An Overview of the Factors that Influence Purchasing Intentions in Online Reviews

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Abstract. Consumer purchasing behaviour is increasingly influenced by online reviews in the current internet era. Existing models have not fully explained the correlation between online reviews and consumer purchase intention in specific contexts. This study aims to analyse their relationship and propose inspiring viewpoints. The authors summarize current academic research from three perspectives: independent variables, mediating variables and moderating variables. The findings suggest that there are already well-developed studies on the independent variables, but there is still room for further discussion on the mediating variables; for the moderating variables, aspects of service, trust, and personal characteristics are common moderating studies at present. However, there are only a few studies on business service compensation measures and response methods. In addition, most of the existing literature adopts questionnaire survey and data analysis methods, and the content mainly focuses on mediating variables, so there is still room for further development of the study among the remaining variables. Therefore, this paper constructs an intermediate regulation model and proposes one new mediating variable: perceived fit and two new moderating variables: sales volume and business service quality, to investigate how they mediate and moderate the relationship between online reviews and purchase intention. Through an extensive literature review, the authors identified the limitations and shortcomings of previous models. This paper aims to complement and improve the existing research and provides a new research model to provide a basis for further in-depth research.

Keywords: Online reviews, purchase intention, intermediate regulation model, literature review.

1. Introduction

The advent of the digital age has led to significant changes in consumer behaviour, in which online reviews have become a key factor influencing consumers’ purchasing decisions. In contemporary society, people increasingly rely on the opinions and personal experiences conveyed by other consumers through online reviews as a way to make informed choices about various goods and services. Numerous studies have shown that online reviews favorably influence the purchase intentions of consumers in different industries. For marketers and companies to effectively harness the potential of IWOM, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms by which online reviews influence consumer behaviour.

The significance of this literature review lies in its ability to synthesize and assess existing academic research relating to the relationship between online reviews and consumer purchase intentions. This discourse emphasizes the importance of effectively managing one's online reputation and responding effectively to negative feedback. Furthermore, it acknowledges the impact of emerging trends such as marketing and concerns surrounding falsified and manipulated reviews. By examining the variables proposed by the mediated moderation model, this paper provides valuable insights into the impact of online reviews on consumers, the mediation and moderation path, and the
impact of the path on purchase intentions. The study also highlights the need for further research into the psychological mechanisms underlying the impact of online reviews on consumer behaviour.

The theme explored in this literature review relates to the impact of online reviews on consumer purchase intentions. This paper examines more than a hundred pieces of literature from different industries and across platforms, as well as papers on positive and negative reviews, add-on reviews, and other branches of research. All known variables are summarized, from which four independent variables, four mediating variables, and four moderating variables with research value are selected to discuss their impact on consumer perceptions and choices. This study also constructs a mediators moderation model with the proposed new variables to gain a deeper understanding of the cognitive and affective processes by which consumers respond to online reviews. In addition, this study explores current developments such as influencer marketing and the difficulties posed by forged and manipulated reviews.

This literature review used the literature research method to collect and assess relevant academic studies on the impact of online reviews on consumer purchase intention. Academic databases and peer-reviewed journals were explored in depth to identify research articles investigating the correlation between these two variables. The review summarizes and analyses the results of various studies to identify the main factors that influence consumer purchase decisions. In addition, it examines mediators and moderating pathways in mediated moderation models and discusses the implications of emerging trends and challenges in this area. The rigorous research methodology ensures the reliability and validity of the findings of the review.

2. Research Model Variable Setting

2.1. The Direct Effect of Online Reviews on Purchase Intention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable classification</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Online review</td>
<td>Content aspect</td>
<td>Comment Content, Comment Quality, Comment Quantity, Comment Length, Comment form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional aspect</td>
<td>Comment titer, Comment timeliness, Comment affective tendency, Comment positive and negative attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of reviewer</td>
<td>Reviewer aspect</td>
<td>Reviewer recognition, Reviewer credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content aspect</td>
<td>Reviewer experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of receiver</td>
<td>Receiver aspect</td>
<td>Recipient specialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acceptability aspect</td>
<td>Recipient recognition</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 lists the research on independent variables of more than one hundred online review literature searched in this paper. Among them, comment quality, comment number, comment timeliness, and comment emotional tendency will be selected and explored, and the literature review will be conducted based on the results of related research.

The quality of online consumer review content is usually evaluated in terms of four dimensions: relevance, reliability, understand-ability, and adequacy. Many studies have shown that rational and objective information is more effective than emotional, subjective, and ambiguous information for consumer purchase decisions [1]. Consumers are more likely to infer that the former has better quality due to the standard of four aspects. In addition to this, studies have shown that positive reviews increase sales, while negative reviews decrease sales. But there are cases where negative reviews also increase sales, and items with pertinent negative reviews may have a better chance of increasing consumers' willingness to buy [2]. This is because consumers may consider completely positive reviews to be insufficiently reliable and adequate to be called high-quality reviews. Therefore, business need to put an end to the phenomenon of money back for positive reviews and false brushing
reviews, so that consumers can make real reviews, which can improve the quality of reviews and thus promote purchase intention.

Based on research, the number of online reviews is positively correlated with consumers' purchase intention [3]. When the product has a large number of consumer reviews, this reflects the quality and popularity of the product, and consumers can learn more about it, which increases the consumer's willingness to buy. Consumers will have a herd mentality when they see a product with many reviews, and they will increase their willingness to buy because they think that the product which is recognized by the public has a lower risk. In addition, the number of positive and negative reviews will also have an impact on purchase intention. Some scholars have analyzed the data and classified the number of reviews into positive reviews, bad reviews, and medium reviews. They found that a high number of positive reviews will promote an increase in product sales, while too many medium and bad reviews will inhibit the growth of sales [4]. This means that consumers can accept a certain number of negative reviews, so the authors concluded that the number of reviews is not an absolute variable, but a relative one. As long as the proportion of bad reviews is within a certain range, even if the number of bad reviews is relatively high, because of the overall large number of reviews, the proportion of positive reviews is sufficient, and the consumers can still accept it.

In a previous study, it was found that the higher the timeliness of an online review, the lower possibility that the consumer would perceive a loss from purchasing the item and perceive the item, and consider it more valuable to purchase than an item with a less-timely review [5]. In addition, highly current reviews help buyers reduce the risk they face when making a purchase decision, thereby increasing their trust in the product, and they can be informed about the product by the opinions of other consumers promptly, which in turn can promote purchase intent [6]. Therefore, this paper argues that the timeliness of reviews does affect consumers' purchase intention, but perhaps not to the same extent as the other independent variables, as some reviews with longer timeliness can also affect consumers' purchase intention if it has high quality.

It has been found that when there are too many negative consumer reviews of a product, consumers show a negative bias toward it, which significantly reduces their willingness to purchase [1]. The reason for this phenomenon is that, compared with the positive reviews of the product, the negative reviews will give consumers a more profound impression, which will reduce consumers' willingness to buy [7]. Therefore, merchants need to improve product quality and after-sales service, try to avoid negative reviews, and even if there are negative reviews, they should be resolved positively. The emotional tendency of reviews is one of the most important factors affecting consumers' buying willingness, and a positive emotional tendency of reviews can not only increase the sales of goods but also establish a good image of the product and business in the minds of consumers.

2.2. The Mediating Role of Perceptual Variables between Online Reviews and Purchase Intention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable classification</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived risk</td>
<td>Obverse and reverse</td>
<td>Perceived risk, Perceived credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived value</td>
<td>Commodity perception aspect</td>
<td>Perceived usefulness, Perceived usability, Perceived value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal perception aspect</td>
<td>Unique perception, Perceives similarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other perception</td>
<td>Other aspects</td>
<td>Consumer satisfaction, Brand image, Information overload</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 lists the mediating variable studies of more than one hundred literature studies retrieved for this paper. The authors will select perceived risk, perceived trustworthiness, perceived value and brand image as the main subject for this part of the literature review.

Due to the spatial distance of online shopping, consumers are unable to make adequate self-judgment about the products. At this point, online reviews are the only way for consumers to learn
about merchants and products, this phenomenon may affect the strength of perceived risk [8]. Subsequent academic studies have demonstrated that a large amount of high-quality positive online reviews can significantly reduce consumers' perceived risk of broadcast room and their products, and even promotes consumers' purchase intention [9]. Negative online reviews can affect changes in psychological states such as consumers' emotional or cognitive responses through perceived risk, which in turn affects consumers' willingness to purchase raw food [10]. It can be seen that no matter what kind of goods, the relationship between online reviews and perceived risk is negatively influenced, online reviews make up for the consumer's perception of the product authenticity, and as a result, the perceived risk will be weakened. While too many negative reviews can expose hidden problems that are not shown on the product detail page, which leads to the fact that consumers may feel riskier in purchasing the products.

The probe points out that consumers' trustworthiness perceptions are particularly influenced by peripheral cues such as website reputation, product/service ratings, and reviewer professionalism [11]. However, contrary to the generally agreed results, the current study found that the quantity of reviews has a significant negative impact on review credibility, and consumers are less likely to purchase items with an excessive number of reviews instead. Consumer perceptions have gradually begun to change as a result of recent media revelations about the existence of brushing reviews and false reviews on a large number of merchants. In addition to this, negative additional reviews also have a significant impact on consumers' perceived trust. Compared with consistent negative additional reviews, consumers' perceived trust in inconsistent negative additional reviews is stronger [12]. That is to say, consumers trust additional negative reviews that are different from the original ones, and due to the frequent occurrence of malicious negative reviews in recent years, consumers have gradually started to scrutinize the authenticity of negative reviews.

Perceived value can be divided into functional value and emotional value, both of which have a significant positive impact on consumers' purchase intention [13]. However, the study shows that online consumers are firstly concerned about the functional value such as the effect of the product nature, followed by the emotional value brought by the product. In addition, by browsing online reviews, consumers can not only get more information about the product but also reduce the uncertainty of purchasing the product [5]. Therefore, consumers can measure the gap between information perception and decision effectiveness, then finally make a purchase decision [7]. Thus, the perceived value of online reviews does have a positive impact on purchasing decisions, so the nature of online reviews is a key concern for merchants, therefore they should enhance the management of online reviews to improve the perceived value of consumers and promote purchasing intentions at last.

The content of online reviews also affects a brand's (merchant's) image. Some scholars have categorized brand image into several types and explored the impact on purchase intensity [13]. Studies have shown that the intensity is, in descending order, product image, promotional image, communication service image, and order fulfillment image. In addition to this, other studies based on data analysis found that online reviews have a more significant impact on brand awareness and brand associations, which leads to an increase in consumers' willingness to buy [2]. With deeper research, scholars explained this phenomenon, online reviews have a substantial impact on consumers' purchase intention by influencing their mental image of the product [6]. Thus, when customers form a positive impression of a product based on their initial contact, they form a positive mental image which increases their desire to purchase this product multiple times when needed, which also shows the importance of online review management by merchants.
2.3. The Moderating Effect of Multiple Variables on Purchase Intention

Table 3. Moderating variables setting of present academic circle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable classification</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceptual factor</td>
<td>Distance aspect</td>
<td>Psychological distance (social, spatial, temporal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expectation aspect</td>
<td>Desired degree of certainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trust aspect</td>
<td>Brand trust, Propensity to trust, Celebrity effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service compensation</td>
<td>Data aspect</td>
<td>Seller response rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of receiver</td>
<td>Attitude aspect</td>
<td>Humor level of seller respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seller response strategies (No response, conciliatory, defensive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Service recovery measures (Reactivity, compensatory, contact)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer characteristics</td>
<td>Acquired aspect</td>
<td>Self-selection bias, self-construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Innate aspect</td>
<td>Cognitive characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Price aspect</td>
<td>Price promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment factor</td>
<td>Type aspect</td>
<td>Comment type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content aspect</td>
<td>Product involvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 lists the research of the moderating variables in the retrieved literature. The authors will select brand trust, seller response strategies, service recovery measures, and cognitive characteristics as variables for the literature review.

When browsing online reviews, consumers develop trust in the merchant or brand. Studies have found that when the number, quality, and emotional tone of the reviews are the same, brand trust can enhance the effect of positive reviews and reduce the negative impact of negative reviews [14]. Moreover, in the case of unfamiliar versus familiar brands, the effect of brand trust is such that even if there are negative views, consumers tend to choose familiar brands [8]. Therefore, merchants should focus on cultivating consumer loyalty to their brands and also improve the promotion and quality of their brands.

After purchasing a product, consumers post online reviews, and sellers have different response strategies to these reviews. Previous research has found that seller response strategies play an important moderating role [10]. A good seller service attitude and timely response can reduce consumers' perception of negative reviews and product risks, while positive responses can gain consumers' potential understanding and promote their purchases. If sellers adopt defensive response strategies, consumers will increase their risk perception and attribute the problems to the sellers themselves. Furthermore, since consumers can obtain certain information from seller responses, their purchase intentions may increase when the negative feedback in the reviews is not caused by the seller, and the effect of negative reviews was not significant [12]. This shows that sellers adopting appropriate response strategies can turn potential customers into actual customers, or even loyal customers.

After posting negative reviews, merchants tend to provide certain service compensation to mitigate the impact of negative reviews. Research has found that the quality-of-service recovery measures is judged in three dimensions: compensation, responsiveness, and interaction [15]. Fast response speed, high-quality material compensation, and active interpersonal interaction can increase consumers' positive emotions and satisfaction, weaken their negative emotions, and reduce their willingness to spread negative word-of-mouth. Moreover, the service recovery experience and its moderating effect on consumer emotions enhance the impact of online reviews on purchase decisions, leading to a higher likelihood of a second purchase. Therefore, merchants should try to take positive response strategies to increase sales.

Current research shows that the purchase intentions of network consumers with high cognitive demand are affected by the quality of online reviews, while the purchase intentions of online consumers with low cognitive demand are influenced by the number of reviews [3]. From the perspective of personality traits, existing research suggests that personality traits affect consumers’
perception of the online review's usefulness, and the effect of different dimensions of personality traits on consumers' perception of usefulness differs [16]. Conscientiousness and agreeableness traits help consumers better capture the usefulness of review information; whereas extroversion traits have a negative impact on perceived usefulness: openness and neuroticism traits have little to no effect on the perception of review usefulness. Both cognitive characteristics and personality traits have significant research potential, as different traits and cognitive levels can lead us to have different perceptions of the same review or product, resulting in varying degrees of purchase intentions and decisions.

3. Research Deficiencies and Model Proposal

3.1. Proposing New Variables

Through a systematic review of previous research reviews, the authors identified the limitations and shortcomings of previous models in explaining the impact of online reviews on purchase intention.

As can be seen from the previous variable review, three main independent variables are set to be the nature of online reviews, recipients, and reviewers. Among them, the research on the nature of online reviews is the most important, and the relevant studies from quality to affective tendency are already very comprehensive, so there is no need to discuss them any further.

Academic research on mediating variables continues, and although they are all based on a perceptual level, there is still room for discussion between the variables. In this paper, the authors found that perceived risk and perceived trustworthiness are consumers' judgement of the content truthfulness of the review, while perceived value is consumers' judgement of the product value. However, previous literature has not considered that consumer tends to read the product introduction before browsing the reviews, and whether the product expectation generated at this time will have an impact on purchase intention. Therefore, this paper constructs a mediator variable - perceived fit, and proposes to combine own judgement and review judgement to explore the gap between them, and whether it will affect the purchase intention or not. In addition to this, the present academic studies on merchant (brand) image are relatively comprehensive.

The moderating variables in existing studies are very diverse, with service, trust, and personal characteristics being the most common aspects. In the case of service, it has been found that both compensation measures and merchant responding methods have an impact on the purchase decision. However, many other factors can affect the purchase decision, such as merchant attitude, coupons and gifts. For this reason, this paper constructs a moderating variable, merchant service quality, to explore whether high-quality service will raise the customer's acceptance threshold for bad reviews. The most discussed variable at the trust level is the variable about the brand, and cases of enhancing the acceptance of bad reviews due to high brand loyalty or awareness are common, but there is less research on consumer-related trust variables in academia at present. Therefore, this paper proposes sales volume as a new moderating variable to explore its moderating effect on purchase intention.

The reason of authors divided it into a consumer trust variable is that more sales mean more consumers purchase it, and choosing a high-sales volume product indicates chooses to trust in the purchase decision of these consumers. In addition, academic researches on personal characteristics including both cognitive and personality aspects, are relatively comprehensive.

3.2. Proposing New Variables

To enrich the direction of related research and provide another way of thinking, this paper will supplement and improve the previous research. As shown in Figure 1, the authors construct a mediation model and introduce a new intermediate variable, perceived fit, as well as two new moderating variables, the sales volume and the service quality.
The authors defined perceived fit as the match between the actual evaluation of a product and the expected value of the product. Before purchasing a product, consumers must have an overall understanding of the product and therefore have expectations of the product. After browsing online reviews, consumers will compare the content of the reviews with their expectations. There are two hypotheses: first if the actual evaluation of the product is positive, the higher it is beyond the expectation value, the stronger the purchase intention. Second, if the actual evaluation of the product is negative, the closer it is to the expected value, the more likely it is to promote the purchase. In short, a product that is better than expected or as bad as expected would both promote purchase willingness.

In the model, the sales volume and the merchant’s service quality are used as moderating variables:

The moderating effect of the number of goods sold: since most consumers subconsciously believe that goods with high sales volume may be better because more people choose to buy them, therefore they choose to follow the crowd and believe their decisions. Besides, even though there are still some bad reviews, the percentage of bad reviews is minimal compared to good reviews because of the high sales volume, thus consumers' acceptance of bad reviews increases.

The regulating effect of the quality of business services: in the process of consumer purchasing, if a business has a good service attitude, gives out concessions or gifts, and solves consumer's questions efficiently, all these could make customer's acceptance of bad reviews becomes higher, and may also change the consumer's initial concept of the goods or business.

4. Conclusion

This paper summarizes previous research from the perspectives of independent variables, mediator variables, and moderator variables and finds that the two variables of emotional disposition and perceived value of reviews can significantly affect consumers' purchase intention. The variables of review quality, perceived risk, perceived credibility, and brand trust are easily affected by fake reviews. The number of reviews and the timeliness of reviews can also affect purchase decisions but are not particularly significant. In addition, merchants can take measures to change consumers' perceptions of their products through the variables of seller's response strategy and quality of service compensation to promote consumers' purchase intention. The research on cognitive characteristics and service compensation quality is too scarce, and there is still a lot of research space to be filled.

Through extensive literature review and reviewing previous research reviews, the authors found that previous models have limitations and shortcomings in explaining the impact of online reviews on purchase intention. In most of the previous studies, questionnaires and data analyses were used, and the studies related to independent variables have been relatively comprehensive, and for the studies on mediating variables, they are almost all based on the perception level, but still have a lot of research space. Although the previous research on the moderating variables is very diversified, but there is less in-depth discussion on the aspect of merchant service compensation measures and
response methods, and only a small amount of literature has been mentioned. In addition, most of the articles nowadays have not explored the research on consumer-related trust variables. Therefore, this paper adds to this aspect by constructing models and adding variables.

The findings of this study can help merchants gain a deeper understanding of the factors affecting consumer purchase motivation and develop more effective marketing strategies by adjusting these factors. In addition, this article allows scholars to systematically review the relevant research findings and summarize the studied variables for reference. At the same time, a simple analysis of the variables in the model is conducted to lay the groundwork for future in-depth research and provide new ideas for future studies on the impact of online reviews on consumer purchase intentions.

This study has certain limitations. Since the literature related to some moderating variables, such as the quality-of-service compensation, is scarce, the research findings may not be comprehensive enough. In future research, authors will focus on the research results and variable settings in this area, conduct in-depth research, and make contributions to promote the development of this study area.

5. Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

References
