

The Effect of On-Line Consumer Reviews on Consumer Purchasing Intention: The Moderating Role of Involvement

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ABSTRACT: On-line consumer reviews, functioning both as informants and as recommenders, are important in making purchase decisions and for product sales. Their persuasive impact depends on both their quality and their quantity. This paper uses the elaboration likelihood model to explain how level of involvement with a product moderates these relationships. The study produces three major findings: (1) the quality of on-line reviews has a positive effect on consumers' purchasing intention, (2) purchasing intention increases as the number of reviews increases, and (3) low-involvement consumers are affected by the quantity rather than the quality of reviews, but high-involvement consumers are affected by review quantity mainly when the review quality is high. These findings have implications for on-line sellers in terms of how to manage on-line consumer reviews.

KEY WORDS AND PHRASES: Consumer involvement, elaboration likelihood model, electronic word-of-mouth, on-line consumer review, on-line word of mouth, product review.

Internet-based electronic commerce is growing rapidly with the proliferation of commercial Web sites and the increasing acceptance of on-line transactions by consumers [23]. As a new marketing channel, the World Wide Web differs from traditional retail formats in many ways [1]. Consumers shopping on-line cannot touch or smell products, as would be possible in traditional retail outlets, so their purchase judgments must be based on the product information presented on the Web site. On-line sellers seek to overcome this limitation by giving consumers the opportunity to share product evaluations on-line [11, 12]. This consumer-created information is helpful in making purchase decisions because it provides indirect experiences of products.

In contrast to a traditional seller, an on-line seller generally provides consumers with two types of product information. It can offer seller-created product information via its Web site or other traditional communication channels such as advertisements, and it can also offer consumer-created product information by allowing consumers to post comments on its Web site. Consumer-created information, an *on-line consumer review*, is new information presented from the perspective of consumers who have purchased and used the product. It includes their experiences, evaluations, and opinions. The user-oriented information provided in this way is, in effect, a new kind of word-of-mouth communication. As an independent product-information resource, on-line reviews are increasing in popularity and importance [12, 22].

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