

Should manufacturers publish online reviews in their own online shops?

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Abstract

Online reviews are an increasingly important tool for online shops. However, the effectiveness of online reviews for manufacturers remains unclear. Relying on attribution theory and two experimental studies, we find two contrasting effects of online review publication in manufacturers' online shops. First, online reviews in manufacturers' online shops tend to be perceived as manipulated as manufacturers solely sell their own brands and thus have a commercial interest in endorsing their own products. Second, customers feel grateful towards a manufacturer's online shop for providing additional information in form of online reviews which has a positive effect on customer purchase behavior. The negative effect of online reviews on perceived manipulation is especially pronounced in case of extremely positive reviews and when a large amount of reviews is presented. Our results suggest that manufacturers should carefully decide whether and how to present online reviews in their online shops.

Keywords: *online reviews; manufacturers' online shops; experimental research*

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