Future Research Directions for Expectation Confirmation Theory in Cross-Cultural and Emerging Digital Environments

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Abstract - **This systematic review examines the application of Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) across various digital contexts, analyzes its integration with other theories, and identifies key factors influencing consumer behavior in digital environments. The study employed a systematic literature review process using Web of Science and other sources to search for relevant publications up to 2024. The review focuses on journal articles in computer science that have applied ECT in digital contexts. A rigorous screening process was conducted, resulting in the selection of 50 studies for final analysis. The review reveals the wide-ranging applications of ECT across e-commerce, social media, healthcare technology, and education. It highlights the successful integration of ECT with other theoretical frameworks, thereby enhancing its explanatory power in digital environments. Key factors influencing consumer behavior in digital contexts were identified, including perceived usefulness, satisfaction, trust, and expectation-confirmation. This study provides a comprehensive understanding of ECT's application in diverse digital settings and its integration with other theories. It offers valuable insights for researchers and practitioners, guiding strategies to improve user satisfaction and retention in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. Additionally, the review identifies future research directions, including cross-cultural studies, longitudinal investigations, and further integration with emerging theories on digital consumer behavior.**
Keywords: **Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT), Digital contexts, Consumer behavior, Systematic Literature Review, Theoretical Integration**

I. INTRODUCTION

Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) elucidates how satisfaction with a product or service is influenced by the confirmation or disconfirmation of preexisting expectations. When actual performance meets or surpasses expectations, individuals experience satisfaction. Conversely, dissatisfaction arises when performance fails to meet anticipated standards. The key constructs of ECT-xpectations, perceived performance, confirmation, satisfaction, and repurchase intentions-facilitate an understanding of consumer behavior (Albahar, 2023; Leonard & Needham, 2020). Expectations represent beliefs about a product's performance prior to its use.

Perceived performance reflects the actual experience, while confirmation assesses whether this performance aligns with expectations. Satisfaction is the emotional response derived

from this comparison, influencing future behaviors such as repurchases or recommendations (Ayatollahi *et al.,* 2016; Bhattacherjee, 2001). ECT has been applied across various fields, including marketing, tourism, information systems, and healthcare, to analyze consumer behavior (Lim *et al.,* 2023; Shigetani, 2021). In marketing, ECT serves as a valuable tool for evaluating customer satisfaction and loyalty, particularly in the service sector. For instance, low-cost carriers use ECT to enhance customer satisfaction by managing expectations (Shigetani, 2021).

Similarly, studies on consumer behavior among college students in Tamil Nadu have demonstrated that online shopping behaviors are influenced by expectations and satisfaction, underscoring the relevance of ECT in understanding consumer preferences (Parameswari & Saravanan, 2019). In tourism, ECT is employed to assess pilgrim satisfaction with hospitality during events such as the Hajj, highlighting the importance of expectation management (Albahar, 2023). In information systems, ECT is used to examine user satisfaction and continuance intentions, emphasizing the role of expectations in technology acceptance (Bhattacherjee, 2001).

In the context of green consumer behavior among students, affective environmental sustainability attributes have been linked to satisfaction and behavioral intentions, reinforcing ECT's adaptability to sustainability initiatives (Musthafa & Sajila, 2018). In healthcare, ECT is utilized to evaluate patient satisfaction with hospital services and information systems, aiming to improve service quality (Liu *et al.,* 2022). The theory explores cognitive beliefs, emotional responses, and behavioral intentions to elucidate how expectations shape user experiences and satisfaction (Malik & Singh, 2022).

For example, studies analyzing vaccination intentions during COVID-19 have shown that perceived convenience and safety, assessed through ECT, significantly influence health behaviors (Liu *et al.,* 2022). Additionally, ECT has been extended to incorporate personality traits, examining their influence on technology adoption and continued use, thereby enriching the theory's scope (Malik & Singh, 2022). Recent research has further applied ECT to retail and consumer sales promotions, investigating how consumer self-regulation

moderates' satisfaction and purchase behavior (Varghese & Paul, 2019). Similarly, studies on consumer preferences for essential products, such as coconut oil in Tamil Nadu, illustrate ECT's applicability across diverse consumer contexts (Santhoshkumar & Sekar, 2012). The evolution of ECT in digital contexts has progressed significantly, with researchers adapting the theory to address the unique challenges and opportunities of digital platforms. Combining ECT with models such as the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) has enhanced the understanding of consumer behavior in the digital age (Lim *et al.,* 2023). Recent studies have emphasized user experience and perceived usefulness in digital payment systems, demonstrating how ECT can inform strategies to improve user satisfaction and engagement in digital environments (Beura *et al.,* 2023).

Furthermore, the integration of advanced technologies into retail has been conceptualized as a means to enhance consumer trust and experience, aligning with ECT's tenets (Raghavendra & MG, 2024). As digital technologies continue to evolve, the application of ECT is expected to expand, offering valuable insights into consumer behavior and satisfaction across various digital contexts. Although ECT is widely utilized, a comprehensive understanding of its application in diverse digital contexts and its integration with other theories remains imperative. This systematic review addresses this gap by investigating ECT's role in elucidating consumer behavior and continuance intentions in contemporary digital environments through the following research questions:

1. How has ECT been applied to different digital contexts?
2. How has ECT been integrated with other theories to enhance its explanatory power in digital settings?
3. What key factors influence consumer behavior in digital environments in ECT-based studies?

This study enhances the understanding of ECT's application across diverse digital contexts, its theoretical integration, and the principal factors affecting online consumer behavior. It provides critical insights for researchers, facilitating the development of strategies to improve user satisfaction and retention in a dynamic digital landscape.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the application of Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) across various digital contexts.
2. To analyze the integration of ECT with other theories.
3. To identify the key factors influencing consumer behavior in digital contexts.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This comprehensive review explores studies on continuance intention across diverse fields, including communication, information science, business economics, environmental science, and psychology. Shin (2010) examined e-book

consumer experiences, identifying factors such as satisfaction, validation, perceived benefits, user-friendliness, content quality, and demographic influences (e.g., age and income) that affect continued service usage. Joo and Choi (2016) studied online library resources in academic settings, finding that perceived usefulness and resource quality are key determinants of continuance intention, with confirmation indirectly influencing continuance through satisfaction.

Lan (2017) explored women's use of breast health check-up DMV services, revealing that confirmation, perceived usefulness, and satisfaction significantly predicted continued usage intentions, explaining 86% of the variance. Kumar *et al.,* (2018) developed a framework for mobile banking applications, demonstrating that expectation confirmation, quality, and trust impacted satisfaction and motivations derived from self-determination theory. Similarly, Hussain and Ahmed (2020) found that brand experience, equity, and brand mianzi influence repurchase intentions and customer loyalty to smartphones, emphasizing symbolic consumer behavior.

Raghavendra and Aparna (2024) extended the Technology Acceptance Model to explore factors influencing the adoption of the Unified Payments Interface among hawkers in Mangaluru, providing valuable insights into consumer behavior in digital payment systems and aligning with the application of ECT in understanding satisfaction and continuance intentions. Rahi *et al.,* (2021) examined internet banking users' post-adoption practices, with perceived usefulness and trust accounting for 68.4% of the variance in continuance intentions. Li (2021) analyzed blog engagement, showing that satisfaction and habitual behavior mediate identity verification and continuance intention. Sukma and Leelasantitham (2022) studied community water users' readiness to continue digital government services, highlighting trust, commitment, perceived value, and governance as critical factors. Huang *et al.,* (2022) evaluated Chinese residents' perceptions of smart city benefits, demonstrating that expectation-perception performance positively impacts these perceptions through expectation confirmation.

Ye *et al.,* (2023) investigated vocational students' adoption of online emergency learning, finding that expectancy beliefs, attitudes, and satisfaction with theoretical courses significantly influence continuance. Cheng (2024) identified satisfaction and perceived value as drivers of continued use of virtual reality art exhibitions, emphasizing aesthetics and escapism. Jia *et al.,* (2024) examined live-streaming behavior, identifying antecedents that influence viewers' continuance intentions. Bhatnagar *et al.,* (2024) evaluated AI-driven digital banking, showing that perceptions of intelligence and human-like interaction qualities impact continued use. Ngochi and Kihara (2019) assessed SMEs' growth through digital marketing strategies, highlighting the importance of meeting customer expectations for platform retention. Guo (2022) studied digital trust in e-government services, identifying consumer satisfaction as a mediating

variable between perception, expectation, and trust. Ma *et al.,* (2023) analyzed motivations and satisfaction among Weibo users, showing that cognitive and social integrative needs enhance satisfaction and continuance intentions. Fang *et al.,* (2024) investigated ChatGPT's educational applications, noting that learners' satisfaction stems from usefulness, expectation confirmation, and information quality. Shiau and Luo (2013) found that blogging continuance is influenced by engagement and perceived enjoyment. Kim (2010) and Mohamed *et al.,* (2014) emphasized that satisfaction and ease of use in online shopping, along with trust and anticipated outcomes, influence repeat purchases.

Lin and Fan (2011) highlighted firm characteristics in public accounting. Tsui (2019) noted that perceived usefulness drives e-government service continuance, while Alruwaie (2014) identified confidence and social factors as crucial for e-government platform stickiness. Zhu *et al.,* (2023) highlighted trust and privacy concerns as mediators of telemedicine service continuance. Studies on IoT systems (Dong & Zhang, 2017), mobile food apps (Amin *et al.,* 2020), and fitness wearables (Gupta *et al.,* 2020) identified satisfaction, perceived value, and social dynamics as pivotal for continued use. Collectively, these studies underline the critical role of satisfaction, perceived usefulness, and the confirmation of expectations in driving continuance intentions across various domains.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The systematic literature review process encompasses several key steps to ensure a comprehensive and rigorous analysis of Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) in digital contexts. Initially, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Semantic Scholar were selected as the databases for the search. The search strategy in Web of Science employed the combination "Expectation Confirmation Theory" and "Digital" for publications up to 2024, focusing on journal articles and proceedings papers within computer science topics. The initial search yielded a total of 56 studies.

Inclusion criteria were established to focus on studies that adopted ECT in digital contexts and were published in English. Exclusion criteria eliminated non-digital context studies and non-English publications. The screening process involved removing one non-English article, eliminating 13 duplicate articles, and excluding 14 non-relevant studies from other sources. Ultimately, 29 studies out of the initial 56 were selected.

Data extraction focused on identifying studies that adopted ECT in digital contexts, noting theoretical integrations with ECT, and extracting key factors influencing consumer behavior. The analysis phase concentrated on theoretical integration and synthesizing factors affecting consumer behavior. Finally, a narrative synthesis was conducted to examine ECT applications across digital contexts, analyze theoretical integrations and their implications, and identify common themes and factors influencing consumer behavior. After a comprehensive review, 29 studies were included in the final analysis. Figure 1 illustrates the expectation-confirmation model (ECM) as presented in Bhattacherjee's (2001) expectation-confirmation model.
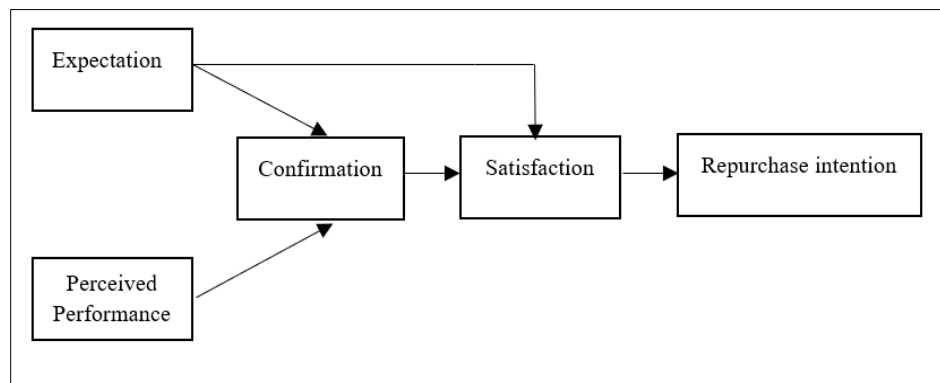

Fig. 1 Expectation Confirmation Model

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. ECT in Diverse Digital Contexts
1. E-Commerce and Online Shopping

Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) has been extensively employed to examine consumer behavior in online retail environments, particularly investigating factors that influence satisfaction and the intention to make repeat purchases. Research has demonstrated that customer assurance, expected outcomes, and perceived advantages significantly affect satisfaction and loyalty in e-commerce (Mohamed *et al.,* 2014; Kim, 2010). Moreover, ECT has been utilized to explore how trust and user experience impact e-loyalty throughout the various phases of the buying process, emphasizing the importance of meeting customer expectations in digital marketplaces.

2. Healthcare Technology

The utility of Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) has been demonstrated through its application in examining patient satisfaction and behavioral intentions within healthcare services. For example, ECT has been employed to

assess telemedicine services, investigating how factors such as trust, privacy concerns, and expectation fulfillment influence satisfaction and the intention to continue usage (Zhu *et al.,* 2023). Furthermore, ECT has been combined with other frameworks to evaluate digital mammography services, emphasizing the significance of perceived usefulness and ease of use in predicting satisfaction and repeated usage (Lan, 2017).

3. Education and E-Learning

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) through the widespread adoption of digital learning platforms and educational technologies. In these digital environments, research has shown that user satisfaction and the intention to continue usage are significantly influenced by factors such as perceived utility, met expectations, and compatibility with personal values (Ye *et al.,* 2023). Furthermore, studies revealed that e-learning platforms incorporating immersive and interactive elements contribute to an enhanced user experience and sustained engagement.

4. Social Media and Blogging

Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) has been employed to examine user behavior on social networking platforms, focusing on how cognitive and social gratifications enhance user satisfaction and the intention to continue usage. For example, research on platforms such as Weibo has shown that users' motivations for seeking information or social connections significantly affect their satisfaction and engagement levels (Ma *et al.,* 2023). Similarly, studies on blogging have integrated ECT with Social Identity Theory to investigate how identity construction and habitual behaviors mediate user satisfaction and the intention to continue usage (Li, 2021).

5. Virtual Reality and Digital Experiences

ECT applications have proven advantageous for cutting-edge technologies such as VR art displays and gaming platforms. Research indicates that when user expectations are met, factors such as immersion, perceived aesthetic appeal, and escapism contribute to increased satisfaction and encourage continued usage (Cheng, 2024). The successful implementation of ECT in these innovative digital experiences demonstrates its capacity to elucidate user behavior in emerging technological contexts.

6. Banking and Financial Services

Digital banking and mobile payment systems have extensively utilized ECT to assess customer retention and satisfaction. For instance, AI-powered digital banking platforms have incorporated ECT to investigate how factors such as perceived intelligence, trust, and user experience influence satisfaction and continued usage (Bhatnagar *et al.,* 2024). Similarly, mobile banking applications have

integrated intrinsic motivation and regulatory elements into ECT frameworks to forecast user engagement (Kumar *et al.,* 2018).

B. Integration of ECT with Other Theories

The combination of Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) with other theoretical frameworks has enhanced its explanatory capabilities, enabling scholars to examine the complex nature of digital consumer behavior. A notable integration is the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which introduces concepts such as perceived usefulness and ease of use into ECT. For instance, in e-government services, TAM demonstrates how trust and perceived usefulness significantly affect user satisfaction and the intention to continue usage (Tsui, 2019). Similarly, in digital mammography services, TAM supplements ECT by incorporating ease of use as a crucial factor for satisfaction and adoption (Lan, 2017).

Another merger involves Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which focuses on intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. This blend has shown effectiveness in mobile banking scenarios, where motivational elements such as self-determination enhance user satisfaction and continuance intentions (Kumar *et al.,* 2018). Moreover, the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory augments ECT by investigating how cognitive and social gratifications drive satisfaction and engagement, particularly on social media platforms such as Weibo (Ma *et al.,* 2023).

Social Identity Theory has also been merged with ECT to explore identity formation and habitual behaviors in blogging, illustrating how these factors mediate satisfaction and user engagement (Li, 2021). In emerging contexts such as virtual reality (VR), the integration of Flow Theory and Experiential Value Theory with ECT underscores the influence of immersion, perceived value, and satisfaction on continuance intentions (Cheng, 2024). Additionally, Social Comparison Theory has been combined with ECT in fitness-tracking applications, where social rank expectations and comparisons affect user satisfaction and continued usage. These integrations broaden the applicability of ECT, enabling it to address various factors, including motivation, trust, identity, and immersion, thus establishing it as a robust framework for analyzing consumer behavior in intricate digital environments.

C. Key Factors Influencing Consumer Behaviour in Digital Contexts

1. Expectation Confirmation

Expectation confirmation, a key concept in ECT, occurs when users' experiences with a product or service meet or surpass their initial expectations. This favorable alignment substantially impacts perceived usefulness, satisfaction, and the intention to continue usage across diverse digital landscapes, including VR applications and mobile platforms for ordering food (Cheng, 2024).

2. Perceived Usefulness

Perceived usefulness, a crucial construct in ECT, assesses how individuals gauge a system's effectiveness in achieving their objectives. This factor directly influences satisfaction and the intention to continue usage in various domains. For example, in e-learning environments, the perceived utility of a system drives ongoing engagement. Similarly, in IoT systems, perceived usefulness underscores the importance of designs that prioritize user needs (Dong & Zhang, 2017).

3. Satisfaction

Satisfaction is the emotional result of comparing expectations with actual performance. This concept acts as an intermediary between expectation confirmation and behavioral intention. It plays a crucial role in driving repeat purchases in e-commerce, sustained use of mobile banking, and customer retention in telemedicine services (Kim, 2010; Bhatnagar *et al.,* 2024; Zhu *et al.,* 2023).

4. Behavioral Intention

The likelihood of users continuing to engage with a digital product or service is indicated by behavioral intention, which is influenced by factors such as expectation confirmation, perceived usefulness, and satisfaction. This metric serves as a robust predictor of user engagement and loyalty in digital environments (Lan, 2017; Tsui, 2019).

5. Trust

Trust plays a crucial role in digital environments that demand high reliability, such as e-government systems and AI-powered banking applications. It acts as an intermediary between perceived utility and user satisfaction and exerts a considerable influence on users' intentions to continue using these services (Guo, 2022).

6. Perceived Ease of Use

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) frequently incorporates perceived ease of use, which minimizes the effort needed to engage with digital platforms. This element contributes to improved user satisfaction in various domains, including digital mammography services and e-government systems (Lan, 2017; Tsui, 2019).

7. Motivation

Consumer behavior in mobile banking is shaped by both internal and external motivational factors. These elements play a crucial role in fulfilling psychological needs, thereby enhancing user satisfaction and the likelihood of continued use (Kumar *et al.,* 2018).

8. Aesthetic Experiences

The visual appeal of virtual reality (VR) exhibitions significantly influences user satisfaction. When aesthetic considerations are combined with meeting user expectations, they lead to an increased likelihood of continued use by creating engaging and pleasurable experiences for users (Cheng, 2024).

9. Social Influence and Comparison

User engagement and satisfaction are influenced by social factors, including comparison and gratification. The incorporation of social connections and competitive elements into fitness-tracking applications and social media platforms enhances users' intentions to continue using these services (Ma *et al.,* 2023).

D. Practical and Theoretical Implications

This comprehensive analysis of Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) in digital environments offers significant insights for both theoretical and practical applications. From a theoretical standpoint, it highlights ECT's versatility and continued relevance in the dynamic digital realm, emphasizing its robust applicability across various sectors, including e-commerce, education, healthcare, and cutting-edge technologies such as virtual reality and AI. The integration of ECT with complementary frameworks such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Self-Determination Theory (SDT), and Social Identity Theory enhances its explanatory capacity, enabling a multifaceted understanding of digital consumer behavior.

This underscores the significance of ECT as a fundamental framework for examining satisfaction, trust, and behavioral intentions in digital settings. Furthermore, these integrations pave the way for additional theoretical advancements, such as its alignment with personalization, gamification, and cross-cultural research. From a practical perspective, these findings provide actionable strategies for professionals to improve user satisfaction and retention on digital platforms. By focusing on key elements such as perceived usefulness, ease of use, trust, and expectation confirmation, organizations can create user-centric systems that meet consumer expectations and encourage engagement. In contexts such as AI-driven banking and e-learning, measures to build trust and personalized user experiences are crucial for promoting continued usage. Likewise, sectors including healthcare and virtual reality can utilize aesthetic and motivational components to enhance user satisfaction and loyalty. These insights can inform the development of strategies to optimize digital services and ensure sustained customer engagement and satisfaction in a competitive digital landscape.

E. Future Research Directions

This systematic review identified several promising directions for future Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) research in digital environments. Cross-cultural studies are needed to examine how cultural differences, such as individualism versus collectivism, affect ECT applications and offer insights into global digital behaviors. Longitudinal research should explore the evolution of user expectations and satisfaction over time, particularly with rapidly

advancing technologies such as AI, virtual reality, and IoT. Investigating ECT's integration with concepts such as gamification, personalization, and adaptive systems could enhance the understanding of user engagement and satisfaction. Additionally, the impact of personalized digital services on user expectations and satisfaction within the ECT framework remains underexplored, warranting studies in sectors such as e-commerce, healthcare, and education. Research should also consider ethical issues and digital trust in ECT, particularly in sensitive areas such as data privacy and AI-driven services. These directions will enrich ECT's theoretical framework and provide practical solutions for the digital era.

VI. CONCLUSION

This systematic review examines the application of Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) across various digital contexts, analyzes its integration with other theories, and identifies the key factors influencing consumer behavior in digital environments. A rigorous screening process resulted in the selection of 50 studies for the final analysis. This review revealed the wide-ranging applications of ECT across e-commerce, social media, healthcare technology, and education. It highlights the successful integration of ECT with other theoretical frameworks, thereby enhancing its explanatory power in digital environments. Key factors influencing consumer behavior in digital contexts were identified, including perceived usefulness, satisfaction, trust, and expectation confirmation. The study provides a comprehensive understanding of ECT's application in diverse digital settings and offers valuable insights for researchers and practitioners. Future research directions include cross-cultural studies, longitudinal investigations, and integration with emerging theories on digital consumer behavior. This study is significant because it provides a comprehensive understanding of Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) in various digital contexts, highlighting its adaptability and successful integration with other theories. This knowledge is valuable for researchers and practitioners as it offers insights into improving user satisfaction and retention in an ever-evolving digital landscape. The study also identifies key factors influencing consumer behavior, which can guide strategies for enhancing digital service design and user experience.

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