



Article Title

Following the breadcrumbs: An analysis of online product review characteristics by online shoppers.

Citation

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Abstract

Consumer-generated product reviews are a driving force behind online purchases; at the same time, unfavorable reviews can discourage interested online shoppers and eventually hurt the brand. The objective of this exploratory study was to analyze a diverse range of characteristics and the valence of online product reviews that would aid in responding to customer dissatisfaction. Product reviews (N = 1982) from Amazon.com were collected and content analyzed. Some of the key findings include the following: (a) price was the most commonly discussed product feature; (b) online shoppers found two-sided reviews to be most informative, contradicting the commonly held assumption that negative reviews were more informative and diagnostic in nature; and (c) 'no action' was the most common end action across two-sided and negative reviews, indicating that varying levels of dissatisfaction might not always lead to a negative end action. Implications for marketers are discussed.

Summary

Overall, the majority of the reviews did not indicate any end actions, suggesting that most reviews only go as far as giving positive/negative/two-sided evaluations of the brand. With reference to negative reviews, when 'no action' is indicated by a dissatisfied consumer, a great deal of uncertainty arises. Without accurate information, the brand can hardly take steps to curtail the issue. In such situations, encouraging consumers to contact the brand and having easy-to-follow procedures in place that can confirm a timely response is warranted. However, the negative reviews ended with some kind of a specific action (35%) more often than the positive reviews (18.2%). Given that the end actions found in the negative reviews were strong actions taken against the brand, ignoring negative reviews of consumers could be highly dangerous in terms of marketing. Because negative reviewers could take strong action and their reviews are generally known to have greater

informational value to other shoppers, companies should carefully monitor negative feedback to gauge the reason for the dissatisfaction to inform future product development.