI	LowLI
(MP3)	HighCR	LowCR	HighCR	LowCR
Review 6	HighLI	HighLI	LowLI	LowLI
(MP3)	LowCR	HighCR	LowCR	HighCR
Review 7	LowLI	LowLI	HighLI	HighLI
(MP3)	HighCR	LowCR	LowCR	HighCR
Review 8	LowLI	LowLI	HighLI	HighLI
(MP3)	LowCR	HighCR	HighCR	LowCR

LI indicates language intensity and CR indicates credibility

After reading each online customer review, participants completed 2 manipulation check questionnaire items and 11 questionnaire items about the review, 6 measuring purchase intent for the cell product, and 5 measuring identification with the reviewer. The order of the questions was randomized for each review.

When participants finished reading all 8 reviews and answering all the relevant questions, they were directed to pages asking their gender, age, and ethnicity. After answering the demographic questions, participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

RESULTS

Two overall dependent variables – purchase intent for the product and identification with reviewer – were analyzed using a 2 language intensity (high/low) x 2 reviewer credibility (high/low) repeated-measure ANOVA design. Both independent variables were of within-subjects factors. However, participant gender was included later in the analysis as a between-subjects variable to a 2 language intensity (high/low) x 2 reviewer credibility x participant gender (male/female) mixed repeated-measure ANOVA analysis.

Manipulation Checks

Manipulation checks for the two credibility manipulations – expertise manipulation and trustworthiness manipulation – were conducted. The two manipulation check items were averaged to create a single manipulation measure. The results showed that the manipulations were effective, with high credibility conditions displaying significantly higher level of both perceived reviewer-expertise and reviewer-trustworthiness than low credibility conditions, $F(1, 124) = 181.29$, $p< 001$, Partial $\eta^2 = .59$ (High Credibility= 3.33, *SEM*= .05; Low Credibility= 2.41, *SEM*= .05).

Hypothesis Tests

Both dependent variables – purchase intent for the reviewed product and consumer identification with reviewer – were run as part of the same hypothesis test analyses.

Purchase Intent

Language intensity. The results from both the purchase intent for the self scale and purchase intent for others as gift scale supported H₁. For both scales, the main effect for language intensity was significant, $F(1, 124) = 26.07$, $p< .001$, Partial $\eta^2 = .17$ for the purchase intent for self scale and $F(1, 124) = 12.19$, $p= .001$, Partial $\eta^2 =$

.09 for the purchase intent as gift scale. When participants were considering to purchase the product for themselves or for others as a gift, they were more likely to show interest in purchasing the product when online product reviewers were using high language intensity to express their positive emotions about the product than when they were using low language intensity (purchase intent for self scale: High Language Intensity= 2.70, *SEM*= .07; Low Language Intensity= 2.47, *SEM*= .07/ purchase intent for others as gift scale: High Language Intensity= 2.30, *SEM*= .07; Low Language Intensity= 2.14, *SEM*= .07).

Source credibility. Significant main effect for reviewer credibility was also evident in both scales, supporting H$_2$, F (1, 124) = 70.22, p< .001, Partial η^2 = .36 for the purchase intent for self scale and F (1, 124) = 49.44, p< .001, Partial η^2 = .29 for the purchase intent as gift scale. The results indicate that participants are more likely to show interest in purchasing the product for their own use when the product reviewers are of high credibility rather than of low credibility (High Credibility= 2.77, *SEM*= .07; Low Credibility= 2.40, *SEM*= .07). The same results were evident in the purchase intent as gift scale (High Credibility= 2.38, *SEM*= .08; Low Credibility= 2.07, *SEM*= .07).

No significant 2-way language intensity x reviewer credibility interaction was observed, indicating that high language intensity induced more purchase intentions from participants in any reviewer-credibility conditions. Hence, in line with IPT's predictions, H$_1$ and H$_2$ were supported.

Participants' gender had no significant main effect on the purchase intent for self scale, F (1, 123) = .35, p = .555, Partial η^2 = .00, or the purchase intent for others as gift scale, F (1, 123) = .87, p = .353, Partial η^2 = .00.

Identification

Just as with purchase intent scales, there was a significant main effect for reviewer credibility, $F(1, 124) = 84.88$, $p < 001$, Partial $\eta^2 = .41$. Participants were more likely to identify with high credibility reviewers than with low credibility reviewers (High Credibility= 2.86, *SEM*= .05; Low Credibility= 2.34, *SEM*= .05), which supported H_3. There was no significant effect of language intensity on participants' identification with the reviewers. Unexpectedly, however, significant 2-way and 3-way interactions with participants' gender were observed. A significant 2-way interaction of participant gender x reviewer credibility reveal that males (High Credibility= 3.00, *SEM*= .07; Low Credibility= 2.33, *SEM*= .07) were more likely to identify with high credibility reviewers than females (High Credibility= 2.75, *SEM*= .07; Low Credibility= 2.35, *SEM*= .06), $F(1, 123) = 5.91$, $p < .05$, Partial $\eta^2 = .05$. To further validate the above 2-way interaction, a 3-way interaction of participant gender x reviewer credibility x language intensity was also significant, $F(1, 123) = 8.90$, $p < .01$, Partial $\eta^2 = .07$(see Table 6 for means).

Table 6

Interaction of Gender x Language Intensity x Reviewer Credibility on Identification

	High Language Intensity		Low Language Intensity	
	High Credibility	Low Credibility	High Credibility	Low Credibility
Male	2.91	2.46	3.08	2.19
	(.09)	(.09)	(.09)	(.09)
Female	2.85	2.37	2.66	2.33
	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)

Numbers in parentheses are the standard errors of the mean

The 3-way interaction shows that males were more likely than females to identify with high credibility reviewers regardless of the language intensity level that the reviewers use, while females were more likely to identify with high credibility reviewers, more so when they use high language intensity than low language intensity.

DISCUSSION

The results of the current study show that participants' perceptions of language intensity and reviewer credibility play a role in their purchase decisions. Throughout conditions, participants were more likely to consider purchasing the reviewed product when reviewers were highly credible and when they expressed their emotions with highly intense language in their positive reviews about the product. This was true in both cases of product purchase intentions for oneself and for others as a gift. Such outcome directly supports the predictions of IPT. As noted in the introduction, IPT suggests that when source-receiver opinion discrepancy is held constant, both the high credibility source and the low credibility source will be more persuasive when they use high language intensity than when they use low language intensity in their messages.

Also from the results, it is evident that individuals, especially males, identify with the reviewer more when they perceive the reviewers to be highly credible. The outcome of the current research suggests that individuals are more likely to ascertain credible reviewers to be more like themselves and believe that they feel the same emotions as the reviewer when the reviewers are of high credibility. Such results provide evidence that not only are individuals more persuaded by a highly credible source to change their attitude or behavior toward a subject as Gilly, Graham, Wolfinbarger, and Yale (1998) pointed out in their research, but also are led to identify more with the source. Individuals in this particular research may have felt that they were similar to a high credible source because the credibility manipulations used in the current research were that reviewers either had or did not have significant financial interest in the company, used names or pretentious Internet IDs, and had several experiences with similar products or none at all. Given that the participants for this study were undergraduates, it is likely that they did not have any financial interest

in any product companies and have had experience with high-tech gadgets such as the ones used in this research as reviewed products. This may have led participants to identify themselves more with the traits of high credibility reviewers. However, it is still notable that participants also identified more with the reviewers' emotions and thought they felt the same emotions as displayed by the reviewer when the reviewers were highly credible. Identifying with the reviewers' traits may have led participants to easily internalize the feelings felt by the reviewers. However, explicating the process of such observation was out of scope of the current research. Further studies on examining such processes are advisable.

Advantages and Contributions

A theoretical contribution of the current study is that by testing two language theories – IPT and LET – with conflicting predictions, it clarifies which one of the two predictions of the theories apply to a particular situation such as online shopping instances. As the results indicate, in the case of online reviews, the prediction of IPT appropriately explains the effects of the level of language intensity used in the reviews and that of the reviewers' credibility. The study buttresses IPT's prediction that high language intensity used by the message source enhances the source's persuasiveness even when the source is of low credibility, rather than the prediction of LET that a source is more persuasive when it uses a language intensity level that matches their credibility level. Hence, the current research validates the predictions of IPT in a new area of online reviews where individuals are free to express in any intensity level their opinions about a product and recommend the product to other potential online consumers. The results add to the body of language intensity research and make a statement that despite their short length of text, online reviews with the reviewers' emotions freely displayed, influences individuals to make decisions based on them.

Another advantage of the current study is that the reviews used in the study were online reviews that were extracted from an actual retailing website. The reviews contained online reviewers' original means of expressions frequently used in online settings such as using capital letters and/or exclamation marks. The results obtained from such reviews with emotional expressions used in real-world online settings shed light on what kinds of messages individuals are drawn to online. In addition, the current study reveals that individuals refer more to review messages that recommend the product with highly intense levels of emotional expressions to make purchasing decisions for a product. Contrary to the common impression that exaggerated positive expressions in online reviews would be regarded as puffery – "advertising or other sales representations which praise the item to be sold with subjective opinions, superlatives, or exaggerations, vaguely and generally, stating no specific facts" (Kamins & Marks, 1987, p. 6) – and hence less believable or persuasive, the results provide evidence that individuals are more drawn to highly intense expressions in online reviews when they were trying to make purchase decisions for novel products.

The comprehension gained through the current research on the significance of language intensity on individuals' online purchase decision making behavior can further be expanded to the area of consumer behavior research that ruminates on consumer reactions to different language intensity utilized by other consumers when expressing their emotions about a product to another potential consumer. The current study's conceptual finding that high intensity language utilized by product endorsers is well-heard and is effective in reaching out to potential online consumers would contribute to further development of advertisements and computerized recommendation systems. Especially for advertisements that use previous consumers as recommenders for products and for computerized online recommendation systems,

such understandings can be directly applied to their design of narrative scripts and recommendation display formats.

Limitations

As with any research, this study was subject to some limitations. The current research restricted its boundaries only to positive product reviews for new high-tech gadgets. High-tech gadgets such as touch-screen cell phones and MP3 players were chosen in order to introduce in the experiment products that undergraduates would likely be interested in and to eliminate the effects of any previous experiences with the product. Due to such choices, the purchase intention for the two reviewed products may have been somewhat inflated in that undergraduates may have been generally more interested in such products overall. The participants' preexisting interest may have been boosted with the positive contents of the target reviews. Although it was out of the scope of the current study, the possibility exists that participants' reactions to products that they are less involved and interested in may differ from the results obtained from the current study.

Another shortcoming of the current research is that the difference between the participants' preexisting opinions about the reviewed products and those of the reviewers were not explicitly controlled, although it was highly unlikely that participants had preexisting opinions about the products given their novelty in the market. The main effects of language intensity and source credibility on consumer purchased intent observed in the current study were significant to a degree that this issue becomes a minor factor in altering the hypothesis tests, but collecting the source-receiver discrepancy data would have made clearer the test of IPT. Since IPT model suggests a multiplicative interaction formula of language intensity, source credibility and discrepancy between message sources' position and that of message receivers

(Hamilton et al., 1990), the collection and analysis of the discrepancy data would have enabled the current research to numerically test Hamilton et al.'s IPT model.

Future Research Directions

Despite the above disadvantages, the observed main effect that online consumers were more likely to show interest in purchasing the product when reviewers used high intensity expressions rather than low and when reviewers were of high credibility rather than low still remains significant and theoretically interesting. Yet, some improvements and future research directions can be suggested.

All the target online reviews used in the current study were positive reviews of high-tech gadgetry products with high or low language intensity. For future research, it would be interesting to include a more variety of language intensity of both positive and negative reviews, especially since there still isn't a clear academic principle that explicates their different effects. Inclusion of reviews that express varying language intensity levels of positive and negative emotions would not only allow one to examine the effects of emotional valence on individuals' purchasing decisions based on online reviews but also clarify which degree of language intensity will increase or decrease the reviews' persuasiveness and receivers' perceptions of their realism. Also, looking at reviews of other product categories such as fashion, food, books, etc. as well would expand the boundaries of the current research by exploring the effects of consumer involvement with products in addition to language intensity and source credibility on consumer decision making and would augment the generalizability of its findings to products of different consumer involvement level.

Another addition that future research may also benefit from is to explore the effects of the two credibility constructs – source trustworthiness and source expertise. The current study's scope only allowed for combined examination of the two credibility constructs. Consequently, the current study's credibility manipulations

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were utilized in a way that high credibility sources were of both high expertise and high trustworthiness whereas low credibility sources were of both low expertise and low trustworthiness. However, there is academic evidence that source trustworthiness and source expertise operate as two separate constructs. Ohanian (1990) treated the two source factors as separate constructs of source credibility in her credibility scale that measures celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness and found that message receivers distinguish between such credibility constructs when evaluating an endorser and making subsequent purchase decisions. Furthermore, O'Hara, Netemeyer, and Burton (1991) studied the discriminant validity among expertise, trustworthiness, and likability to observe that expertise played a heavier role in persuasion than trustworthiness or likability. However, studies that looked at credibility constructs in on-line settings observed somewhat different results. Chen (2008) found that online consumers acknowledged that other consumers who were posting recommendations were non-experts but nevertheless found them to be more trustworthy than expert recommenders. Senecal and Nantel (2004) also found that online consumers rated other consumers to have less expertise than computerized recommendation systems or human experts of products sold online but perceived them to be more trustworthy (Senecal & Nantel, 2004). One possible explanation for such difference is that online shopping consumers may prefer guidance from sources that are perceived to be similar to themselves without vested interest associated with the product or the brand in question (Chen, 2008).

With such past findings as foundations for future research, it would be advantageous to look at how online consumers perceive online reviewers' expertise and trustworthiness and explore which of the two credibility constructs carry more weight in persuading them to make purchase decisions.

Lastly, as briefly noted in the discussion, further studies on how and why individuals identify more with high credibility sources than with low credibility sources would be beneficial. Also, a possible development of a model that explicates individuals' purchase decision making process with its base on perceived identification with online reviewers would be a worthwhile topic for future research.

CONCLUSION

The current study had two main goals: 1) to investigate the interactive effects of emotional language intensity and source credibility on persuasion by testing IPT and LET in the domain of online consumer reviews and 2) to observe which characteristics of the message source individuals identify with when making purchase decisions. This research not only adds to the theoretical body of language intensity studies by demonstrating that IPT's predictions apply to a section of the prospering realm of e-commerce, online product reviews, but also provides insight to understanding what kinds of online reviewers potential online consumers are drawn to and identify with. It is needless to say that how online consumers make purchase decisions is complex process. However, based on the results of the current research, some conclusions can be drawn. The intensity of the reviewers' emotional expressions and their credibility levels matter. Not only do individuals identify more with more credible reviewers, but they are also more persuaded by the contents of the online reviews when the reviewers are more credible and when they display their enthusiasm with highly intense language.

APPENDIX

Cover Story

Hello. Thank you for your participation.

We are testing a new format of online product review system and we would like to hear your opinion about it. The system is not much different from the other online product review systems on existing retailing websites. The features include: online reviewers' name, their financial conflict of interest, the date that the review was posted, and information regarding the product provided by the reviewers. Among the new features of the system there is a section that may need further explanation. In this system, reviewers are encouraged to provide information about the number of experience they have had with products of similar category with the reviewed product by clicking the appropriate box under the Experience criterion. Also, please note that if a reviewer has checked "YES" in the Financial Conflict of Interest Disclosure box at the top of each review it indicates that the reviewer may have or had a significant financial interest in the company of the product. Significant financial interests include:

- Salary, royalties, or other payments
- Product company stocks or subsidies
- Current or past employment from the product company

Again, thank you very much for your valuable opinion.

Online Review Texts

[Review 1]

Review by (Elise Choy/DANDIANDEE "ANDEE")

Do you have any significant financial interests that would reasonably appear to be affected by this review? (Yes/No)

How many times have you used products of this category? (Never/5 times or more)

[High LI content]
This is my (first/fifth) cell phone and I have had this phone for about 3 weeks now. And I ABSOLUTELY Love it. The Keyboard is the best for sending text messages. I love how it's all touchscreen. Oh and the camera takes some amazing pictures, crystal clear and I extremely love how you can edit them too. It does take some time to figure

out how to use all the wonderful features but well worth the time. A mighty fun phone to have. LOVE, LOVE this phone and you will too.

[Low LI content]
This is my (first/fifth) cell phone and I have had this phone for about 3 weeks now. And I like it. The Keyboard is good for sending text messages, I like how it's all touch screen. Oh and the camera takes some nice pictures, clear and I like how you can edit them too. It does take some time to figure out how to use all the good features but worth the time. A fun phone to have. I like this phone and you may too.

[Review 2]

Review by (Elise Choy/DANDIANDEE "ANDEE")

Do you have any significant financial interests that would reasonably appear to be affected by this review? (Yes/No)

How many times have you used products of this category? (Never/5 times or more)

[High LI content]
I bought this phone 'cause I wanted a touch screen and didn't want to have to pay an arm & leg for one. I have (used a phone like this several times/never used a phone like this) before and I would have to say that I'm INTENSELY happy with my decision and the phone is PERFECT for someone who doesn't care for all the fancy extra software. I'm not much into emailing, IM'ing etc. but texting I do! LOVE IT!! I haven't had any problems with the phone. It has a very loud ringer, battery life so-so, the only thing that irritates me is that I have to change all of my ringtones to MP3 format in order to use them on the phone and also can't change text ringer to personal ringer. Overall EXTREMELY satisfied!!! Awesome phone, great price!!

[Low LI content]
I bought this phone 'cause I wanted a touch screen and didn't want to have to pay an arm & leg for one. I have (used a phone like this several times/never used a phone like this) before and I would have to say that I'm mildly happy with my decision and the phone is good for someone who doesn't care for all the fancy extra software. I'm not much into emailing, IM'ing etc. but texting I do. Like it. I haven't had any problems with the phone. It has a very loud ringer, battery life so-so, the only thing that irritates me is that I have to change all of my ringtones to MP3 format in order to use them on the phone and also can't change text ringer to personal ringer. Overall fairly satisfied. A good phone, good price.

[Review 3]

Review by (Anthony Richards/"Richie Rich")

Do you have any significant financial interests that would reasonably appear to be affected by this review? (Yes/No)

How many times have you used products of this category? (Never/3 ~ 4 times)

[High LI content]
I purchased this phone 3 days ago after doing a lot of research for phones although I've (never owned a touchscreen phone/owned 2 touchscreen phones) before. I love this phone and I think it is EXTREMELY AWESOME. I haven't had any problems with it. I can hear great on it. I LOVE THIS PHONE! I recommend it!!! The touch screen is wonderfully receptive, more so then its competitors, (HTC fuze, google phone; LG voyager, incite; Samsung instinct, etc.). Also the internet work is GREAT so far, no problems when trying to surf the web or check my e-mail.

[Low LI content]
I purchased this phone 3 days ago after doing a lot of research for phones although I've (never owned a touchscreen phone/owned 2 touchscreen phones) before. I fairly like this phone and I think it is okay. I haven't had any problems with it. I can hear well on it. I like this phone. I recommend it. The touch screen is responsive, more so than its competitors, (HTC fuze, google phone; LG voyager, incite; Samsung instinct, etc.). Also the internet work is good so far, no problems when trying to surf the web or check my e-mail.

[Review 4]

Review by (Anthony Richards/"Richie Rich")

Do you have any significant financial interests that would reasonably appear to be affected by this review? (Yes/No)

How many times have you used products of this category? (Never/3 ~ 4 times)

[High LI content]
I chose the LG Arena instead of the apple iPhone. I wanted something smaller, more satisfying. This excellent little phone caught my eye, and was just what I wanted. This is my (first/fourth) time using a touch screen phone but I can say that this touch screen is extremely receptive. It also has tactile feedback (vibration) when you touch it! This phone has extremely great color in the pictures. The camera on this is the BEST! The only things that I wish it had are a standard 3.5mm headphone jack, and customizable menus. Anyway, this phone is an EXCELLENT buy!

[Low LI content]
I chose the LG Arena instead of the apple iPhone. I wanted something smaller, more satisfying. This pleasing little phone caught my eye, and was what I wanted. This is

my (first/fourth) time using a touch screen phone but I can say that this touch screen is fairly receptive. It also has tactile feedback (vibration) when you touch it. This phone has fairly good color in the pictures. The camera on this is acceptable. The only things that I wish it had are a standard 3.5mm headphone jack, and customizable menus. Anyway, this phone is a good buy.

[Review 5]

Review by (<u>Suzan Zapp</u>/"X FAN")

Do you have any significant financial interests that would reasonably appear to be affected by this review? (Yes/No)

How many times have you used products of this category? (Never/3 ~ 4 times)

[High LI content]
Before my X series, I've (never had an MP3 player/had 4 MP3 players). The X's interface is EXTREMELY snappy and snazzy, and it can do a lot as long as you have access to a wireless hotspot. Google maps can pinpoint your location to within 100 yards, and can route you to your destination, and even has traffic information! I intensely like this product!
How amazing is all this in a tiny package with a reasonable price? I'm REALLY impressed by how mighty fine the experience of using the X is.

[Low LI content]
Before my X series, I've (never had an MP3 player/had 4 MP3 players). The touch's interface is fairly snappy and snazzy, and it can do a lot as long as you have access to a wireless hotspot. Google maps can pinpoint your location to within 100 yards, and can route you to your destination, and even has traffic information. I like this product. How pleasing is all this in a tiny package with a reasonable price? I'm mildly impressed by how fair the experience of using the X is.

[Review 6]

Review by (<u>Suzan Zapp</u>/"X FAN")

Do you have any significant financial interests that would reasonably appear to be affected by this review? (Yes/No)

How many times have you used products of this category? (Never/3 ~ 4 times)

[High LI content]
I must wholeheartedly agree that this device is INCREDIBLE. I extremely like this MP3 player. The new apps work incredibly, and, the video is excellent. I've (never had an MP3 player/had three MP3 players) before but the connectivity is wonderfully

simple and the controls become second nature in a short time.

I, too, was one who complained about the "limited" storage, but, in reality 16GB is totally adequate for most anyone. How many songs can you listen to, or how many movies/videos can you watch over a given period of time?

An EXCELLENT buy.

[Low LI content]
I must agree that this device is good. I like this MP3 player. The new apps work fairly well, and, the video is favorable. I've (never had an MP3 player/had three MP3 players) before but connectivity is pleasingly simple and the controls become second nature in a short time.

I, too, was one who complained about the "limited" storage, but, in reality 16GB is totally adequate for most anyone. How many songs can you listen to, or how many movies/videos can you watch over a given period of time?

An acceptable buy.

[Review 7]

Review by (<u>Jeffery O'Dwyer/</u>"<u>Dr.</u>")

Do you have any significant financial interests that would reasonably appear to be affected by this review? (Yes/No)

How many times have you used products of this category? (Never/5 times or more)

[High LI content]
The X Walkman is FANTASTIC! I've (never used/used several) MP3s in the past and I can say that this one is simple to use and has plenty of storage space for things I might want to add. The music application is EXTREMELY wonderful and with a simple accessory, I use it to play on my car stereo system. For movies, this MP3 player is incredible! The LCD screen is clear and crisp enough for things I wish to watch (Which is GREAT for those times spent in the car on a long trip.). And if I choose to, the composite accessory cables make it possible to transfer my movies to a TV. (I plan on using those for on vacation this summer at the condo.) It's EXCELLENT to not have to drag around those extra DVD cases and player.

It's also WONDERFUL to store a BUNCH of pictures on it. I always have a lot of family photos and memories ready at the click of a button or tap on the screen.

[Low LI content]
The X Walkman is pretty good. I've (never used/used several) MP3s in the past and I can say that this one is simple to use and has plenty of storage space for things I might want to add. The music application is good and with a simple accessory, I use it to play on my car stereo system. For movies, this MP3 player is favorable. The LCD screen is clear and crisp enough for things I wish to watch (Which is nice for those times spent in the car on a long trip.). And if I choose to, the composite accessory

cables make it possible to transfer my movies to a TV. (I plan on using those for on vacation this summer at the condo.) It's pleasing to not have to drag around those extra DVD cases and player. It's also good to store pictures on it. I always have a lot of family photos and memories ready at the click of a button or tap on the screen.

[Review 8]

Review by (Jeffery O'Dwyer/"Dr.")

Do you have any significant financial interests that would reasonably appear to be affected by this review? (Yes/No)

How many times have you used products of this category? (Never/3 ~ 4 times)

[High LI content]
This is the (first/third) time for me to use apple products. I found it an EXCELLENT tool. The touch screen is AMAZING and sensitive. The brightness and colors are wonderful. The note pad included in this version is one of the greatest apps ever added to this ipod. This gadget added another awesome information resource to my practical life.
Also, for the majority of people, I think the 16GB version will suffice.

[Low LI content]
This is the (first/third) time for me to use Sony products. I found it a fair tool. The touch screen is good and sensitive. The brightness and colors are pleasing. The note pad included in this version is one of the good apps added to this MP3 player. This gadget added another fine information resource to my practical life.
Also, for the majority of people, I think the 16GB version will suffice.

Questionnaire Items

PI1: How likely are you to inquire about the product for yourself?

    1   Not at all likely
    2   A little likely
    3   Somewhat likely
    4   Likely
    5   Very likely

PI2: How likely are you to consider purchasing the product for yourself?

    1   Not at all likely
    2   A little likely
    3   Somewhat likely

4 Likely

5 Very likely

PI3: How likely are you to purchase the product for yourself?

1 Not at all likely

2 A little likely

3 Somewhat likely

4 Likely

5 Very likely

PI4: How likely are you to inquire about the product as a gift to others?

1 Not at all likely

2 A little likely

3 Somewhat likely

4 Likely

5 Very likely

PI5: How likely are you to consider purchasing the product as a gift to others?

1 Not at all likely

2 A little likely

3 Somewhat likely

4 Likely

5 Very likely

PI6: How likely are you to purchase the product as a gift to others?

1 Not at all likely

2 A little likely

3 Somewhat likely

4 Likely

5 Very likely

ID1: I can really identify with the reviewer in the message.

1 Not at all

2 A little

3 Somewhat

4 Quite a lot

5 Very much

ID2: I am not much different from the reviewer in the message.

1 Not at all different
2 A little different
3 Somewhat different
4 Different
5 Very different

ID3: Think about the attributes you actually possess. How similar are the attributes you actually possess to the attributes of the reviewer?

1 Not at all similar
2 A little similar
3 Somewhat similar
4 Similar
5 Very similar

ID4: Think about the attributes you would like ideally to possess. How similar are the attributes you would like ideally to possess to the attributes of the reviewer?

1 Not at all similar
2 A little similar
3 Somewhat similar
4 Similar
5 Very similar

ID5: While reading, I felt the same feelings expressed by the reviewer.

1 Not at all
2 A little
3 Somewhat
4 Quite a lot
5 Very much

MC1: Please rate the online product reviewer. Select the number that best represents your opinion between the two words.

1 Not an expert
2
3
4
5   Expert

MC2: Please rate the online product reviewer. Select the number that best represents your opinion between the two words.

1 Untrustworthy

2
3
4
5   Trustworthy

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