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Online Reviews, Consumer Confusion and Cognitive Dissonance: Need for Cognition and Self Efficacy as Moderators

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Abstract

Today's consumers face richer information environments than ever before. Online reviews considered as a part of e-WOM provides unbiased & trustworthy source of product information, they are often allied with providing too much information causing adverse judgmental decision making. Limited processing capacity of consumers becomes cognitively overloaded when they attempt to process "too much information" which results in confusion, cognitive strain & other dysfunctional consequences. The present paper investigates the mediating role of online reviews in creating consumer confusion and cognitive dissonance. The effect of cognitive strain caused due to confusion and dissonant thoughts is different for people with high self-efficacy and high need for cognition (NFC) as compared to those who have less of these personalities. The paper studies the moderating impact of NFC and self-efficacy on the relationship between consumer confusion and cognitive dissonance. Data was collected from 116 respondents from Delhi and NCR with the help of a structured questionnaire and focus groups. The paper finds that online reviews significantly impact consumer confusion whereas their effect on cognitive dissonance was found to be insignificant. The mediating impact of consumer confusion in the relationship between online reviews and cognitive dissonance was partially &