How Online Consumer Reviews and the Product Positioning affect Consumer Intentions

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Resumo

This study explores the influence of different types of review on consumer intentions, demonstrating the effect is mediated by review diagnosticity. The results showed attribute-based reviews (ex. UV protection lenses) are perceived as more diagnostic than experience-based reviews (ex. style of sunglasses) and customer ratings (ex. five-star product), and thus, lead to higher consumer purchase intentions and willingness to pay. It also investigates the product positioning impact on the relationship between review type and consumer responses. Two experiments test these predictions. This work offer contribution to the e-WOM literature as it extends the current knowledge regarding the influences of reviews format and products characteristics on consumer intentions. It also contributes to the information processing literature by enriching the understanding of the information diagnosticity role in online reviews.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the influence of different types of review on consumer intentions, demonstrating the effect is mediated by review diagnosticity. The results showed attribute-based reviews (ex. UV protection lenses) are perceived as more diagnostic than experience-based reviews (ex. style of sunglasses) and customer ratings (ex. five-star product), and thus, lead to higher consumer purchase intentions and willingness to pay. It also investigates the product positioning impact on the relationship between review type and consumer responses. Two experiments test these predictions. This work offer contribution to the e-WOM literature as it extends the current knowledge regarding the influences of reviews format and products characteristics on consumer intentions. It also contributes to the information processing literature by enriching the understanding of the information diagnosticity role in online reviews.

Key-words: Online reviews, Review type, Product positioning, Review diagnosticity

INTRODUCTION

The internet enabled consumers to exchange opinions and reviews through social media and retailer websites, being this form of communication known as electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) (Lee & Koo, 2012). Consumer reviews are an essential element of online retailing, as consumers rely each time more on their peers' opinions to create their evaluation of products (Pan & Zhang, 2011). Previous studies have investigated the influences of review content, where some argue objective information in reviews is more helpful to consumers (Park & Lee, 2008), while others indicate that subjective information is more diagnostic (Yin, Bond, & Zhang, 2016). Also, work regarding reviews format demonstrated that text reviews are more diagnostic compared to numerical ratings (Filieri, 2015), while there are findings in the communication literature suggesting that statistical evidence is more persuasive than narrative evidence (Allen & Preiss, 1997). Thus, a lack of agreement concerning the influences of these different types of reviews on consumer responses is found.

To address these issues, we draw on literature concerning the diagnosticity of information to demonstrate that different types of reviews (attribute-based, experience-based and customer ratings) will have distinct influences on consumer intentions. We argue that reviews perceived as more diagnostic by consumers have a higher impact on their intentions. By doing so, this research contributes to the e-WOM literature by showing how different types of reviews influence consumer intentions due to their perceived review diagnosticity. We also contribute to the marketing and information systems literature since few studies show how different types of reviews can influence consumer intentions (e.g., D. Park & Lee, 2008).

Moreover, we also explore how the product positioning (functional or symbolic) can affect the review type influence on consumer intentions. We broaden past propositions by demonstrating that the review diagnosticity is the mechanism which explains why different matches between product positioning and review type lead to distinct consumer intentions. Therefore, we aim to contribute to the online reviews literature as we explore the product moderation on the relationship between e-WOM and consumer responses. Furthermore, the findings from this paper can help marketing managers and architects of review platforms to understand how different aspects of online reviews can influence consumers' intentions.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
Types of consumer reviews: attribute-based, experience-based and customer ratings

In the e-WOM domain, the attribute-based reviews (ABR) and experience-based reviews (EBR) are text statements posted by a consumer who already bought a product, offering their opinion (Huang, Tan, Ke, & Wei, 2013). The ABR is more objective, centered on the description of the product attributes, while the EBR represent the overall assessment of the product made by the reviewer, being more subjective and containing more emotions (Huang et al., 2013). On the other hand, customer ratings (CR) are a numerical score (stars) provided by reviewers to indicate their overall opinion about the product (Pan & Zhang, 2011). These different types of reviews could lead to distinct outcomes over consumer intentions. For instance, Filieri (2015) found that text reviews are more helpful to consumers compared to CR. Further, some authors argue that objective information (ABR) have a higher influence on consumer intentions (Park & Lee, 2008), whereas others indicate that subjective information(EBR) would lead consumers to higher purchase intentions (Yin et al., 2016). Clarifying such differences could help academics and practitioners to understand when and how to leverage such consumer opinions on online sales.

A literature review concerning the differences between ABR and EBR seems to point to higher influences on consumer intentions for the previous one. Past research suggested that factual content, defined as more objective, would lead consumers to better intentions rather than an evaluative content, referred as a subjective interpretation of intangible product characteristics, as the factual content uses logical and verifiable arguments, improving the review adoption (Holbrook, 1978). Consumers also present more positive cognitive responses (Edell & Staelin, 1983), perceive higher diagnosticity, and indicate higher purchase intentions (Park & Lee, 2008) when they receive objective information rather than subjective information.

Furthermore, the subjectivity presented in the EBR is another reason to expect lower influences of this review type on consumer intentions. When a review contains subjective information, it becomes dependent on the interpretation of each person, since intangibles product characteristics are not measured equally by all individuals (Edell & Staelin, 1983). Even if a product is considered beautiful by many consumers, the reasons why this beautifulness is perceived may be different for each, and thus, such subjective information may not be considered useful (Sen & Lerman, 2007). Since ABR is more factual and objective, we expect that its influence on attitude formation would be higher when compared to EBR.

Also essential when analyzing the influences of different review types is their format: text or ratings. Past studies indicate that the text reviews result in higher information diagnosticity, compared to the CR, due to the capacity of the text comments in providing more information to consumers (Filieri, 2015). Meanwhile, evidence from a meta-analysis point to a more persuasive influence for statistical rather than narrative evidence (Allen & Preiss, 1997).

Compared to text reviews, CR contains less detailed information, which would lead to a lower influence on diagnosticity, and further, on consumer intentions (Filieri, 2015). Moreover, reviews offering product attribute details are found more persuasive (ABR) than overall reviews with insufficiency of such attribute's detailed information (EBR) (Jiménez & Mendoza, 2013). The EBR provides consumers with the overall evaluation of the product (Huang et al., 2013), leading consumers to evaluate the product based on general attitudes and summary impressions (Mantel & Kardes, 1999). A similar assessment occurs when consumers observe a CR, since it works as a shortcut inference, demonstrating the overall impressions of others (Filieri, 2015). Based on these previous studies, we suggest that ABR will have a higher influence on consumer intentions compared to EBR and CR. Thus, we propose that:

H1: Consumer intentions will be higher when consumers receive an attribute-based review when compared to experience-based reviews and customer ratings.

The role of diagnosticity

The diagnosticity of a review is based on the capacity of message reviews to increase the knowledge of a consumer about the product analyzed in the review, sometimes indicated as the level of information helpfulness (Filieri, 2015). Consumers' confidence to make decisions tends to be higher when they perceive the high diagnostic information (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). Research concerning the impact of review format on diagnosticity of information has demonstrated that text reviews are considered more helpful than CR (Filieri, 2015). Furthermore, consumers perceive a higher diagnosticity when viewing ABR, compared to EBR (Park & Lee, 2008). Following this argumentation, we suggest that ABR would lead to higher diagnosticity of information when compared to EBR and CR.

The higher the information diagnosticity, more prone consumers are to adopt information (Filieri, 2015). Further, previous work suggested that the information diagnosticity has a positive influence on consumer attitudes (Jiang & Benbasat, 2007). In the same line of reasoning, the diagnosticity of a review also has a positive impact on consumer purchase intentions (Park & Lee, 2008). Taken together, these previous findings offer evidence for the mediation of information diagnosticity on the relationship between review type and consumer intentions. Thus, we offer the second hypothesis of this research:

H2: The reviews diagnosticity will act as the underlying mechanism that explains the influence of review type on consumer intentions.

The product positioning moderation

The importance of product type on the relationship between the eWOM and consumers' perceptions has already been demonstrated in previous research (Pan & Zhang, 2011). The work of Huang et al. (2013) showed that when the product type matches the review type (search product with ABR vs. experience product with EBR), the helpfulness perceived by consumers is higher. This past evidence shows that the product characteristics can affect the influence of review types on consumer responses. In this work, we demonstrate the role of the product positioning in the relationship between review type and consumer intentions. The choice to explore the role of the product positioning (functional vs. symbolic) rather than the product type was made to achieve more controlled results.

It is known that a product can offer both utilitarian and symbolic benefits to a consumer. Still, different products may be assessed based more on one of these benefit dimensions (Batra & Ahtola, 1991). Functional products are evaluated mainly in their capacity to fulfill a utilitarian need, being bought by their particular attributes (Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998). Contrastively, symbolic products are considered based on their intangible characteristics and emotional value (Bhat & Reddy, 1988). Thus, when a consumer intends to perform a behavior (a purchase) based on utilitarian (symbolic) reasons, their attitudinal evaluation will rely on such utilitarian (symbolic) benefits (Batra & Ahtola, 1991).

Therefore, the ABR, which focuses on the products attributes, would offer helpful information for the assessment of functional products, leading consumers to higher intentions. Contrastively, the EBR would not, since its content is mainly intangible (Huang et al., 2013). As in the case of symbolic products, we believe that the intangible characteristics contained in the EBR would be helpful, as symbolic products are expected to fulfill intangible benefits (Bhat & Reddy, 1988), further influencing the consumer attitudes. The ABR would also help in the judgment of symbolic products since these not only need to attend intangible benefits but also to offer some standard level of functional value (Oliver, 1999). Consequently, detailed information of utilitarian benefits would help consumers to evaluate the symbolic products.

Meanwhile, different than the text reviews, CR is an overall unidimensional evaluation of reviewers (Filieri, 2015). These ratings may only be perceived as helpful if consumers

believe the reviewers' preferences for a product are homogeneous (Archak, Ghose, & Ipeirotis, 2011). Further, consumers presume that population preferences for functional products vary less than for symbolic products, as these lack objective standards for comparison (He & Bond, 2013). CR would be helpful to consumers in the evaluation of functional products since its information is more useful for products with homogeneous population preferences (He & Bond, 2013). Therefore, we predict that CR will result in higher consumer intentions when reviewing a functional product, but lower intentions when reviewing a symbolic product.

Following our previous discussion, we expect that the product positioning will influence the impact of the review type on consumer intentions, changing its magnitude for CR and EBR, but not for ABR. Further, building on past research (Huang et al., 2013), we suggest that the reviews diagnosticity will be the reason why consumers show different intentions to different matches of review type and product positioning. Hence, we offer the following hypothesis:

H3$_a$: Consumers who see an attribute-based review will not show different intentions across both types of product positioning
H3$_b$: Consumers who see a customer rating for a functional product will have higher intentions compared to those who see it for a symbolic product
H3$_c$: Consumers who see an experience-based review for a functional product will have lower intentions compared to those who see it for a symbolic product.
H4: The reviews diagnosticity will be the mechanism that explains why consumers indicate different intentions towards different combinations of review type and product positioning.

STUDY 1

This study tested our four research hypotheses. Two hundred and twenty-one individuals (57% female, M_{age} = 35.63, SD = 10.92) were recruited through Amazon's MTurk. They were randomly assigned to one of the six conditions in a 3 (review type: CR vs. ABR vs. EBR) x 2 (product positioning: functional vs. symbolic) between-subjects design. Thirty-eight participants were dropped due to failing to indicate the correct type of review or response time shorter than the minimum of 180 seconds. The final sample was 183 individuals.

Procedure. Participants were told to imagine that they needed a new travel mug and to describe what they would expect from it. In the functional product condition, the reason for the need was to maintain beverages temperature when outside home, while in the symbolic product condition the reason was to stop using plastic cups, preserving the environment. Next, they were presented with a travel mug offer containing an image, the price, the product description and the consumers' reviews. In the functional product condition (n=89), the description consisted of attributes and structural features. As for the symbolic product condition (n=94), the description focused on self-expression, green consumption and style aspects. ABR (n=60) included opinions concerning the structure and temperature maintenance. EBR (n=59) contained opinions about self-expression, style and overall satisfaction of the reviewers. Participants on the CR (n=64) condition only saw the stars the reviewers gave to the product. All the reviews offered had a positive valence to control for the effects of review variance.

Measures. Following the manipulation, participants were asked to rate "How likely would you be to buy this Travel Mug?" on a 7-point semantic differential scale ranging from 1 "Not likely" to 7 "Very likely" (Nowlis, Mandel, & McCabe, 2004). They also rated the question "Would you be willing to pay a premium price for this Travel Mug?" on a 7-point semantic differential scale ranging from 1 "I would not pay" to 7 "I would pay." Additionally, they answered the item "How much would you be willing to pay for this Travel mug in relation to its average value?" on a 7-point semantic differential scale ranging from 1 "Substantially" less to 7 "Substantially more." We also measured the review's diagnosticity (Filieri, 2015)

perceived by the respondents with a three-item scale ($\alpha = 0.90$), ranging from 1 "Strongly disagree" to 7 "Strongly agree": "The information provided in online reviews was helpful for me to evaluate the product", "The information provided in online reviews was helpful in familiarizing me with the product" and "The information provided in online reviews was helpful for me to understand the performance of the product".

Results

Manipulation checks. The product positioning manipulation check showed that participants in functional product condition perceived it to be more functional (M = 2.35; SD = 1.47) compared to the symbolic product condition respondents (M = 3.13, SD = 1.82; F (1, 181) = 10.12, p < 0.01, $\eta_p^2 = 0.053$). Moreover, the review type manipulation check indicated that respondents in the ABR condition perceive the review as focusing more on the attributes of the product (M= 3.58, SD = 1.79) than individuals in the EBR condition (M =5.15, SD =1.57; F (1, 117) =25.80, p<0.001, $\eta_p^2 =0.181$). Two-way ANOVAs were conducted with both manipulation factors to ensure that no interaction effects were triggered on manipulation checks (Fs < 1).

Consumer purchase intentions and willingness to pay. We performed a two-way ANOVA to test whether the ABR would lead to higher purchase intentions and willing to pay compared to CR and EBR (H1). The results showed that the review type manipulation did not influenced purchase intentions (PI, F (2, 177) = 0.830, p = 0.44), neither the willingness to pay (WTP, F (2, 177) = 1.252, p = 0.29) and willingness to pay premium (WTPP, F (2, 177) = 0.712, p = 0.49). Thus, the results of this experiment fail to support our H1.

Diagnosticity mediation. To test if diagnosticity mediates the effect of review type on consumer intentions (H2), we performed a mediation analysis (Hayes 2012, model 4) on the three DVs. Since our independent variable had three levels, we set the ABR condition as the baseline for the analysis, considering that we expected it to have higher means compared to the other two levels (H1). The pairwise comparisons of the effect on the DVs demonstrated that the ABR indirect effects were higher than the CR indirect effects (PI 95% CI = -0.658 to -0.047; WTP 95% CI = -0.364 to -0.022; WTPP 95% CI = -0.563 to -0.040), but showed no difference to the EBR indirect effects (PI 95% CI = -0.562 to 0.043; WTP 95% CI = -0.278 to 0.008; WTPP 95% CI = -0.459 to 0.029). The analysis did not reveal either a total effect or a direct effect of the ABR condition compared to the CR or the EBR condition (all p > 0.05). Thus, the results of this experiment offer initial support to H2.

Product positioning moderation. To test H3a-c and H4, we conducted bootstrapping analysis (Hayes 2012, model 8) on the three DVs. Three dummy variables were encoded, one for each type of review. Then, we performed the analysis setting each dummy as the independent variable and one of the other two orthogonal dummies as a covariate.

The results indicate that the product positioning moderated the effects of the review type on the consumer intentions, but only for CR and EBR. The effects of the ABR on the three DVs were not influenced by the product positioning (all p > 0.05). As for CR, the analysis showed that this review had a lower influence on PI (b = -1.16; p = 0.041), WTP (b = -0.92; p = 0.047) and WTPP (b = -1.39; p = 0.015) when reviewing a symbolic positioned product compared to a functional positioning. Moreover, EBR had a higher influence on PI (b = 1.29; p = 0.025) and WTPP (b = 1.37; p = 0.019) when reviewing a product with a symbolic positioning compared to a functional positioning, whereas the influence on WTP was not affected by the product positioning (p > 0.05). Thus, these findings support H3a-c.

To test H4, we used the ABR as a baseline for the model, since our independent variable had three levels and this review type presented higher influences on both product positioning conditions. The analysis showed that for a symbolic positioned product, the diagnosticity mediated the relative negative effect of CR compared to ABR on PI (95% CI = -0.978 to -0.157), WTP (95% CI = -0.492 to -0.060), WTPP (95% CI = -0.811 to -0.135). However, such

mediation did not occur for the functional positioning (PI 95% CI = -0.457 to 0.294; WTP 95% CI = -0.233 to 0.123; WTPP 95% CI = -0.388 to 0.244), as expected, since these two types of review were predicted to have higher influences on consumer intentions for functional products.

Further, for products with a functional positioning, the diagnosticity mediated the relative negative effect of EBR compared to ABR on WTP (95% CI = -0.373 to -0.006), PI (90% CI = -0.686 to -0.042) and WTPP (90% CI = -0.570 to -0.035). On the other hand, when the product had a symbolic positioning, this diagnosticity mediation did not occur (WTP 95% CI = -0.265 to 0.103; PI 90% CI = -0.445 to 0.160; WTPP 90% CI = -0.380 to 0.127), which was expected, as both EBR and ABR were predicted to have higher influences on products with a symbolic positioning. Together, these results corroborate H4.

Discussion. The results of this first study failed to support our hypothesis that ABR leads consumers to higher purchase intentions and willingness to pay, compared to CR and EBR (H1). We could argue that our scenario choice in this experiment somehow influenced our results, as the use of the green appeal in the symbolic product positioning could have interacted with our manipulations. This study also provided initial support to our proposition that the diagnosticity is the process explaining the effects of review type on consumer intentions (H2). Further, the product positioning moderation was supported in this study (H3$_{a-c}$) offering insights into the effect of review type on different types of products. First, the product positioning does not affect the influence of ABR on consumer intentions (H3$_a$). Second, CR tends to lead consumers to higher (lower) intentions when used to review a functional (symbolic) positioned product (H3$_b$). Third, EBR results in higher (lower) consumer attitudes when offered in reviews of symbolic (functional) positioned products. Finally, our results indicated that the reviews diagnosticity explained the product positioning moderation on the relationship between review type and consumer intentions, therefore supporting H4.

STUDY 2

The main goal of the second study was to correct and replicate the effects found in the first experiment. This time, we elaborated the scenario with a different product (Sunglasses). Instead of using a green appeal in the symbolic positioning, we incorporated a style and classic appeal. Two hundred and six individuals (54% female, $M_{age} = 37.52$, SD = 11.97) were recruited from Amazon's MTurk. The design of the study and the criteria for participant's exclusion from the sample were similar to the first study. The final sample was 168 individuals.

Procedure. Initially, participants were asked to imagine that they needed a new pair of sunglasses and to describe what they would expect from it. In the functional product condition, the reason for the need was the protection of the eyesight, while in the symbolic product condition the reason was to improve their appearance. Next, they were presented with a sunglass offer, which contained an image and the price of the product, the product description, and the product reviews. Once again, participants only were provided with reviews containing positive valence. In the functional product condition (n = 84), the description consisted of attributes and sunglasses technical features. As for the symbolic product condition (n = 84), the description focused on sunglasses history and style aspects. ABR (n = 56) included opinions concerning the UV protection, structure, and polarization of the sunglasses. EBR (n = 53) contained opinions, sentiments and overall satisfaction of the reviewers about the style of the product. Participants on the CR (n = 59) condition only saw the stars the reviewers gave to the product.

Measures. All the measures were similar to previews study. The diagnosticity measurement resulted in an index with α = 0.92.

Results

Manipulation checks. The product positioning manipulation check showed that participants in functional product condition perceived it to be more functional (M = 2.85; SD =

1.71) compared to the symbolic product condition (M = 3.75, SD = 1.96; F (1, 166) = 10.18, p < 0.01, η_p^2 = 0.058). Moreover the review type manipulation check indicated that respondents in the ABR condition perceive the review as focusing more on the attributes of the product (M = 3.61, SD = 1.83) than individuals in the EBR (M = 5.30, SD = 1.48; F (1, 107) = 28.22, p < 0.001, η_p^2 = 0.209). Two-way ANOVAs were conducted with both manipulation factors to ensure that no interaction effects were triggered on manipulation checks (Fs < 1).

Consumer purchase intentions and willingness to pay. Two-way ANOVAs were performed using the review type and product positioning as the factors on the three DVs – PI, WTP, and WTPP. The results showed that the review type manipulation influenced the PI (F (2, 162) = 3.467, p < 0.05; η_p^2 = 0.041), but not the WTP (F (2, 162) = 2.232, p = 0.111) and WTPP (F (2, 162) = 2.296, p = 0.104). No main effects were found for the product positioning manipulation in the three DVs (all p>0.05). Tukey post hoc analysis indicated that respondents in the ABR indicated more PI (M = 5.11, SD = 1.84) compared to participants in the EBR condition (M = 4.17, SD = 2.03; p<0.05). No statistical difference in PI was found between participants in the ABR and CR condition (p > 0.05). These results partially support H1.

Diagnosticity mediation. Following, we tested our H2. Bootstrapping analysis (Hayes 2012, model 4) were performed on the three DVs. Again, we set the ABR condition as the baseline for the analysis. The pairwise comparisons of the effect on the DVs demonstrated that ABR indirect effects were higher than CR indirect effects (PI 95% CI = -0.691 to -0.148; WTP 95% CI = -0.432 to -0.076; WTPP 95% CI = -0.605 to -0.118) and higher than EBR indirect effects (PI 95% CI = -0.579 to -0.058; WTP 95% CI = -0.363 to -0.034; WTPP 95% CI = -0.513 to -0.050). The analysis did not reveal either a total effect or a direct effect of the ABR condition compared to the CR condition (p > 0.05). Further, we found significant total effects for all DVs when comparing the ABR condition with the EBR condition (p < 0.05), but not for the direct effect (p > 0.05). These results suggest that a full mediation occurs in the relative effect between ABR and EBR on PI through diagnosticity, thus offering support to our H2.

Product positioning moderation. To test H3 and H4, we again conducted bootstrapping analysis (Hayes 2012, model 8) on the three DVs. We used the same encoding process of study 1 to carry the analysis. The results indicate that the product positioning moderated the effects of the review type on the consumer attitudes, but again, only for CR and EBR. The effects of ABR on consumers PI, WTP and WTPP again were not influenced by the product positioning (all p > 0.05). In addition, the influences of CR on WTP (b = -0.92; p = 0.023) and WTPP (b = -1.33; p = 0.034) were influenced by the product positioning moderation, whereas the impact on PI was not (p > 0.05). Thus, when the CR was offered to review a symbolic (functional) positioned product, the participants demonstrated lower (higher) attitudes toward the product. The analysis also revealed that the EBR influence was higher on WTP (b = 0.97; p = 0.019), WTPP (b = 1.73; p = 0.007), but not on PI (p > 0.05), when reviewing a product with a symbolic positioning compared to a functional positioning. Therefore, these results corroborate H3$_{a-c}$.

The ABR was again used as the baseline to test the hypothesis concerning the diagnosticity mediation on the interaction effect of review type and product positioning (H4). The results demonstrated that, regarding the differences between the ABR and the CR, negative indirect effects through the diagnosticity were found for all DVs in both product positioning conditions. Further, the indirect effects for the symbolic positioned product (Effect$_{PI}$ = -0.442; Effect$_{WTP}$ = -0.253; Effect$_{WTTP}$ = -0.355) were lower than for the functional positioned products (Effect$_{purchase}$ = -0.285; Effect$_{WTP}$ = -0.163; Effect$_{WTTP}$ = -0.229), converging toward H4.

Further, for products with a functional positioning, the diagnosticity mediated the relative negative effect of EBR compared to ABR on PI (95% CI = -0.794 to -0.057), WTP (95% CI = -0.479 to -0.022) and WTPP (95% CI = -0.683 to -0.052). Meanwhile, when the product had a symbolic positioning, this diagnosticity mediation was not significant. Therefore, these analyses offer further support to our H4.

Discussion. The results of this study partially support H1 concerning the review type influence on consumer intentions. Participants indicated a higher PI when they saw an ABR rather than an EBR. No differences were found between ABR and CR regarding respondent's PI. Moreover, mediation analysis suggests that the effect of review type on consumer intentions is mediated by the information diagnosticity (H2). Moreover, regarding our H3, the product positioning again moderated the effect of review type on consumer attitudes, leading to a similar conclusion that we drew from the first study. Finally, this study corroborated H4 regarding the mediation role of the review diagnosticity in the product positioning and review type interaction effect on consumer intentions. When participants perceived a match of product positioning and review type to be high (low) on diagnosticity, they demonstrated high (low) consumer attitudes.

GENERAL DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The studies of this research highlight the relevance of different types of online reviews and the reviewed product positioning on shaping consumer intentions. First, this present research contributes to the literature of e-WOM by investigating how different types of reviews influence consumer attitudes. We have argued that ABR would lead consumers to higher attitudes when compared to EBR and CR. Our studies only provided evidence for the higher influence of ABR on consumer attitudes compared to EBR, but no differences were found between CR and the other two review types. In study two we showed that participants who saw an ABR have higher PI compared to individuals who saw an EBR.

Further, when the diagnosticity was accounted in the analysis, the results of our second study indicated that ABR had higher PI, WTP and WTPP compared to EBR. When participants received an ABR, rather than EBR, they perceived the reviews as having high diagnosticity and thus indicated higher intentions towards the product. This finding corroborates a body of research which indicates that objective and factual information is perceived as more informative by consumers, influencing their intentions (Holbrook, 1978; Park & Lee, 2008). In addition, in both our studies we found positive indirect effects regarding the differences between ABR and CR. Therefore, our research highlights the review diagnosticity function as the mediator of the review type influence on consumer intentions.

Past studies have demonstrated that the content of a review (Holbrook, 1978) and its form (Filieri, 2015) have an impact on the information diagnosticity. Our research extends the current knowledge by demonstrating how different types of reviews have distinct impacts on consumer attitudes due to the perceived review diagnosticity. When consumers receive an ABR, rather than an EBR review or a CR, they indicate higher levels of information diagnosticity and are prone to indicate higher consumer attitudes. This more comprehensive analysis concerning different types of reviews offers new insights relating to past findings demonstrated in the marketing literature. For instance, Filieri (2015) indicated that text reviews are more diagnostic and tend to be more adopted compared to CR. The present research further explores this proposition, showing that only ABR are perceived as more diagnostic by consumers than CR, whereas the EBR lead to similar levels of diagnosticity.

Moreover, this work adds to the existing research on online reviews as it extends the understanding of the product moderation on the relationship between e-WOM and consumer attitudes. Past research has suggested that the product type reviewed (search or experience) can alter the perceived helpfulness of ABR or EBR (Huang et al., 2013). We extended these previous findings by exploring the role of the product positioning, in search of a more controlled influence of the product nature, since the product type manipulation (search or experience) can be influenced by price and risk perceptions (Darby & Karni, 1973). Both our studies indicated that the product positioning affected the impact of the review type on consumer intentions. We demonstrated that functional positioned products receive higher consumer intentions when

reviewed with CR or ABR, rather than EBR. On the other hand, symbolic positioned products obtain higher consumer intentions when reviewed with ABR or EBR, instead of CR.

Finally, this study contributes to the information processing literature by enriching the understanding of the information diagnosticity role in online reviews settings. The present studies not only show that the review diagnosticity mediates the influences of different review types on consumer attitudes, but they also evidenced that the moderation effect of the product positioning in this relationship is also explained by the review diagnosticity. When the matches between the product positioning and the review type are perceived as high in diagnosticity, they further elicit higher consumer attitudes. Further, we observe that our hypotheses are in line with data from previous research. For example, similar to our results, Pan and Zhang (2011) have shown that CR received higher means of helpfulness when offered for utilitarian products compared to more experiential (intangible) ones. Work from Filieri (2015) showed that reviews for tourism-related products (which we could infer as having more intangible benefits) were perceived as more diagnostic when they were presented in text form compared to the numerical rating form. The same pattern of review diagnosticity we found in our studies when the product review had a symbolic positioning. These findings from past research offer extra support to our propositions.

As e-WOM is a known driver of sales and has been pointed as an essential tool to influence consumers, implications for marketing managers and architects of review platforms can also be drawn from this present research. First, our research demonstrates that online retail websites that sell a variety of products, and that do not have a precise segmentation of categories within site, should request consumers to leave text feedbacks with more objectives argumentation about the product, highlighting the attributes of the product. Since consumers consider the ABR as more diagnostic compared to other types of review, and it also exerts higher influences on consumer attitudes, this form of e-WOM could help retailers to boost consumers responses toward their products, independently of their positioning.

Further, this study also highlighted the importance of the product reviewed to understand the influences of online reviews. The positioning a company chooses for its product, more functional or more symbolic, has a clear impact on the effectiveness of online reviews. Online stores that sell mostly commodities, like supermarket and hardware stores' websites, would benefit most when offering CR or ABR for their consumers Otherwise, we indicate a different strategy for websites selling branded products with a more symbolic appeal. For instance, clothing and jewelry stores could benefit most by providing text comments to its consumers, due to the intangible nature of their products.

Our research presents some limitations. First, we only account for positive valence reviews in our studies. This choice was made so we could control the e-WOM valence source of variation. We recommend that future research extend our studies to account for e-WOM volume and variance, improving the understanding of the influences of different review types on consumer responses. Second, although we explored the product positioning role, other products aspects could be explored to extend the generalization of our findings. For example, the price and risk of a product can affect consumers skepticism towards information (Darby & Karni, 1973). Third, more research is needed to evidence the differences between CR and text reviews. We could not find a relative main effect between these review types in this work, only indirect effects through the diagnosticity mediation.

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