

Beyond the Stars: Rethinking Online Ratings to Combat Predominantly Positive Online Ratings in E-Commerce

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Abstract

Research highlights the crucial role of online ratings in consumer decisions, assuming they guide informed choices. However, predominantly positive ratings on many e-commerce sites challenge this assumption. Employing range-frequency theory, we examine how consumers use such ratings to form consideration sets and explore the effectiveness of an alternative metric—the Review Score. Findings reveal that consumers adopt a binary approach: categorizing products into non-buyable vs. buyable. If ratings are predominantly positive, a compromise between the range and the frequency principle leads consumers to underrecognize the true frequency of ratings and consider more products as buyable. Hence, consumers face heightened choice difficulty, evidenced by lower concentration on the best products, more deferred choices, and increased price sensitivity. The Review Score helps mitigate these issues.

Keywords: Online Ratings, Consumer Decision-making, Skewed Distribution

Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media