



**THE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING**

TMI: Exploring How and Why Intimate Self-Disclosure Affects the Persuasiveness of Consumer Online Word of Mouth

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**Date: 19th May 2023 (Friday)
Time: 9:00 am – 10:30 am
Venue: Online meeting via Zoom**

Abstract:

To make reviews more helpful, marketers and online review platforms often encourage consumers to write highly personalized reviews. As a result, reviewers frequently disclose intimate personal information; however, little is yet known about how intimate self-disclosure affects review persuasiveness. Using both laboratory studies and a secondary data set (examining 34,141 Amazon reviews), we show that, counter to expectations, reviewer intimate self-disclosure hurts review persuasion. Unlike sharing intimate information with familiar others (e.g., friends, colleagues, family), online reviews largely occur between strangers. In this context, sharing intimate information is seen as socially inappropriate, which lowers a reviewer's likeability and reduces their persuasiveness. In other words, results suggest that marketers' attempts to increase review helpfulness by encouraging personalization may have the unintended consequence of reducing review helpfulness in many circumstances. We address alternative explanations for this effect (e.g., information relevance) while also identifying theoretically motivated variables (e.g., reviewer likeability) and managerially actionable ways to mitigate this negative effect (e.g., by altering how intimate information is displayed).