Strategy for Initial and Appending Reviews: An Emerging China Phenomenon

Emergent Research Forum papers

Chiang-Yu Cheng
Soochow University
taican.ccy@gmail.com

Wesley Shu
National Central University
shuwesley@gmail.com

Chia-Sheng Lin
National Central University
hotalin@gmail.com

Abstract

In most websites, consumers are allowed to leave reviews on the sellers, but in China, they are allowed to leave both initial and appending reviews. Appending reviews give the reviewers more chance to write or make revisions based on the first review. They also prevent consumers from making purchase decision out of incomplete information. Because it is a new business practice in China, there is no research on it so far.

Our research purpose was to analyse the impact on consumer decisions from appending reviews. We also wanted to identify the best reply patterns for appending reviews. We found that when cognition relationship is dissonant, purchase decisions encounter difficulty. When valences are different, the orders made no difference for consumers. Sellers’ reply strategies may have different impact on consumers’ purchase decision difficulty

Keywords (Required)

Review, valence, China, appending review, initial review, cognition relationship.

The Research

According to Dimensional Research (2013), 88% of consumers are influenced by online reviews when making purchase decisions. Many scholars also concluded that consumers tend to believing online reviews more than firms’ advertisements (e.g., Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006; Smith et al., 2005). Today, many websites, especially the ones in China, offer appending reviews in additional to initial reviews. Without appending reviews, some shortcomings can occur. First, there is no guarantee that consumers keep the same attitudes after the initial reviews are done. Second, consumers may not fully understand the products and write negative reviews but they can feel the benefits after the products are fully understood. Third, there are always chance that consumers want to say more after the reviews are written.

Because an initial review and its appending review are written by the same consumer, there is congruency effect between the two reviews. First, if the consistent reviews are more convincing then inconsistent reviews? Second, which review, initial or appending, has more impact on the consumers? Third, how consumers interpret the reviews with different valence? From firms’ perspective, they may need to decide to respond to all the reviews or only the appending reviews. We adopted Broniaczyk & Griffin’s model (2014) on decision difficulty to answer these questions.

Two concepts need to clarify. The first is valence. This table shows the valence difference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive initial review</th>
<th>Negative initial review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive appending review</td>
<td>Consonance (both positive)</td>
<td>Dissonance (negative first and positive second)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The other concept is decision difficulty including information load (Park & Lee, 2009), perceived uncertainty (Luo et al., 2014), emotional difficulty (Lin et al., 2012), and preference uncertainty (Lee & Lee, 2009). With all these concepts, we developed our research model:

There are several hypotheses generated from this model. For example, one hypothesis is whether ‘positive then negative’ or ‘negative then positive’ gives more information load to consumers.

After knowing the impact of valence on decision difficulty, we then tried to know what seller response strategy should be. We illustrate this second stage experiment as the following:
One hypothesis drawn upon this model is “different seller response strategies may result in different levels of information load for consumers.”

We tested all hypotheses on real websites such as TMall in China. We used four types of products illustrated in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repeated usage</th>
<th>Non-repeatable</th>
<th>Repeatable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Storability</td>
<td>Perishable product</td>
<td>Intangible product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-storable</td>
<td>Disposable product</td>
<td>Consumer product</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Product Type

After checking the reliability and validity, we found our questionnaire was valid. We then did the hypothesis testing. For the first stage, we found, first, valence dissonance created decision difficulty for consumers. Second, the order of the valence did not create different decision difficulty.

We then tested what strategies should be used when the valence was dissonance. One thing we found was response to the appending review and response to both reviews created lower emotional difficulty for consumers, and response to the appending review was more effective than response to both reviews. We also found that response to appending review worked best when the valence was ‘positive-then-negative’. We explored different strategies in different scenarios.

REFERENCES


