



**EFFECT OF ONLINE REVIEW ON TURKISH CUSTOMER PURCHASE  
INTENTION IN RESTAURANT SELECTION.**

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**ABSTRACT**

Online reviews can be seen as an information resource especially for experience goods. In a study conducted by Podium concluded that 93% of respondents believe that online reviews can influence them in their buying decision. Online reviews are seen as modern word of mouth advertisements and are referred to the reviews posted on Internet by previous customers whom already experienced products or services. They are considered as information source to decrease the risk of uncertainty particularly in experience goods such as leisure or restaurants. These reviews are various in terms of their length, valence, type and time of creation. Valence and recentness are identified as a part of important factors that are associated with the stimulus.

Current research evaluates the three main aspects of online reviews as valence (positive vs negative), length (number of the words) and recentness (the day review has been posted) to realize the impact of these aspects on review attitude and in fact in purchase intention of Turkish customers while choosing restaurants. This paper aims to investigate significant features of online ratings and how they can influence Turkish consumers purchase intention in regard to restaurant selection.

195 students from Istanbul city have been surveyed. First they have been shown 2 manipulated (8 manipulated review in total) online reviews regarding an unreal restaurant and then they were asked to respond printed questionnaire in which assess the review attitude and purchase intention based on the manipulated reviews. Data then has been analyzed utilizing AMOS.

Results indicate that except length of the review that has small positive effect on review attitude, all other independent variables demonstrate positive medium correlation with review attitude and purchase intention. Review attitude as well is positively correlated with purchase intention.

**KEYWORDS: LENGTH, ONLINE REVIEWS, PURCHASE INTENTION, REVIEW ATTITUDE, RESTAURANT, RECENTNESS, VALENCE, WOM.**

## 1. Introduction

Customer is the most authentic advocate for any business and thanks to digital world, each customer's voice is now strong enough to be heard globally. A new opportunity for a shared experience for customers is the Internet and information technology online evaluations (Avery, Resnick and Zeckhauser 1999). Survey conducted by Podium suggests that 77 percent of customers indicate their willingness to leave review for local businesses to help promoting them, and 61 percent would like to post online review for other customers to help them in their purchase decision.

Amazon.com started to offer users the possibility to placing its feedback on our products on its site. At present, Amazon.com estimates that it owns nearly 10 million product reviews for almost all its product categories, which are recognized to be among the bestselling categories in the world. As well as popular functions of Amazon ((Los Angeles Times, 3 December 1999) in the past years an increasing quantity from Internet vendors (e.g. BevMo.com) used a comparable approach. They encourage the consumers of products to publish their reviews on the sellers' site.

There are review Web sites that supply clients by providing user ratings, offered by certain external resources, among which are Epinions.com. Consumer online reviews appear to be the norm across many categories of products, for example, novels, Electronics, computer games, music, videos, drinks and wine.

According to the latest findings, the importance of customer ratings for making purchases has grown significantly for Decisions making and product sales. One recent analysis by Forrester Research suggests more than half of the people who looked at the store visited the retailer Sites with published consumer comments stated that user ratings play an essential or very crucial role within their purchasing decisions (Los Angeles Times, 3 December 1999). Using information obtained from Amazon.com. also, Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) note the significant influence of on-line book reviews on book sales.

Among all possible advantages offered by electronic commerce to retailers, the capacity to offer consumers a flexible and personalized relationship is probably one of the most important ones (Wind and Rangaswamy, 2001). Online personalization offers retailers two major benefits. It allows them to provide accurate and timely information to customers which, in turn, often generates additional sales (Postma and Brokke, 2002). Personalization has also been shown to increase the level of loyalty consumers hold toward a retailer (Cyber Dialogue, 2001; Srinivasan, Anderson, and Ponnayolu, 2002). While there are several ways to personalize an online relationship, the capacity for an online retailer to make recommendations is certainly among the most promising (Cyber Dialogue, 2001). Online recommendation sources range from traditional sources such as ex consumers (e.g., testimonies of customers on retail websites such as Amazon.com) to personalized recommendations provided by recommender systems (Fung and Lee, 1999). To date, no study has specifically investigated and compared the relative influence of these online recommendation sources on consumers' product choices.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Online Consumer Evaluations**

Present generation consumers broadly consider that online consumer reviews represent a variation of E-WOM within a Decision process for both online and offline-purchase of products. Online review helps individuals to obtain in-depth analysis of information providing a certain amount of confidence and believability versus Data provision by distributors. Based upon the significance of Internet feedback, a significant number of Researchers involved in the field of marketing or information technology systems have examined the features of reviews and reviewers in order to estimate how online reviews influence three major aspects: sales of products, User habits and how users regard this information. Online reviews impact the decision-making process of consumers. For example, whenever users online browse a product offering on a retail Web site, they may not easily obtain reliable knowledge about the " real " qualities of the product and may not be capable of accurately judging the quality of the product prior to purchase (Fung and Lee, 1999). The distinction lies in information, owned by vendor and customer, is related to asymmetric information.

### **2.2. Online Reviews and Purchase decision**

It is widely recognized that user reviews influence consumers' purchasing decisions on the Internet. Multiple separate surveys have demonstrated the ways in which the usage of user reviews and Assessments are expected to shape buying habits and intentions of consumers, and Adaptations to manufacturing and resellers (Chen et al., 2004, Floyd et al., 2014, King et al., 2014).

Drawing on newer research of recent meta-analyses, major traits are outlined to be value and volume of the valuations (Floyd et al., 2014, King et al., 2014, Purnawirawan et al, 2015). Seen as a whole, positive ratings increase sales and engagement, whilst the negative feedback diminishes those (Floyd et al., 2014, King et al., 2014, Purnawirawan et al, 2015, Liu, 2006). Yet, their effect depends to a large extent on how exposed readers are to reviews (Maslowska et al.,2017) as well as the features of the Reviewer (Karimi and Wang, 2017) in parallel with the source of the review them (Floyd et al., 2014).

### **2.3. Online Reviews Characteristics**

#### **2.3.1 Valence**

The value of online reviews corresponds to the assessment orientation of comments regarding the Product purchasing experience. That is, the assessments of these stars reflect the level of the attitudes, representing the variation from the center of an attitude spectrum (Krosnick, et al., 1993). Studies by Forman et al., (2008) indicates that while being confronted with a massive flow of information such as online consumer reviews, processing information would happen heuristically, meaning that, they will depend on the features of the resource or on pictorial review ratings as a convenient and efficient heuristic mean. Virtual customers more probably will pay attention to the value of reviews when encountering numerous reviews, being a significant measure indicating quality of product. (Chaiken and Maheswaran, 1994). Valence consideration would matter more when surfing reviews of experimental and credential goods and services. Forman et al., (2008) observed evidence that mild valuations (approximately three stars) as compared to extreme ratings (one star/five stars) were seen less useful. Consequently,

unilateral reviews are regarded by consumers as far preferable to those that are balanced and contain feedback on either positive or negative attributes.

### 2.3.2 Recentness

Another independent variable that can be utilized to modify the online reviews is the time of the review being posted: the creation date or how recent is the review appeared (Gretzel et al., 2007). Identified by Cheung and Thadani (2012) recentness is considered to be a major element associated with the review. Recency falls under "youngest" and "old" postal dates. An investigation conducted into the type of reviews indicates recency as extremely important role and effective outcome for online trip reviews during the analysis of a journey record. 59.3% of those surveyed judged the creation date being at stake as critical when Assessing an online review (Gretzel et al., 2007). According to common sense, the consequences from online reviews can be that More recent online reviews might be seen more than earlier ones, due to the website Provide access to the newest online reviews first (Gretzel et al., 2007). Yet the precise correlation between the newness and impact on customer decisions is ambiguous. A number of surveys exist that investigated in this regard, including Wu and Huberman (2007), concluded that remembrance and the recentness will be discontinued after a while.

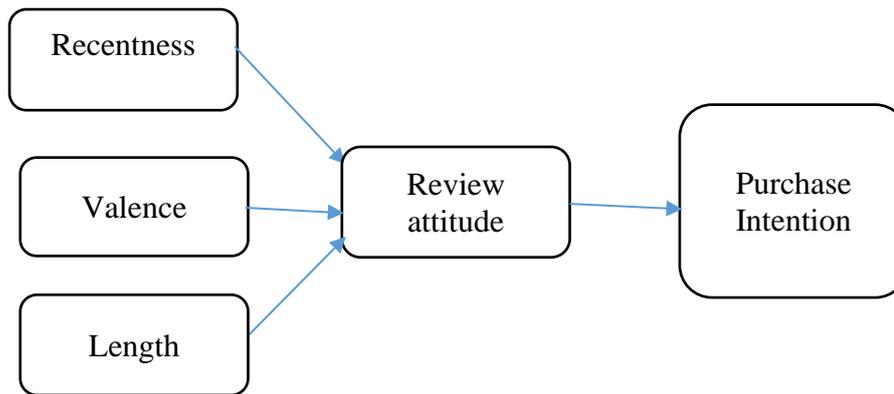
### 2.3.3 Length

Finally, there is a factor that is important for the evaluation of online review content: the length: this is the sum of all of characters written in typescript (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2004). Brief internet feedbacks are likely to contain lower amounts of Details vs. more lengthy reports online (Järveläinen et al, 2013). Compared to shorter reviews, longer ones provide much richer coverage that might be seen engaging beyond the shorter online Reviews. In addition, lengthier ratings draw greater notice online since there is more promise for the consumer to retrieve the desired subject. The length of a review is thus determined as being of the most important messages that are likely to be heard among consumers when seeking goods (Järveläinen et al, 2013). As more and more detailed and relevant data are made available to the person taking the decision, this provides an incentive of the Confidence of the decision-maker (Tversky and Kahneman, 1974). Long Ratings seem much useful as opposed with briefer web reviews.

Owing to the factual approach of using the Nature of the items searched, such comments could have a short form (Mudambi and Schuff, 2010). However, there is a difference of length with respect to search tangible goods and experience goods. The effect of length in tracing items enhances the possibility to perform better diagnoses compared to experiential goods (Mudambi and Schuff, 2010). From Nelson (1970, 1974) indicates that long review is considered as more easy information on product quality while searching for goods before buying a particular product. The length has a correlation with the enthusiasm of the author of review (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2004). You might perceive the length of online reviews to be stronger, since longer ratings are more likely to provide a wider scope of technical information which frequently includes additional facts on the respective product plus much more Details describing how the item was actually utilized (Mudambi and Schuff, 2010). In the light of this finding, it is believed the length of the online review affect the approach to desire and the willingness to buy.

### 3. Research Model and Hypotheses

#### 3.1. Conceptual Model



**Figure 3.1:** Research Path

#### 3.2. Hypotheses:

- **H1:** The length in online reviews has a positive effect on (a) review attitude and therefore also on (b) purchase intention.
- **H2:** The valence of online reviews has a positive effect on (a) review attitude and therefore also on (b) purchase intention.
- **H3:** The recentness in online reviews has a positive effect on (a) review attitude and therefore also on (b) purchase intention.
- **H4:** review attitude is positively correlated with purchase intention.

### 4. Research Methodology

#### 4.1. Research Design

This study applies quantitative research method. Using a printed version of survey questionnaire and then analyzing data by AMOS. Valence, length, recentness, review attitude and purchase intention are measured through survey questionnaire in which reviews are shown to respondents by random. Data then have been inverted in AMOS to evaluate validity, reliability and regression weight.

#### 4.2. Procedure

The data has been collected from university students of Istanbul city in Turkey by a survey. First section participants are being asked to enter their personal information like Age, Gender, Education level, Occupation and Nationality. They have been assured regarding the purpose of study, what we aim to reach and how we will use their personal data in accordance with thesis. This section also included guidance concerning how to fill survey. It is important to mention that, due to the length of survey, it required intelligent and attractive design as well as clear instruction of how to fill it. Participants were being explained of reviews. First the respondents read one of the online reviews. And after that, the questions

about the online review were exposed. Each respondent saw two conditions at random per questionnaire.

Second section provides the main questionnaires for random manipulated reviews. Therefore, they have been shown 2 random reviews, and then were being asked to score questions based on their impression regarding manipulated reviews. The online reviews are made in the same design and style of the existing online review website tripadvisor.com.

### 4.3. Participants

The questionnaire has been distributed among university Students in Istanbul city. Current sample size consists of 195 students presenting Age range from 17 to 35 years old. (M= 26) Around 90 of which has been male participants that almost contributes to 46% of whole sample. Female participants were 105 individuals that is roughly 53% of sample size. There has been no third sexuality among participants. Participation has been completely volunteer; they were being asked to engage just in case they really are enthusiastic to attend the survey. Due to the importance of result accuracy, there has been absolute sensitivity to avoid any unintended participation. In addition, some participants have been appreciated with a small gift by a lottery selection.

#### 1. Positive, recent, long



Can K

Restaurant: Sea Taste (56 reviews)

Visit Date: June 2020

Restaurant is located 10 minutes from center and is accessible by both bus and metro. it offers sea food, soup and a range of salads .We stumbled upon this while making our way down from the Hagia Sophia to the Sea of Marmara. Fantastic find! We knew to order fish and the choices were extensive as were the methods of preparation. You will have a lot of choice from cold starters to main dishes, and if you are in doubt feel free to ask your server for a recommendation! Portions were generous and food was tasty. Friendly staff, well spoken in English. Would definitely recommend it. Loved this place, waiter could not have been more helpful. made suggestions. nothing was too much trouble. Food was great and reasonably priced (3-10 \$). Extra thanks for separate non-smoking area on a second floor, very good for visiting by non-smokers and with children and has mazing view of Marmara sea from second floor.

**Figure 4.1:** Sample of Manipulated Online Review

## 5. Data Analysis

### 5.1. General Descriptive Statistics of Sample

**Table 5.1:** Sample Population

Category	Percentage
Level of study	Bachelor: 65% Master: 31% Phd:4%
Age	18- 26 :82% 27 -35 :18 %
Gender	Male: 46 % Female: 53 %

### 5.2. Descriptive Statistics

Basic descriptive statistics as well as total score of items has been shown in Table 5.2. The mean scores obtained during current survey show acceptable consistency.

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Purchase Intention	195	1.00	7.00	3.302	.931
Review Attitude	195	1.50	5.73	3.925	.699

**TABLE 5.2:** BASIC DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Most of mean values report amounts higher than mid-point that can be interpreted due to population age (young population aged 17-35) and education level (mostly academic degree students). Standard deviations exhibit lower amounts than those for each items as formers are based upon the averages of items. In this study there will be no gender monopoly in regard to result interpretation. Current study applies CR measure to assess the reliability. Assessment has been simplified by employing Amos plugins. Table 5.4 exhibits reliability and validity among factors.

**Table 5.3:** Conditions and Respondents

<b>Conditions</b>	Positive Long Recent	Positive Long Old	Positive Short Recent	Positive Short Old
<b>Respondents</b>	47	47	50	50
<b>Conditions</b>	Negative Long Recent	Negative Long Old	Negative Short Recent	Negative Short Old
<b>Respondents</b>	50	50	48	48

**Table 5.4:** Validity, Reliability and Inter-Correlation

<b>Factors</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>AV E</b>	<b>MSV</b>	<b>Max R(H)</b>	<b>RA</b>	<b>PI</b>
RA	.87 9	.675	.105	.647	<b>.455*</b>	
PI	.93 3	.746	.214	.541	.148	<b>.556*</b>

RA: Review Attitude, PI: Purchase Intention

\*Square Root of AVE.

in our research, as can be seen in table 5.4, composite reliability coefficient for review attitude, indicates amount of 0.879 which based on study by Hair et al (2010) indicates reasonable amount to consider survey items reliable enough to measure the underlying factor (CR is bigger than 0.7). Same can be applied for purchase intention items with CR of 0.933 that again sustain sufficient reliability to measure the purchase intention. Same table, as well indicates the numbers for validity of questionnaire.

**Table 5.5: Regression Weights**

			<b>Estimate</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>C.R.</b>	<b>P</b>
Review attitude	<--	Valence	.854	.012	17.252	***
	-					
Review attitude	<--	Recentness	.961	.063	13.746	***
	-					
Review attitude	<--	Length	1.025	.025	4.265	***
	-					
Purchase intention	<--	Valence	1.785	.089	21.369	***
	-					
Purchase intention	<--	Recentness	1.457	.014	9.124	***
	-					
Purchase intention		Length	.988	.031	15.362	***
	<--					
Purchase intention	-	Review attitude	.846	.042	20.498	***
	<--					
	-					

\*\*\* P < 0.05

Assessing the standardized coefficients shows that highest impact belongs to valence on purchase intention with Co. of (0.59), the positive sign of coefficient illustrates positive correlation between variables and significant number of 0.59 based on Grace and Bollen study (2005) demonstrated medium positive relationship between valence and purchase intention. Second great correlation can be observed between review attitude with coefficient of (0.42) that demonstrates positive medium relation between review attitude and purchase intention which support the study of Somohardjo (2017). Effect of valence of review on review attitude with coefficient of 0.35 same demonstrates positive medium correlation between 2 variables. Meaning that positive review will promote both review attitude and increases intentions to purchase whilst negative reviews will demote review attitude and decreases purchase intention. the result supports the study of Somohardjo (2017) that also demonstrates positive medium correlation between valence of review with both review attitude and purchase intention. This pattern can be observed for recentness of review with both review attitude (coefficient of 0.29) and purchase intention ( coefficient of 0.33) in which positive medium relationship between variables is sustained, meaning that a late review can promote review attitude more and can increase purchase intention .this result matches with findings of Jin et al (2014) that expresses most recent reviews have greater effect on purchase intention of clients while does not support the study of Somohardjo (2017)which indicates the late review can decrease purchase intention.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1. Findings and Reasoning

In order to analyze hypothesis, both outputs from table 5.5 will be taken into account. Unstandardized coefficients (Beta=B) together with P- Values are extracted from table 5.5 besides standardized coefficients.

**H1:** The valence of online reviews has a positive effect on (a) review attitude and therefore also on (b) purchase intention: both hypothesis are supported by P value of 0.000 while the valence of review shows positive medium impact on review attitude (Coefficient of 0.35 and B: 0.854) and positive medium impact on purchase intention (Coefficient of 0.59 and B: 1.875). This finding is in accordance with study conducted by Somohardjo (2017).

**H2:** The length in online reviews has a positive effect on (a) review attitude and therefore also on (b) purchase intention: both hypothesis are supported by P value of 0.000 while the length of review shows positive small impact on review attitude (Coefficient of 0.16 and B: 1.025) and positive medium impact on purchase intention (Coefficient of 0.29 and B: 0.988). This finding is not in accordance with study conducted by Somohardjo (2017).

**H3:** The recentness in online reviews has a positive effect on (a) review attitude and therefore also on (b) purchase intention: both hypothesis are supported by P value of 0.000 while the recentness of review shows positive medium impact on review attitude (Coefficient of 0.29 and B: 0.961) as well as positive medium impact on purchase intention (Coefficient of 0.33 and B: 1.457). This finding is not in accordance with study conducted by Somohardjo (2017).

**H4:** review attitude is positively correlated with purchase intention: Review attitude also shows positive medium correlation with purchase intention with standardized coefficient of 0.42 and Beta for 0.846, and with the significant P value of 0.000 H4 is supported declaring that review attitude acts as moderator variable and has impact on purchase intention.

### 6.2. Research Limitations

Current study applies unique method of data collection that has been adopted from Somohardjo study, designing such survey demands absolute academic assistance from universities and academic staff and normally students will face more difficulty in case the research is not financially supported. Therefore, utilizing professional software and tools to design online survey and play it by random to participants was not feasible which resulted in printing version of survey to be distributed randomly.

Most obvious limitation of printed version in the era of Covid-19 pandemic, has been lack of enough participants, particularly that social distancing measures and rules are preventing people of getting closer to each other.

Another limitation of study, has been due to lack of sufficient resources, mainly because of the fact that other resources have analyzed online reviews from different perspectives and the underlying tested factor in current study has rarely been investigated through prior researches.

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