

Solicited Online Product Reviews

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Abstract

Online reviews are becoming increasingly important in consumer purchase decisions. Many retailers, hotels and other service providers actively solicit reviews, prompting customers to evaluate their purchases and experiences. Building on the reciprocity and equity theories, we propose that solicited reviews are different from organic reviews, identify conditions when soliciting reviews could be beneficial for the firms, and examine the underlying process. Using an actual e-retailer data, we find that customers who post solicited (vs. organic) reviews provide higher product ratings. However, the solicited reviews are shorter and perceived as less helpful. Further, in an experimental setting, we examine the effects of product experience and review type on product recommendations and ratings, perceived product quality and review characteristics. Interestingly, after a negative experience, consumers who post solicited (vs. organic) reviews perceive higher product quality and are more likely to recommend the products because of perceived higher firm effort. Our findings have important implications in outlining effective solicitation strategies.

Keywords: *Online reviews; Online recommendations; Solicited reviews*

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