

The Impact of Fake Reviews of Online Goods on Consumers

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Abstract. The fake product reviews on the Internet have brought great obstacles to consumers to make the right purchase decision. Fake reviews reduce the goodwill of e-commerce platforms and harm the interests of most merchants on the platforms. The appearance of fake reviews is easy to mislead consumers to make wrong decisions. Therefore, the research and identification of fake comments are urgent and significant. This paper will detailed discussion and analyze the impact of fake reviews on consumers from the perspective of the formation of consumers' purchase decisions. The four dimensions are demand cognition, looking for alternative plans, purchase decisions, and purchase behavior. Fake reviews may stimulate consumers' purchase desire by changing their demand perception. When evaluating alternative plans, they are affected by the reputation of merchants, etc., and fake reviews significantly affect the purchase decision. Consumers may make positive or negative comments after a purchase. When reviewers do not have expectations for the goods they receive, they become distrustful of the business and the platform, and they give emotionally negative reviews. If satisfied, positive publicity feedback will be given. This paper conducts literature and case studies on the impact of poor information on consumers caused by artificial evaluations and the prevention and control of fake reviews. The author will analyze the reasons for the occurrence of false comments and discuss how to prevent the occurrence of false information to the maximum extent, including the establishment of reward and punishment mechanisms, innovating the detection technology of fake commodity reviews to avoid unfair competition, and strengthening the control of real-name information on the Internet.

Keywords: False review; consumer choice; purchase decision-making; effect.

1. Introduction

Using fragmented time to search for information and read online reviews has become a habit of consumers before they choose and experience goods and services. Online product reviews have become a key factor influencing consumers' purchasing decisions [1]. In order to pursue economic benefits and network reputation, merchants will denigrate or tout some goods or services through various means, which seriously affects the market order. Although the reputation system has a partial effect on reducing the information gap between buyers and sellers and can help hesitant consumers choose trustworthy merchants. However, for their own interests, many merchants manipulate comments to attract more consumers by controlling public opinion information. There are a large number of Fake reviews created by copying and pasting on the Internet, and it is also common to interfere with comments with elaborate text and text, which directly affects the effectiveness of the system for users to refer to when making decisions. With the expansion of Taobao's scale and the increase in the number of users, Taobao has changed from a single C2C online market to a comprehensive retail circle including C2C, group buying, distribution, auction and other e-commerce models. It has become one of the world's e-commerce trading platforms in China with a high complaint rate often contradicting the high praise rate. E-commerce sites such as Taobao and Tmall have also acknowledged the existence of fake reviews, and services dedicated to helping merchants improve their reputation have become a huge industry. Through empirical research. In recent research fields with fake reviews as the theme, most of the research focuses on the methods of detecting fake reviews, the motivation for publishing fake reviews, and the influence of fake reviews on consumers' purchase decisions. By analyzing the formation process of consumers' purchase behavior, this paper explores the positive or negative impact of false comments with certain subjective color and beautification degrees on consumers and gives corresponding satisfied or dissatisfied feedback after the purchase behavior. Merchants and platforms employ writers and photographers on social media

platforms to make false publicity for them and attach the label of Internet celebrity artificially, which misleads others and greatly reduces the credibility of online word-of-mouth. This paper further advocates that the regulatory authorities and platforms should promptly deal with such deceptive behavior, while consumers themselves should resist the temptation of small favors.

2. Fake Comments

2.1 Definition of Fake Review

Fake online commodity reviews refer to the fact that merchants or individuals advocate or slander the goods or services out of practice when writing the review content, and interfere with the purchasing decisions of other consumers through false reviews so that the merchants can win a better market reputation and have a competitive advantage over other similar products or services [2]. Including comments that are not true, whose authenticity cannot be determined and are not related to the product. As commodity reviews play a very important role in merchants' word-of-mouth, unreal high or low comments issued by merchants in order to promote products and enhance their own reputation and sales volume seriously interfere with consumers' purchasing decisions and the platform's opinion mining system. This kind of unrealistic advocacy or slander of a product or service is also called a fraudulent comment or misrepresentation. For example, merchants encourage consumers to give 5-star reviews by giving cash back or gift vouchers. Although consumers may not be satisfied with the product, they choose not to care about it for convenience or benefit and eventually make a false evaluation that cannot reflect the real quality of the product. The adoption of sales promotion means such as "cash rebate for good reviews", "coupon for good reviews" and "lucky draw for good reviews" has become one of the important means for network businesses to rapidly improve their online reputation, drown negative reviews and increase sales [3]. In this paper, it is believed that false comments are untrue comments on goods or services made by bad merchants and consumers in pursuit of economic benefits, which can affect the consumption decisions of many customers by disrupting the normal order of the market.

In order to ensure the fairness of market competition, China has issued the Anti-Unfair Competition Law to maintain the fair conduct of market transactions. Article 20 of the law stipulates: Where a business operator, in violation of the provisions of Article 8 of this Law, Engaging in false and misleading commercial publicity of the commodities sold in commercial activities that are inconsistent with the actual content or helping other businesses operators to engage in false and misleading commercial publicity to mislead customers or consumers by means of unfair competition by organizing false transactions in violation of the principle of good faith, The supervision and inspection department with the power to exercise the relevant functions and powers shall order the cessation of the act in violation of the provisions of the law and impose a fine of not less than 200,000 yuan but not more than one million yuan. If the circumstances are serious, a fine of not less than one million yuan but not more than two million yuan shall be imposed, and the business license shall be revoked for this violation of recognized commercial principles.

Consumer purchasing behavior refers to all consumption-related personal behaviors taken by consumers in order to obtain, use and dispose of consumer goods or services. It includes the formation of demand motivation, the occurrence of purchase behavior and the post-purchase feeling, as well as the psychological activities, physiological activities and other substantive activities displayed in the process of purchase or consumption. In fact, the behavior of consumers around the purchase of means of living is more complex, which will be explored in this article. Consumers have different behaviors on different occasions when buying different types of products. In this paper, consumers' purchasing behavior is divided into four stages, which are demand cognition, looking for alternatives, purchase decision and purchase behavior, to explore the impact of fake reviews on consumers one by one, finally give practical suggestions on the management of false reviews.

3. The Impact of Fake Reviews on Consumers' Purchasing Decisions

3.1 Consumer Demand Perception

It refers to the individuals who purchase various products and services for the purpose of personal consumption and use or the individual users of the final products. They usually choose the commodities they think are worth buying and can provide according to their need to be willing and able to buy a specific commodity at various possible prices and their psychological inclination to know a certain thing or engage in a certain activity in a certain period. The judgment of potential demand inclination includes the tradeoff between product functionality and brand emotional value. Generally speaking, when we choose a product, the product we choose may not be the best among similar products in terms of value. Because consumers cannot become an expert in each category to study and test whether it can achieve its real cost performance, consumers make product decisions based on the brand impression related to the product and the word-of-mouth of consumers. These impressions come from the cognition of the brand -- the brand's usage memory, advertising, reliability, quality trust, reputation, value identification, etc. After reading the fake comments, they have the value identification of a product, so they unconsciously exclude or even deny other brands, and naturally defend the approved product psychologically. The faster selection of products under the trust can effectively reduce the cost of searching and selecting products for consumers, but with the information asymmetry and the limited information that consumers have, it is inevitable that there will be the phenomenon of over-exaggerating and beautifying products, and eventually fall into the well-prepared trap.

In the Internet era, some "water army" live in different parts of the country, use the network IP of different cities, under the inspiration of brands or marketing companies, around the same topic to express their opinions or forward promotion, forming false marketing, malicious marketing. False comments come from the commercial realization pressure of Internet platforms. It is difficult to achieve timely, two-way and high-stickiness interaction between products and users with simple comments, recommendations and guidelines. Therefore, all platforms strive to realize transformation through community sharing and gradually embark on the realization road of social e-commerce. Recreational maneuvers at the regulatory margins often fail to make consumers wary. In the era of the Internet celebrity economy, the fan effect has become an important element in the field of the market economy. A large number of bloggers under the content cooperative organizations of the platform realize realization through group behavior to attract fans and thus drive product sales. For example, on the Little Red Book little social media platform, it is widely believed that Internet celebrities lead the fashion trend, and the pursuit of beauty makes fans follow them to buy the same style, and they will choose certain brands because of a certain Internet celebrity. After seeing the needs of fans, merchants quickly attract fans to buy through corresponding products and services, thus stimulating consumption. Consumers may not have the demand for such goods, but frenzied marketing induces the desire and demand. Merchants have insight into the psychological activities of consumers, and Advertising media should be used to disseminate information about commodities or services to consumers or users, or in a certain business environment, appropriate methods and skills should be adopted to publicize the brand of enterprises' products and guide potential customers to buy products or services, so as to arouse consumers' attention and emphasis on commodities and promote their purchasing behaviors. Because of the "network water army", it has a strong concealment and group operation, which poses a severe challenge to consumer discrimination.

3.2 Evaluate Alternatives

The era of big data and information technology, faced with a large number of merchants and limited consumption time, consumers usually pay attention to the credit level of the merchant and other consumers' evaluation of the merchant and the commodity when choosing consumption objects and commodities, or choose the merchant for experience according to the recommendation list set by the platform. The brushing behavior of goods will lead to the misunderstanding of the public about

the real operation of the store and eventually affect the purchasing behavior of consumers. The "criteria of satisfaction" should be met in the search process. In actual decision-making, it is impossible to choose the optimal scheme. This is because the decision-maker is restricted by people, money, materials and time in the process of decision-making, and it is impossible to find all the schemes. In addition, it is difficult to find a comprehensive standard to judge the optimal of multiple schemes. Therefore, in the actual process, it is often to find a number of satisfactory schemes that all the objectives meet the requirements and then choose the best.

In the process of online shopping, consumers tend to make an overall review of the shop seller before making a decision, including the reputation of the seller and the overall number of reviews of the shop. On the one hand, according to the rules of credit score, the higher the credit level of the seller, the higher the favorable rate of the buyer for the store's products, and the easier for the buyer to trust the seller [4, 5]. On the other hand, out of conformity and risk avoidance, people are always more likely to choose products that attract more attention. Many studies have shown that the number of reviews reflects the popularity of an item and has a significant positive impact on the usefulness, trustworthiness and purchase intention of online reviews [6, 7].

3.3 Purchase Decisions

False reviews have some positive effects. Firstly, they save consumers' decision-making time before purchase, and secondly, they achieve psychological balance when consumers seek approval after purchase. Whether a review can bring effective information is a major function of online review. Whether it can provide consumers with comprehensive and objective product information is a key factor to determine whether consumers can have purchase intention. If consumers cannot understand all the features of the product, the purchase intention cannot be generated, and the sales volume of the product cannot be improved [8]. In the context of online shopping, consumers can only judge the product description and comments and finally decide whether to buy it. However, the product description only gives basic information such as the material and size of the product, and the picture is also refined. For consumers, just look at the product description, not necessarily can make a judgment. At this point, reviews become auxiliary information, providing a reference for consumers. Merchants bought fake reviews; content quality is higher. The comments are detailed and comprehensive, and the seller shows rich reference materials. The seller shows different scenes, different angles, and different looks and figures are used as the supplement to the detailed picture of the products, which undoubtedly provides consumers with a large number of auxiliary information for reference. When consumers buy goods with small brand differences, there is less information between different brands, and they focus more on whether the price of the brand is reasonable and favorable, whether the purchase time and place are convenient, and the time from the purchase motivation to the purchase decision is short. However, compared with complex purchasing behaviors, consumers are more likely to regret due to product defects or other superior brands. In order to pursue psychological balance, consumers begin to seek information that is favorable to the brand they have purchased, and the purchase choice is still correct. For this kind of purchase behavior, fake reviews often through many channels to carry out business activities, and sales behavior in the process of providing beneficial information to the enterprise and products, so that consumers believe that their purchase decisions are correct, producing psychological support.

3.4 Purchase Behavior

Whether an enterprise can run for a long time depends on "fake reviews" is far from enough. Quality is always the key to winning. The "fan effect" can appeal to some people. An enterprise with a good business plan should make use of the mass base accumulated by "fake reviews" to first occupy a part of the market, and then attract more people to buy through its quality, unique technology and design, so as to further occupy the market. People's enthusiasm will not last long, and the enthusiasm for a product will soon burn out. The power of "fake reviews" alone cannot guarantee that the enterprise can occupy the market share for a long time. Even if an enterprise can change its

spokespersons or hire more spokespersons, funding, energy and communication are all problems. After the degree of trust in the platform declines, comments are not a relatively desirable measurement standard, and the operating profits obtained by enterprises with false comments cannot be guaranteed. Therefore, relying on lies to gain long-term profit is not advisable, short-term profit is only temporary. Once consumers perceive that they are being cheated, they will stop buying and tend to give emotionally bad reviews.

4. Suggestions

From the perspective of competition, market practitioners will find that the comment manipulation strategy has fallen into the "prisoner's dilemma". If they do not follow their competitors to adopt the comment manipulation strategy, it will be difficult to maintain basic competitiveness in the market. From the perspective of consumers, they often distrust platforms because they cannot judge the authenticity of reviews subjectively [9]. Therefore, it is necessary to cut off the production chain of false praise and return the evaluation to objective and true. In the future, the governance of fake reviews needs to be more about governance than prevention [10]. This requires a combination of measures. First, to better protect online consumers, we should consider amending the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Consumers again. In particular, we should regulate the online consumption of new forms of business, such as live broadcast marketing and community group buying. Second, accelerate the implementation of the small-amount lawsuit system, and simplify the dispute-handling procedure. Reduce the time, economic and human costs spent by every consumer in the process of protecting their rights, and improve the efficiency of dispute handling caused by the contradiction between economic rights and economic obligations between the subjects of economic and legal relations. Third, consumers should also take active responsibility to avoid becoming the "accomplices" of the merchants to create false praise.

5. Conclusion

The platform is connected to tens of millions of small, medium, and micro market players at one end, and hundreds of millions of consumers and new forms of employment at the other. The steady and healthy development of the platform economy is conducive to promoting high-quality economic development and meeting consumer demand. This paper first expounds on the definition of fake reviews and analyzes their positive and negative impacts on consumers. It divides consumer buying behavior into four stages, namely demand cognition, seeking alternative plans, purchase decision, and purchase behavior. Fake reviews can stimulate consumer spending and improve efficiency in decision-making, but if the quality of the product does not meet expectations, consumers will give emotional and negative feedback. Finally, it gives three suggestions on managing fake reviews and maintaining the credibility of online consumption platforms, so as to achieve the purpose of truly mining the potential value of consumer review data.

This study theoretically supplements and improves the existing research on the impact of online user reviews on consumer purchasing decisions, broadens the research horizon of consumer decision-making, and has guiding significance for online consumer purchasing and the operation and management of e-commerce platforms. This paper does not cover the detection methods of fake reviews but focuses on supervision and influence. Future research could further explore the governance effects of different regulatory approaches on fake reviews.

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