STAR RATINGS IN ONLINE CONSUMER REVIEWS - EMOTIONS OR EVIDENCE?

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ABSTRACT

Purpose
Online product websites revolutionise the information search stage of the purchase decision process. The reviewers use various search and product cues to narrow down the choice and consideration set. One of the popular search cues used by the reviewers is the star rating associated with a review. This research work addresses a bias associated with the star rating.

Design/Methodology/Approach
Star rating in a review provides swift communication of the textual content to reviewers. Past studies suggest an incongruence between the star ratings and textual content. This study analysed the star rating with the number of intrinsic, extrinsic cues used in the reviews and sentiment scores.

Findings
The results support the proposition that the star ratings contain more emotions than evidence. High-star-rated reviews have better sentiment scores. Reviews with lower star ratings contain a significantly higher number of cues. Users of the reviews are systematically biased by the consumers' sentiments rather than product attribute-based evaluations.

Practical Implications
Customer assessments solely based on star ratings will create a halo effect on the product evaluation. Hence, this study creates the need for marketers and researchers to find ways to track the cues used in the reviews, sentiment scores and incorporate the measurement of sentiment scores for customer evaluations to minimise bias of star ratings.

Originality/Value
The research work analyses star ratings with cue utilization. A text analysis context is a unique approach by combining the cues usage in the review with sentiment and star ratings.

Keywords: Sentiment Analysis, Intrinsic Cues, Extrinsic Cues, Star Rating, eWOM