

Online Product Reviews: The Effect of Information Sources on Consumer Trust and Behaviour

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Cite as:

Schunck Josiane, Zambaldi Felipe, Guissoni Leandro, Ponchio Mateus (2025), Online Product Reviews: The Effect of Information Sources on Consumer Trust and Behaviour. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 54th, (125981)

Paper from the 54th Annual EMAC Conference, Madrid, Spain, May 25-30, 2025



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Abstract:

This research examines how trust in online product reviews varies across three types of sources—experts, consumers, and virtual assistants—and how these information sources influence consumer behaviours. Grounded in Source Credibility Theory, the study includes four experiments: two conducted in laboratory settings and two in real-world contexts using a Brazilian e-commerce platform. The findings reveal that specialists consistently outperform other sources in trust dimensions (competence, benevolence, and integrity) and engagement metrics, with unpaid specialists being perceived as more benevolent than their paid counterparts. Click-through rates favoured unpaid specialists, emphasising the importance of perceived altruism in building trust. These results highlight the role of credible review systems in enhancing consumer engagement and contribute to trust literature while offering actionable insights for optimising e-commerce strategies.

Keywords: online product reviews, consumer trust, source credibility

Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media