

I don't like it! Examining the Impact of Product Disliking on Perceived Status

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Abstract:

This paper explores the role of expressing product disliking in shaping perceptions of status and consumer behavior. Drawing on research into the valence of word-of-mouth (WOM), we argue that the effect of negative WOM on consumer choice is influenced by social context and consumer expertise. Across four studies, we demonstrate that expressing dislike for a product can act as a subtle signal of status, leading others to mimic the disliker's choices when companions are present. Furthermore, only during solo consumption, consumer expertise plays a moderating role, with less knowledgeable consumers being especially sensitive to the implications of product liking. These findings go beyond the negativity effect, highlighting product disliking as a powerful status signal in consumer decision-making.

Keywords: status signaling; impression management; WOM

Track: consumer behavior