What Can Product Trial Offer?
The Influence of Product Trial on Chinese Consumers’ Attitude towards IT Product

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ABSTRACT
New IT products emerge constantly and rapidly, which are new and unfamiliar to customers. Compared to customers in Europe and North America, generally speaking, most of Chinese customers have lower knowledge about the product, and then have lower beliefs and intention to adopt or purchase the new IT product. Product trial is an important and effective marketing method to promote and improve consumers’ beliefs about new IT product. However, previous studies do not clearly discuss the effect of consumers’ beliefs about product after product trial. In the present paper, authors try to discuss the relationship between beliefs after trial with consumers’ attitude and intention to purchase. Results reveal that not every belief after trial have the same effect on consumers’ attitude and intention to purchase.

KEYWORDS
Beliefs, Consumer’ Attitude, New IT Product, Product Trial

INTRODUCTION
Product Trial refers to “a consumer’s first usage experience with a brand. It is a critical factor in determining brand beliefs, attitudes, and purchase intentions” (Kempf et al., 1998). Trial is unique from advertising and other forms of indirect experience because it provides the consumer with direct sensory contact with the product (Kempf & Smith, 1998).

Studies in Marketing, Consumer Psychology and Information Systems have consistently shown that product trial is a powerful mechanism of leading to attitudes toward the product or services (Huang et al., 2015). For example, Wang, Oh and Wang (2013) find that a mobile newspaper trial can increase the Purchase/Continuance Intention by impacting customers’ Expectation Confirmation, Beliefs and Satisfaction. Soscia, Arbore, and Hofacker (2011) conclude that product trial has an influence on Perceived Ease of Use, which then affects the technology adoption of mobile TV.

With the advance of technology, new IT products emerge constantly and rapidly, which are not familiar to consumers, such as the health-related electroencephalogram IT product (e.g., NeuroSky\textsuperscript{1}). Then consumers are not able to evaluate these products just by their search attributes. Compared with customers in Europe or North America, generally speaking, most of Chinese customers have lower intention to purchase, because they have less related experience, and then have worse beliefs about the product (Tong, 2010). Therefore, personal experience, or product trial, is becoming increasingly

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important for consumers to evaluate the product and make purchase decisions. Right now, more and more companies pay attention to their customers’ trial experience with the product and offer better trial experience before customers’ purchase-decision making.

Although product trial is an effective method to promote product, it is the most expensive way in marketing strategies (Kempf & Smith, 1998). Therefore, scholars and practitioners pay more attention to the final results of product trial (Huang & Korfiatis, 2015; Jiang et al., 2007; Kempf & Smith, 1998; Kim et al., 2007). For example, how do customers’ beliefs about the product after trial influence their attitude? However, up to now, it is not clear that how different beliefs influence customers’ attitude, because in previous studies (especially in Marketing papers), most scholars’ use Fishbein and Ajzen’s (1975) expectancy value to measure customers’ all beliefs as one single variable, cognitive structure (Kempf, 1999; Kempf et al., 2001; Kim & Morris, 2007). Therefore, what we can get is whether customers’ beliefs can and cannot have influence on customers’ attitude. We, however, do not know which beliefs are able to influence customers’ attitude significantly.

Therefore, in this paper, authors try to answer the question: how do consumers’ beliefs have influence on their attitude and intention to purchase the product after a product trial. In order to answer this question, we combine the TAM model and Product Trial theory to find out the relationship between consumers’ beliefs and their attitude and intention after product trial. A field study was used to test the relationship.

This paper is organized in the following way: in the next section, authors will introduce the previous related studies and propose the research hypothesis; in the third section, research methodology will be discussed, including participant, experiment procedure, and measurement; in the fourth section, the results of the study and statistics analysis will be shown; in the fifth section the theoretical and managerial implication will be discussed; finally, authors will discuss this paper’s limitation.

**LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESIS**

Product trial is an important method to affect and change consumers’ beliefs about the product (Jiang & Benbasat, 2007; Kamins et al., 1990; Kempf & Smith, 1998; Wang et al., 2013). In the Product Trial theory, it is believed that trial can influence consumers’ cognitive structure, which refer to consumers’ beliefs or evaluation of the product (Kempf & Smith, 1998). Furthermore, the cognition influence consumers’ attitude toward product and attitude toward trial (Kempf, 1999; Kempf & Smith, 1998).

In previous studies, Fishbein and Ajzen’s (1975) expectancy value measures ($\Sigma B_i E_i$), including attribute-level brand beliefs ($B_i$) and attribute evaluations ($E_i$), are often used to measure consumers' beliefs about the product in Marketing papers (Kempf, 1999; Kempf & Laczniak, 2001; Kim & Morris, 2007). Right now, some scholars argue that this operational definition may not capture the whole concept of cognitive structures (Kim & Morris, 2007). Product-related attributes beliefs ($B_i$’s) were measured by asking participants, using a nine-point scale ranging from “zero likelihood” to “completely certain”, “How likely do you believe it is that ____ software has attribute ____?” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Kim & Morris, 2007). Attributes are measured by asking participants to write down the attributes that would be important to them if they are buying the product (Kim & Morris 2007). This way could obtain the important attributes about this particular product, but its external validity is low. Besides, this operational definition cannot make connection with and take fully advantage of previous knowledge. Most importantly, we do not know which attribute evaluation has the most import influence on consumers’ attitude.

In information system research, there have been many theories of analyzing users’ beliefs in determining information systems or information technologies adoption (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh
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