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**THE CAUSE AND INFLUENCE OF ONLINE COMMODITY  
REVIEW DEVIATION**

Bachelor's thesis

Programme: International Business and Administration, specialisation Marketing

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the paper independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors has been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading. The document length is 5479 words from the introduction to the end of conclusion.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This bachelor thesis study determines the deviations causing effects in commodity reviews during online shopping. Consumers cannot guarantee the quality of goods in online shopping. The way only gets information about goods quality directly is reading online product reviews. The author takes Taobao, China's largest online shopping site, as an example. Study the three primary actors that influence online product reviews: websites, merchants and consumers. The results show that there are deviations in online product reviews. The author suggests improving the supervision of the selling web-platform, motivate the merchants to maintain a good reputation, and stimulate consumers to maintain the objectivity.

Keywords: Online product reviews, consumer trust, consumer purchasing decisions

## **INTRODUCTION**

As an emerging shopping method, online shopping has developed rapidly in recent years. Because of convenience, speed, and choice, the advantages are substantial. The number of online shoppers has proliferated, and the scale of online retail enterprises has continued to expand, creating a suitable environment for the development of e-commerce. The drawbacks are also revealed. In particular, the falsity in the network makes it difficult for consumers to obtain the accurate quality information of the goods. A common way to solve this problem is to refer to online product reviews from other buyers in the review area. However, there are deviations in online product reviews, and everyone questions review authenticities and objectivity. If online reviews fail to convey the correct perception of the vast majority of consumers and the objective quality of the goods, it will increase the risk for other consumers to make the wrong purchase decisions.

The aim of this bachelor's thesis will discuss the impact of reviews deviation. The three perspectives of the consumer, seller, E-commerce platform, were separately studied. Research questions:

1. What causes the deviation of the online shopping review? (analyzed from website platform, seller, consumer)
2. What is the impact of the bias on the purchase of goods by consumers?

The case seeks to the compilation of literature and theories. We take Taobao as an example to collect product review data, analyze online shopping sites and sellers, and conduct a questionnaire study on consumers behavior. We study the causes and effects of online commodity review bias through the methods of data analysis.

In Chapter 1, We provide a brief overview of previous academic attitudes toward online product review research in the background information for online shopping. A comprehensive overview of research in communication and consumer behavior theory is present. The definition of online reviews is explaining.

In Chapter 2, The methodology is presented in order to research questions from consumers, seller, and E-commerce platforms to give a questionnaire.

In Chapter 3, Collect survey results. Reliability and validity studies of received data prepare for the next study of the factors that influence the bias of online product reviews.

In Chapter 4, I thorough analysis, and the following discussion of the data takes place. It investigates and analyses the deviation of online products reviews. discussion online shopping reviews participants

Finally, the research conclusions of this paper are drawn from the research of the several above four chapters. At the same time, we propose countermeasures to help websites, consumers, and sellers to overcome their shortcomings, correct the bias of reviews and maintain a pleasant trading environment.

# **1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & BACKGROUND**

In order to analyze the deviation of online product reviews, this thesis introduced an online shopping background, and offer theories are word of mouth, consumer behavior models and Theory of Reasoned Action. Theories based on word of mouth are helpful in the introduction of product reviews. Consumer behavior models and the theory of reasoned action explain consumer motivations for shopping. This theory is useful for studying the deviation of product reviews.

## **1.1. Background of online shopping**

After years of rapid development, e-commerce has almost hanged everything you want to buy online, and its power has penetrated every aspect of life. At the same time, online complaints have also increased. According to data from internationally renowned research firm E-marketer, global online retail transactions are expected to exceed \$4 trillion by 2020. The rapid development of e-commerce has not only led to economic growth but also increased the derivatives of e-commerce activities - online product reviews. Online product reviews are consumer reviews of goods or services posted on the web. It is a form of Internet word of mouth. Consumers publish online product reviews are objective. In recent years, the authenticity of online product reviews has received much attention. Many false and low-quality reports give consumers a failed shopping experience. Promote the development of network economic activities to guide consumers' shopping behavior correctly. This thesis examines the influencing factors of online product reviews.

## **1.2. Word Of Mouth**

Word Of Mouth (WOM) is an ancient means of information dissemination. When informationization is underdeveloped, most of the information dissemination and collection done by word of mouth. The American Word Of Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA) has explained the basic concept of WOM involved: word-of-mouth refers to the creation or dissemination of marketing information by a consumer to another consumer. In the Internet age,

Internet WOM and traditional WOM are the same in concept, but they are significantly unique. This part of the thesis will define of word-of-mouth and internet word-of-mouth, compare the differences between them.

### **Word Of Mouth Definition**

The research on word-of-mouth comes from an experiment by Arndt, which aims to influence the short-term sales of products on the product's dialogue and finds the promotion of new products. Word of mouth is an informal, non-commercial communication between customers. And the discussion of this information can be positive or negative (Arndt, 1967). With the development of the Internet and the advancement of information technology, the interaction between consumers has gradually increased. Many scholars have differently defined the internet word of mouth. WOM intentions imply potential efforts to exchange direct and indirect experiences with products and services in a casual manner (Westbrook, 1987)

In the era of high Internet popularity and information technology advancement, the Internet has become the leading platform for consumers to share opinions. The virtual interaction between people is rapidly spreading, and the scope and depth of influence are expanding. From a marketing and management perspective, Stauss (1997,2000) discusses the business opportunities and threats due to the increase in consumer network exchanges brought about; this is the first study on Internet Word of Mouth (IWOM). Stauss said that with the rapid growth of the Internet, consumers would have the opportunity to communicate their perceived quality of service globally. The non-commercial communication between consumers using online media is Internet word of mouth. Chatterjee (2001) defines Internet word-of-mouth as being done through communication platforms such as bulletin boards system or chats between individuals (such as Facebook and other online media) and consumers about brands, products, services, and suppliers. Henning-Thurau and Walsh (2003, 2004) further elaborated that the Internet can help consumers get word-of-mouth information about products or services, and that is not only available from friends, acquaintances, or colleagues as a traditional review. Internet word-of-mouth possible for consumers to get help from “strangers” with relevant experience and knowledge. And the Internet Word of Mouth is a collection of all positive and negative statements from potential, actual, or prior customers who had experience with the product or merchant. Chung et al. (2008) argue that the most significant difference between IWOM and traditional WOM is that superior to physical limitations, and a small number of consumer opinions with product-related experience can be spread globally.



## **Word Of Mouth Characteristic**

Internet word of mouth is inheriting the characteristics of the Internet. It is more influential due to its speed, convenience, one-to-many, and no face-to-face. This thesis summarizes several prominent features of Internet Word of Mouth:

features of Internet Word of Mouth:

i. Non-time and regional restrictions

The use of the Internet breaks the limits of geography and time. Consumers can publish experiences about consumption at any time and any place. Consumers can exchange information through the online platform around the world. On the one hand, this dramatically reduces the cost of information dissemination of enterprises or products. On the other hand, it can suppress the spread of counterfeit products and provide appropriate protection for consumers.

ii. Anonymity of information exchange

In the virtual cyberspace, it is difficult to determine the true identity of the information publisher, and the information receiver sees the virtual identity, which forms the anonymity of the Internet word of mouth.

iii. The big of information and second-spread

Internet word of mouth cost is shallow. Customers can publish a consumption experience at any time and anywhere you want, which has an unprecedented scale in terms of online word of mouth. At the same time, for any Internet user, word-of-mouth can be easily "re-propagated" or "second-spread" Thanks to the easy copy and transmission on the internet, based on network communication, can spread to a broader range at geometric exponential speed.

## **1.3 Consumer Behavior Models**

Consumer behavior has always been the focus of scholars in many disciplines, such as economics, psychology, sociology, and marketing. The research on consumer behavior in the market foundation of merchant marketing activities and the guidance of consumer science consumption.

For consumer behaviour, Nicosia (1966) considers it to be a purchase and is not intend for resale. Schiffinan and Kanuk (1991) argue that consumer behavior is not only a purchase behavior, also a search for and evaluation of products or services. Engel and Blackwell (1993) supplement the definition of consumer behavior, which, in addition to these actions of acquiring, using, and disposing of consumer goods or services, includes decision processes that occur before or after these actions. Solomon (1998) does not limit consumer behavior to individuals but also includes

the team. He believes that consumer behavior is the process by which consumers choose, consume, and dispose of products, services, experiences, and plans to satisfy their desires and demand.

This study aims to explore the impact of Internet Word of Mouth on consumer behavior in different stages of consumer decision-making. Therefore, this study defines consumer behavior as determine demand, search for relevant information, evaluate purchase plans, make purchase decisions, and make purchases.

### **Nicosia models:**

Nicosia proposed this model in the book Consumer Decision Process(1966), which divided the consumer's purchasing decision behavior into a four-stage:

i. Information transfer.

Consumers internalize the information about the products provided by the merchants to form and attitude.

ii. Survey evaluation.

Consumers are interested in the merchant's products or services, and then begin to search for information as an evaluation criterion, which in turn generates a buying motivation.

iii. Purchase behaviour.

Consumers turn their buying motives into buying behaviors, and this process is still affected by the merchants' brand.

iv. Consumption and feedback.

Consumers buy products or services and leave feedback on them. Consumers have an impact on themselves next purchase behavior based on experience and evaluation. At the same time, merchants will adjust sales strategies based on feedback from consumers.

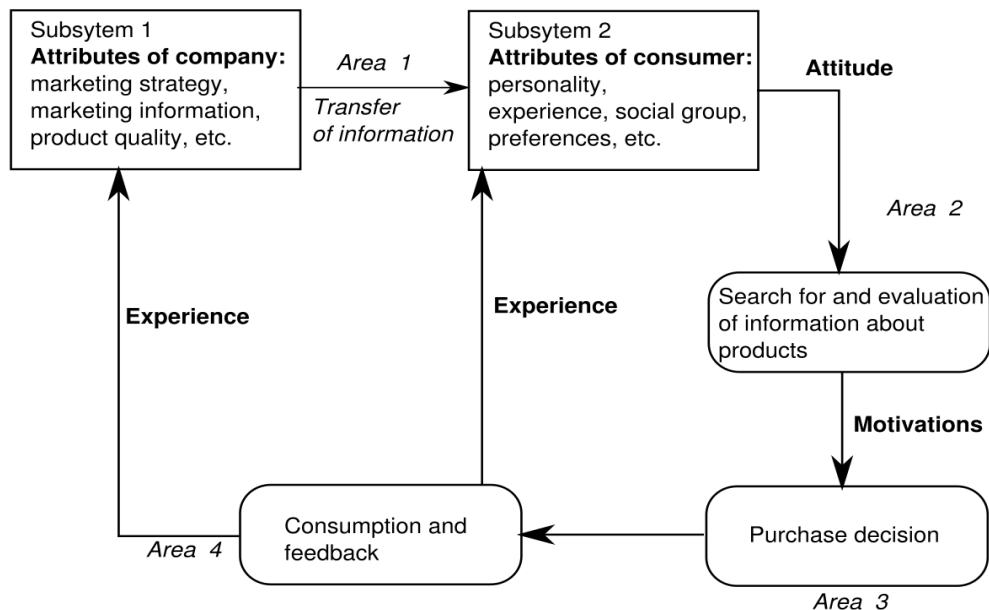


Figure 1.1. Nicosia models:

Source Nicosia, J.Y. & Francesco, R.G. (1966) *Consumer Decision Process: Marketing and Advertising Implications*.

### Howard-Sheth mode

The “Howard-Shethian model” was proposed by Howard in 1963. After revision with Sheth, it was officially presented in the book. *The Theory of Buyer Behaviour* (1969). According to the Howard-Sheth model of consumer behavior, there are four primary variables:

iv. Input:

It includes three kinds of stimuli: significant, symbol, and society. The quality and price of products generate significant stimuli; symbolic stimuli are stimuli generated by pictures, texts, etc. transmitted by the media, sales assistants, etc.; social stimuli are from families, social classes, related groups, product-related stimuli, and so forth.

v. External variables:

It is an external factor that influences the purchase decision process, such as culture, time pressure, religion, and financial status.

vi. Perceptual and Learning Constructs:

The consumers will form an impression after accepting the input and the external variables. Form an impact in the consumer consciousness, and combine the consumer's motivation, confidence, and other factors to generate will. The input factor is also a process of mental activity, including the process of perception and the process of learning. Perception is the process of making purchase decisions; learning is the process of forming the concept.

vii. Output:

It is the answer to Perceptual and Learning Constructs. Consumers react to the variables, such as attention, brand understanding, attitudes, and intentions. The final decision influences on purchase behavior

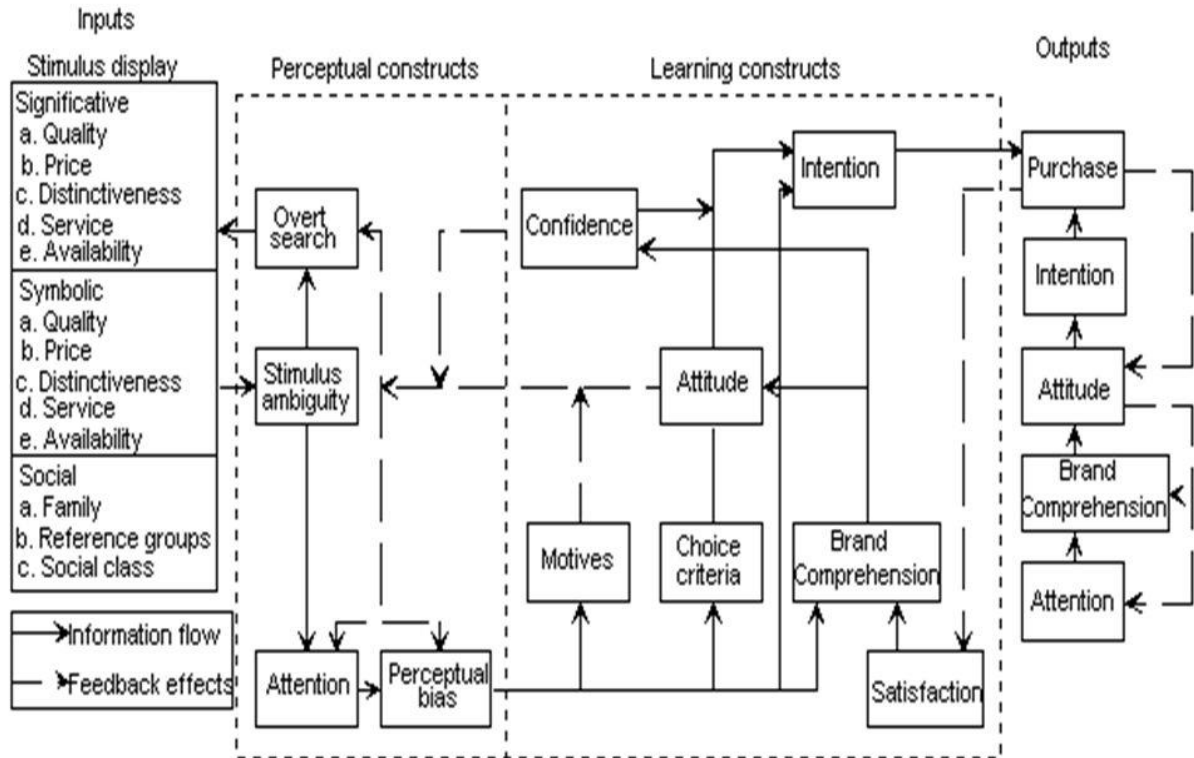


Figure 1.2 Howard-Sheth mode

Source Howard, J. A., Sheth, J. N. (1969) The Theory of Buyer Behavior. New York: John Wiles & Sons, Inc.

**E.B.M mode**

In 1968, Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell proposed the E.B.K model. After that, it has been revised and changed several times. In 1990, Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard jointly reviewed it to the E.B.M model. The model emphasizes the consumer purchasing decision process in five phases:

1. Problem Recognition:

When consumers are stimulated by outside and inside, they realize that there is a difference between the actual and expected conditions, and they have a problem awareness.

2. Information Search:

When consumers perceive problems, they enter the information search phase. Information search includes internal search and external search. Consumers can use existing information

or past buying experience, as well as mass media, salespeople, friends, and family to seek information.

3. Evaluation of Alternatives:

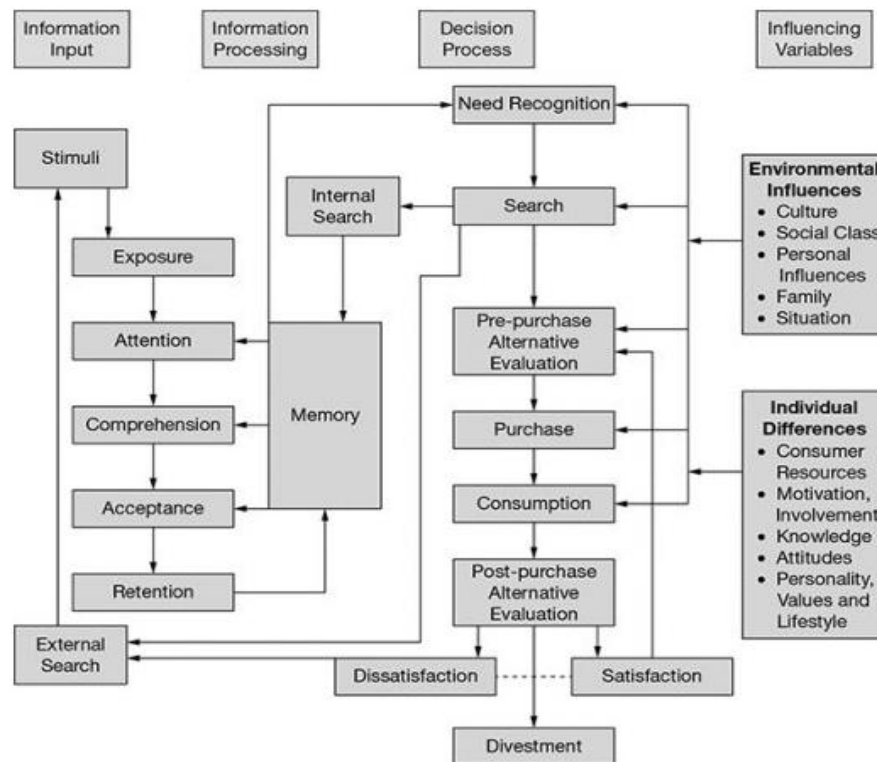
Consumers derive their assessment criteria based on the information search to compare various possible choices and generate preferences for options. Among them, the formation of assessment criteria is influenced by personal and environmental factors.

4. Purchase Decision:

Consumers choose the best solution based on the results of the scheme evaluation and generate purchases. In this process, consumers may be affected by third-party attitudes such as other consumers and some unexpected factors such as out of stock.

5. Post Purchase Behaviour:

After the consumer buys the product, he forms a perception of the product. If the product can exceed expectations of a consumer, the chances of the consumer's second purchase will increase, and the loyalty of the brand will be enhanced; if the product is below consumers' expectations, it will lead to the presence of consumer complaints and dissatisfaction.



The 'Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (EBM)' Model

Figure 1.3 E.M.B Mode

Source: Engel, J.F.Blackwell, R.D, Miniard, P.W., (1995) Consumer Behavior, 8th edition, N.Y.: Dryden Press, Vol, 20-35.

Throughout the process, consumers may be affected by other factors, such as environmental factors such as culture, social class, family, motivation, attitude, lifestyle, and other individual factors. We can see that Nicosia believes that consumers form an attitude based on the information provided by the manufacturer and in this attitude, further search for relevant information to generate purchase motives, and finally purchasing decisions. The Nicosia model emphasizes the exchange of information between a seller and consumers, and this communication is two-way. Therefore, manufacturers can adjust their marketing strategies based on feedback from consumers, thus actively changing consumer behavior.

The Howard-Sheth model emphasizes consumer decision making based on customer satisfaction. Consumers form a sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction by comparing the investment and return. The consumer thus decides on purchase behavior.

The E.B.M model regards the consumer's purchasing decision as a problem-solving process. He believes that the collection and evaluation of the information is a very important aspect of consumer behavior and that consumer behavior is an ongoing cycle of continuous feedback.

#### **1.4 Theory of Reasoned Action**

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) is an influential factor in personal behavior proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen in 1975. The author points out that individual behavior is influenced by behavioral intentions, while attitudes toward behavior and subjective norms influence individual behavioral intention. Individual attitudes can be seen as people's emotional beliefs about specific behaviors. Subjective norms are also one of the critical determinants of behavioral intention and refer to the way perceptions of relevant groups or individuals such as family members, friends, and peers may affect one's performance of the behavior. Both of them affect the individual's behavioral intentions and the final behavioral changes.

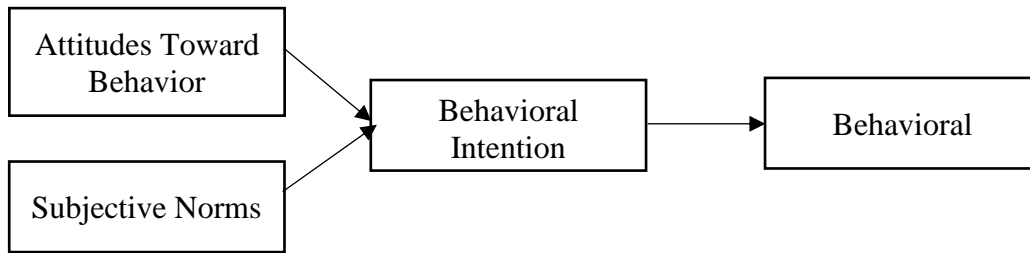


Figure 1.4 The Theory of Reasoned Action

Source: Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975) *Belief, Attitude, Intention, and Behavior: An Introduction to Theory and Research*.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was proposed by Icek Ajzen (1991). TPB is based on the development of rational behavior theory. The theory holds that behavioral intentions influence behavior. Behavioral intentions are influenced by behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Perceived behavioral control is an individual's perceived ease or difficulty of performing a particular behavior. These factors influence personal attitude beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs.

The model of planned behavior theory shown in the figure. In this model, social influence is manifested through normative beliefs and subjective norms. It is the individual's behavioral intentions that are influenced by society and others. Social impact can be measured by evaluating different social groups. Most models observe behavior from a personal cognitive perspective, while the planned behavior model incorporates social impact into the system. Considering that people cannot be separated from the group, they are often influenced by social networks and organizations, so the social impact is a perspective worth exploring.

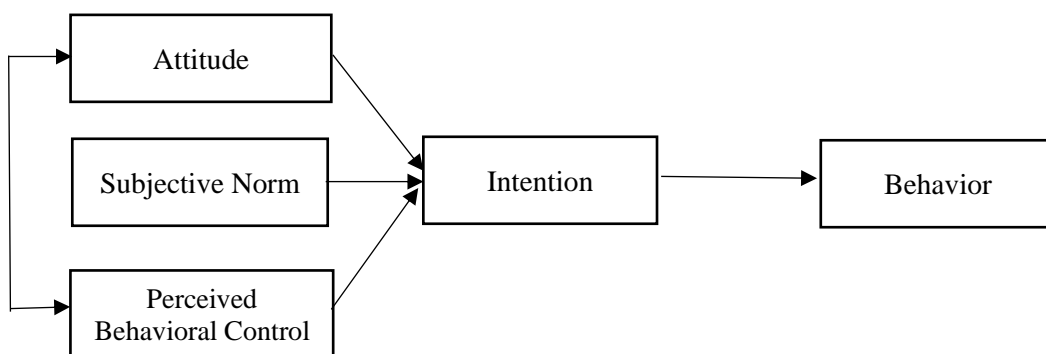


Figure 1.5 The Theory of Planned Behavior

Source: Ajzen, Icek (1991). "The theory of planned behavior" *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This chapter verifies and analyzes the influencing factors of online product review information to understand the method of online product review information dissemination. This is the basis and premise of proposing a strategy for intelligent online product review quality optimization. The author analyzes the relationship between various influencing factors based on the research on the impact of online commodity reviews, identifies the relationship between the influencing factors and propose targeted issues. A survey through questionnaires was conducted to lay the foundation for further analysis.

### **2.1. Research instrument**

This thesis uses the method of questionnaires to research the influencing factors of online product reviews. The Statistical Society of London invented the questionnaire by the Statistical Society of London in 1838. In order to collect accurate information, the questionnaire was formulated in English and translated into Chinese. it can be found in the Appendix.

This questionnaire divided into two parts: The first part helps to understand the necessary information of the survey object. There are three questions related to the gender, age and online shopping frequency of the respondents. The author understands the characteristics of the interviewee from a macro perspective. The second part proposes the measurement of problems based on the consumer, merchant, and e-commerce platforms and is also a core part of the questionnaire. This paper uses the Likert five-scale method to design problems. The content of the questionnaire can view in the Appendix.



## **2.2. Variable relationships and research hypotheses**

### **The relationship between online product reviews and consumers**

Online product reviews are a way of word-of-mouth communication, and the quality of goods is the main target of word-of-mouth communication. Consumers are buyers of goods and recipients of word-of-mouth communication. In the Theory of Reasoned Action mentioned above, commodity reviews as subjective norms affect behavioral intentions. In Nicosia mode, good and bad reputation affects consumers' purchasing decisions. At the same time, consumers are reviewers. Based on the above research, I propose the following assumptions from the customer's point of view.

Q4: Product information in online product reviews is useful.

Q5: Online product reviews are real, effective, and trustworthy.

Q6: Online product reviews will affect my choice

Q7: I choose a merchant who has a large number of reviews when I shop.

Q8: I choose a merchant who has a high rating when I shop.

Q9: The product I received was of the same quality as the online reviews.

Q10: It will promote my desire to buy when I see the details are more fully described and accompanied by pictures.

### **Relationship between merchants and consumers**

Commodity praise affects the reputation ranking of the business. Business credibility is directly related to the score of online product reviews. In recent years, merchants have hired praised hands and used false transactions to manipulate comments to achieve the goal of raising the favorable rate. Hennig-Thurau's research shows that economic incentives are an essential motivation for consumer word-of-mouth behavior. The online reviews behavior is a voluntary behavior of consumers to share their opinions after purchase actively. They spend time and effort, and not all consumers actively evaluate after the purchase of commodities (Resnick and Zeckhauser, 2002). We propose the following assumptions from the customer's point of view.

Q12: I will review every time after purchase commodities.

Q13: I will describe the product in good faith according to my usage, when I write a product review.

Q14: Merchants cashing gifts can improve my evaluation of the goods.

Q15: Merchants pay for benefits. I will provide high scores against my will.

### **Relationship between the e-commerce platform and the consumer.**

The e-commerce platform is the medium for the delivery and distribution of online product reviews. The review system of the e-commerce platform has a guiding role in the writing of review information. This thesis takes Taobao.com as an example to study its review mechanism. There are two main points: The system default review and The return cancellation evaluation. We propose the following assumptions from the customer's point of view.

Q16. I know that Taobao has a default review mechanism and a return cancellation evaluation mechanism.

Q17. I write product reviews after every purchase.

Q18. I prefer to write a product review only if the product is excellent or very poor.

### **2.3. Sample characteristics**

The survey total of 190 copies recovered. All respondents are active regarding online shopping and purchase goods on the internet regularly. One respondent does not often shop online, and the frequency of purchases is lower than once a month. His answers have been omitted as not relevant. This qualified answer totals 189 copies.  $n=189$ .

### **3. RESULTS**

Questionnaires were used to survey customers who regularly do online shopping. The author mainly uses the "https://www.wjx.cn" for online design, release, and recycling data. The poll post on the blog and WeChat platform via links. This questionnaire was open for responses from 13 November 2019 to 17 November 2019.

#### **3.1 Survey statistics and analysis**

The proportion of men and women in the interviewed group was equal. According to the age distribution of the respondents, the average interviewee belongs to the 19-50 age group, which accounts for 61.9% of the total. This group representatives work and have an income. These respondents have adapted to the online shopping style of the Internet age and have a high frequency of online shopping. Also, they are more willing to share their views. According to the survey results, the proportion of people under 18 years old and over 51 years old is small. This is related to the issue of the questionnaire. The author distributes the online questionnaire to his friends, classmates, and family members. Most of the author's friends are between the ages of 21 and 30, so the proportion of respondents of this age group is higher. During the survey, we made statistics on the online shopping frequency of the interviewed individuals. This data is shown in table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Main sample characteristics

Characteristic		Number of responses	Proportion %
Gender	Male	95	50.26
	Female	94	49.74
Age	0~18	41	21.69
	19~24	60	31.75
	25~50	57	30.16
	More than 51	31	16.4
How often do you buy online every month?	1-5	74	39.15
	6-10	66	34.92
	More than 10	49	25.93

Source: authors own calculations

### 3.2 Reliability and Validity analysis of survey data

Reliability can reflect the degree of consistency of the survey results. The Cronbach's alpha is currently used in most academic studies as a reliability evaluation standard. It is mainly used to reflect the internal consistency of the sample data. The larger Cronbach's alpha, it will higher the credibility of the sample data, and the higher the reliability. It is generally believed that the Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.7 is better for the sample data, and the Cronbach's alpha value of 0.5 is the lowest acceptable reliability level.

Validity is the degree to which data results are valid. The high validity value means the availability of the data. When the validity of the questionnaire is high, the measurement result is the response to the real situation, and it can be used. Otherwise, the poll needs to be modified.

This thesis will analyze Cronbach's alpha and KMO on <https://spssau.com> The Cronbach's alpha for each factor in this study is shown in the table3.2.

Table 3.2 Reliability and Validity analysis

Variable relationships	Number of questions	Cronbach's alpha	KMO
online product reviews and consumers	7	0.930	0.924
online product reviews and consumers	4	0.888	0.835
e-commerce platform and consumer	3	0.825	0.708

Source: authors own calculations

According to the above table, the variable relationships of online product reviews and consumers Cronbach's alpha is 0.930. The variable relationships of online product reviews and consumers Cronbach's alpha are 0.888, and the variable relationships of e-commerce platform and consumer Cronbach's alpha is 0.825. Cronbach's alpha values are higher than 0.7. This explains that the variables of this study are credible. The KMO value of this survey is 0.868, which is higher than 0.6, which means the data is valid.

## 4. DISCUSSION

According to the results of the questionnaire obtained. The author uses the data to discuss the different influencing factors of consumer, merchant and E-commerce platforms on online review deviation.

### 4.1 Consumer factors for online product reviews

Online product review information is an objective reality. The product review will not change following the reader. Only consumers who have purchased goods on Taobao are eligible for writing online reviews, so the reviewer is also a consumer. However, the consumers' attitude and behavior determine the review information. Moreover, the commentator's behavioral attitude is uncertain, and it is not fixed. Therefore, the commentator's factors have an impact on online product reviews.

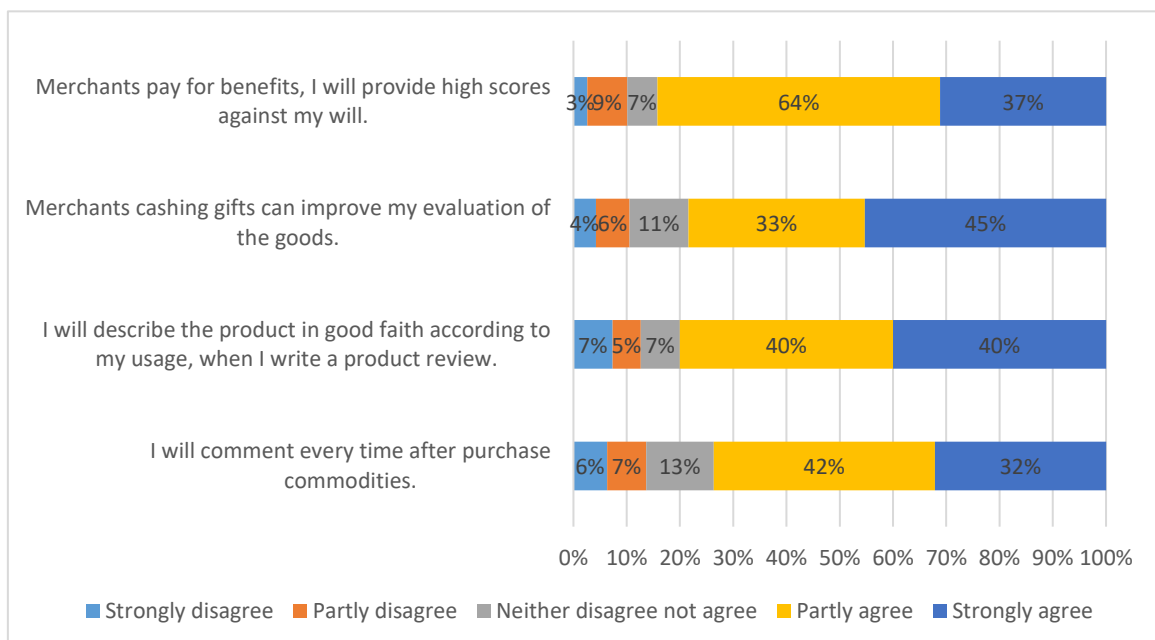


Figure 4.1. Online Product Reviews impact on consumers. Displayed (%), N=189  
Source: authors own calculations

Consumer personality has an impact on online product reviews when they write reviews, user show positive or negative commenting habits and styles because the consumer has different characters.

Extroverted consumers are more active and willing to share information with others. Some other consumers are used to giving precise and straightforward reviews. Different language styles and speak habits can affect online product reviews. Consumer review habits also have an impact on online product reviews. The practice of commenting is embodied in the frequency and timeliness of writing reviews. According to Table 4-1, only 32% of consumers write reviews after each purchase. However, 6% of consumers never write reviews. It takes time and effort for consumers to write reviews, and not actual writing does not affect shopping behavior.

It is worth noting, based on the relevant literature and the questionnaire, we can verify: when consumers are extremely dissatisfied or extremely satisfied with the goods, they will actively write reviews. The survey data indicates that 80% of consumers agree or strongly agree with this point of view. This is a way to discharge positive or negative emotions. However, often in the case of extreme emotions, consumers cannot guarantee an objective and fair written online product evaluation.

## **4.2 Merchant factors for online product reviews**

Individual characteristics and behavior of the merchant affect the consumer's reviews. The reputation of the merchant comes from the consumer's trust. On Taobao, the credit level of the merchant is reflected in the consumer evaluation during the long-term trading process. In the virtual environment of the network, it is difficult for consumers to determine the quality of the product. The information provided by online product reviews represents the real experience of other consumers. Review can better convince potential consumers to make a purchase decision than the merchant's description.

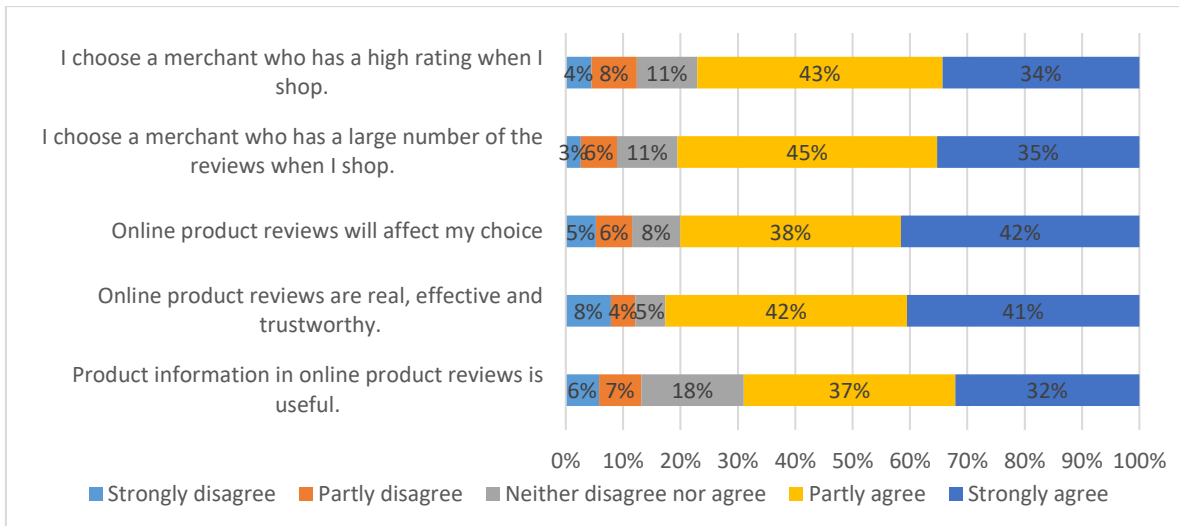


Figure 4.2. Online Product Reviews impact on Merchant Displayed (%), N=189  
 Source: authors own calculations

At the same time, according to the results of the survey show in Table 4-2, more than 80% of consumers agree to buy from merchants that have a large number of reviews and higher positive scores. About 146 of respondents believe that online product reviews are valid and effective. Merchants want to get more sales and have the incentive to improve the praise of online products deliberately.

We have asked similar questions in Table 4-1. 86 (45%) respondents said they strongly agree that redeeming gifts from merchants will improve they are the review of products. Among them, 71 (37%) respondents said that they have experienced writing favorable reviews to obtain offers from merchants. The survey results indicate that merchants manipulate online product reviews. The merchant's review manipulation behavior is that after the commodity transaction ends, the merchant changes and controls the consumer's original reviews. The purpose of the merchants' manipulation is to improve product review.

According to the first chapters, the consumer behavior theory and Theory of Reasoned Action. Online product reviews influence consumer purchasing decisions. It also related to the profit of the seller. The biggest winner of online product reviews deviation is the seller.



### 4.3 Platform factors on online product reviews

The platform's review system is the manager of online product review information generation, distribution, and display. It limits the number of words and the reviews, has format requirements, deletes low-quality reviews, and pushes high-quality reviews. Taobao's e-commerce platform online review mechanism is not perfect, and it does not give too many restrictions on consumer reviews. Consumers must take time and product experience to write a review. The e-commerce platform without any restrictions for consumers not to write a review. So many consumers do not spend time to review. However, consumers did not have to review online products actively.

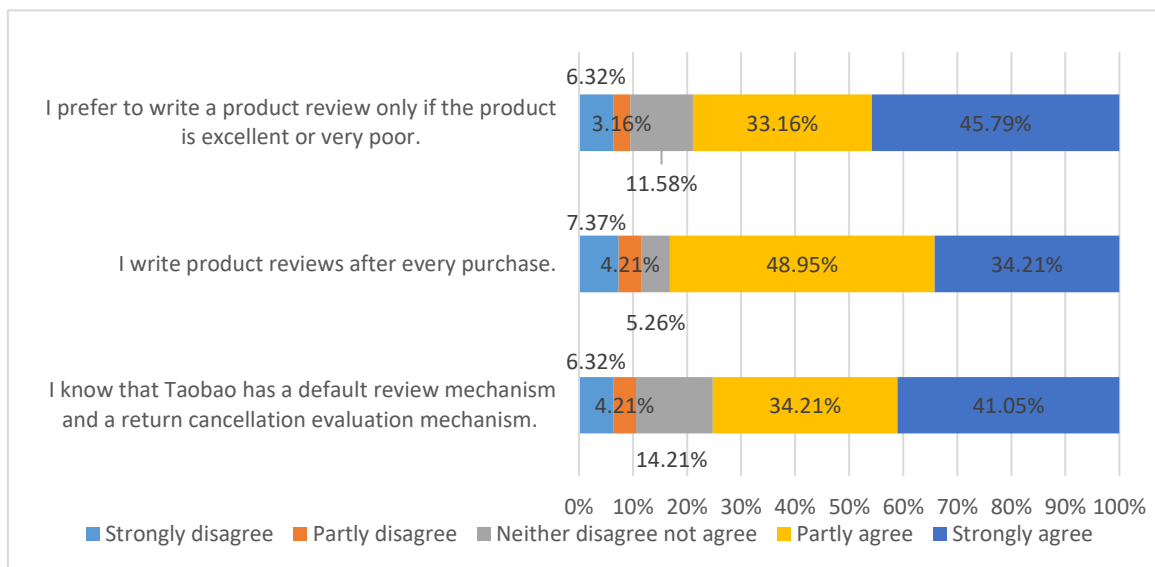


Figure 4.3. Online Product Reviews impact on Platform Displayed (%), N=189  
Source: authors own calculations

Taobao's "Default Praise" system. If there is no review on the goods within 15 days after the purchase, the system will automatically give a good review. However, there are not all consumers are satisfied with the purchase experience. In Table 4-3, there are only 65 (34.21%) of consumers agree that they wrote a review after each purchase behavior. The purchasing experience of other consumers has not been entirely accurately expressed in the review. So the "Default Praise" system of the e-commerce platform affects online product reviews.

Another factor in Taobao affecting online product reviews is the "return transaction close" system. When the consumer wants to returns, the online review system turns off. The consumer returns product whose shopping experience is complete. They have a feeling for products and services, and the review of the reviews also have reference value. Moreover, consumers choose to return

the product that means they are not satisfied with the product quality. Nevertheless, the platform's "Return transaction closing" system reduces this part of the negative review.

## CONCLUSION

Online product reviews are an essential Internet word of mouth. It is also a vital reference for consumer purchasing decisions. However, merchants and online shopping platforms use unfair competition to gain profits. There is a large number of false, and low-quality online product reviews appear. Incorrect information leads to worry about consumer purchasing decisions. Based on this background, this thesis collects theoretical literature and uses online commodity reviews as research objects, analyzes the influencing factors of online product reviews.

The questionnaire is used to verify it. The final influencing factors are discussed and propose the suggestion. The primary research purposes and contents of this paper are as follows:

1. The author analyzes the influencing factors of online product reviews by collating the literature. The author mainly uses theories of "Word Of Mouth," Consumer behavior decision theory, and Theory of Reasoned Action. Online product reviews are a form of Internet word of mouth. They have influenced consumers' purchasing behavior.
2. According to relevant theories, the three main participants of e-commerce are consumers, merchants, and commerce platforms. We ask similar questions separately, And design a questionnaire.
3. According to the questionnaire results. The author uses reliability and validity analysis to conclude that Cronbach's alpha and KMO were both higher than 0.7. The results show that the questionnaire is trustworthy and useful.
4. The thesis discusses consumers, businesses, and e-commerce platforms. Consumers are also reviewers, and their subjective approach will affect the impact that online product reviews have. For getting more profit, merchants use unique means to obtain the great word of mouth and influence online product reviews. Commerce platforms sites "default praise" and "return transaction close" mechanisms that affect online product reviews.

Based on the findings and the discussion, the current study suggests the following:

I recommend that consumers express their feelings from product and service objectively and truthfully after each purchase.

I suggest that the E-commerce platform improve the website system and treat consumers and sellers fairly and equitably. The platform should cancel the “default praise” and “return transaction cancel” mechanism.

It is hoped that the government will improve relevant laws and increase supervision and punishment of illegal sellers.

I hope that with the joint efforts, a more benign online shopping environment will be created.

Online product review information plays a vital role in e-commerce activities. This thesis attempts to explore the quality of commodity review information. Because time and personal ability, the paper draws some conclusions, there are still needs improvements. Strengthen the analysis of the status quo of online product reviews. In this paper, Taobao is taken as an example to analyze from three aspects of consumers, merchants, and E-commerce platforms. It does not represent the operating mechanism of other platforms. Also, many factors affect online product reviews that are subject to further research. Due to the complexity of the structure, the detailed analysis of each variable does not seem possible.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1. The Questionnaire continued**

#### **Questionnaire online product reviews Influencing factors**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Hello! I am a bachelor student who is going to graduate. In order to complete the academic research for my graduation thesis, I ask you to kindly share your opinions regarding reviews in online shopping. This questionnaire is anonymous. The information provided by you is for academic research only. We will keep it strictly confidential. Please fill it out according to your real beliefs.

All questions in this questionnaire are only used to understand your shopping habits. There is no right or wrong answer. You only need to choose the option you think is appropriate. I want to express my heartfelt thanks to you for your support and cooperation.

Q1: What's your gender?

- Man
- Woman

Q2: How old are you?

- 16~24
- 25~39
- 40~60
- More than 60

Q3: How often do you buy online every month? (times)

- 0
- 1~5
- 5~10
- More than 10

## Appendix 1. The Questionnaire continued

In questions 4-10 and 12-18, 1=Strongly disagree; 2=Partly disagree; 3=Neither disagree not agree; 4=Partly agree; 5=Strongly agree.

QUESTION	Strongly disagree	Partly disagree	Neither disagrees not agree	Partly agree	Strongly agree
Q4: Product information in online product reviews is useful.	11(5.79%)	14(7.37%)	34(17.89%)	70(36.84%)	61(32.11%)
Q5: Online product reviews are real, effective, and trustworthy.	15(7.89%)	8(4.21%)	10(5.26%)	80(42.11%)	77(40.53%)
Q6: Online product reviews will affect my choice	10(5.26%)	12(6.32%)	16(8.42%)	73(38.42%)	79(41.58%)
Q7: I choose a merchant who has a large number of reviews when I shop.	5(2.63%)	12(6.32%)	20(10.53%)	86(45.26%)	67(35.26%)
Q8: I choose a merchant who has a high rating when I shop.	9(4.74%)	15(7.89%)	20(10.53%)	81(42.63%)	65(34.21%)
Q9: The product I received was of the same quality as the online reviews.	3(1.58%)	21(11.05%)	12(6.32%)	67(35.26%)	87(45.79%)
Q10: It will promote my desire to buy when I see the details are more fully described and accompanied by pictures.	13(6.84%)	11(5.79%)	18(9.47%)	71(37.37%)	77(40.53%)

Q11: Did you been posted a review on the website?

Yes    No



## Appendix 1. The Questionnaire continued

Question	Strongly disagree	Partly disagree	Neither disagrees not agree	Partly agree	Strongly agree
Q12: I will review every time after purchase commodities.	12(6.32%)	14(7.37%)	24(12.63%)	79(41.58%)	61(32.11%)
Q13: I will describe the product in good faith according to my usage, when I write a product review.	14(7.37%)	10(5.26%)	14(7.37%)	76(40%)	76(40%)
Q14: Merchants cashing gifts can improve my evaluation of the goods.	8(4.21%)	12(6.32%)	21(11.05%)	63(33.16%)	86(45.26%)
Q15: Merchants pay for benefits. I will provide high scores against my will.	6(3.16%)	17(8.95%)	13(6.84%)	83(43.68%)	71(37.37%)

Question	Strongly disagree	Partly disagree	Neither disagrees not agree	Partly agree	Strongly agree
Q16. I know that Taobao has a default review mechanism and a return cancellation evaluation mechanism.	12(6.32%)	8(4.21%)	27(14.21%)	65(34.21%)	78(41.05%)
Q17. I write product reviews after every purchase.	14(7.37%)	8(4.21%)	10(5.26%)	93(48.95%)	65(34.21%)
Q18. I prefer to write a product review only if the product is excellent or very poor.	12(6.32%)	6(3.16%)	22(11.58%)	63(33.16%)	87(45.79%)

Source: authors own calculations

## **Appendix 2 The Online Questionnaire translated to Chinese**

The online questionnaire translated to Chinese has, according to the methodological guide for writing the thesis at Tallinn University of Technology, been update to a third-party server for looking and downloading. The questionnaire is on the following link:

<https://www.wjx.cn/report/49901594.aspx>