

## **ONLINE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR: NEW CRITERIA FOR WEB-BASED COMMUNICATION EXPOSURE AND INTERNAL PSYCHOLOGICAL BEHAVIOURAL APPROACHES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Numerous theories, theoretical viewpoints and models on consumer behaviour stipulate consumers' offline and online behaviour when purchasing a product or using a service. Because existing approaches focus on a purchase perspective, mostly in a fragmented manner, it is argued that limited research has been conducted on paper on the information and web-based communication message "seeking and consumption" perspective. This paper addresses this gap by proposing two new approaches to online consumer behaviour, namely the web-based communication exposure and internal psychological behavioural processes approaches. The main aim of this paper is to address the research problem that limited and fragmented approaches exist which mainly focus on purchasing perspectives and arguably do not present adequate theoretical criteria to explain online consumer behaviour.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Most consumer behaviour studies only focus on the activities and behaviour patterns of consumers during their purchase experience (Strydom 2004; Wells, Moriarty and Burnett 2006) and not on their behaviour when searching for, consuming and experiencing online communication and information (Taylor and Strutton 2009; MacInnis & Folkes 2009). This paper addresses this gap and presents a systematic theoretical analysis, integration and application of offline and online consumer behaviour literature to develop new theoretical criteria for online consumer behaviour from the web-based communication exposure and internal psychological behavioural processes approaches. This paper firstly presents five theoretical components for online consumer behaviour; and secondly proposes new theoretical criteria for online consumer behaviour.

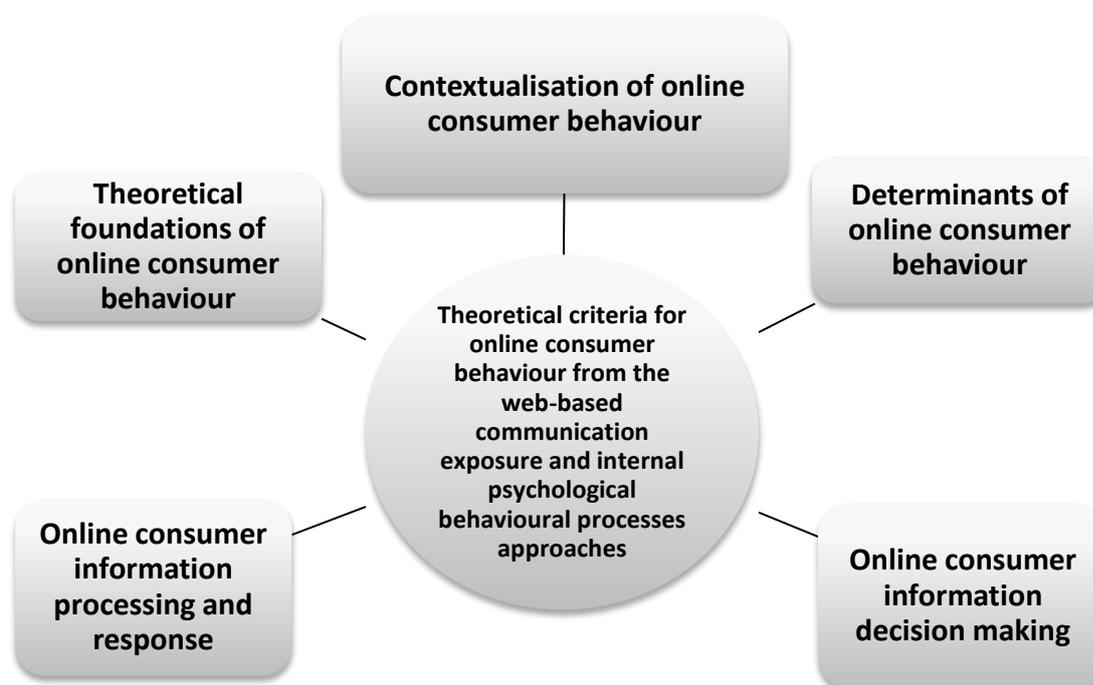
### **METHODOLOGY**

A combination of exploratory and descriptive research within a qualitative research paradigm was followed. This method was used to obtain new insights on the phenomenon of online consumer behaviour, to address the lack of information on online consumer behaviour during interactive information-seeking and consumption activities and to propose new theoretical criteria.

### **THEORETICAL COMPONENTS FOR ONLINE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR**

Five theoretical components have been identified for this study which can be used to develop the theoretical criteria, based on an exploration, description, summation and integration of the theoretical underpinnings of consumer behaviour from existing offline and online perspectives in the literature (inter alia, Ajzen & Fishbein 1969; Maslow 1970; Bagozzi, Gopinath & Nyer 1999; Schiffman & Kanuk 2000; Hoyer & MacInnis 2001; Koufaris 2002; Assael 2004;

Chaudhuri 2006; Wright 2006; Taylor & Strutton 2009) and the application of these criteria to the online perspective of the paper which is indicated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Theoretical components of the theoretical criteria for online consumer behaviour**

Each of these components is subsequently discussed.

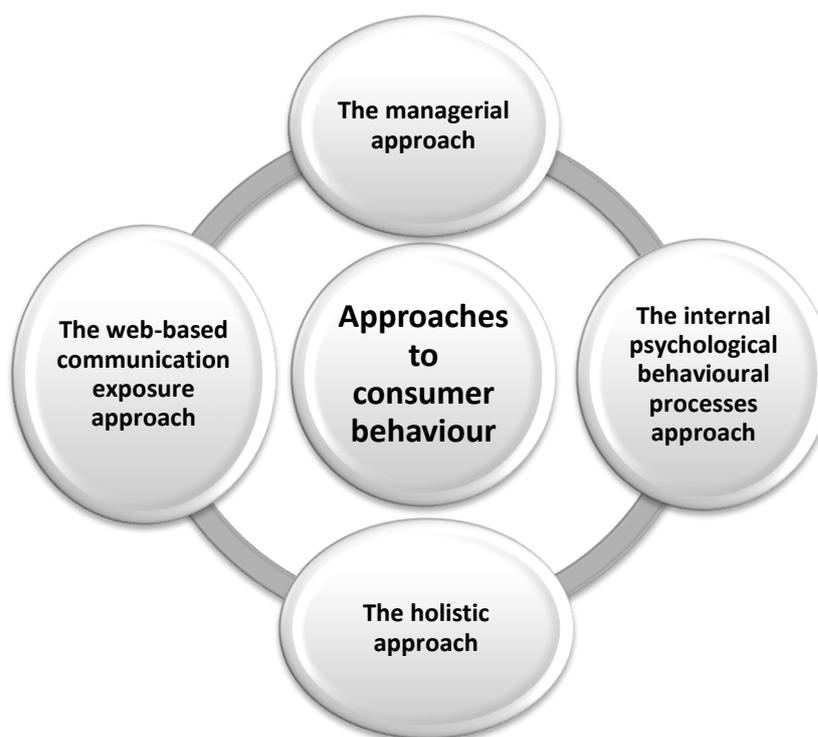
### **Theoretical component 1: Contextualisation of consumer behaviour**

Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2006:4) define consumer behaviour in the *offline environment* as *activities people undertake when obtaining, consuming and disposing of products and services*, while Chaudhuri (2006:1) defines it as *the study of how and why people consume products and services*. Hoyer and MacInnis (2001:4) maintain that consumer behaviour is *behaviour that reflects the totality of consumers' decisions with respect to the acquisition, consumption and disposition of goods, services, time, and ideas by (human) decision-making units [over time]*. Definitions by Schiffman and Kanuk (2000), Chaudhuri (2006) and Belch and Belch (2012) explain consumer behaviour in the offline environment as a process that consumers move through when they endeavour to satisfy their needs and desires with products and services. This process also highlights the manner in which individuals make decisions and the influence that their genetics have on their purchasing behaviour. Based on these conceptualisations, the following new definition of offline consumer behaviour is proposed: *Offline consumer behaviour constitutes product acquisition, consumption and disposal activities which are dependent on individual characteristics and environmental factors and motivated by specific needs*.

In contrast to various authors' (Hoyer & MacInnis 2001; Cheung, Zhu, Kwang, Chang & Limayem 2003; Constantinides 2004; Koufaris 2002; Blackwell et al 2006; Demangeot &

Broderick 2007; Gurau 2008; Dennis, Merrilees, Jayawardhena & Wright 2009) who perceive online consumer behaviour from a purchasing perspective, it is suggested that a wider perspective to include the complete web experience should also be considered, specifically in terms of online consumer's searching, browsing, finding, selecting and comparing products. It is posited that consumers' behavioural patterns in the offline environment differ from the behavioural patterns in the online environment, especially when the focus is not on purchasing behaviour, hence a new contextualisation and definition of online consumer behaviour is proposed: *Online consumer behaviour comprises a complete web-based communication experience that manifests in web-based communication exposure and internal psychological behavioural processes leading to cognitive information-processing and response, information decision-making and output processes, determined by internal, external and online factors.*

Figure 2 presents an overview of the different approaches relevant to this study on consumer behaviour where the grey circles indicate Assael's (2004) existing managerial and holistic approaches to consumer behaviour, whilst the highlighted blue circles indicate the proposed new approaches.



**Figure 2: Approaches to consumer behaviour**

An extensive discussion on the existing approaches will not be provided but are summarised in Table 1. The key components of this paper are derived from interpretations of existing viewpoints of authors in existing literature mentioned earlier and include the key similarities and differences between the existing approaches and perspectives and the new proposed approaches.

**Table 1: Existing approaches and perspectives and proposed new approaches to consumer behaviour**

Approaches and perspectives	Existing offline perspective on consumer behaviour	Existing online perspective on consumer behaviour	The managerial approach to consumer behaviour (Assael 2004)	The holistic approach to consumer behaviour (Assael 2004)	Proposed new web-based communication exposure approach to online consumer behaviour	Proposed new internal psychological behavioural processes approach to online consumer behaviour
Similarities	Purchasing products	Purchasing products online	Product purchasing perspective			
	Influenced by environmental factors		Influenced by environmental factors (macro facet)	Environmental context	Influenced by environmental factors (external determinants)	Influenced by environmental factors (external determinants)
	Influenced by individual characteristics	Influenced by individual characteristics	Influenced by individual differences (micro facet)		Influenced by individual characteristics (internal determinants)	Influenced by individual characteristics (internal determinants)
		Interactivity			Interactivity	Interactivity
Differences	Selection, use and disposal of products. Consumption of products.	Online consumer as a computer user. Importance of building trust/ Confidence. Control. Searching, browsing, finding, selecting and comparing. Evaluating products.	Applied social science. Micro facet. Macro facet.	Pure social science. Focus on consumption experience.	Behavioural processes of online consumers. Exposure to web-based communication messages. Experiences of web-based communication messages. Informational experience. Information-seeking and consumption actions.	Internal psychological behavioural processes. Psychological variables and constructs. Preinformation consumer perception attributes. Preinformation consumer attitudinal attributes. Postinformation consumer attitudes. Emotion and reason. Consumer motivation. Exposure, attention and perception. Knowledge and understanding. Attitude formation. Memory and retrieval.

The focus of this paper is specifically on the two new proposed approaches, namely the web-based communication exposure and internal psychological behavioural processes approaches. Firstly, the *web-based communication exposure* approach differs from the existing purchasing approach and is based on theoretical constructs of existing online consumer behaviour theory. In addition to viewpoints in existing literature, it is proposed that the online environment should be regarded as a cognitive environment because of the higher cognitive effort expected from consumers when they are interacting in this environment. This approach further explicates online consumers' information-seeking, information-gathering and information-consumption processes, again pointing to a more cognitive and active environment. This

approach therefore contextualises online consumer behaviour in terms of *exposure to and the experience of web-based communication messages* highlighting the information-seeking and consumption actions and behaviour of consumers as a result of exposure to web-based communication messages.

Secondly, the proposed *internal psychological behavioural processes approach* considers the behavioural processes of online consumers at the internal psychological level when they are exposed to web-based communication messages as opposed to the usual technical approach focusing on the experience with the website (Martinez-Lopez, Luna and Martinez 2009). This approach further considers the psychological elements that explain online consumer behaviour with an emphasis on consumer orientation where existing psychological theoretical constructs and viewpoints are applied to the online context as summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2: Theoretical constructs of the internal psychological behavioural processes approach**

<b>Key theoretical constructs of the internal psychological behavioural processes approach</b>	<b>Brief explanation</b>
<b>Pre-information consumer perception attributes</b>	The perceptions that the online consumer forms before engaging in information search and consumption activities, should be based on the ease with which online messages can be used. These should also have perceived value and should not hold any perceived risks.
<b>Pre-information consumer attitudinal attributes</b>	Before online consumers search for and consume web-based communication messages, a trusting relationship between them and the organisation can be built if trustworthy information that will increase perceived usefulness and value and reduce perceived risk, is shared.
<b>Postinformational consumer attitudes</b>	After being exposed to web-based communication messages, online consumers experience either positive confirmation or negative confirmation, which refers to the satisfaction that they experience.
<b>Emotion and reason as the motivation for consumer behaviour</b>	Online consumers' emotion and reason play an important part in the processing of web-based communication and information.
<b>Consumer motivation</b>	Online consumers are involved in web-based communication messages and information when exposed to web-based communication messages. Personal relevance and ability are motivators for engaging with online information.
<b>Exposure, attention and perception</b>	When exposure takes place, the online consumer comes into contact with the web-based communication message. The type of mental activity that an online consumer engages in refers to attention. These have an influence on the perception of the web-based communication message.
<b>Knowledge and understanding</b>	Online consumers gather knowledge while engaging with web-based communication messages, hence proceeding through a process of subjective comprehension.
<b>Attitude formation</b>	Online consumers will form an attitude towards the web-based communication message/interaction, which refers to the positive or negative manner in which they will perceive or receive an online message.
<b>Consumer memory and retrieval</b>	Online consumers' memory and their retrieval processes play a major role during their interactions in the online environment, especially with regard to the internal psychological behavioural processes that they proceed through when exposed to web-based communication messages and information.

### Theoretical component 2: Determinants of offline and online consumer behaviour

Several factors/aspects influence the manner in which consumers act and react when they are exposed to offline marketing communication messages for the purpose of purchasing a product. The existing internal and external determinants of consumer behaviour as indicated by various authors (like Schiffman & Kanuk 2000; Morreau et al 2001; Hoyer & MacInnis 2001; Koufaris 2002; Cheung et al 2003; Assael 2004; Constantinides 2004; Blackwell et al 2006; Chaudhuri 2006; Wright 2006; Taylor & Strutton 2009; Lin, Wang & Hwang 2010; Lu & Zhu 2010; Wang & Liang 2010) are applied to the online environment as indicated in Table 3.

**Table 3: Application of the influence of the internal external determinants of consumer behaviour to the online context**

<b>Internal determinants of consumer behavior</b>	<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Rational, emotional and instinctive motivations are caused by tension that results from unfulfilled informational needs</b>
	Personality	Because personality refers to an individual's unique psychological makeup and characteristics suggesting consistent and enduring individual difference, it will arguably influence online consumers' behaviour in the online environment during exposure to web-based communication messages and information.
	Perception	Online consumers use selective exposure when they seek out messages that are relevant to their particular contexts and then pay selective attention when choosing the most relevant web-based communication message. Subconsciously, online consumers may be perceptually defensive and apply perceptual blocking when they do not wish to be exposed to certain web-based communication messages and information.
	Learning	Incidental learning seldom takes place since exposure is usually intentional because of the online consumer's control over the communication encounter and his/her search for information-intensive communication messages.
	Attitude	The process of attitude formation influences online consumers' online behaviour.
<b>External determinants of consumer behaviour</b>	Reference groups and family	Normative/membership, indirect, disclaimant, dissociative, friendship, work, virtual and family reference groups are social and cultural influences that determine or change online consumers' behaviour.
	Social class	Because social class is arranged in strata, which explains online consumers' "positions" in society, it could alter or determine their online behaviour.
	Culture	The evaluation of web-based communication messages is based on the individual's general values and norms, which in turn constitute his/her culture.
	Subculture	Since subculture is the beliefs, values and norms of a distinct group of people that functions in the larger context of an existing culture, it is argued that it could influence online consumers' behaviour.

The determinants evident in the existing online literature indicated by the authors listed above which are related to the web-based communication exposure context include the following: trust (technological trust, online trust, competence-based trust and individual trust); consumer familiarity, technology acceptance, prior interaction and technology attitude; functional, symbolic and experiential benefits; the total web experience; emotional and cognitive

responses, perceived control, concentration, attention focus and message involvement; and usability.

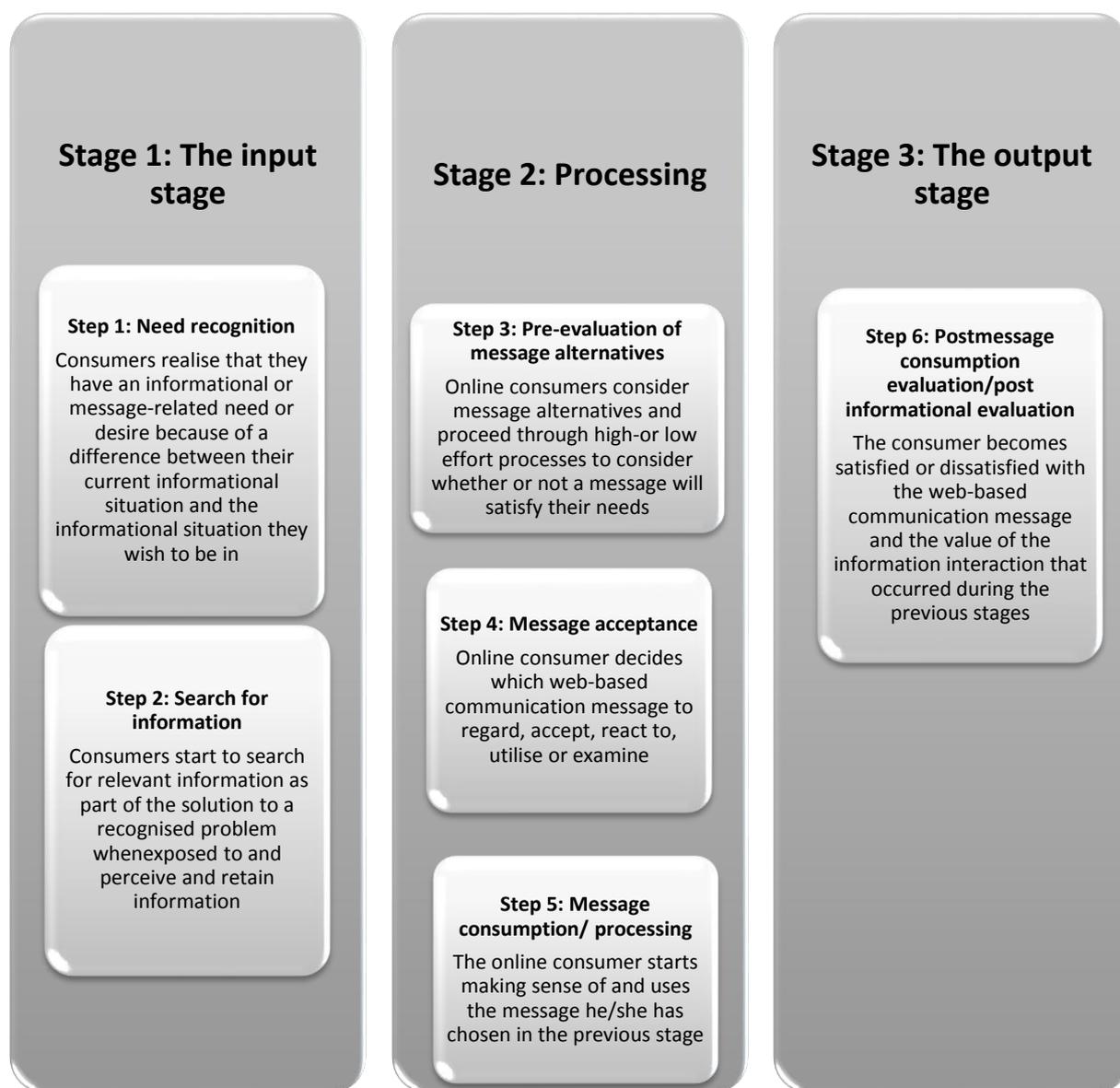
Based on the existing perspectives and their application to the web-based communication exposure perspective, the following new definition of the determinants of online consumer behaviour is proposed:

*The determinants of online consumer behaviour are controllable and uncontrollable internal, external and unique online aspects that cognitively and affectively influence and affect online consumer behaviour during the total web experience in the web-based communication exposure and internal psychological behavioural processes approaches.*

### **Theoretical component 3: Online consumer information decision-making**

Consumer decision-making is a complex focal point in the realm of consumer science literature and consumption behaviour but considers decision processes in a purchasing context as evident from various researchers (Chaffee & McLeod 1973; Montgomery & Ryans 1973; Bettman et al 1998; Hoyer & MacInnis 2001; Assael 2004; Blackwell et al 2006; Chrzan 2009; Wang & Liang 2010). One example is Schiffman and Kanuk (2000:437) who explain decision-making as *the selection of an option from two or more alternative choices*. In general, the decision-making process consists of several predictable steps such as need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives and purchase decision. In combination with these steps, consumers make use of different decision strategies such as, amongst others, extended problem solving, limited problem solving, habitual decision making, problem recognition, information search, weighted adding strategy, lexicographic strategy, satisficing, elimination-by-aspects, equal weight utility maximisation. Because existing decision-making perspectives focus on a purchasing context, it is argued that consumer decision-making should rather be conceptualised in terms of message exposure and information processing, information and message searching and decision making if applied to the online environment. The motivation for proposing this new perspective is based on the argument that a purchasing perspective restricts the consumer decision-making process to a mere consideration of product attributes and alternatives. This new perspective focuses on information and message alternative decisions and information decision-making during web-based communication exposure, specifically from an online perspective.

For the purpose of this section and in line with the proposed online information decision-making perspective, existing theoretical constructs of offline consumer decision-making in a purchasing context identified by some authors like Hoyer and MacInnis (2001), Assael (2004), Blackwell et al (2006), Wright (2006), Vohs et al (2009) and Roozmand, Ghasem-Aghaee and Hofstede (2011) are organised into stages and steps which form the basis for the proposed online consumer information decision-making process from the web-based communication exposure and internal psychological behavioural processes approaches as indicated in Figure 3.



**Figure 3: The online consumer information decision-making process**

**Theoretical component 4: Consumer information processing and response**

The theoretical criteria for online consumer information processing and response are based on the theoretical constructs of the models summarised in Figure 4.



**Figure 4: The consumer information-processing and response models and theories**

For the purpose of this paper, these models will not be elaborated on or discussed in-depth as their main theoretical constructs will be synthesised, integrated, adapted and applied to the web-based communication exposure and internal psychological behavioural processes approaches and presented as theoretical criteria for consumer information processing and response. Briefly it is argued that the information theory and the focus on information flow are specifically relevant. In addition, hierarchical information processing and response phases are identified to pinpoint consumers' internal psychological processes during their exposure to information, including cognitive, motor and emotional procedures, based on cognitive resources and implying intentionality and controllability.

#### **Theoretical component 5: Theoretical foundations of consumer behavior**

Four main theories are prevalent in this section based on existing literature, namely: the *theory of reasoned action* which predicts an individual's behavioural intention and overt behaviour based on his/her attitude towards the particular act (Ajzen & Fishbein 1969; Fishbein & Ajzen 1973), hence it is argued that behaviour per se can be predicted on the basis of the online consumer's attitudes and social normative beliefs; the *theoretical model of behavioural intention prediction* which predicts behavioural intentions and not behaviour per se which means that predicting behavioural intentions for a single online behavioural act can extend beyond normal online behavioural situations to choice situations; the *theoretical model of*

*behavioural prediction* is also relevant because it predicts online behaviour by means of social psychological concepts such as behavioural prediction; the main theoretical constructs of the *theory of planned behaviour* are predictive powers of attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control which are applicable to behaviour in different situations (Ajzen & Madden 1986) and can therefore provide a framework for explaining human behaviour in terms of the prediction of behavioural intention and general behaviour in the online environment; and the *Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)* and its extensions are relevant in terms of the concepts of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use which are regarded as significant determinants of online consumer behaviour (Venkatesh & Bala 2008).

### **THEORETICAL CRITERIA FOR ONLINE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR**

This section proposes the theoretical criteria for online consumer behaviour. Tables 4 to 8 indicate the theoretical criteria for each theoretical component within the web-based communication exposure and internal psychological behavioural processes approaches.

**Table 4: Theoretical criteria for the contextualisation of online consumer behaviour**

<b>Offline perspective</b>	<b>Online perspective</b>
<b>Web-based communication exposure approach</b>	<b>Internal psychological behavioural processes approach</b>
<b>THEORETICAL CRITERIA</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. A new perspective on online consumer behaviour based on existing offline and online perspectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offline perspective</li> <li>• Exposure to and experience of web-based communication messages</li> <li>• Information access and evaluation</li> <li>• Consumption and disposition of online communication experiences</li> <li>• Online behaviour including internal psychological behavioural processes during exposure to and experience of web-based communication messages</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Online consumer behaviour: a proposed web-based communication exposure approach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to and experience of web-based communication messages and web content</li> <li>• Complete web experience</li> <li>• Consumers' interactivity</li> <li>• System, website and information content trust and credibility during the acquisition of information</li> <li>• Information search and consumption</li> <li>• Cognitive effort and behaviour</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. Online consumer behaviour: a proposed internal psychological behavioural processes approach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive and affective internal psychological behavioural processes</li> <li>• Preinformation acquisition perception attributes (perceived ease of use, usefulness, value and risk)</li> <li>• Preinformation acquisition consumer attitudinal attributes (trust, literacy and affinity)</li> <li>• Postinformation acquisition consumer attitudes (positive and negative disconfirmation; and satisfaction)</li> <li>• Emotion and reason as motivation for online consumer behaviour (emotional and rational knowledge acquisition)</li> <li>• The communication of emotion and reason (emotion is unintentional, automatic, nonpropositional, spontaneous and communicated through signs; and rational messages are socially shared, intentional, propositional, require knowledge of learnt symbols and are symbolically communicated)</li> <li>• Forms of emotions (Emotion I (EI): physiological responses; Emotion II (EII): motivational-emotional state; Emotion III (EIII): affect; commonly known as emotion which include physiological reactions [EI] and facial expressions [EII]; perceived control; and concentration/attention focus)</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	

- Consumer motivation (readiness and willingness to search for, acquire and process web-based communication messages and information; cognitive involvement; and affective involvement)
- Factors affecting motivation (values, goals and needs)
- Consumer ability (depends on resources like knowledge and intelligence, cognitive styles and information-processing techniques)
- Exposure (consumer comes into physical contact with the web-based communication message/information)
- Attention (selective attention and preattentive processing)
- Perception (absolute perception threshold; differential threshold; and subliminal perception)
- Knowledge and understanding (knowledge content and structure; objective comprehension; and subjective comprehension)
- Attitude formation (Counterarguments (CAs); Support arguments (SAs); Source derogations (SDs); utilitarian or functional dimension; hedonic dimension; interest level; high cognitive involvement; knowledgeability of the message or information; easy accessibility of attitudes; attitude confidence; specificity of attitudes; situational factors; normative beliefs and motivation; personality variables; cognitive, affective and conative components; and dual-mediation hypothesis)
- Consumer memory and retrieval (sensory, short-term and long-term memory; rehearsal and encoding; chunking; recirculation; elaboration; retention; activation; schema; episodic and semantic storing; retrieval; spreading of activation; interference; optimacy and recency; explicit and implicit memory; and retrieval cues)

**Table 5: Theoretical criteria of the determinants of online consumer behaviour**

Offline perspective	Online perspective
<b>Web-based communication exposure approach</b>	<b>Internal psychological behavioural processes approach</b>
<b>THEORETICAL CRITERIA</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. The determinants of online consumer behaviour contextualised</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Controllable and uncontrollable internal, external and online determinants that cognitively and affectively influence online consumer behaviour in terms of web-based communication exposure and internal psychological behavioural processes</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Internal determinants of online consumer behaviour</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivation: Personality (personality traits, the self-concept, self-esteem and self-image)</li> <li>• Perception: Learning (cognitive learning, high and low involvement learning and information processing)</li> <li>• Attitude</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. External determinants of online consumer behaviour</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference groups and family</li> <li>• Social class</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Subculture</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>4. Online determinants of online consumer behaviour</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Web-based communication familiarity, prior interaction, technology acceptance and technology attitudes</li> <li>• Symbolic and experiential benefits</li> <li>• The total web experience</li> <li>• Emotional and cognitive responses, perceived control, concentration, attention focus and message involvement</li> <li>• Usability</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	

**Table 6: Theoretical criteria for online consumer information decision making**

Offline perspective	Online perspective	Online consumer information decision-making perspective
Web-based communication exposure approach	Internal psychological behavioural processes approach	
<p><b>THEORETICAL CRITERIA</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Online consumer information decision making defined</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New perspective of online consumer information decision making, referring to online consumers' decision-making processes in terms of message exposure and information processing</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Online consumer decision-making categories and strategies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended problem solving</li> <li>• Limited problem solving</li> <li>• Habitual decision making</li> <li>• Problem recognition</li> <li>• Information search</li> <li>• Weighted adding strategy</li> <li>• The lexicographic strategy</li> <li>• Satisficing</li> <li>• Elimination-by-aspects (EBA)</li> <li>• The equal weight utility maximisation strategy</li> <li>• The confirming dimensions strategy</li> <li>• Information processed by alternative</li> <li>• Compensatory strategy</li> <li>• Noncompensatory strategy</li> <li>• Attribute processing</li> <li>• Affective strategies</li> <li>• One-reason heuristic strategy</li> <li>• Elimination heuristic strategy</li> <li>• Multiattribute utility maximisation (MAU)</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. Consumer decision-making theory</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The schematic decision matrix</li> <li>• Stochastic consumer choice behaviour</li> <li>• Interaction framework of consumer decision making</li> <li>• Constructive choice processes</li> <li>• Complex decision making</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>4. Determinants of online consumer information decision making</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual differences (psychographics, values and personality; consumer resources; motivation; knowledge; attitudes; self-awareness; and emotional orientation)</li> <li>• Environmental influences (culture; social class; family; personal influences; situation behaviours; and availability of information)</li> <li>• Psychological processes (information processing; learning; attitude and behaviour change; ability to process information; individual perception; and memory)</li> <li>• Online atmospherics (website quality, interface, satisfaction and experience; perceived risk; perceived benefit; trust; and consumer control)</li> <li>• Online consumer information decision making (need recognition; search for information; pre-evaluation of message alternatives; message acceptance; message consumption/processing; postmessage consumption evaluation; and post-informational consumption evaluation)</li> </ul> </li> </ol>		

**Table 7: Theoretical criteria for online consumer information processing and response**

Offline perspective	Integrated marketing communication perspective	Online perspective
<b>Web-based communication exposure approach</b>		<b>Internal psychological behavioural processes approach</b>
<b>THEORETICAL CRITERIA</b>		
<p><b>1. Online consumer information processing and response</b></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refers to the internal psychological processes online consumers proceed through during exposure to online web-based communication messages</li> <li>• Pre-exposure (literacy; intent; and voluntary access)</li> <li>• Web-based communication exposure (vehicle exposure; deliberate and desired exposure; information pull and regulation; web-based communication exposure; and awareness)</li> <li>• Perception (message perception; prior perception; integrated perception; selective perception; perceptual vigilance; perceptual defence; perceptual organisation; and perceptual interpretation)</li> <li>• Cognition (attention; recognition of needs; gathering of information; association; cognitive learning; conditioned learning; differentiation; comprehension; elaboration; knowledge; and web-based communication acceptance)</li> <li>• Interaction (web-based communication control; active attraction to web-based communication messages; choice; active engagement and participation with web-based communication messages; interaction with customised, information-intensive web-based communication; dialogue; multidirectional communication; exchange and sharing; information empowerment; uncertainty reduction; involvement; connectivity; building online relationships; and enjoyment and gratification)</li> <li>• Affection (recognition of wants; shaping of emotions around the message; interest; liking; desire; preference; conviction; attitude formation; and motivation formation)</li> <li>• Decision making (association evaluation; integrated evaluation; affect referral; compensatory heuristic; conjunctive heuristic; message stimulation; prior stimulation; and integrated stimulation)</li> <li>• Conation (memory: recognition; memory: recall; conviction and preference; action; and commitment and loyalty)</li> </ul>		
<p><b>2. Determinants of online consumer information processing and response</b></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Web-based communication exposure (web-based communication exposure occasion/condition; online consumer's attention level; online consumer interest; online consumer awareness; and characteristics of the individual online consumer)</li> <li>• Perception (web-based communication/information relevance; web-based message recognition; characteristics of the online stimuli; and information-processing style)</li> <li>• Cognition (web-based communication/informational need; type of learning; web-based communication message differentiation; recall; conditioned learning; informational and transformational motivations; perceived web-based communication messages differentiation; and topical involvement)</li> <li>• Affection (informational want/desire; individual's feelings; liking; resonance; motivation; influence of opinion leaders; web-based communication involvement; believability/credibility; preference and intention; and loyalty)</li> <li>• Decision making (online consumer interest; web-based communication relevance; message recognition; impact of web-based communication message; interpretation of web-based communication message; credibility of web-based communication message; and familiarity)</li> <li>• Conation/behaviour (trial; contacting; advocating; referral; prevention/avoidance; interpretation of web-based communication message; and credibility of web-based communication message)</li> </ul>		

**Table 8: Theoretical criteria for the theoretical foundations of online consumer behaviour**

Cognitive psychological perspective	Social behavioural perspective	Expectancy theoretical perspective
Web-based communication exposure approach	Internal psychological behavioural processes approach	
<b>THEORETICAL CRITERIA</b>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Offline and online theoretical foundations of online consumer behaviour</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theoretical criteria that indicate behavioural intentions, behaviour and technology acceptance</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Individual reasoned action</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual's personal beliefs (personal normative beliefs) (NBp)</li> <li>• Individual's beliefs of the expectations of significant others in terms of the individual's behaviour in specific situations (social normative beliefs) (NBs)</li> <li>• The individual's intentions in terms of the behaviour or action he/she is engaging in – also referred to as behavioural intentions (BI)</li> <li>• The individual's actual behaviour – also referred to as overt behaviour (B)</li> <li>• The individual's attitude towards behaviour in a certain situation (A-act)</li> <li>• The individual's motivation to comply with social normative beliefs; that is, others expectations of his/her behaviour in a certain situation (Mcs)</li> <li>• The individual's attitude towards a specific object in a certain behavioural situation (Ao)</li> <li>• The individual's motivation to comply with the norms stipulated in a specific situation (Mc)</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. Attitude</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive component</li> <li>• Affective component</li> <li>• Conative component</li> <li>• Action</li> <li>• The target that specifies the direction of action</li> <li>• The context in which the action occurs</li> <li>• The time during which the action occurs</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>4. Behavioural intention prediction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavioural intention determined by attitude towards the act, other individuals' expectations and personal normative beliefs</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>5. Factors influencing behavioural intentions and the attribution of responsibility</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The act's perceived consequences</li> <li>• Values</li> <li>• The source of normative beliefs</li> <li>• Association</li> <li>• Commission</li> <li>• Foreseeability</li> <li>• Intentionality</li> <li>• Justification</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>6. Planned behaviour</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived control, attitude and subjective norms determine individual intentions and behaviour</li> <li>• Internal factors (adequate planning, skills, abilities, knowledge, normative influences and informational influences)</li> <li>• External factors (dependence of behaviour on the cooperation of other people and the opportunity and time that determine the control over the intended behaviour)</li> <li>• Intention that consists of attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control</li> <li>• Beliefs that consists of behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs and control beliefs</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>7. Technology acceptance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived ease of use</li> <li>• Perceived usefulness</li> <li>• Social influence processes (subjective norm; voluntariness; compliance; and image)</li> <li>• Cognitive instrumental processes (demonstrability; and perceived ease of use)</li> <li>• Individual differences (personality, demographics, traits, gender)</li> <li>• System characteristics (determine positive or negative perceptions of the system)</li> </ul> </li> </ol>		

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Social influence (influence individuals' perception of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness)</li></ul> |
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### **LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The main limitation of this paper is that it is exploratory in nature and the specific perspectives and approaches used might be considered as restricted views of consumer behaviour. However, these approaches propose a deviation from existing purchasing approaches by focusing on an information and web-based communication message “seeking and consumption” perspective. Future studies might consider alternative perspectives and approaches to online consumer behaviour as well. In addition, it is recommended that a model for online consumer behaviour be developed for these approaches. However, the proposed theoretical criteria could serve as a very valuable theoretical foundation for the development of such a model.

### **CONCLUSION**

This paper proposed new theoretical criteria for online consumer behaviour from the web-based communication exposure and internal psychological behavioural processes approaches. The theoretical criteria were composed from five theoretical components, including: theoretical criteria for the contextualisation of online consumer behaviour within the proposed new web-based communication exposure and internal psychological behavioural processes approaches; theoretical criteria of the determinants of online consumer behaviour; theoretical criteria for online consumer information decision making; theoretical criteria for online consumer information processing and response; and theoretical criteria for the theoretical foundations of online consumer behaviour. The research problem was addressed by elaborating on the existing limited and fragmented purchasing approaches to offline and online consumer behaviour through the development of new theoretical criteria to explain online consumer behaviour in terms of exposure to web-based communication messages and subsequent internal psychological behaviour processes during interactive information-seeking and consumption activities. Because web-based communication permits comprehensive integration and has raised to the status of a business imperative, it is important to realise that it is central to the success of any online consumer endeavour to obtain insight into its application in practice. This is probably best echoed in the words of Bill Gates, CEO of Microsoft who said in the late nineties: *The Internet is a tidal wave. It will wash over nearly all industries drowning those who don't learn to swim in its waves*, which is according to Gay, Charlesworth and Essen (2007) sensible words that came almost as a warning to organisations that they should embrace the advantages of the web whereby it is concluded that organisations should realise that the web allows consumers to search for the information and web-based communication message “seeking and consumption” perspective by organisations rather than organisations focusing on purchasing behaviours of consumers.

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