EFFECTS OF ONLINE COMMENTS ON CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTIONS: EVIDENCE FROM EMERGING E-COMMERCE ECOSYSTEMS IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT

Online customer comments have evolved into powerful informational cues within the digital marketplace, particularly in emerging e-commerce ecosystems where institutional trust mechanisms are still developing. This study investigates how specific textual characteristics of online comments (valence, length, recentness and objectivity) shape consumers' purchase intentions in Ghana's e-commerce platforms. Drawing on the signaling theory, information diagnosticity theory and dual-process persuasion models, tested a moderated framework explaining how comment attributes interact to influence behavioral intentions. Using a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 324 online shoppers with prior platform experience. A multiple regression study indicated that valence, recency, and length of comment each have strong positive impacts on purchase intention, collectively accounting for 86.2% of its variance. The length of comments proved to be a significant predictor, highlighting the importance of informational cues in reducing uncertainty. Haye's (2012) moderation analysis further revealed that objectivity strongly influences the association between length and purchase intention. Although both length and objectivity individually enhance purchase intention, their relationship exhibits declining marginal effects: as objectivity rises, the additional persuasive influence of lengthier reviews diminishes. The results theoretically integrate informational and stylistic characteristics within a cohesive interactive model and empirically expand online review research to the setting of a developing Ghanaian market. The findings indicate that e-commerce platforms ought to promote reviews that combine factual accuracy with emotive depth to enhance persuasive efficacy.

Keywords: Online comments, purchase intention, e-commerce, comment length.