Investigating the Clarity Dimension of Social Norms: How Normative Ambiguity on Digital Piracy Intentions

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Abstract. Digital piracy is widely recognized as a global concern, and it may arise due to different causes. The Chinese music market is holding unique characteristics as a result of China's distinctive institutional context and technological development. However, the extant research in explaining this unethical consumer behavior in the digital era only examined the impact of the strength of social norms and ignored the effect imposed by the clarity dimension of social norms. The purpose of this paper is to introduce the clarity dimension of social norms into explaining consumers' digital piracy intentions through a deductive approach. The current research contributes to the existing literature on digital consumer behavior by investigating the new perspective of clarity of social norms. Also, by bringing in data from an under-studied context of an emerging economy, this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of the piracy issues from a social-psychological perspective. Theoretical and managerial contributions, as well as the limitations and suggestions on future research, are also discussed.

Keywords: Digital piracy, Social norms, Normative ambiguity, Unethical consumer behavior

1. Introduction

"Copyright-intensive industries, including film, television and music, support over 11 million jobs.…, and piracy, with the associated loss of revenue it brings, represents a direct threat to those industries," notes Christian Archambeau, Executive Director of the EUIPO. The government reports of several countries (e.g., Austrialia, China, Europrean countries, United state) highlighted that there is much work to do to tackle pirated consumption problem to help decision makers as they develop policies and solutions. The State Intellectual Property Office of China highlighted that a key area where the need for more investigation is consumer's awareness. This is because such

studies can provide more detailed information regarding consumer's awareness with the decision markers from both governments and the industries to facilitate the sustainable development of the society and industries.

Although there are many studies that has been investgating consumer's awareness across various contexts (e.g., environment, food). There is still a little focus on how consutmer's social norms impact their unthicial behavior, particularly in the context of digital domain [1], [2]. Some of those studies in digital piracy behaviors have predominately applied Theory of Planned Behavior to predict consumer behaviour based on the intention to perform the behaviour and levels of perceived behavioural control [3]–[8]. Some others have applied psychological theories to predict consumer hehaviour, such as egocentric heuristics and social learning perspectives [9], social cognitive theory [10], uses and gratifications approach [11] and exchange theory [12].

The literature has identified subjective norm as one the main factors that influence consumer behavior. Subjective norms are derived from the way an individual perceives that other significant referrants (people or groups) would behave. The term "subjective norm" captures both social norms, and the individual's susceptibility to social pressure to perform in a certainway. The literature further conceptually expanded subjective norms into descriptive subjective norms and injunctive subjective norms [13]. Descriptive subjective norms refer to an individual's obeservations on others' behavior, while injunctive subjective norms is formed through the perception on what others think an individual should do.

However, those existing studies has largely investigated the impact of the strength of social norms, such as injunctive norms and descriptive norms, on behavioral intentions [14], [15]. Indeed, the strength of social norms provides its significant value on our understanding of how social norms affect customer's unethical behavior. According to the psychological research [16], when we investigating a person's social awareness, we should pay attention to its strength, but also its clarity. Therefore, we propose that the clarity of social norms is also an important dimension to be considered, as the clarity of norm information is a crucial assumption to enable social norms to impact an individual's behavior. We believe that, in addition to the strength of social norms, the exploration of the clarity of social norms can provide a comprehensive insight into how social norms influence unethical consumer behavior toward ditital domain.

This paper makes several contributions to the literature. First, we extend the academic community's understanding of social norms by investigating a new dimension of social norms in the form of which have a direct influence on individuals' unethical consumer behavior in the digital era. Prior research in the field of unethical consumer behaviors has emphasized largely on the strength of social norms [15], [17]–[19]. We introduce the clarity of social norms. We provide a new perspective on how the strength and clarity of social norms work together to influence unethical consumer behavior.

2. Theoretical Background

1.1 The Strength of Social Norms :Subjective Norms Descriptive and Injunctive Norms

Perhaps the most influential development of the normative component in TPB is the further conceptualisation of subjective norms proposed by Cialdini et al. (1990). Inspired by the mixed and sometimes contradictory findings on the effect subjective norms have on behavioural intentions, Cialdini and his colleagues have suggested that "…norms do have substantial impact on human action; however, the impact can only be properly recognised when researchers separate two types of norms" [21]. These two types of norms are descriptive norms and injunctive norms, with descriptive norms referring to the perceptions of what most others do and injunctive norms referring to the perceptions of what most others approve or disapprove of doing [22].

Descriptive norms predict or explain human behaviour. They have an informational value in terms of the behaviour in question, and they are argued to provide an information-processing advantage and a decisional shortcut when an individual is making a choice on what to do. This type of norms is confirmed to act as reliable predictors or antecedents of a number of social behaviours even if the behaviours are in a morally neutral position [20]. Another type of social norms is the injunctive norms which involve an explicit *request* on what an individual should do in terms of a certain behavior. In differentiating these two types of social norms, Cialdini stated that "…rather than simply informing one's actions (i.e. descriptive norms), these norms (injunctive norms) enjoin it through the promise of social sanctions." Descriptive and injunctive norms are conceptually different, and they are derived from different sources of human motivation. However, these two types of norms are connected to a certain extent, as what an individual should do is always what most others do.

The theoretical expansion of subjective norms into descriptive and injunctive norms gives scholars a new perspective on the normative influences the social context imposes on human social behaviours. Descriptive norms were argued to explain or predict human behaviours through the informational value they could provide. This kind of social norm could provide information to the decision-makers on the behaviours of others. Injunctive norms, which are conceptualised as a different source of normative motivation of human behaviour, are argued to contain an explicit request on what should be done to be considered socially acceptable. The extant researches have examined the different effect of descriptive and injunctive norms on human behaviours which significantly enhanced our understandings of these normative motivations and their functioning mechanisms. These studies have relied on a crucial assumption that the descriptive norms and injunctive norms toward a certain human behaviour is clear to the decision-makers. However, in some cases or under certain circumstances, an individual's perceptions of these social norms could be ambiguous.

3. The Clarity of Social Norms

3.1 Normative Ambiguity

In previous research, normative ambiguity has been identified in sociological research into conflict and violent contexts [23]. In their research, normative ambiguity was defined as the "absence of higher-order rules for reconciling contradictions between conflicting codes for conduct in situations …"[23]. However, this definition was given in the context of violence. Following this line of reasoning, the definition of normative ambiguity could be extended to cover a broader range of human behaviors. In this research, we define ***normative ambiguity***, which was identified and conceptualized from the interviews, as the situation where the individual is unable to possess precise normative beliefs toward the behavior of interest from their social referents. In the specific context of music piracy behavior in China, normative ambiguity might be observed since the concept of copyright was not originated in China and Chinese music consumers had been enjoying the "free" music services for years, and as a result, the referents chosen by the music consumers may not be able to deliver negative descriptive and injunctive messages against music piracy behaviors to the music consumer.

According to [24]–[27], subjective norm captures the social influence imposed by individuals' social referents. These social referents include your family members and close friends. We argue that one crucial assumption for these social referents to be valid is that they must possess explicit normative beliefs toward the behavior of interest (i.e., whether one should conduct digital piracy or not). In another word, for the family members and close friends functioning as valid social referents, they must be able to easily decide how to respond in the context of digital piracy since there exists a higher-order rule in dealing with music acquisition behaviors. While in China and many other less-developed markets, intellectual property protection issues involved in the music acquisition process might be ambiguous, given the fact that most Chinese music consumers are not paying for the online music services in China. In this case, these potential social referents, as well as the social influence imposed by them, might be invalidated by the presence of normative ambiguity toward digital piracy.

4. Results

4.1 Construct Reliability and Model Fit

Internal Consistency Reliability. The composite reliability of each construct should be greater than 0.70, and composite reliability of all constructs in our study exceeds 0.85, which shows satisfactory internal consistency reliability [28].

Variable	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
INJ	INJ1	0.853	0.862	0.906	0.707
	INJ2	0.796			
	INJ3	0.879			
	INJ4	0.835			
DES	DES1	0.813	0.839	0.892	0.675
	DES2	0.873			
	DES3	0.799			
	DES4	0.798			
NA	NA1	0.899	0.825	0.895	0.739
	NA2	0.798			
	NA3	0.879			
PR	PR1	0.887	0.866	0.918	0.789
	PR2	0.884			
	PR3	0.895			
INT	INT1	0.902	0.758	0.892	0.805
	INT2	0.892			
DPB	DPB1	0.902	0.781	0.901	0.821
	DPB2	0.910			
PBC	PBC1	0.824	0.846	0.896	0.683
	PBC2	0.823			
	PBC3	0.842			
	PBC4	0.817			
ATT	ATT1	0.866	0.881	0.918	0.737
	ATT2	0.837			
	ATT3	0.856			
	ATT4	0.875			

4.2 Discriminant Validity

	INJ	DES	NA	PR	INT	DPB	PBC	ATT
INJ	**0.841**							
DES	-0.427	**0.821**						

NA	0.165	-0.287	**0.860**					
PR	0.284	-0.369	0.523	**0.888**				
INT	-0.543	0.560	-0.348	-0.534	**0.897**			
DPB	-0.194	0.371	-0.175	-0.271	0.545	**0.906**		
PBC	-0.384	0.414	-0.239	-0.302	0.550	0.399	**0.827**	
ATT	-0.360	0.452	-0.243	-0.302	0.548	0.386	0.407	**0.858**

	INJ	DES	NA	PR	INT	DPB	PBC	ATT
INJ1	**0.853**	-0.335	0.081	0.262	-0.447	-0.132	-0.330	-0.294
INJ2	**0.796**	-0.405	0.207	0.211	-0.416	-0.179	-0.293	-0.297
INJ3	**0.879**	-0.364	0.139	0.255	-0.500	-0.178	-0.342	-0.341
INJ4	**0.835**	-0.337	0.134	0.224	-0.458	-0.165	-0.323	-0.275
DES1	-0.397	**0.813**	-0.238	-0.318	0.474	0.313	0.375	0.366
DES2	-0.343	**0.873**	-0.252	-0.300	0.467	0.333	0.308	0.386
DES3	-0.329	**0.799**	-0.218	-0.288	0.409	0.255	0.313	0.331
DES4	-0.329	**0.798**	-0.234	-0.305	0.481	0.312	0.361	0.397
NA1	0.155	-0.281	**0.899**	0.474	-0.328	-0.158	-0.229	-0.218
NA2	0.151	-0.209	**0.798**	0.424	-0.237	-0.095	-0.151	-0.183
NA3	0.124	-0.244	**0.879**	0.452	-0.320	-0.184	-0.225	-0.222
PR1	0.240	-0.305	0.456	**0.887**	-0.471	-0.208	-0.272	-0.296
PR2	0.247	-0.349	0.446	**0.884**	-0.491	-0.277	-0.267	-0.280
PR3	0.270	-0.329	0.494	**0.895**	-0.459	-0.236	-0.266	-0.228
INT1	-0.496	0.522	-0.324	-0.512	**0.902**	0.494	0.521	0.476
INT2	-0.477	0.481	-0.300	-0.445	**0.892**	0.484	0.465	0.509
DPB1	-0.194	0.322	-0.146	-0.249	0.487	**0.902**	0.368	0.328
DPB2	-0.159	0.350	-0.170	-0.243	0.501	**0.910**	0.355	0.371
PBC1	-0.349	0.293	-0.197	-0.247	0.447	0.283	**0.824**	0.347
PBC2	-0.329	0.382	-0.199	-0.238	0.471	0.330	**0.823**	0.335
PBC3	-0.336	0.374	-0.172	-0.259	0.468	0.371	**0.842**	0.335
PBC4	-0.250	0.317	-0.225	-0.256	0.430	0.334	**0.817**	0.330
ATT1	-0.313	0.425	-0.246	-0.290	0.500	0.370	0.395	**0.866**
ATT2	-0.246	0.311	-0.190	-0.221	0.417	0.268	0.322	**0.837**
ATT3	-0.326	0.394	-0.215	-0.255	0.452	0.286	0.331	**0.856**
ATT4	-0.342	0.413	-0.182	-0.266	0.504	0.388	0.346	**0.875**

The model fit was assessed through R^2 and by conducting a blindfolding test, the Q^2 value (construct cross-validated redundancy) was calculated to assess the predictive relevance of the model. In this study, the R^2 value of the proposed structural model is 0.687 for INT and 0.311 for DPB, which indicates satisfactory explaining power. In addition, the Q^2 values calculated from blindfolding procedure for all constructs are greater than zero, which is indicative of predictive relevance of the proposed structural model [29], [30].

	R Square	Q Square
INT	0.687	0.513
DPB	0.311	0.237

4.3 Path Coefficients and Test of Hypotheses

The path coefficients of each path in the proposed framework as well as the corresponding P values are presented in Table.

Paths	β	STDEV	t	p
INJ -> INT	-0.192	0.036	5.330	0.000
DES -> INT	0.168	0.058	2.907	0.004
INT -> DPB	0.529	0.044	12.148	0.000
PBC -> INT	0.189	0.043	4.368	0.000
ATT -> INT	0.208	0.043	4.887	0.000
INJ*NA -> INT	-0.086	0.041	2.070	0.039
INJ*PR -> INT	-0.221	0.048	4.607	0.000
DES*NA -> INT	0.069	0.054	1.275	0.202
DES*PR -> INT	-0.178	0.085	2.101	0.036
Age -> DPB	0.018	0.039	0.463	0.643
Gender -> DPB	0.042	0.039	1.063	0.288
Income -> DPB	-0.036	0.040	0.905	0.366
Education -> DPB	0.103	0.039	2.639	0.008

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