

A RESEARCH NOTE OF ONLINE BIDDERS' CONFORMITY

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Consumers' mimicking behavior has been confirmed by numerous experiments conducted by sociologists and psychologists. Bidders may be influenced by other bidders in order to reduce perceived risk or collect better product information. Based on the influence of online customer reviews, and Lascu and Zinkhan's conformity model (1999), this research is designed to build on the exploratory research with three important factors that affect conformity bidder behaviors: informational social influence (mediator), perceived risk, and product involvement.

The experiment involved 480 students from a university in northern Taiwan who have used online auction services within the last six months. Data were completed within a 2-week period in the summer of 2006 for two products: mobile phone (high involvement) and t-shirt (low involvement). The two variables, total number of bids and ratings of sellers, were manipulated. Each subject was randomly assigned to one of two treatment conditions. The hypothesis (*perceived risks will significantly influence online bidders' conformity*) was supported in experiments. The results show that bidders are more susceptible to interpersonal influence, when one is more highly involved with a product. It was also proved that perceived risk would affect bidders' conformity, suggesting that marketers can take specific actions such as positive word of mouth to create a positive impression. The findings of this study take us far beyond the existing literature.

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Exploration can be conducted in the future for other products or different nationalities to better understand bidders' conformity behavior.

Keywords: online bidders, consumers' mimicking behavior, perceived risk, online customer reviews.

REFERENCE

Lascu, D., & Zinkhan, G. (1999). Consumer conformity: Review and applications for marketing theory and practice. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 7 (3), 1-12.