

The Impact of Facial Emojis in Consumer Reviews: Enhancement or Backfire?

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Abstract

The current study explores the enhancement vs. backfire effects of facial emojis on customer reviews on perceived review helpfulness. Based on the EASI (Emotions as Social Information) theory, we hypothesize that reviews with facial emojis are perceived as more helpful for hedonic products due to their emotional resonance but may decrease perceived helpfulness for utilitarian products by inducing mistrust. Using a 2 (product type: hedonic vs. utilitarian) \times 2 (review type: with emojis vs. verbal-only) between-subjects experimental design, we investigate participants' responses to reviews for a hedonic (ice cream) and a utilitarian (microwave) product. We expect that product type moderates the relationship between emojis and review helpfulness, mediated by emotional arousal and mistrust. The results contribute to the literature on online reviews and emotional content, offering actionable insights for digital marketers and platforms on optimizing review strategies based on product characteristics.

Keywords: Online consumer reviews, Emotional contents, Facial emojis

Track: Digital Marketing and Social Media