

Examining Individuals' Ads Click Intention in the Wechat Moments: A Lens of Elaboration Likelihood Model

Completed Research Paper

Zhen Shao

Zhengyuan Pan

Rui Zhao

Jiandong Wang

Abstract

Drawing upon elaboration likelihood model (ELM), we compared the dual routes in determining users' ads click intentions and examined the mediation mechanism of cognitive vs. affective trust on the influence processes in the Wechat Moments. A scenario-based survey was conducted in a university of China, and 183 data was collected. Structural equation modelling analysis was used to test the research model. The empirical results suggested that content personalization and social recommendation were significant antecedents of ads click intention, and their effects were mediated by cognitive trust and affective trust. Moreover, a multi-group analysis indicated that the two influence processes were moderated by prior product experience. Theoretical and practical implications are illustrated in the final section.

Keywords: Ads Click Intention, Elaboration Likelihood Model, Cognitive Trust, Affective Trust

Introduction

With the rapid development of mobile communication technologies, mobile social media application has been widely applied in people's daily life in the past few years. Wechat Moments is deemed as one of the dominant mobile social platforms in China, and has gained more than one billion active users all over the world by the year of 2018 (ref: HICSS). The burgeoning growth of mobile social platforms (e.g. Wechat Moments) has aroused the attention of advertisers to find new ways of harnessing these platforms for their advertising purposes. According to the Tencent Financial Announcement, the advertising revenues from Wechat Moments has increased to 14,110 million RMB in the second quarter of 2018, with a growth rate of 39%. While advertising on social mobile platforms has enjoyed the explosive popularity in China, the advertising contents may not necessarily elicit interest among users and persuade them to click on advertisements (ads) while browsing. There are still a large number of people who would not like to click ads from the mobile social platforms because of the perception of intrusiveness, tediousness, etc. (IRsearch, 2018). The application of technology provides users with more accurate ads, but the increase of ads amount also reduces their experience. It is an important yet challenging issue to deeply understand users' needs and improve the performance of mobile advertising.

Previous research in this field has examined the precursors of individuals' ads-click intention from multiple perspectives. The first stream of studies focused on information quality, specifically, the

manipulation of advertising contents to evoke consumers' emotions or sentiments and thereby stimulate reactions (Xu, 2006; Tucker, 2014; Matthes et al., 2014; Tseng & Huang, 2016; Zhang & Mao, 2017). The second category of studies concentrated on individual characteristics, and examined personalized targeting based on consumers' prior knowledge of products or services (Gauzente, 2010; Lin et al., 2015; Celli et al. 2016). In particular, Gauzente (2010) demonstrated that prior knowledge of specific advertising moderated the positive relationship between attitudes and ads-click intention of mobile advertising. The third stream of research drawn attention to social influence of the advertisement provider (Erdem et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2018). For instance, Erdem et al. (2017) reported that the word of mouth can help drive ads-clicks in SNS advertising context.

Despite the extant literature provides us a theoretical foundation of ads-click behavior in various research contexts, the understanding of the patterns of influence processes in ads-click intention still remains scant. Particularly, we are not aware of any research that differentiates the impact mechanism of ads information quality to user perception, and explains whether and why such impact mechanism is consistent with individual characteristics. In order to enrich our understanding of influence process in ads-click behaviors, we employed elaboration-likelihood model (ELM) as an overarching theoretical framework. Following the previous research, the central and peripheral routes are invoked here to manifest the dual processes (Petty & Wegener, 1999). Moreover, individual characteristics plays an important role of moderator in the patterns of influence processes in ads-click intention.

Prior studies have examined the critical perceptions that drive the intention of ads-click, and trust was identified as a significant determinant (Gauzente, 2010; Wu et al. 2018; Ogbanufe & Kim, 2018). Considering that different types of social media security issues have been identified, such as personal information, image tagging and hacking (Joe & Ramakrishnan, 2014), trust in ads vendors might mitigate clicking risk and galvanize ads-click intention. In particular, we examine two relationship formation mechanisms, cognitive and affective trust, and investigate their unique antecedents in the context of Wechat Moments. Cognitive and affective trust framework is salient in Wechat context because users' ads-click behaviors are influenced by both performance-relevant cognitions and emotional bonds relationships (McAllister, 1995; Schaubroeck et al., 2011). It is essential to distinguish between cognitive and affective trust when examining factors that mediate relationships between various antecedents and ads-click behaviors, with each dimension associated with different routes.

Overall, the research motivations of this study are two-fold. Firstly, we examine how information quality (central route) and social recommendation (peripheral route) evoked by target ads affect cognitive-affective trust and click intention. Secondly, we investigate the moderating effect of prior experience towards a given ads between the two different routes and the two trust mechanisms.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows: we first review the extant literature in elaboration likelihood theory and trust. Then we develop a research model and propose the corresponding hypotheses. Thirdly, we describe the research method, discuss statistical analysis outcomes of the main model, and conduct a post-hoc analysis. We conclude with a discussion of theoretical and practical implications.

Literature Review

ELM

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) is a general theory of attitude formation or change (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). ELM argues that one's attitude formation is caused by dual routes: central route and peripheral route (Petty & Wegener, 1999). The central route requires individuals to think carefully and scrutinize issue-relevant arguments before judging about the target behavior, such as information quality (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006; Zhou, 2012). Whereas the peripheral route requires individuals to processes heuristic cues and form attitudes based on simpler or more superficial inference about its merits, like source credibility (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006). In mobile advertising context, the central route is manifested in ads content, which requires individuals to consider seriously about the informational arguments; while social recommendation acts as a significant peripheral route, which involves less cognitive efforts.

According to ELM, the route taken by an individual is contingent on the elaboration likelihood (Petty et al., 1983). Elaboration refers to the amount of thinking individuals devote in scrutinizing an issue, and is determined by one's motivation and ability to process information (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006; Gu et al., 2017). If recipients have related experiences or involvement with a given argument, more cognitive efforts are taken to adequately scrutinize the information. In contrast, inexperienced or unpassionate ones may be unwilling to analyze the inner content, instead, they rely on cue-based heuristics for attitude formation (Gu et al., 2017). In the context of mobile advertising, prior product experience is considered as an elaboration likelihood to the information process, since such experience enables ads recipients to accumulate specific knowledge or sentiment that related with product's actual effectiveness and personalization.

The ELM in information system discipline has been used to examine users' behaviors in diverse contexts. Specifically, Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006) applied ELM in the context of IT acceptance, and posited that the central and peripheral routes regarding argument quality and source credibility are effective ways to impact IT acceptance. Greiner & Wang (2011) drawn upon ELM to examine customer-to-customer trust in e-finance marketplaces. Ho & Bodoff (2014) combined ELM with consumer search theory (CST) to investigate users' attitudes and intentions towards the web personalization agent through sampling and processing of personalized recommendations. Recently, ELM is applied in advertising context to examine the effects of positive vs. negative emotions evoked by ads pictures on users' perceptions and click intentions (Wu et al., 2018). There is a call for more empirical studies to examine the central and peripheral routes to persuasion based on ELM in advertising context (Wu et al., 2018).

Cognitive and Affective Trust

Trust is identified as a significant antecedent that influences individuals' behaviors in the context of e-commerce and social commerce (Mayer et al., 1995; Corritore et al., 2003). McAllister (1995) argued that trust is a multi-dimensional construct, and divided trust into two typologies: cognitive trust and affective trust. Cognitive trust refers to an individual's belief about the reliability and competence of the ads-vendors (Rempel et al., 1985; Johnson & Grayson, 2005). While affective trust represents emotional attachment, caring and reciprocity between a trustor and a trust target (Stewart & Gosain, 2006; Fan & Lederman, 2018). The framework of cognitive trust and affective trust has been widely applied in previous literature (Cook & Wall, 1980; Johnson & Grayson, 2005; Webber, 2008; Webber & Klimoski, 2004). For example, Stewart & Gosain (2006) proposed that cognitive trust and affective trust among open source software team members have positive effects on the team's input effectiveness. In a recent study, Fan and Lederman (2018) adopted the cognitive and affective trust framework to examine the mechanisms for information adoption and relational closeness in online health communities.

In mobile advertising context such as Wechat Moments, trust also plays a significant role in affecting individuals' ads-click intention because of the high uncertainty and potential risks of information disclosure (Chen et al., 2018). For example, users will be guided to ads-vendors' portals after clicking ads in Wechat Moments and are exposed to the risk of data leakage. While trust in vendors is likely to relieve risk perceptions and facilitate ads-click intention (Ogbanufe & Dan, 2018). In Wechat Moments, the persuasion process is figured by both cognitive cues (e.g. content personalization) and affective cues (e.g. social recommendation). Thus this study focuses on the view of multi-dimensional trust, and examines the antecedents and outcomes of cognitive and affective trust in the context of ads-click.

Research Model and Hypotheses

Adopting ELM as an overarching theoretical framework, this study considers content personalization as a significant central route, and identifies social recommendation as significant peripheral route in the context of advertisement. To accommodate risk-aroused context and explore cognitive and affective mechanisms, this study introduces cognitive vs. affective trust as mediating reactions, which in turn affect individuals' ads-click intention. In particular, gender, age, education and network size are considered as control variables in the structural model, as suggested in the previous literature (Shao &

Pan, 2018). The proposed theoretical model is presented in Figure 1. The theoretical logic of each hypothesis is illustrated in the next sections.

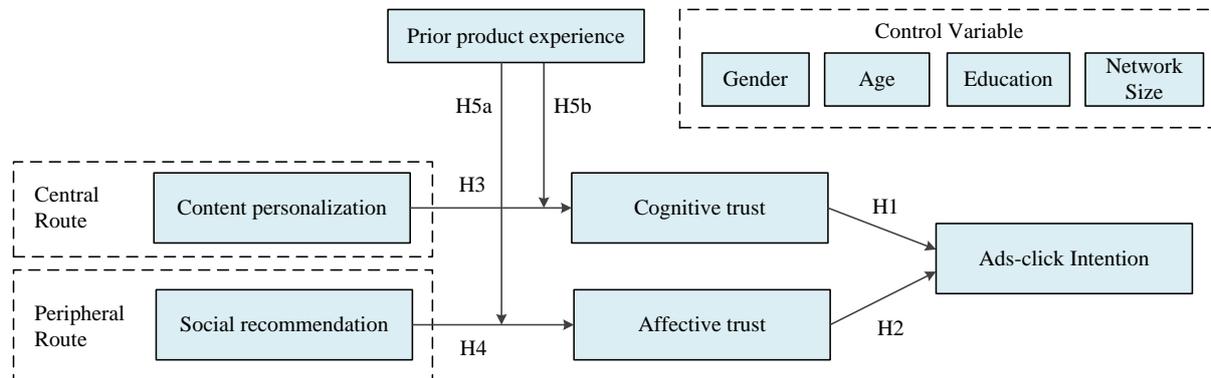


Figure 1. Research Model

Influence of Trust on Ads-click intention

Trust is identified as a major determining factor of behavioral intentions over a decade of research in information systems (Mayer et al., 1995; Pavlou & Gefen, 2004; Lu et al., 2009). In the context of mobile advertising, there exists potential data leakage to vendors when clicking the pervasive target ads, while trust acts as a necessity in the risk-aroused situation (Mayer et al., 1995). In an empirical study, Ogbanufe & Dan (2018) attested that trust positively influences ads-click intention in the mobile social platform. McAllister (1995) argued that trust is a multi-dimensional construct, which comprises two dimensions of cognitive trust and affective trust. Cognitive trust relies on a rational assessment of the target by the trustor (McAllister, 1995), and such assessment may be related to the adequate evaluation of competence of the trust target as well as the probability of opportunistic behavior by the target (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006). As a result, a user with cognitive trust towards vendors will perceive a lower level of potential risk associated with ads-click intention, thus he/she is more likely to click ads in the mobile social platform. Affective trust stems from emotional attachment between a trustor and a trust target (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006). A user assured of a vendor's affective trustworthiness will develop a stable and enduring perception towards uncertainty (Fan & Lederman, 2018), thus may be motivated to click ads intrinsically. Accordingly, leveraging what we know about cognitive and affective attitude in risk-aroused context, this study argues that cognitive trust and affective trust can jointly influence users' intention to click ads. The following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Cognitive trust has a positive effect on ads-click intention.

H2: Affective trust has a positive effect on ads-click intention.

Influence of Content personalization on Trust (Central Route)

In the context of mobile advertising, content personalization is defined as the extent of perceived customization between advertising contents and individual needs, which is basically coherent with the term of perceived relevance (Zeng et al., 2009; Kim & Sundar, 2010). Content personalization helps users cope with the abundance of available information (Billsus & Pazzani, 1999; Jokela et al., 2001; Lang, 1995), and relieves users from ads intrusiveness (Xu, 2006). Xu (2006) suggested that personalization plays a pivotal part in affecting people's attitude towards mobile advertising. Drawing upon ELM literature, content personalization can reflect the facet of information quality in central route, and is positively related with initial trust (Zhou, 2012). Empirical studies demonstrated that the ads relevant to the search keywords (Kim & Sundar, 2010) or site context (Pelsmacker et al., 2002) can reduce negative perceptions and evoke more positive attitudes towards ads providers. Recently, Chen et al. (2018) adapted the cognitive-affective trust framework into social commerce context, and attested the positive relationship between recommendation quality and cognitive trust towards commercials purveyors. Cognitive trust relies on a rational assessment of the target by the trustor (McAllister, 1995),

which arises from accumulated knowledge based on performance-relevant attributes (Chen et al., 2018). Likewise, when the target ads in Wechat moment contains relevant information matching to their needs, the target users will perceive a higher personalization with ads and may be more likely to believe that the vendors are professional and trustworthy. Accordingly, ads vendors in mobile social platform with high content personalization ads can galvanize the germination of strong cognitive trust among their target users. The above analysis leads to the following hypothesis:

H3: Content personalization has a positive effect on cognitive trust towards ads vendors.

Influence of Social Recommendation on Trust (Peripheral Route)

Social recommendation steams from social influence (Lewis et al., 2003), and it is defined as the effectiveness of users' recommendation cues (e.g. comment, thumbs-up) towards presented ads in the mobile social platform. Social recommendation is identified as a peripheral route in the context of mobile advertising, because users may rely on others' recommendations to make evaluations if they cannot judge product information. In particular, users are likely to rely on peers and friends' experiences and opinions concerning certain products (Kim & Park, WOM review), and social recommendation plays a crucial role in inducing trust in the context of s-commerce. For example, Chen et al. (2018) found that similarity in social commerce enhances affective trust towards recommenders, which in turn facilitates positive affective responses towards the referral. Considering the effectiveness of social network, an emotion-attached social commerce's recommendation based on others' prior experience can be an external compensation of self-prior experience (Lewis et al., 2003; Tsai et al., 2014). In the context of Wechat Moments, users are more inclined to generate emotional reactions towards the vendors if their friends or peers recommend the ads. Notably, the durative affective trust is possibly susceptible to the social network effect in the mobile social platform. Thus, we argue that social recommendation is beneficial to enhance affective trust, and propose the following hypothesis:

H4: Social recommendation has a positive effect on affective trust towards ads vendors.

The moderating role of prior product experience (Elaboration Likelihood)

Drawing upon ELM literature, the effects of central or peripheral routes on individual's attitudes are moderated by users' ability to elaborate on informational messages (Bredahl et al., 1998; Priester & Petty, 1995; Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006). In general, ability refers to the extent that one possesses prior knowledge or experience with the product or service (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006). When accumulating prior product experience, users are more likely to possess information regarding product quality, product-individual fit, and other context-specific issues. Thus, those who possess a higher prior product experience are inclined to scrutinize the content and rely on central route (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006). For example, familiarity with products can affect users' notion of product attributes (Huang, 2015). Thus, individuals are more attracted by information messages, and are less likely to consider peripheral cues when clicking ads in the mobile social platform (Rucker & Petty, 2006). Contrarily, users without product experience are mitigated to the effect of content personalization, and may instead rely on peripheral route of social recommendation for shaping attitudes (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006). In the context of ridesharing usage, Shao (2018) found that customers with less experience are more likely to trust in the service providers based on others' recommendations. The above analysis leads to the following hypotheses:

H5a. Prior product experience has a positive moderating effect on the relationship between content personalization and cognitive trust.

H5b. Prior product experience has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between social recommendation and affective trust.

Research Methodology

Instrument design

All measures in this study were designed based on prior literature, using 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5). Content personalization was measured based on Xu (2006)’s study, and sample item is like: “The ads presented in the Wechat Moments fits right to me.” Social recommendation was adapted from Venkatesh et al. (2012)’s study, and sample item is like: “My friends in the Wechat Moments like the presented ads.” Cognitive trust and affective trust were measured as first order constructs that are correlated and distinguishable with each other (McAllister, 1995). We modified some items in order to better fit the current research context. The items were translated into Chinese and were reviewed by Ph.D. students to guarantee the translation accuracy of the instrument. A pretest was conducted before the final data collection, and a total of 53 participants were invited to complete the questionnaires. The analysis results show that all the items satisfy the validity and reliability threshold value of the instrument. Table 1 lists the measurement items and original references.

Table 1. Constructs and Items

Constructs	Items	References
Content Personalization (CP)	CP1-CP3	Xu (2006)
Social Recommendation (SR)	SR1-SR3	Venkatesh et al. (2012)
Cognitive Trust (CT)	CT1-CT3	McAllister (1995)
Affective Trust (AT)	AT1-AT3	
Ads-Click Intention (ACI)	ACI1-ACI3	Ogbanufe & Kim (2018)

Data collection

A field survey was conducted in a well-known university and 206 undergraduate students were invited to participate in the investigation in a laboratory course. We first manifested a typical scenario to participants to describe the advertising context in Wechat Moments, as suggested in Ogbanufe & Kim (2018)’s study. A popular product of mobile phone was presented to the participants through the Wechat platform as target ads. We selected Huawei as the mobile phone provider since it is well-known and recognized in China. After reading through the presented ads, participants were asked to complete the subsequent questions. A rewards of 5 RMB were provided to each participant after he/she completed the questionnaire. Totally 206 questionnaires were received from the participants. We excluded invalid questionnaires based on the following criteria: 1) The respondents chose the same answer to all questions; 2) The respondents chose a wrong answer to the test questions set up in the questionnaire. Finally, we got 183 questionnaires which are suitable for this study after deleting the invalid samples. The characteristics of samples are shown in table 2.

Table 2. Sample Characteristics

Items	Types	Numbers	Percentage
Gender	Males	83	45.4%
	Females	100	54.6%
Age	Below 20	118	64.5%
	20-24	60	32.8%
	Above 25	5	2.7%
Network Size	Below 50	12	6.5%
	51-100	35	19.1%

	101-150	40	21.9%
	151-200	40	21.9%
	201-250	11	6.0%
	251-300	21	11.5%
	Above 300	24	13.1%
Prior Product Experience	With Product experience	82	44.8%
	Without product experience	101	55.2%

Structural equation model analysis

Structural equation modelling (SEM) approach was used to examine the research model. SmartPLS was employed to test the research model since its suitability for handling large and complex model, and is more appropriate for theory exploration and prediction compared with covariance-based SEM methods (Gefen et al., 2000). The sample of 183 can satisfy the requirements of PLS—either 10 times the larger measurement number within the same construct or 10 times the larger construct number affecting the same construct (Chin et al., 2003).

Measurement Modelling Analysis

Following a two-step analysis procedure, we first examined validity and reliability of the constructs. As noted in Table 3, the item loadings and Cronbach's alpha of each construct are greater than 0.7, showing a high internal consistency and reliability of the instrument. Moreover, the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct is above the threshold of 0.5, indicating an adequate convergent validity of the measurement model. We then assessed discriminant validity by checking if the square root of the AVE for each construct is higher than its correlation with other constructs (Chin et al., 2003). As illustrated in Table 4, all the constructs meet the requirement, demonstrating a good discriminant validity of the measurement model.

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity Analysis

Constructs	Items	Factor Loading	T Statistical Test Value	Composite Reliability	AVE
Content Personalization (CP)	CP1	0.912	61.269	0.961	0.892
	CP2	0.961	150.069		
	CP3	0.960	140.846		
Social Recommendation (SR)	SR1	0.900	53.648	0.931	0.819
	SR2	0.936	67.945		
	SR3	0.877	25.881		
Cognitive Trust (CT)	CT1	0.917	37.414	0.947	0.856
	CT2	0.934	67.597		
	CT3	0.925	79.591		
Affective Trust (AT)	AT1	0.876	39.157	0.903	0.757
	AT1	0.867	24.803		
	AT3	0.866	36.789		
Ads Click Intention (ACI)	ACI1	0.945	80.325	0.962	0.895
	ACI2	0.960	116.948		
	ACI3	0.934	71.243		

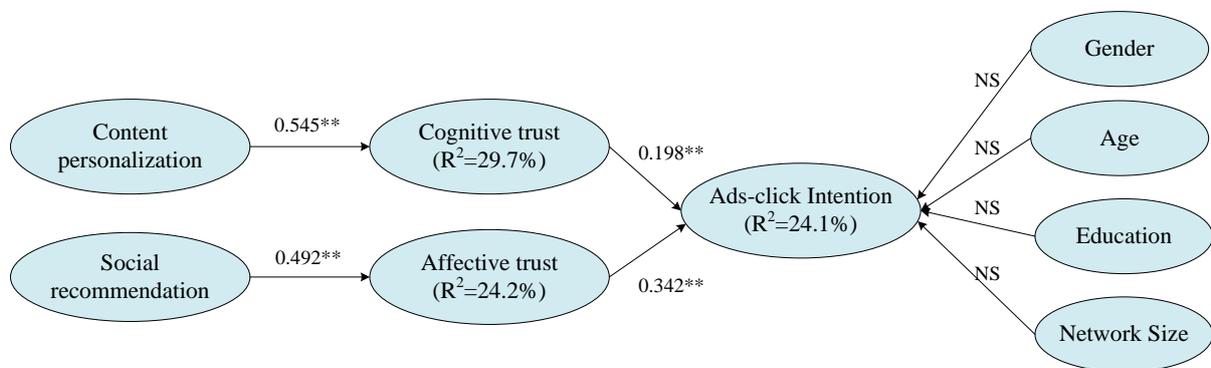
Table 4. Correlation Analysis

	Mean	S.D.	CP	SR	CT	AT	ACI
CP	3.964	1.675	0.944				
SR	4.000	1.415	0.481	0.905			
CT	4.197	1.333	0.545	0.528	0.925		
AT	3.692	1.254	0.419	0.492	0.547	0.870	
ACI	2.463	1.358	0.432	0.377	0.383	0.456	0.946

Note: Values on the diagonal and bold are square root of AVEs

Structural Modelling Analysis

The structural modelling analysis was then conducted to examine the path relationship and explanatory power of the research model. Bootstrapping procedure method was used to calculate the statistical significance of the parameter estimates, in order to derive valid standard errors and t-values (Temme et al., 2006).



Note: Path coefficient are significant at: * $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$.

Figure 2. Structural Model Analysis Results

As shown in Figure 2, both cognitive trust and affective trust are positively associated with ads-click intention content ($\beta_1 = 0.198$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta_2 = 0.342$, $p < 0.001$), thus supports hypotheses H1 and H2. Content personalization is significantly associated with cognitive trust ($\beta = 0.545$, $p < 0.001$). Moreover, social recommendation has a positive influence on affective trust ($\beta = 0.492$, $p < 0.001$). The results can provide support for hypothesis H3 and H4. As for control variables, gender, age, education and network size have no significant influences on ads-click intention. Regarding the variance of the endogenous variables, we note from Figure 2 that R^2 values of cognitive trust and affective trust are 29.7% and 24.2% respectively. Further, cognitive trust and affective trust account for 24.1% variance of ads-click intention, indicating a good explanatory power of the model.

Mediation Test

This study applied sobel test and bootstrapping method to examine the mediation effects of cognitive trust and affective trust, as suggested in the previous literature (Shao et al., 2019). As shown in Table 6, the mediation effect of CT between CP and ACI ($\beta = 0.0898$, 95% CI = [0.0131, 0.1735]) is significant. The mediating effect of AT between SR and ACI ($\beta = 0.1690$, 95% CI = [0.0857, 0.2823]) is also confirmed. Moreover, we added direct links from CP and SR to ACI, and re-conducted the structural model in PLS, as suggested in the previous literature (Liang et al., 2007; Shao et al., 2017). The results demonstrate that the direct effects of content personalization and social recommendation on ads-click intention remain significant after incorporating cognitive trust and affective trust as mediators. The results indicate that both cognitive trust and affective trust partially mediate between independent variables and dependent variables.

Table 5. Mediating effects testing

Path	Sobel test	Boot β	Boot SE	Confidence interval (95%)		Mediation effect
				Lower	Upper	
CP→CT→ACI	1.91	0.0898	0.0388	0.0131	0.1735	Partial mediation
SR→AT→ACI	2.10	0.1690	0.0477	0.0857	0.2823	Partial mediation

Moderating Test

In order to examine the moderating effect of prior product experience, we divided the full sample into two samples (with prior product experience vs. without prior product experience). Drawing upon Keil et al. (2000)'s method, we conducted a multi-group analysis in PLS, and statistically tested the significance of path coefficient differences across the two sub-samples. The employed procedure has been widely applied in the previous literature (Zhou et al., 2014; Shao et al., 2019). Table 6 illustrates the analysis and comparison results in the two sub-samples.

Table 6. Path Coefficient Analysis and Comparison Results I

Path Relationship	Path coefficients		$t_{spooled}$
	Samples with prior product experience ($N_1=82$)	Samples without prior product experience ($N_2=101$)	
Content Personalization → Cognitive Trust	0.594**	0.510**	12.178**
Social Recommendation → Affective Trust	0.367**	0.573**	-26.926**

Note: * $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, NS represents Not Significant

As noted in Table 6, the effect of content personalization on cognitive trust is significantly higher for samples with prior product experience than samples without prior product experience, thus supports hypothesis H5a. The result suggests that users who are familiar with the product are more attracted by the content personalization (central route) of the presented ads in the mobile social platform. While the influence of social recommendation on affective trust is significantly stronger for samples without prior product experience than samples with prior product experience, thus providing support for hypothesis H5b. The results indicate that users who are not familiar with the product are more attracted by friends' and peers' recommendations (peripheral route) when clicking ads in the mobile social platforms. Overall, the analysis results are consistent with the theoretical arguments of the elaboration-likelihood model.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

For theoretical implications, this study makes at least three major contributions to the extant literature. Firstly, this study adopts elaboration-likelihood model in the context of mobile advertising, and uncovers the dual routes in determining users' ads-click intentions. Previous literature has drawn attention in ads-click behaviors in marketing and e-commerce contexts, while few studies have examined the specific influence processes in the context of mobile social platform. By conducting a scenario-based survey in the Wechat Moments, this study identifies content personalization and social recommendation as significant central and peripheral routes in driving individuals' ads-click intention. The empirical results can enrich the extant literature of ELM in the emerging context of mobile social platform. Secondly, this study reveals the mediation mechanism of cognitive vs. affective trust on the relationship between the dual routes and ads-click intention. Prior literature has investigated the role of

trust in affecting users' ads-click intention, whereas less attention has been paid to the affective and cognitive components of trust. By introducing McAllister (1995)'s multi-dimensional trust framework in the context of mobile social platform, this study identifies the two alternative influence processes in stimulating ads-click through the two different trust mechanisms. Thirdly, this study uncovers the moderating effect of prior product experience on the two alternative influence processes from the lens of ELM. Notably, experienced users tend to be more influenced by the central route of content personalization and make ads-click decisions based on a rational assessment of the target; whereas inexperienced users are more susceptible to the peripheral route of social recommendation and react emotionally when clicking ads in the Wechat Moments. The empirical results can provide us a better understanding of the dominant influence process that engender users' ads-click intention across different populations categorized by product experience.

For practical implications, this study can provide guidelines to administrators of mobile social platforms in two aspects. On the one hand, the administrators need pay more attention to the customization of ads content, and present ads to users to satisfy their personal needs. For example, the ads presented to Wechat users are contingent upon their gender, age, educational background and browse history. This is beneficial to increase users' perceived utility and credibility, which in turn facilitate their ads-click intentions. This strategy may be especially effective for users who are familiar with the recommended products. On the other hand, the administrators must also draw attention to the effect of social recommendation when pushing ads in the mobile social platform. In addition to the ads content, the social network effect also plays a significant role in stimulating users' ads-click behaviors. Accordingly, the administrators can push and present similar ads to users with common interests in the platform, and enable the social recommendation information visible. When users see their friends and peers thumb up or comment on the ads, they are more likely to generate a positive emotional reaction and click ads in the platform. This means may be more efficacious for users who have not used the products before.

Conclusions and Future Research Directions

Drawing upon ELM, this study develops a research model to examine the antecedents and impact mechanisms of users' ads-click intention in the context of mobile social platform. A scenario-based survey was conducted in China, and 183 data was collected from potential users who attempt to click ads in the Wechat Moments. The empirical results suggest that content personalization and social recommendation are significant antecedents of ads click intention, and their effects are mediated by cognitive trust and affective trust. Moreover, the relative influences of the two alternative processes are contingent upon users' prior product experience. This study has several limitations that leave open future research directions. Firstly, this study considers users' prior product experience as a binary variable and has not considered the extent of product experience (for example, positive or negative experiences). Future studies can measure product experience using Likert-scale in order to further examine its moderating effects. Secondly, this study majorly focuses one central route and one peripheral route. Future studies can incorporate other significant antecedents, such as attractiveness of ads content and reputation of the ads vendor, in order to examine their joint influences on ads-click intention. Last but not least, future studies can divide the social recommendation into thumb up and comments, and investigate their specific effects on trust and ads-click intention with experimental method.

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