

Seeing the Stars Clearly: Debiasing in Online Consumer Reviews Through a Third-Person Perspective

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Abstract

Consumers frequently rely on online consumer reviews, yet their evaluations often exhibit base-rate neglect—a cognitive bias in which aggregate product ratings are underutilized in favor of individual reviews. This research explores how social distance moderates this bias: consumers purchasing for themselves strongly favor individual reviews, while those buying for others rely more on aggregate ratings. Additionally, interventions such as prompting consumers to adopt a third-person perspective mitigate base-rate neglect by encouraging greater reliance on aggregate metrics. These findings are consistent across multiple studies, robust against alternative explanations, and highlight perceived risk as a central mechanism. The research offers practical strategies for digital platforms and marketers to enhance consumer decision-making and satisfaction.

Track: Consumer Behaviour