Can Prepurchase Word of Mouth Affect Postpurchase Word of Mouth? The Role of Interpersonal Closeness in Online Review Sharing

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Abstract

Consumers often purchase new products on the basis of online reviews and recommendations from both friends and strangers. Previous studies have extensively explored the effects of word of mouth (WOM) on the prepurchase stage, but little is known about whether WOM from friends or strangers can alter consumers' postpurchase behavior. The authors propose that buying a new product on the basis of positive WOM from distant (vs. close) others increases consumers' intention to leave negative online reviews when the product fails to perform to their satisfaction. This is due to the perception that misleading WOM from distant others reaches more people, and consequently, consumers expect their reviews with truthful content to have a greater impact on helping others. Studies 1 and 2 provide experimental evidence for a main effect of interpersonal closeness on negative online review intention and a mediating effect of anticipated impact. Studies 2–4 also validate the underlying mechanism by showing the moderating role of self-construal level and product performance while ruling out the role of impression management. This research offers important practical implications for managing WOM and misinformation through different types of social ties.

Subject Areas: *Consumer Behaviour, Electronic Commerce and Internet Marketing*

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