

# Numerical Framing and Emotional Arousal as Moderators of Review Valence and Consumer Choices: An Abstract



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**Abstract** Review valence refers to consumers' positive or negative evaluations of products (Mudambi and Schuff 2010). It can be reflected by star ratings or dichotomous choices such as recommendation rates and thumbs up or down rates. The effects of valence reported in previous studies have been equivocal (King et al. 2014). Therefore, this dissertation aims to identify factors that help reconcile these inconclusive findings through two essays. Specifically, the first essay investigates the role of numerical framing with five experiments, including an eye-tracking study. It shows that the effect of review volume (vs. review valence) on purchase likelihood will be lower when valence is presented as absolute numbers (160 of 200 customers recommend) than when it is in percentages (80% of 200 customers recommend). This is because consumers adopt two distinct approaches (piecemeal vs. holistic) when processing the two aforementioned numerical formats. In addition, the ability of an absolute number format to weaken the impact of volume on purchase likelihood will be lower when valence and volume are shown in two different colors than when they are in the same color.

Through two lab experiments and one field study, the second essay examines the moderating effect of emotional arousal on review valence and consumer decisions. It shows that consumers consider extreme reviews with high emotional arousal as being less informative about the product performance. Therefore, the presence of high arousal emotions dilutes the extremely negative reviews' ability to discourage consumer purchases as well as the extremely positive reviews' ability to boost consumer purchases through consumers' perceived informativeness. However, consumers' decision strategy varies depending on the purchase stage they belong to.

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Whereas, consumers discount those extreme reviews with high arousal during their search stage, negativity bias causes them to rely more on the extremely negative reviews accompanied by high emotional arousal.

**Keywords** Online reviews · Valence · Emotional arousal · Purchase stages

References Available Upon Request