

Research on the Impact of Online Comments on Consumers' Willingness to Purchase Domestic Brands

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Abstract. With the rapid development of the Internet, the scale of online shopping has gradually increased, and with the expansion of the online shopping market and the impact of the epidemic, consumers' main reference information in online shopping has gradually turned to online reviews. Based on this background, this paper takes the SOR model as the basis, divides the dimensions of online reviews and uses them as independent variables, takes domestic brand identity as the mediator, and consumers' purchase intention as the result variable, and constructs the influence model of online reviews on consumers' purchase decisions of domestic brands. The results show that consumers' purchase intention of domestic brands is positively affected by the quality, quantity and professionalism of reviews, and domestic brand identity plays a partial role as an intermediary. However, the comment potency did not play a significant role.

Keywords: online reviews, domestic brand, consumer willingness to buy, brand identity.

1. Introduction

With the development of the domestic economy and the improvement of consumer purchasing power, Chinese consumers are gradually shifting their focus towards domestically produced high-quality products, and domestic brands are becoming their preferred choice while steadily developing. However, compared to large foreign enterprises, domestic brands still have a gap in brand establishment, recognition, and market acceptance. Consumer-driven market demand emphasizes the importance of respecting consumer preferences and addressing their pain points for domestic brands. The number of online shopping users in China has reached 841 million, with 80% of internet users engaging in online shopping. Online reputation significantly influences 80.1% of consumers' online shopping decisions. During the pandemic, the habit of online shopping has led consumers to search and browse online reviews, influencing their offline shopping behavior. This study aims to delve into the special impact of online reviews on consumers' purchase decisions regarding domestic brands, considering the unique attributes of domestic brands and the cultural identity and emotional factors of Chinese consumers. It seeks to address the limitations of existing research, which are mainly focused on Western markets and lack specific analysis of Eastern collectivism and domestic brand influences.

2. Literature Review

Amdt proposed in 1967 that word-of-mouth is a communicative expression of experiential descriptions of products and services between consumers^[1]. This concept was initially introduced by Chatterjee in 2001, who pointed out that consumers, when shopping online, would look at information related to previously purchased products posted by other consumers^[2]. Du Meixue (2016) suggested that online reviews are accounts of consumers' actual experiences with products posted online after making a purchase, aimed at helping potential consumers gain a comprehensive understanding of the product^[3]. In summary, this paper defines online reviews as descriptive information reflecting consumers' personal feelings posted online after purchasing and using products bought online.

Fishbein et al. (1975) indicated that purchase intention is the subjective judgment probability formed by the comprehensive interaction of consumer attitudes, evaluations, and other factors before consumers make a purchase, which is the most critical factor in predicting consumer behavior^[4].

Dodds (1991) and other studies suggested that purchase intention is the desire for a product that arises in consumers before they make a purchase, and the intensity of this desire is directly proportional to the probability of the final purchase behavior occurring ^[5]. Wang Yue (2019) stated that purchase intention refers to consumers' subjective preferences when purchasing products ^[6]. Taken together, as a subjective attitude that influences or even determines purchase behavior, purchase intention is crucial in studying purchase decisions, and this paper selects it as the outcome variable.

In general, online reviews mainly influence consumers' purchase intention in two ways. On the one hand, there is the awareness effect, which involves consumers becoming aware of, paying attention to, and choosing a product through reading online reviews. On the other hand, there is the recommendation effect, where online reviews cause a shift in consumers' attitudes and acceptance of the product^[7]. Customers influenced by online reviews exhibit higher loyalty. This is also the reason why this paper explores the impact of online reviews on consumers' purchase intention for domestic brands, urging domestic brands to value online reviews and improve brand image based on feedback, thereby enhancing domestic brand reputation.

3. Research Hypotheses and Model

3.1. Theoretical Basis

Mehrabian and Russell proposed the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model in 1974 ^[8]. Donovan and Rossiter were the first to apply this model to purchasing behavior and decision-making ^[9]. The theory suggests that consumers, when exposed to external stimuli, will experience certain emotional states, which further influence their purchasing behavior and outcomes. Therefore, to some extent, this theory can serve as a reference for the elucidation of this study. Accordingly, this paper defines the stimulus factor as online reviews, including review quality, quantity, valence, and expertise. The organism response factor is defined as domestic brand identification, and the response factor is defined as purchase intention, thus establishing the influence model for this study.

3.2. Research Hypotheses and Model

3.2.1. The Relationship between Online Reviews and Consumers' Purchase Intention for Domestic Brands

First, the impact of review quality on purchase intention. With the rapid expansion of online shopping, many merchants choose to hire fake reviewers to write positive reviews in order to increase product sales and brand awareness. In addition, some consumers have little interest in reviews and may easily leave simple and casual comments that do not truly reflect the quality of the product. Therefore, when reading reviews, negative evaluations are more likely to be accepted, while positive reviews are more likely to be doubted. Research by Zheng Xiaoping found that the higher the quality of the reviews, the greater the impact on consumers' purchase intention [14]. Based on the above, this study proposes the hypothesis:

H1a: Review quality positively influences consumers' purchase intention for domestic brands.

Second, the impact of review quantity on purchase intention. As consumers shop online, a higher number of reviews tends to attract more attention and increase the product's popularity. Generally, the higher the sales volume of a product, the greater the corresponding number of reviews. Therefore, the quantity of reviews reflects consumers' purchasing volume and endorsement of the product. Furthermore, a larger quantity of reviews provides consumers with more information, and based on the psychology of the masses, consumers' approval of the product will unconsciously increase, thereby enhancing their purchase intention. Based on the above, this study proposes the hypothesis:

H1b: The quantity of reviews positively influences consumers' purchase intention for domestic brands.

Third, the impact of review valence on purchase intention. Online reviews for a product can be categorized into positive, neutral, and negative. It has been observed that consumer reviews generally

fall into one of these three categories. In daily life, we often see that the longer the queue in front of a store, the more people will join the line. At such times, consumers tend to believe that the longer the queue, the better the store's reputation. This reflects that positive reviews often generate more positive stimuli for consumers. Therefore, this study proposes the hypothesis:

H1c: Review valence positively influences consumers' purchase intention for domestic brands.

Finally, the impact of review professionalism on purchase intention. Based on the variance in the attributes of review content, online reviews are generally categorized into professional and subjective reviews. Professional reviews are characterized by objectivity and can help consumers understand the objective situation and attributes of services and products, providing consumers with rational and objectively accurate product information. Additionally, professional reviews are more persuasive and better meet consumers' reference needs. Therefore, this study proposes the hypothesis:

H1d: Review professionalism positively influences consumers' purchase intention for domestic brands.

3.2.2. Analysis of the Impact of Online Reviews, Domestic Brand Identification, and Purchase Intention

In the internet era, consumers are increasingly using online reviews to understand product information, which has a significant impact on product evaluation and brand awareness. Meanwhile, the development of domestic brands has attracted increasing attention in recent years, and the enhancement of domestic brand identification has become an important factor in promoting brand development. From the "Xinjiang cotton" incident, where netizens collectively refused to purchase foreign brands associated with Xinjiang cotton and instead supported numerous domestic brands such as HLA, Metersbonwe, Semir, it even sparked a "buy domestic products with money voting" movement. Generally, consumers often make purchasing decisions after browsing online reviews. However, under the unique attributes of domestic brands in the context of domestic social events, a new path has emerged. Domestic consumers spontaneously purchase and willingly publish positive or even praiseworthy reviews about domestic brands. Due to the voluntary nature of consumer-generated review behavior, the quality of reviews has improved, and the quantity of reviews has significantly increased amid the event's fermentation. The effect of review valence becomes more apparent, further enhancing domestic brand identification and subsequently increasing consumer purchase intention. As the purchase rate increases and sales volume grows, more people subsequently publish online reviews, leading to an improvement in the professionalism of reviews, thereby generating further purchase intention.

H2: Domestic brand identification positively influences purchase intention

H3a: Review quality positively influences domestic brand identification

H3b: Review quantity positively influences domestic brand identification

H3c: Review valence positively influences domestic brand identification

H3d: Review professionalism positively influences domestic brand identification

H4a: Domestic brand identification mediates the relationship between review quality and purchase intention

H4b: Domestic brand identification mediates the relationship between review quantity and purchase intention

H4c: Domestic brand identification mediates the relationship between review valence and purchase intention

H4d: Domestic brand identification mediates the relationship between review professionalism and purchase intention

In summary, the research model of this study is as follows:

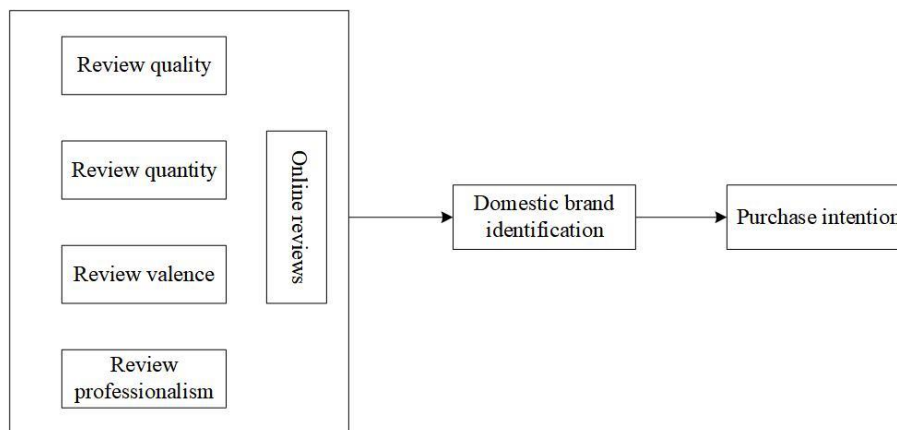


Fig. 1 Research model of the impact of online reviews on consumers' purchase intention towards domestic brands

4. Questionnaire Design and Data Collection

4.1. Questionnaire Design

In order to ensure the scientific validity of the questionnaire, this study referenced previous research findings when designing the questionnaire and made appropriate adjustments based on the content of this study. Specifically, the review quality referred to the research of Juliet et al. ^[10], the review quantity referred to the relevant research of Bi et al. ^[11], the review valence referred to the research results of Du et al. ^[12], the review professionalism referred to the research of Chen et al. ^[13], the domestic brand identification referred to the studies of Lam ^[14], Jin ^[15], and others on brand identification, and the consumer purchase intention for domestic brands referred to the relevant research of Bansal and Voyer ^[16]. The questionnaire design utilized a Likert 5-point scale, and respondents were asked to answer based on their actual feelings.

4.2. Pilot Testing and Data Collection

Before the formal questionnaire survey, a small-scale pre-survey was conducted, and data from participants who completed the questionnaire too quickly or exhibited overly consistent responses were excluded. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS 27.0, and the results indicated that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for each variable were greater than 0.7, the KMO index was greater than 0.6, and Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded a p-value of less than 0.05. Therefore, it was considered that the dimensions of the scale were sound, leading to the finalization of the questionnaire and its distribution through various online platforms and channels. Ultimately, 206 questionnaires were collected, with 188 valid responses, resulting in an effective response rate of approximately 91.26%.

5. Empirical Analysis

5.1. Descriptive Statistical Analysis

The data shows that males account for 44% and females account for 56%, a gender ratio in line with the national demographic distribution of internet users, and also reflective of the higher proportion of females in online shopping. In terms of age distribution, the highest proportion is in the 21-30 age group, accounting for 65 individuals, followed by the 31-40 age group at 16%, together constituting the majority of the sample. This is due to the high proficiency of this age group in using the internet and their frequent online shopping behavior, which aligns well with the focus of this study on online reviews and reflects good participation in the survey. Regarding the duration of internet

usage, those with less than 1 year of experience accounted for only 11%, indicating that respondents have a relatively high level of familiarity with online shopping, meeting the requirements of this study.

5.2. Validity and Reliability Analysis

5.2.1. Reliability Analysis

In order to examine the accuracy and reliability of the data, this study conducted a reliability test. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for review quality, review quantity, review valence, review professionalism, domestic brand identification, and consumer purchase intention for domestic brands were 0.753, 0.808, 0.867, 0.786, 0.755, and 0.835, respectively. All Alpha values were greater than 0.7, indicating good reliability of the scale and its suitability for the subsequent research analysis.

5.2.2. Validity Analysis

To measure the rationality of the scale, factor analysis was conducted for validation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.832, exceeding the threshold of 0.8, and the result of Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded a p-value of 0.000, indicating that the data is suitable for factor analysis.

Furthermore, in the rotated component matrix, the factor loadings of each item on its corresponding factor are all greater than 0.4. The results of the factor extraction are consistent with the variable settings of the questionnaire, and the distribution of each item on its corresponding factor is favorable, without any instances of items crossing over to influence two different factors. Therefore, the validity of the scale is good.

5.3. Structural Equation Model (SEM) Examination

In this study, a Structural Equation Model (SEM) was used for hypothesis testing, with review quality, quantity, valence, and professionalism as independent variables, domestic brand identification as the mediating variable, and purchase intention as the dependent variable. The model fit indices are shown in Table 1. As indicated in the table, the goodness-of-fit indices of the model all meet the criteria, and the fit of each indicator is relatively high, making it suitable for the analysis of the results in this study.

Table 1. Model fit test results of the impact of online reviews on consumers' purchase intention towards domestic brands

Goodness of fit index	χ^2/df	P	RMSEA	IFI	TLI	CFI
Criterion	<3	>0.05	<0.10	<0.10	>0.9	>0.9
Observed value	1.144	0.119	0.028	0.986	0.982	0.986

The results of the hypothesis testing are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Structural equation model validation results

Paths of variable relationships	Unstandardized path coefficient	SE	z (CR value)	p	Standardized path coefficient
Domestic brand identification → Purchase intention	0.22	0.081	2.723	0.006	0.253
Review professionalism → Purchase intention	0.261	0.079	3.321	0.001	0.296
Review valence → Purchase intention	-0.042	0.065	-0.638	0.524	-0.051
Review quantity → Purchase intention	0.242	0.08	3.047	0.002	0.266
Review quality → Purchase intention	0.177	0.079	2.256	0.024	0.206
Review professionalism → Domestic brand identification	0.297	0.1	2.979	0.003	0.294
Review valence → Domestic brand identification	-0.043	0.087	-0.493	0.622	-0.046
Review quantity → Domestic brand identification	0.312	0.101	3.107	0.002	0.299
Review quality → Domestic brand identification	0.349	0.098	3.569	0	0.354

5.4. Conditional Process Analysis

In this study, the Bootstrap method was utilized to test the mediating effect. The examination was conducted using the "process" program, and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of conditional process analysis

Item	Inspection conclusion	Total effect	Mediation effect	Direct effect	SE	Effect proportion
Review quality → Domestic brand identification → Purchase intention	intermediary	0.254	0.077	0.177	0.045	30.22%
Review quantity → Domestic brand identification → Purchase intention	intermediary	0.311	0.069	0.242	0.042	22.11%
Review valence → Domestic brand identification → Purchase intention	Intermediation is not significant	-0.051	-0.009	-0.042	0.027	0%
Review professionalism → Domestic brand identification → Purchase intention	intermediary	0.327	0.066	0.261	0.042	20.07%

6. Conclusion

6.1. Research Conclusion

The results of this study show that online reviews have a significant impact on driving consumer purchases of domestic brands to a certain extent. The conclusions are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Statement of Hypothesis	Test results
H1a	Review quality positively influences consumers' purchase intention for domestic brands.	Established
H1b	The quantity of reviews positively influences consumers' purchase intention for domestic brands.	Established
H1c	Review valence positively influences consumers' purchase intention for domestic brands.	Not established
H1d	Review professionalism positively influences consumers' purchase intention for domestic brands	Established
H2	Domestic brand identification positively influences purchase intention	Established
H3a	Review quality positively influences domestic brand identification	Established
H3b	Review quantity positively influences domestic brand identification	Established
H3c	Review valence positively influences domestic brand identification	Not established
H3d	Review professionalism positively influences domestic brand identification	Established
H4a	Domestic brand identification mediates the relationship between review quality and purchase intention	Established
H4b	Domestic brand identification mediates the relationship between review quantity and purchase intention	Established
H4c	Domestic brand identification mediates the relationship between review valence and purchase intention	Not established
H4d	Domestic brand identification mediates the relationship between review professionalism and purchase intention	Established

6.2. Structural Equation Model (SEM) Examination

Firstly, strengthen cultural branding to enhance brand identification. With the continuous development of the global economy, the purpose of purchasing goods has shifted from mere material enjoyment to seeking spiritual fulfillment. Therefore, culture has become the core competitive advantage of brands. The data collected indicates that online reviews have a significant impact on the identification and purchase intention of domestic brands. This also demonstrates the importance of cultural branding to the value of domestic brands. This study suggests that domestic enterprises should moderately endow products with national sentiment, enhance the intrinsic image of the brand, strengthen the cultural value of the brand, and drive consumer attention to domestic brands. Additionally, domestic enterprises should also pay attention to changes in consumers' ideological and emotional pain points, appropriately adjust the cultural orientation of the enterprise, resonate with consumers, and better meet their cultural needs.

Secondly, emphasize the marketing value of online reviews for domestic brands. Compared to physical shopping, online shopping, based on the convenience and speed of the internet, has a larger scale and volume of information, with correspondingly lower costs, thus increasing the completion rate of consumer behavior. At the same time, in the internet era with continuously improving information transparency, anyone can freely express their comments and opinions online without restrictions, reducing the cost of comments, thereby deepening the impact on the audience seeking information. Therefore, in the internet era, brand building and marketing should also keep pace with the times by attaching importance to the operation and management of online reviews, and constructing a more complete online review system.

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