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How primary and supplementary reviews affect consumer decision making?
Roles of psychological and managerial mechanisms

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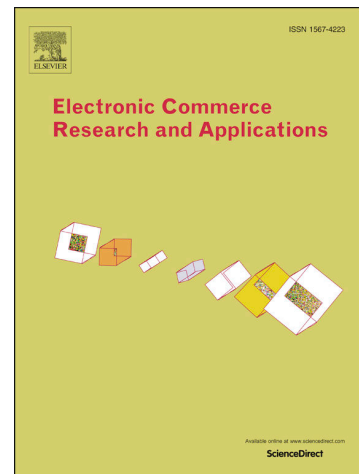
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How primary and supplementary reviews affect consumer decision making? Roles of psychological and managerial mechanisms

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Abstract

There exists evidence that online reviews in general and primary (or initial) reviews, in particular, are manipulated and biased by the sellers to increase their reputation. And, primary reviews may provide little information on consumers' experience of the products since most consumers provide them a few days after the purchase. To overcome the present weakness of primary reviews, such leading platforms as Taobao, the largest C2C marketplace globally, introduced a new type of review, i.e., supplementary (or additional) reviews, which consumers usually do not provide until the products are actually experienced. The present research explores how the interplay of primary reviews and supplementary ones influences consumer decision making, and what sellers should do to manage the ensued inconsistency and consistency by proposing an ambivalence–confidence framework based on the heuristic-systematic model. Moreover, it shows that truthfulness of online reviews and seller responses act as additional heuristics, which bias the systematic processing to mitigate the detrimental effects of inconsistent reviews. Accordingly, this research recommends that e-commerce platforms and sellers should facilitate unbiased reputation systems to encourage truthful reviews to mitigate the adverse effects of inconsistent reviews and strengthen the intention to buy in case of consistent reviews.

Keywords: Supplementary reviews; Consistent reviews; Inconsistent reviews; Reviews truthfulness; Seller response; Heuristic-systematic model (HSM)