

How do others feel about it? How emotional contagion via customer reviews influences consumer judgments

**Elisa Konya-Baumbach**  
University of Mannheim

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## **Abstract**

Consumers rely more and more on information provided online by other consumers, such as customer reviews. In doing so, they not only pay attention to mere facts, but also to emotional content. Across five consumer experiments, we first show that others' feelings toward an experience good as conveyed in online customer reviews influence consumer judgments of this experience good. Second, we demonstrate the existence of an emotional contagion effect in showing that the influence of others' feelings on consumer judgments is mediated via positive feelings of the consumers making these judgments. Third, we provide first evidence for this contagion effect to extend beyond experience goods to search goods. Lastly, we identify a boundary condition of the contagion effect in illustrating that the effect does not occur when customer reviews feature negative feelings. These results highlight the so far neglected indirect effect of emotional contagion via online customer reviews as an important antecedent of consumer judgments. Further, the findings provide managerial implications regarding the power of emotional expressions in marketing experience and search goods.

**Keywords:** *emotional contagion; feelings as information; customer reviews*

**Track:** Consumer Behaviour