

Word-of-Mouth in the Digital Marketplace: Selection, Content, and Misinformation

Ann-Kathrin Polenz

University of Mannheim

Leif Brandes

University of Lucerne

Gizem Ceylan

Fisher College of Business, The Ohio State University

David Kusterer

Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Cite as:

Polenz Ann-Kathrin, Brandes Leif, Ceylan Gizem, Kusterer David (2026), Word-of-Mouth in the Digital Marketplace: Selection, Content, and Misinformation. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 55th, (132639)

Paper from the 55th Annual EMAC Conference, Bath, United Kingdom, June 2-5, 2026



Word-of-Mouth in the Digital Marketplace: Selection, Content, and Misinformation

Session Abstract

This session provides an integrated understanding of how digital word-of-mouth emerges, what content consumers contribute, and how misinformation distorts market outcomes. Our goal is to connect reviewer selection, content generation, and downstream market effects into a single research conversation. By bringing together diverse theoretical lenses and empirical approaches, we contribute toward a unified framework for the information production process in online marketplaces. Although online reviews have been widely studied, existing work typically examines only one part of the review ecosystem. Our session bridges these components by integrating (1) the selection of which consumers choose to contribute reviews, (2) the informational content they provide, and (3) the distortions introduced by misinformation such as fake reviews. This holistic perspective highlights how online feedback systems function and where they break down.

The four papers span consumer psychology, econometrics, digital platform design, text analysis, and prototype market modeling. Because of this conceptual and methodological breadth, no competitive track adequately accommodates the session. Distributing the papers across sessions would undermine the cross-paper insights and the integrated view of review selection, content, and misinformation that the session is designed to generate. The topics are also highly relevant for platforms, marketers, consumers, and policymakers seeking to understand what gets shared online and how this shapes the informativeness of digital feedback systems.

The session proceeds along the full information pipeline. Two talks examine the selection process that determines which experiences are reported to review platforms. Ann-Kathrin Polenz investigates review abandonment as a function of transaction experience and the level of detail elicited by the platform. Leif Brandes analyzes whether consumers are more likely to report on shared versus individual consumption experiences. The third talk, by Gizem Ceylan, examines multimodal reviews and asks whether photos substitute for textual content or whether text creates redundancy. The final talk, by David Kusterer, explores how fake reviews affect market efficiency, how these effects vary with competitive intensity, and how misinformation erodes the informativeness of review systems.