

# Research on the Influence of Online Reviews on Consumers' Purchase Intentions from an Interactive Perspective

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## Abstract

**This paper analyzes the influence of online reviews on consumers' purchase intentions from the perspective of the degree of interaction between the three subjects (consumers, reviewers and sellers) on the online review, and discusses the moderating effect of consumer's trust tendency by using perceived usefulness as intermediary. The results show that we should pay close attention to the online real-time communication between sellers, consumers, the online reviews feedback of sellers, and the interaction factors between consumers and reviewers on the consumers' purchase intention, and actively guide consumers to purchasing behavior.**

## Keywords

**Online Review; consumer purchasing intention; perceived usefulness.**

## 1. Introduction

China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) [1] in Beijing released the 44<sup>th</sup> statistical report on the Internet in China, showing that by June 2019, the scale of Chinese Internet users reached 854 million, Internet penetration rate of 61.2%, a 1.6% increase at the end of 2018, as of December 2018, the network shopping user scale up to 610 million, a growth of 14.4% at the end of 2017, Internet users utilization rate of 73.6%. On September 27, 2018, China e-commerce research center (100ec.cn), a national social think tank of "One Belt And One Road", released the "2018 (I) China online retail market data monitoring report", which shows that the transaction volume of China's online retail market reached 4.1 trillion yuan (RMB) in the first half of 2018, with a year-on-year growth of 30.1%. With the popularity of the Internet and online shopping, B2B, O2O platform increase gradually, and in the current market environment of consumption upgrade, consumers of goods quality and personalized demand is higher and higher, more and more emphasis on shopping experience, so the online market is also more diversified, merchants are also pay more attention to cultivate their advantage in the consumer groups.

Compared with the traditional shopping market, online shopping can not see the real goods, so the convenience of online shopping increases the shopping risk of consumers and the difficulty of shopping decisions. In order to reduce the buying risk of online shopping, consumers can only get the information of products through relevant words, pictures and videos of websites, so as to make shopping decisions. The traditional word-of-mouth is also transformed into online word-of-mouth. Online Review, also known as Online Consumer Review, specifically refers to the Online evaluation system provided by shopping websites in which Online shoppers express their opinions or feelings about a certain product or service mainly through texts. It is because of the risk of online shopping is bigger, lead to increased difficulties of consumers shopping decisions, and therefore, based on study of online reviews, on consumers' online shopping has important guiding significance to make better decisions when, at the same time to the enterprise online word-of-mouth promotion, brand building and management of online consumers also has important significance.

Based on subjective factors, this paper takes sellers, reviewers, and consumers of online reviews on shopping websites as the main research objects, uses related discussions and theories of predecessors in academia to explore its impact on the usefulness of mediating variables, which affects consumers' purchasing willingness, and considers the moderating action of consumers' trust tendencies to improve the theoretical model of the impact of online reviews on consumers' shopping intentions.

## 2. Literature Reviews

At present, the research on the influence of online reviews on consumers' willingness to purchase is mainly based on structural equation model, and more research frameworks have been formed, and more theoretical research results have been formed in terms of model construction and simulation.

Overseas studies on the impact of online reviews on consumers' purchase intention have been relatively early. Park&Lee[2] believed that the number of online reviews would affect consumers' trust and purchase decision. Awad[3] has proved that the quality of online comments can significantly affect the formation of online trust of consumers. Since anonymity is one of the characteristics of the network environment, consumers will pay more and more attention to the quality of online comments. Sencal et al.[4] used the experimental method to study the influence of online evaluation and online product type on consumers' purchase intention. Kim et al.[5] proved that consumers' perceived trust, perceived risk and perceived value had an impact on their online purchase intention and decision based on the trust theory. Park&Kim[6] analyzed the impact of online reviews on consumers, and believed that ordinary consumers would attach great importance to the amount of online reviews published, while the impact of the amount published by expert reviews was very small. Forman[7] believes that positive or negative reviews of online shopping reviewers will affect whether consumers buy a product or not.

Domestic related research started late, but with the popularity of online shopping and the practice of "Internet plus", the research on the relationship between online comments and consumers' purchase intention is increasingly deepened. The research focuses on the improvement of design model, impact system analysis, empirical analysis, etc., and there have been many excellent research results. Song Xiaobing [8] believes that if the information quality of online word-of-mouth is high, consumers will trust the reviews more and influence consumers' purchasing decisions. From the positive and negative dimensions of online reviews, Yu Weiping et al.[9] found that both positive and negative online reviews had significant impact on consumers' purchase intention. Du Xuemei et al.[10] included one of the moderating variables of professional competence, and verified that the functional value of online reviews (including the quantity, quality and price of reviews) had a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention. Zhou Meihua et al.[11] studied the influence of review content on purchase intention under the regulation of different product types (trust products and non-trust products), and concluded that review content has different influence on purchase intention under the regulation of different product types. Wang Lin[12] combined regression model analysis to study the impact of network evaluation on consumers' online purchase, and verified that perceived risk plays an intermediary role in the impact of evaluation on consumers' purchase. Zhang Yanhui et al.[13] found that the number of effective reviews, medium and poor reviews, and uploaded pictures had a significant positive effect on the usefulness of reviews, and the seller's response played an intermediary role. Wang Changzheng[14] believed that, compared with the initial comments, additional comments make consumers' perceived usefulness higher, and additional comments have more valuable information compared with the initial comments.

In summary, most of the current research focuses on the content characteristics of online reviews and the individual characteristics of the subjects involved in online reviews (including reviewers, consumers and sellers), while less attention has been paid to the interaction between reviewers and consumers, the seller's online real-time communication with consumers, and the seller's feedback on the commenter's online comments. This is also the focus of the formal study of this paper.

### 3. Hypothesis Proposed

#### 3.1. Research Hypothesis

##### 1. Interaction between sellers and consumers

The interaction between the seller/supplier and the consumer is closely related to the purchase intention of the consumer. Good online communication between the seller and the consumer will make the consumer feel good shopping experience, thus enhancing the purchase intention of the consumer. Kim et al.[5] proposed that the more timely the online communication of merchants, the more able they are to influence consumers' shopping decisions.

Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

H1a: the interaction between sellers and consumers has a positive impact on perceived usefulness.

H1b: the interaction between sellers and consumers has a positive impact on consumers' purchasing intentions.

##### 2. Interaction between sellers and reviewers

The reviewer is the person directly responsible for the online review, that is, the buyer of the review. When consumers view online reviews of the products they want, sellers' responses to positive reviews/negative reviews, especially sellers' timely feedback on negative reviews, will provide consumers with more information about the product, which may change consumers' previous views and thus affect consumers' purchase intention.

Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

H2a: the interaction between sellers and reviewers has a positive impact on perceived usefulness.

H2b: the interaction between sellers and reviewers has a positive influence on consumers' purchasing intentions.

##### 3. Interaction between reviewers and consumers

Receivers, i.e. consumers, have different needs for online comments, perception and judgment of online comments. For example, taobao's "ask everyone" function means that consumers/receivers can ask questions online about the products they want, and buyers can answer the questions. Questions and answers from the module of consumers. These related interactive evaluations will affect consumers' understanding and perception of online reviews, thus influencing their purchase intention.

Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

H3a: the interaction between reviewers and consumers has a positive influence on perceived usefulness.

H3b: the interaction between reviewers and consumers has a positive influence on consumers' purchasing intention.

##### 4. Assumptions about the relationship between perceived usefulness and purchasing intentions

Many scholars at home and abroad have proved the influence of perceived usefulness on consumers' purchase intention. In his research, Yan Fang[15] believed that perceived usefulness, under the joint influence of review quality, system quality and management quality, had an impact on the use intention, and thus on the purchase intention. Based on the above discussion, we can find that perceived usefulness can have an impact on consumers' purchase intention, which is worthy of further study in this paper.

Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

H4: perceived usefulness has a significant positive influence on consumers' purchasing intentions.

5. Assumption of the relationship between consumer trust propensity and perceived usefulness

Trust tendency refers to the tendency of individuals to have confidence in human nature and take a position of trust in others[2]. The research on the influence of consumer psychological characteristics on consumers' purchase intention has been verified by many scholars. Du Xuemei et al.[10] proved that consumer psychological representational factors (including perceived risk, trust propensity and product involvement) all had a positive effect on the impact of online reviews on consumers' purchase intention. The research of Ma Qin Hai et al.[16] shows that initial trust has a positive effect on purchase intention. Tao Xiaobo et al.[17] pointed out that the higher the trust tendency of consumers, the greater the influence of negative online word-of-mouth on consumers' purchase intentions through factors such as credibility.

Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

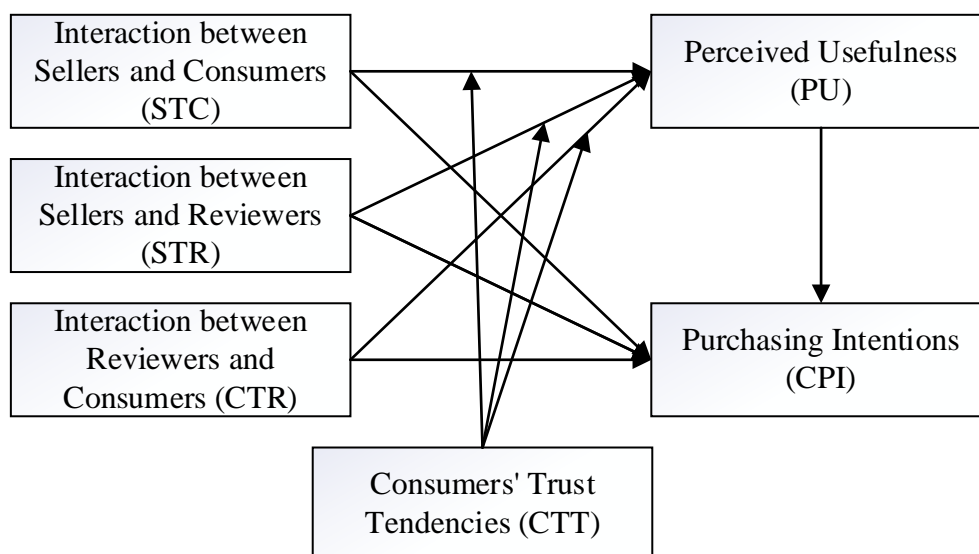
H5a: the propensity to trust positively moderates the perceived usefulness of interactions between sellers and consumers.

H5b: Consumers' trust tendencies positively moderate the perceived usefulness of interactions between sellers and reviewers.

H5c: trust tendencies positively moderate perceived usefulness in the interaction between consumers and reviewers.

### 3.2. Theoretical Model

To sum up, the model is shown in Fig.1.



**Fig.1** the theoretical model of the influence of online reviews on consumers' purchasing intentions

## 4. Research Methods

### 4.1. The Sample Collection

The formal questionnaire of this study is mainly distributed in two ways: online and offline. Among them, the online questionnaires were distributed, and the text was mainly made on the platform of "Wenjuanxing", providing functions equivalent to Amazon Mechanical Turk. The electronic questionnaires were spread by means of WeChat, Weibo, QQ and Baidu post bar. For offline questionnaire distribution, this paper is mainly aimed at university students for face-to-face distribution, and on-site explanation for the subjects, at the same time to ensure on-site recycling. As the object of this study is the online population, the online push method of questionnaire distribution has become a way that subjects highly praise and accept. This questionnaire was issued for a total of 10 days, during which 198 questionnaires were collected, including 153 online questionnaires and 45 offline questionnaires.

As for the screening of questionnaires, this paper mainly selects them from the following aspects: first, for the questionnaires issued offline, the ones that are not filled in or have a lot of alterations are regarded as low-quality questionnaires and shall be eliminated; Secondly, the questionnaires with obvious regularity of answers were eliminated. Thirdly, for the questionnaires distributed online, this paper considers that the questionnaires with less than 120 seconds of answering time are regarded as invalid. Through the above screening and screening, a total of 35 invalid questionnaires were removed from this survey, and 163 valid questionnaires were obtained, with a recovery rate of 82.3%.

### 4.2. Variable Measurement

According to the research hypothesis and theoretical model in this paper, this study has three independent variables, one regulating variable, one mediating variable and one dependent variable. The specific questionnaire includes the main part of the questionnaire and the personal information of the respondents. In the personal information part, questions are generally presented in the way of selection, and all the options in the main part of the questionnaire adopt Likert seven-point scale. (1 means strongly disagree, 2 means disagree, 3 means disagree, 4 means not sure, 5 means agree, 6 means agree, 7 means strongly agree.) By referring to the mature scales of online comments from domestic and foreign scholars, a measurement scale suitable for the purpose of this study is obtained. The following describes the measurement of the quantities in the model.

#### 4.2.1. The Dependent Variable

The dependent variable of this study is consumers' purchase intention. Mullet believes that consumers' attitude towards a certain product, together with the effect of external factors, constitute consumers' purchase intention, which is a subjective tendency of consumers to choose a specific product. The purchasing intentions measurement scale is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Measurement scale of consumers' purchasing willingness

Variable	ID	Questions	Sources
	CPI1	Adopting this online review allows me to make faster purchasing decisions	Bansal&Voyer (2000)
CPI	CPI2	Adopting this online review has been very helpful to my buying decision	[18]; Gilly&Graham (1998)
	CPI3	Adopting this online review has a significant impact on my willingness to buy	[19]

**4.2.2. The Independent Variable**

The independent variables in this study include the interaction between sellers and consumers, the interaction between sellers and reviewers, and the interaction between reviewers and consumers. The measurement scales of the three independent variables are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The scale of Independent variables

Variable	ID	Questions	Sources
STC	STC1	The usefulness of online consultation machine responses affects consumers' purchasing intentions	Kim(2008) [5]
	STC2	If manual services are required during online consultation, the timeliness of manual responses affects consumers' purchasing intentions	
	STC3	The usefulness of human responses to online consultation affects consumers' purchasing intentions	
	STC4	The attitude of artificial service in online consultation affects consumers' purchasing intentions	
STR	STR1	Seller's explanatory response to negative reviews affects consumers' purchasing intentions	Du Huiying (2017) [20]
	STR2	Seller's response to positive reviews affects consumers' purchasing intentions	
	STR3	Seller's usefulness for negative reviews affects consumers' purchasing intentions	
	STR4	Seller's timeliness of responses to negative reviews affects consumers' purchasing intentions	
CTR	CTR1	The amount of interactions between the buyers and consumers affects consumers' intentions to buy	This paper
	CTR2	Negative responses from consumers who have bought questions to consumers affects their purchasing intentions	
	CTR3	Positive responses from buyers to consumer questions affects consumers' purchasing intentions	

**4.2.3. The Regulated Variable**

The consumers' trust propensity scale is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Measurement scale of consumers' propensity to trust

Variable	ID	Questions	Sources
CTT	CTT1	I usually trust others	Gefen(2000)[21]; Lee&Truban(2001) [22]; Ridings(2002) [23]
	CTT2	I tend to believe in others	
	CTT3	I usually trust others unless they give me reasons not to believe	

#### 4.2.4. The Intervening Variable

The measurement scale of perceived usefulness is shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Measurement scale of perceived usefulness

Variable	ID	Questions	Sources
	PU1	Found this online review useful	
	PU2	Adopting online reviews has enriched my knowledge of the product	
PU	PU3	Online reviews gave me many different views than before	Davis, Bagozzi and Warshaw(1989) [24]; Park&Lee(2009) [25]
	PU4	Adopting online reviews can better improve the shopping process	

## 5. The Empirical Analysis

### 5.1. The Reliability and Validity Analysis

The reliability and validity of variables measured by multiple indicators should be guaranteed when used. Reliability analysis is used to check the reliability and stability of the investigation. In this study, the Cronbach reliability test method is adopted, and it is generally believed that the measurement requirements can be met if the value is greater than 0.7000[26]. Validity analysis is used to check the extent to which an indicator measures theoretical variables. Validity is generally measured in terms of load, and a load value greater than 0.4 is considered valid.

#### 5.1.1. The Reliability Analysis

According to the reliability analysis, it can be seen from Table 6 that the  $\alpha$  values of the six variables are all above 0.700, so; The data from this survey have a high degree of internal consistency.

#### 5.1.2. The Validity Analysis

First, KMO value measurement and Bartlett test were conducted for the sample data of this study. The analysis results are shown in Table 5. The KMO test value of the survey data was  $0.854 > 0.700$ , and the scale was suitable for factor analysis. The Bartlett sphericity test results showed that the significance P value was  $0.000 < 0.01$ , and the scale was suitable for factor analysis. Then, as shown in Table 6, the load value of all measured variables in this study is greater than 0.4, so each indicator can well measure the corresponding variable.

**Table 5.** KMO and Bartlett test results

Correlation Test	Sample Measure (KMO)	Bartlett Sphericity Test		
		Approximate chi-square	df	Sig
Indicator Data	0.854	2319.616	210	0.000

**Table 6.** Measured reliability and validity test

Indicators	Load Value	Cronbach $\alpha$
<b>Interaction between Sellers and Consumers (STC)</b>		
STC1	0.721	0.825
STC2	0.742	
STC3	0.810	
STC4	0.772	
<b>Interaction between Sellers and Reviewers (STR)</b>		
STR1	0.738	0.830
STR2	0.768	
STR3	0.701	
STR4	0.753	
<b>Interaction between Consumers and Reviewers (CTR)</b>		
CTR1	0.745	0.841
CTR2	0.688	
CTR3	0.714	
<b>Consumers' Trust Tendencies (CTT)</b>		
CTT1	0.798	0.816
CTT2	0.733	
CTT3	0.642	
<b>Perceived Usefulness (PU)</b>		
PU1	0.763	0.819
PU2	0.892	
PU3	0.853	
PU4	0.788	
<b>Consumers' Purchasing Intentions (CPI)</b>		
CPI1	0.796	0.915
CPI2	0.842	
CPI3	0.857	

## 5.2. The Correlation Analysis

In each independent variable on the dependent variable to do the regression analysis of effect of the former, need six variables in this study: the interaction between the seller and consumers (BTC), the interaction between the seller and reviewers (BTR), the interaction between consumers and reviewers (CTR), consumer trust tendency (CTT), perceived usefulness (PU) and the consumer purchase intention (CPI) do correlation analysis, correlation analysis results as shown in Table 7. The regression analysis is further used for verification.

**Table 7.** Correlation analysis between variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	BTC	BTR	CTR	CTT	PU	CPI
STC	5.5607	1.06674	1					
STR	5.4036	1.07409	0.710**	1				
CTR	5.2667	1.07397	0.654**	0.669**	1			
CTT	5.0905	1.17202	0.535**	0.419**	0.533**	1		
PU	5.6143	0.94611	0.521**	0.399**	0.432**	0.573**	1	
CPI	5.5524	1.09050	0.562**	0.497**	0.545**	0.465**	0.526**	1

Note: \*\*, significant correlation at the 0.01 level (both sides).



### 5.3. The Regression Analysis

In this study, hierarchical regression and adjustment regression were used. Firstly, the influence of main effect was analyzed. Then, the moderating effect of consumer trust tendency is analyzed. The analysis results are shown in Table 8 below.

**Table 8.** Regression Analysis

Effects	PU				CPI				
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9
Main Effect									
STC	0.422	0.583			0.320		0.395		
STR	-0.010		0.683		0.081			0.341	
CTR	0.162			0.299	0.281				0.391
Mediation Effect									
PU						0.526	0.320	0.390	0.358
Moderating Effect									
CTT		0.799	1.097	0.627					
STC*CTT		0.294							
STR*CTT			-0.938						
CTR*CTT				0.248					
R <sup>2</sup>	0.286	0.377	0.359	0.349	0.374	0.277	0.390	0.375	0.401
Adj-R <sup>2</sup>	0.271	0.363	0.384	0.335	0.360	0.272	0.381	0.366	0.392
F-value	18.193	27.436	28.286	24.323	27.034	52.862	43.866	41.094	45.867

#### 5.3.1. Test the Relationship between Three Independent Variables and Purchase Intention

The M5 in Table 8 is used to verify the interaction between the seller and consumers (STC), the interaction between the seller and reviewers (STR), the communication between the consumers and the comments (CTR) and consumer purchase intention (CPI), the relationship between the regression results show that the established hypothesis H1b (0.320, P < 0.05), the interaction between the seller and consumers to have a positive impact on consumer purchase intention. H2b is true (0.081, P<0.05), the interaction between sellers and reviewers has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention. H3b is not true (0.281, P>, 0.05), the interaction between reviewers and consumers has no significant impact on consumers' purchasing intentions.

#### 5.3.2. Test the Relationship between Three Independent Variables and Perceived Usefulness

M1 in Table 8 is used to verify the relationship between seller and consumer interaction (STC), seller and commenter interaction (STR), consumer and review interaction (CTR) and perceived usefulness (PU). The regression results show that: hypothesis H1a is valid (0.422, P<0.05), and the interaction between seller and consumer has a positive impact on perceived usefulness. H2a is not true (-0.010, P>, 0.05), the interaction between the seller and the reviewer has no significant effect on perceived usefulness. H3a is true (0.162, P<0.05), the interaction between reviewers and consumers has a positive impact on perceived usefulness.

#### 5.3.3. Test the Relationship between Perceived Usefulness and Dependent Variables

The M6 in Table 8 is used to verify the relationship between perceived usefulness (PU) and consumer purchase intention (CPI). The regression results show that, H4 is valid (0.526,

$P < 0.001$ ), perceived usefulness has a significant positive impact on consumer purchase intention.

#### 5.3.4. Mediating Test of Perceived Usefulness

M7, M8, and M9 in Table 8 are used to verify the mediating effect of perceived usefulness. After the introduction of the perceived usefulness of the mediating variable, the standardized regression coefficients of the three independent variables BTC, BTR and CTR to the dependent variable CPI all decreased compared with the previous, but the corresponding significance level was still less than 0.05. In M7, the standardized regression coefficient of the intermediary variable PU on the dependent variable CPI is 0.320, with the corresponding significant level less than 0.05. BTC and PU have a significant positive impact on CPI at the same time. In M8, the standardized regression coefficient of the intermediary variable PU on the dependent variable CPI is 0.390, with the corresponding significant level less than 0.05. BTR and PU have a significant positive impact on CPI. In M9, the standardized regression coefficient of the intermediary variable PU on the dependent variable CPI is 0.358, with the corresponding significant level less than 0.05. CTR and PU have a significant positive impact on CPI at the same time.

#### 5.3.5. A Moderating Test of Consumer Trust Propensity

(1) the regulatory effect of consumer trust propensity (CTT) on BTC and PUM2 in Table 8 is used to verify the regulating effect of the regulating variable CTT between BTC and PU. The regression results showed that the standardized regression coefficient of interaction term  $BTC * CTT$  for perceived usefulness PU was 0.294, and the corresponding significant level was less than 0.05, H5a is valid.

(2) the regulatory effect of consumer trust propensity (CTT) on BTR and PUM3 in Table 8 is used to verify the regulating effect of the regulating variable CTT between BTR and PU. The regression results showed that when the interaction term  $BTR * CTT$  was regressed to the perceived usefulness PU, the results were not significant ( $P > 0.05$ ), and H5b is not to be true.

(3) the regulatory effect of consumer trust propensity (CTT) on CTR and PUM4 in Table 8 is used to verify the regulating effect of the regulating variable CTT between CTR and PU. The regression results showed that the standardized regression coefficient of interaction term  $CTR * CTT$  for perceived usefulness PU was 0.248, and the corresponding significant level was less than 0.05, H5c is correct.

## 6. Summary and Inspiration

### 6.1. Research Conclusion

In this paper, from the Angle of the subject, mainly studies the influence of online reviews on consumer purchase intention, and discussed the interaction between the main body (the interaction between the seller and consumers, sellers and reviewers interaction and communication between the consumers and the reviewer) the three variables how to affect perceived usefulness, and perceived usefulness as a intervening variable, at the same time consumer trust tendency as regulating variable, analyzed the consumer trust tendency of online reviews and adjustment effect between the perceived usefulness. The hypothesis is analyzed by empirical research. The main conclusions of this study are as follows :(1) the interaction between sellers and consumers has a positive impact on perceived usefulness and consumers' purchase intention. (2) the interaction between sellers and reviewers has no significant impact on perceived usefulness, but has a significant positive impact on consumers' purchase intention. (3) the interaction between consumers and reviewers has no significant impact on consumers' purchase intention, but has a significant positive impact on perceived usefulness; (4) perceived usefulness has a positive impact on consumers' purchase

intention; (5) consumer trust tendency has a moderating effect on the interaction between sellers and consumers, consumers and reviewers, and perceived usefulness.

## 6.2. Inspiration

This paper verifies that the interaction between three subjects in the online reviews has significant impact on consumers' purchasing intentions, especially the interaction between the seller and consumers and the interaction between reviewers and sellers is stronger, so the providers of products or services should pay more attention to the online evaluation feedback, improve the quality and efficiency of online communication with consumers. The moderating effect of consumers' trust tendency indicates that enterprises should attach importance to and actively establish the degree of trust with consumers. The limitations of this study are as follows: the research objects are mainly concentrated in universities, which to some extent affects the application scope of the research results; In the study of online comments, only the interaction factors among the three subjects are considered from the perspective of subjects, without considering the influence of the characteristics of online comments. This paper only considers the moderating variable of consumer trust propensity. There may be more moderating variables with more significant influence, so further in-depth research is needed.

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