

Accepted Manuscript

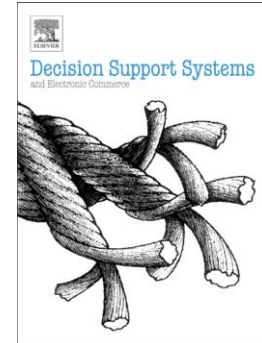
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PII: S0167-9236(16)30165-8
DOI: doi:[10.1016/j.dss.2016.09.016](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2016.09.016)
Reference: DECSUP 12773

To appear in: *Decision Support Systems*

Received date: 30 May 2015
Revised date: 25 July 2016
Accepted date: 14 September 2016



Please cite this article as: Shasha Zhou, Bin Guo, The order effect on online review helpfulness: A social influence perspective, *Decision Support Systems* (2016), doi:[10.1016/j.dss.2016.09.016](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2016.09.016)

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The order effect on online review helpfulness: A social influence perspective

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Abstract

Review helpfulness is receiving increasing attention by academics and practitioners along with the growing problem of information overload in the Internet age. Prior studies on online review helpfulness mainly focus on the direct influences of review- and reviewer-specific characteristics. An implicit underlying assumption of these studies is that reviews for a given product are independent of each other. As such, the existence of social influence among reviewers is much overlooked in the literature on review helpfulness. To fill this gap, this study as a first attempt to explore the order effect on review helpfulness, aims to investigate whether, how, and why the order of a review will affect review helpfulness from a social influence perspective. With an analysis of 70,610 restaurant reviews collected from Yelp.com, this study finds that the order of a review negatively relates to review helpfulness. Moreover, the negative effect of review order on review helpfulness is weakened when the reviewer has more social connectedness or a higher level of expertise, or when the review is more negative in content or more recently posted.

Key words: review helpfulness; order effect; informational social influence; normative social influence

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