The use of Dispreferred Marker to overcome Confirmation Bias in Online Word-of-Mouth communication

온라인 구전에서 담화표지(Dispreferred marker)가 확증편향에 미치는 영향

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Abstract

Online reviews, a form of online word-of-mouth (WOM), have recently become one of the most important sources of information for modern consumers. Some researches show that positive reviews are perceived to be more helpful then negative reviews, other researches show that negative reviews are more helpful than positive reviews. In this research I propose that how reviewers phrase their online review is more important than review valence and introduce a review that uses discourse marker. The mixed effect of positive and negative review may come from low credibility of the reviewer. For instance, review readers would perceive the reviewer less credible if the reviewer is too positive or negative. For this reason, I suggest discourse marker, including phrases such as "I'll be honest," or "I don't want to be mean, but", which could positively affect the credibility of the reviewer. Furthermore, I propose that consumers' initial belief for the product could be attenuated once consumers read reviews that include discourse marker and perceive reviewer as a credible communicator. The goal of this research is to demonstrate confirmation bias and identify whether confirmation bias can be debilitated by discourse marker review. In four experiments the present work tested (1) whether consumers prefer discourse marker reviews over balanced review, (2) whether consumers perceive reviewer who uses discourse marker in its review more credible than the reviewer who does not uses discourse marker, (3) whether perceived credibility of the reviewer could lead to an increase in the attractiveness of a product and (4) whether consumers' confirmation bias could be weakened by using discourse marker in the review.

Keyword : Online reviews, Word-of-mouth (WOM), Confirmation bias, Dispreferred marker
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1. Introduction

Online word-of-mouth (WOM) platforms have become one of the most important sources of information for modern consumers. These platforms enable consumers to socially interact with one another, exchange product-related information, and make informed purchases. Word-of-mouth communication is valuable because it is presumed to be less biased and unvarnished than communication from those with a vested interest in cultivating certain attitudes or behavior (Brown and Reingen 1987, Friestad and Wright 1994, Godes and Mayzlin 2004). In part, empirical studies have usually found that negative WOM hurt sales to a greater extent than positive WOM help sales in diverse product categories (Basuroy et al. 2003, Cao et al. 2011, Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006). On the other hand, there are opinions that negative review is sought after because negative information tends to be more diagnostic and influential than positive information in communication (Baumeister et al. 2001, Herr et al. 1991, Richins 1983). In some instances, mildly negative information can even result in more positive overall assessments of a product (Ein-Gar et al. 2012). In this research I propose how reviewers phrase their online review is more important than review valence to influence consumers' judgments and behavior and introduce review with dispreferred marker. The mixed effect of positive and negative review may come from low credibility of the reviewer. Therefore, I suggest dispreferred marker, including phrases such as "I'll be honest," "God bless it," or "I don't want to be mean, but", which could positively affect the credibility of the reviewer. The goal of this research is to demonstrate that consumers' initial belief for the product could be attenuated once consumers read reviews that include dispreferred marker and perceive reviewer as a credible communicator. In four experiments, this research explored the proposition that the use of dispreferred markers has the potential to influence consumers' judgments and behavior.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Online Word-of-Mouth: It's usefulness

Online user reviews have become an important source of information to consumers (Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006, Herr et al. 1991, Zhu and Zhang 2010). Online review is valuable since it is believed to show honest opinions compared to marketers or retailers (Barbara and Schindler 2010, Goldsmith and Horowitz 2006). Therefore firms have been experimenting with various methods to sort and present the review in the most appropriate manner (Racherla and Friske 2012).

Before the advent of the internet, consumers received word-of-mouth communications about a product or service from people they know by face to face and weighed that opinion when they made purchasing decisions. Also, conversations among buyers were more important than marketing communications in influencing adoption (Ryan and Gross 1943). However, after the advent of the internet, information about the product or service from strangers became more accessible. Accordingly, it became important to understand how consumers derive value from reviews written by strangers.

When consumers are faced to make choice under incomplete information, they tend to interpret ambiguous information by their prior beliefs (Deighton 1984, Hoch and Ha 1986) or rely on heuristics to make decisions at a relatively low cost (Russo and Dosher 1983). On the other hand, Banerjee (1992) suggests that consumers may ignore their own private information in favor of information inferred from others' actions. Furthermore, consumers may pay attention to anonymous posts and this new information can cause discontinuous shifts in the actions of consumers (Bikhchandani et al. 1991, Mayzlin 2004). This suggests that consumers take care and use anonymous communicator's opinion when they make purchasing decision.

Research on persuasion has demonstrated that credibility of the communicator has significant effect on the persuasiveness of the messages such as product reviews. Reviews have been published summarizing the literature pertaining to the effect of source credibility on immediate attitude change (Andersen and Clevenger 1963) and the process by which communicator attractiveness mediates persuasion (Simons et al. 1970). Credibility is defined in terms of two components: expertise and trustworthiness (Chaiken and Maheswaran 1994, Hovland and Weiss 1951). Expertise refers to the extent to which a speaker is perceived to be capable of making correct assertions. In other words, it involves the validity of the communicator's assertions and culminates in judgments such as discernment and intelligence. On the other hand, trustworthiness refers to the degree to which an audience perceives the assertion made by communicator to be one that the speaker considers valid. It involves assessing whether there are biases in the communicator's assertions and culminates in trait judgments such as honesty and trustworthiness (Hovland et al. 1953). Therefore, in this research, I suggest that consumers are more attracted to the product when they perceive reviewer as a credible communicator.

2.2. Dispreferred Marker

Dispreferred markers are phrases like "I'll be honest," "Don't get me wrong," "God bless it." or "I don't want to be mean, but …." These markers do not affect the truth of the message or its referential meaning. Instead serve as an emotional signal, that the communicator is about to mention, or has just mentioned, something unpleasant, negative or argumentative (Fraser 1990, Holtgraves 2010).

The first serious systematic study of dispreferred markers began in the 1980s by Levinson (1983). He was one of the first to suggest dispreferred markers as a group. Since then researchers

focused on understanding the nature and role of dispreferred marker (Blakemore 1987, Frasser 1990, Schiffrin 1987, Schourup 1985).

Dispreferred marker was also studied in the aspect of politeness theory, which sees dispreferred marker as an act of politeness that the communicator extends to the receiver. In everyday conversation, people frequently get involved in face-threatening acts which could and must be managed through linguistic politeness strategies. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), dispreferred marker reduces face threats to the receiver either by sending out a warning that a threat is forthcoming or by acknowledging in a conciliatory manner that a threat has occurred. Also when dispreferred marker is preceded, people much quickly identify threat compared when it is not (Holtgraves 1998).

Not only dispreferred marker functions as sending warning signals but it also influences perception of communicator's credibility and likability because it reveals something about the motivations of the communicator (Hamilton et al. 2014). When communicator uses dispreferred markers such as "To be honest…" or "I'm not going to lie …", listener receives a marker as a warning sign of something negative or uncomfortable. But instead of showing repulsion, listeners regard communicators as someone who reveals and shares information that is psychically or socially costly. Therefore listeners evaluate communicators who use dispreferred marker as more credible in terms of both trustworthiness and expertness (Hamilton et al. 2014, Hovland et al. 1953). As with credibility, use of dispreferred marker increases likeability of communicators. Dispreferred markers show that communicator is trying to be thoughtful by softening negative information in order to offset the potential face threat (Holtgraves 1997, 2000, Jucker 1998).

In this research, I suggest that the reviewer will be regarded more credible if one uses dispreferred marker in the review (vs. no-dispreferred marker). Furthermore, review readers will feel

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more attracted to the product once they read review with dispreferred marker (vs. no-dispreferred marker).

H1. In the dispreferred marker review condition (vs. no-dispreferred marker), attractiveness of the product will be higher (vs. lower) than average product attractiveness rating.

H2. In the dispreferred marker review condition (vs. no-dispreferred marker), credibility of the reviewer will be higher (vs. lower) than average rating.

H3. The effect of dispreferred marker on product attractiveness will be mediated by the credibility of the reviewer. Thus, reviewer who uses dispreferred marker (vs. no- dispreferred) will be evaluated more credible (vs. less credible) and then post attractiveness of the product will be higher (vs. lower) than average rating.

2.3. Source Credibility and Confirmation Bias

Confirmation bias is a tendency of humans to overweigh information that confirms (versus disconfirms) their initial beliefs and positions (Nickerson 1998). Therefore, one's initial belief can have a significant effect on the way one perceives online reviews. There is evidence in many contexts that humans tend to prefer information that confirms their initial beliefs, hypotheses, and conjectures (Klayman and Ha 1987, Trope and Bassok 1982). According to cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger 1957), humans experience psychological discomfort when faced with evidence that contradicts their prior beliefs (Festinger 1962, Swann et al. 1987), and they depreciate disconfirming evidence to reduce such discomfort and maintain consistency (Darley and Gross 1983). A confirmation bias can occur in the evaluation of individual online reviews (Cheung et al. 2009), because information in reviews that

confirms consumers' initial beliefs about the product can cause less psychological discomfort than information that contradicts their initial beliefs. Additionally, confirmation bias depends on consumers' initial beliefs (Alba et al. 1994, Lord et al. 1979) demonstrates that prior belief dominates data-based cues.

However, according to Andersen and Clevenger (1963), source credibility could immediately change attitude of the listener. In other words, listener's perceptions of a speaker's credibility could affect the attitude of the listener. Here, "source credibility" means trust of a speaker by a listener (Hovland et al. 1953). Hovland and his associates (1953) defined source credibility as the combined effect of (1) the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions (expertness) and (2) the degree of confidence in the communicator's intent to communicate the assertions he considers most valid (trustworthiness). Also, according to Giffin (1967), studies of source credibility support the hypothesis that a listener's perceptions of a speaker's expertness, reliability, intentions, activeness, personal attractiveness, and the majority opinion of the listener's associates.

In this research, I suggest that review reader's (listener) confirmation bias will be weakened once the review reader perceives the review writer (speaker) credible. In particular, I examine the use of dispreferred markers as a means of inferring how credible a reviewer is likely to be. As a consequence, I suggest that review reader will perceive review writer more credible when review writer uses dispreferred marker in one's review (vs. no-dispreferred), and the increase in credibility of the review writer could also lead to an increase of product attractiveness.

H4. The effect of dispreferred marker on credibility of the reviewer will not be weakened by prior attractiveness (confirmation bias) of the product. Thus, if dispreferred marker (vs. no-dispreferred) is present in the review, confirmation bias will have weaker (vs. stronger) effect on post attractiveness of the product.

3. Empirical Tests and Data Collection

3.1. Overview of Study

The most notable point of this test was to find out whether consumers prefer dispreferred marker reviews over balanced review (experiment 1) and then see if there is a switch in their prior attractiveness when exposed to review that includes dispreferred marker (experiment 4). I tested predictions in four experiments. Experiment 1 was to show consumers prefer review with dispreferred marker over no-dispreferred marker. Experiment 2 was to identify whether consumers perceive reviewer who uses dispreferred marker in its review more credible than the reviewer who does not uses dispreferred marker. Experiment 3 was to see the mediation effect of reviewers' credibility on product attractiveness. To be specific, it was to find out whether perceived credibility of the reviewer could lead to an increase in the attractiveness of a product. Finally, experiment 4 was to identify the effect of dispreferred marker on confirmation bias. In particular, it was to find out whether confirmation bias could be weakened by using dispreferred marker in the review.

3.2. Participants and Design

200 participants (114 female; average age = 35.5 years, SD = 9.75) were recruited internationally from Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk. Survey was conducted for two days from 17th to 18th of November, 2019. Participants received a small cash incentive ($0.25). Research design was 2 (review valence: dispreferred marker vs. no-dispreferred marker) × 1 (product type: hairdryer) between-subject design.

Each participant was shown a product description sheet of a

hairdryer. The page showed a color image of the product and specifications. The review was printed in the style of an online webpage (amazon), with a narrative. After reading the product description, each participant was asked to rate the attractiveness of the hairdryer to check their prior attractiveness of the product. To be specific, this part was to confirm prior belief to verify confirmation bias.

Then, each participant was randomly assigned to two review conditions (dispreferred marker review vs. balanced review with no-dispreferred marker). In the balanced review condition, the review started with positive aspects of the hairdryer. Then, as a transition to the drawbacks of the product was the line "On the negative side". In the dispreferred marker condition, the transition line was changed to "But well, to be honest". After reading the review, participants were asked to rate the credibility of the reviewer. In the final step, participants were asked to rate the attractiveness of the product. The ultimate goal was to see whether confirmation bias could be weakened if participants regard reviewer who uses dispreferred marker as a credible communicator.

4. Study 1

The goal of this experiment was to find out whether review with dispreferred marker is preferred over balanced review with no-dispreferred marker. Here, I used product attractiveness as an indicator of review preference. For example, if participant preferred dispreferred marker review he or she would rate the attractiveness of a product higher than average rating. I predicted that the use of dispreferred marker would increase the attractiveness of a product. Participants saw one dispreferred marker "But well, to be honest" since different dispreferred marker phrase produced similar effects (Hamilton et al. 2014).

4.1. Method

200 participants were assigned to one of two review conditions (dispreferred marker vs. balanced no-dispreferred marker). Participants were asked to imagine that their old hair dryer just broke and they decided to buy a new one from online shopping mall. First, they were asked to read the product description with three features (price, power and heat setting). Then they were asked to read an online review assuming that the review was written by a consumer who actually bought and tried the hair dryer they were considering to purchase. Two review conditions were randomly assigned to each participant. Finally, they were asked to rate overall attractiveness of a hairdryer using a Likert scales (0= very un-attractive, 10= very attractive) (Simonson 1989).

4.2. Result

Participants showed higher attractiveness of the product after reading dispreferred marker review (M = 6.95; SD = 1.41) than reading balanced no-dispreferred marker review (M = 5.92; SD = 1.86). Attractiveness of the product in the dispreferred marker condition was higher than the average product attractiveness rating (M = 6.43; SD = 1.72, t(198) = -4.41, p< 0.05). Since participants in the dispreferred marker review condition showed higher product attractiveness than average product attractiveness rating, I could support hypothesis 1.

H1. In the dispreferred marker review condition (vs. no-dispreferred marker), attractiveness of the product will be higher (vs. lower) than average product attractiveness rating. **(Supported)**

Table1. Attractiveness of product by review condition

Review Condition	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Combined	200	6.43	1.72
Dispreferred marker	100	6.95	1.41
Balanced no-dispreferred marker	100	5.92	1.86

5. Study 2

Experiment 2 was to test whether consumers perceive reviewer who uses dispreferred marker in its review more credible than the reviewer who does not uses dispreferred marker. I predicted that participants will regard reviewer more credible when one uses dispreferred marker in ones review for two reasons. First, the use of dispreferred marker influences review writers' credibility and likability because it reveals something about the motivations of the communicator (Hamilton et al. 2014). Second, dispreferred marker reviews share two-side of the message which is more involving and attention getting than one-sided message which could lead to personal attractiveness and credibility of the communicator (McGuire 1985, Mudambi and Schuff 2010, Schlosser 2005). This perspective fits within a growing body of research on the motivations underlying word-of-mouth communicators (Cheema and Kaikati 2010, Forman et al. 2008).

5.1. Method

In the extension of the first experiment, 200 participants were randomly assigned to one of two review conditions (dispreferred marker vs. balanced no-dispreferred marker) and were asked to read the given review. Then, they were asked to rate reviewer on honesty, realistic nature, intelligence, and trustworthiness using Likert scales (0= not at all, 10= very much so).

5.2. Result

Mean comparison result indicated that hypothesis 2 was supported. I averaged rating of reviewer's honesty, realistic nature, intelligence, and trustworthiness into an index of credibility (α=0.88). Participants showed higher credibility of the reviewer in the dispreferred marker condition (M = 7.79; SD = 1.77) than in the balanced no-dispreferred marker condition (M = 6.78; SD = 2.08). Credibility of the reviewer in the dispreferred marker condition was higher than the average condition rating (M = 7.28; SD = 1.99; t(198) = -3.68, p<0.05). Since participants showed higher credibility in the dispreferred marker condition than the average credibility, I could support hypothesis 2.

H2. In the dispreferred marker review condition (vs. no-dispreferred marker), credibility of the reviewer will be higher (vs. lower) than average rating. **(Supported)**

Table2. Credibility of the reviewer by review condition

Review Condition	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Combined	200	7.28	1.99
Dispreferred marker	100	7.79	1.77
Balanced no-dispreferred marker	100	6.78	2.08

6. Study 3

The goal of experiment 3 was the see the mediation effect of reviewers' credibility on product attractiveness. To be specific, it was to find out whether perceived credibility of the reviewer could lead to an increase in the attractiveness of a product. I predicted that participants would regard the reviewer who uses

dispreferred marker more credible than the reviewer who does not use dispreferred marker. Furthermore, I estimate that the credibility of the reviewer will affect the attractiveness of the product. Thus, product attractiveness will be higher than average product rating if reviewer is evaluated highly credible.

6.1. Method

In the extension of the second experiment, 200 participants were randomly assigned to one of two review conditions (dispreferred marker vs. balanced no-dispreferred marker) and were asked to read the given review. Then, they were asked to rate reviewer on honesty, realistic nature, intelligence, and trustworthiness using Likert scales (0= not at all, 10= very much so). Finally, they were asked to rate the attractiveness of the product using Likert scales (0= very un-attractive, 10= very attractive) (Simonson 1989).

6.2. Result

I estimated hypothesis 3 using Hayes Process Model in SPSS. In line with the experiment 2, I averaged rating of reviewer's honesty, realistic nature, intelligence, and trustworthiness into an index of credibility (α=0.88). First, review condition (dispreferred marker vs. balanced no-dispreferred marker) predicting reviewers' credibility showed effect of experimental condition (β = 1.0125; t(198) = 3.69, p<0.05). As expected, reviewer who used dispreferred marker were perceived as more credible than the reviewer who does not use dispreferred marker in ones review (M_dispreferred=7.79, M_(no-dispreferred)=6.78). Second, review condition (dispreferred

marker vs. balanced no-dispreferred marker) predicting product attractiveness showed also showed positive effect (β = 0.3637; t(197) = 0.3637, p<0.05). With perceived credibility of the reviewer being equal, review with dispreferred marker review had stronger effect on product attractiveness than review with no-dispreferred marker. Finally, effect of credibility of the reviewer on product attractiveness also showed positive effect (β = 0.6581; t(197) = 0.0387, p<0.05).

Consistent with the hypothesis, effect of dispreferred marker on attractiveness of the product was mediated by the credibility of the reviewer. What is more, indirect effect (Indirect = 0.6663; SE = 0.18834; CI [0.319, 1.039]) of review condition on product attractiveness showed stronger effect than the direct effect (Direct = 0.3637; SE = 0.1541; CI [0.0599, 0.6675]). To conclude, since participants in the dispreferred marker review condition showed higher product attractiveness, which was mediated by credibility of reviewer, compared to participants in no-dispreferred marker review condition, hypothesis 3 is supported.

H3. The effect of dispreferred marker on product attractiveness will be mediated by the credibility of the reviewer. Thus, reviewer who uses dispreferred marker (vs. no- dispreferred) will be evaluated more credible (vs. less credible) and then post attractiveness of the product will be higher (vs. lower) than average rating. **(Supported)**

Table3. Mediation effect of reviewer's credibility on product attractiveness

Direction of Effect	Effect	SE	CI	p-value
Direct Effect of X on Y	0.363	0.154	[0.059, 0.667]	p<0.05
Indirect Effect of X on Y	0.666	0.188	[0.319, 1.039]	P<0.05

* X = Review condition (dispreferred marker vs. no-dispreferred marker)

* Y = Product attractiveness

7. Study 4

The goal of experiment 4 was to identify the effect of dispreferred marker on confirmation bias. I particular, it was to find out whether confirmation bias could be weakened by using dispreferred marker in the review. I predicted that participants' in the dispreferred marker review condition would not be affected by their confirmation bias for two reasons. First, review readers' perception of the review writers' credibility could affect the attitude of the review reader (Andersen and Clevenger 1963). Second, dispreferred marker influences perception of communicator's credibility and likability because it reveals something about the motivations of the communicator (Hamilton et al. 2014). Therefore, I predicted that participants who read dispreferred marker review would be weakly affected by their confirmation bias.

7.1. Method

200 participants were shown a product description sheet of a hairdryer. After reading the product description, each participant was asked to rate the attractiveness of the hairdryer to check their prior attractiveness of the product. In particular, this part was to confirm prior belief to verify confirmation bias. Then, each participant was randomly assigned to two review conditions (dispreferred marker vs. balanced no-dispreferred marker). Then, they were asked to rate reviewer on honesty, realistic nature, intelligence, and trustworthiness using Likert scales (0= not at all, 10= very much so). Finally, they were asked to rate the attractiveness of the product using Likert scales (0= very un-attractive, 10= very attractive). The dependent measure which was product attractiveness consisted with prior and post attractiveness

of the product. Since difference between post and initial product attractiveness shows the strength of confirmation bias, I subtracted prior product attractiveness from post product attractiveness and used this measure as dependent variable to see the effect of confirmation bias (Yin et al. 2016). The ultimate objective was to see whether confirmation bias could be weakened if participants regard reviewer who uses dispreferred marker as credible communicator.

7.2. Result

I estimated hypothesis 4 using Hayes Process Model in SPSS. In line with previous experiments, I averaged rating of reviewer's honesty, realistic nature, intelligence, and trustworthiness into an index of credibility (α=0.88). First, review condition (dispreferred marker vs. balanced no-dispreferred marker) predicting difference between prior and post product attractiveness showed positive effect (β = 1.6321; $t(197)$ = 7.1992, $p<0.05$). Since big difference in product attractiveness indicates weaker confirmation bias, I could confirm that confirmation bias is weaker in the dispreferred marker condition. Furthermore, compared with effect of review condition on product attractiveness in experiment 3 (β = 0.3637; $t(197)$ = 0.3637, $p<0.05$), effect of review condition on product attractiveness difference in experiment 4 is stronger. Therefore, I could confirm that dispreferred marker is an effective measure not only to weaken confirmation bias but also to increase product attractiveness. Second, unlike experiment 3, indirect effect (Indirect = 0.2679; SE = 0.0774; CI [0.1261, 0.4336]) of review condition on product attractiveness difference showed weaker effect than direct effect (Direct = 1.6321; SE = 0.2267; CI [1.1850, 2.0791]). To conclude, since participants in the dispreferred marker were merely affected by their prior belief, I could support hypothesis 4.

H4. The effect of dispreferred marker on credibility of the reviewer will not be weakened by prior attractiveness (confirmation bias) of the product. Thus, if dispreferred marker (vs. no- dispreferred) is present in the review, confirmation bias will have weaker (vs. stronger) effect on post attractiveness of the product. **(Supported)**

Table4. Effect of review condition on confirmation bias.

Direction of Effect	Effect	SE	CI	p-value
Direct Effect of X on Y	1.632	0.226	[1.185, 2.079]	p<0.05
Indirect Effect of X on Y	0.267	0.077	[0.126, 0.433]	P<0.05

* X = Review condition (dispreferred marker vs. no-dispreferred marker)

* Y = Difference between post product attractiveness and prior product attractiveness

8. Conclusion and Implications

This research contributes to the growing body of work on word-of-mouth communications. Most of the work to date on the persuasiveness of online word-of-mouth communication has focused on positive or negative review valence (Chen and Berger 2013; Herr et al. 1991). This paper is novel in that it focuses on how reviewers phrase their massages by using dispreferred marker, which affects consumers' evaluation. Furthermore it demonstrated not only whether consumers prefer dispreferred marker reviews over balanced review but also whether confirmation bias could be attenuated with dispreferred marker reviews. This paper is among the first attempts at incorporating the role of initial beliefs into consumers' perception of dispreferred marker online word of mouth. To be specific, I demonstrated that consumers' prior belief of the product attractiveness would not have significant effect on

the post attractiveness of the product if consumers read the review with dispreferred marker and perceive the reviewer as a credible communicator.

These findings can help improve review websites that want to better inform consumers in their decision making. To reduce review readers' confirmatory tendency, instead of asking to vote for 'helpful' reviews it would be better to ask for 'credible' reviews. This way, companies who are suffering from wrong disgrace or who have weak brand power could increase consumers' attractiveness for the product. Furthermore asking to rate the credibility of the reviewer and using dispreferred marker in the review could make consumers willing to pay more prices. In summary, this article has it's implication that it shows marketers that prior belief of the consumer could be attenuated once the reviewer uses dispreferred marker in ones review and is regarded credible.

9. Limitations and Future Research

This study has few limitations that provide avenues for future research. First, it did not compare positive and negative review condition with dispreferred marker review condition. It did not test which review valence consumers preferred the most. However, since result of previous research demonstrated that dispreferred marker review condition is preferred over only－positive condition (Hamilton et al. 2014) I believe this is not a serious limitation.

Second, findings could be changed in real world setting where consumers already built relationship with the product or communicator. The settings I studied in this experiment were deliberately chosen to mimic the anonymous reviews. Therefore, effect of review could change when consumers already received product information from friends, family or coworkers.

One promising question to be answered by future research is: Does consumer regard dispreferred marker review as positive or negative review? And when consumers read dispreferred marker review, do they focus on positive aspect or negative aspect of review? This research only focused on the credibility of the reviewer and attractiveness of product in the dispreferred marker review condition. Therefore, these questions relate to the basic function of dispreferred marker communication in the first place.

Another question raised is: Would the effect of credibility of the reviewer or attractiveness of the product in the dispreferred marker review condition weakened if consumers saw all types of review valence (balanced, positive-only, negative-only, dispreferred marker) in the review page? Since I only showed one review condition to each participant in this survey, I believe different result might be drawn in if all types of review valance were showed at once.

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국 문 초 록

온라인 구전에서 담화표지가 확증편향에 미치는 영향

홍나래

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온라인 입소문 (WOM) 형태의 온라인 리뷰는 최근 현대 소비자에게 가장 중요한 정보 소스 중 하나이다. 일부 연구에 따르면 긍정적 온라인 리뷰가 부정적인 온라인 리뷰보다 소비자의 의사결정에 더 도움이 된다는 결과를 보인 반면, 다른 연구에서는 부정적인 리뷰가 긍정적인 리뷰보다 소비자의 의사결정에 더 도움이 된다는 결과를 보였다. 본 연구에서는 리뷰의 극성(valence)보다 리뷰의 내용이 소비자의 의사결정에 더 큰 영향을 미친다는 기존의 선행연구를 바탕으로, 리뷰수신자(review reader)가 담화표지(dispreferred marker)를 사용한 리뷰를 읽을 경우 제품에 대한 매력도가 증가함을 밝히고자 한다. 구체적으로, 본 연구에서는 리뷰수신자는 담화표지를 사용하는 리뷰발신자(reviewer)를 담화표지를 사용하지 않은 리뷰발신자보다 더 신뢰하며, 더 나아가 담화표지를 사용한 리뷰발신자에 대한 신뢰도가 높을 경우 리뷰수신자의 확증편향(confirmation bias)이 약화될 수 있음을 규명하고자 한다.

본 연구에서는 네 번의 실험을 통해 담화표지가 리뷰 수신자의 확증편향을 약화시킬 수 있음을 밝히고자 한다. 첫 번째 실험에서는 리뷰 수신자가 균형리뷰(balanced review)와 담화표지리뷰(dispreferred marker

review) 중 어떤 형태의 리뷰를 더 선호하는지 살펴보았다. 두 번째 시험에서는 리뷰수신자가 담화표지를 사용하는 리뷰발신자를 담화표지를 사용하지 않는 리뷰발신자보다 더 신뢰하는지 살펴보았다. 세 번째 실험에서는 리뷰발신자의 신뢰도와 제품의 매력도 간의 상관관계를 살펴보았다. 마지막 네 번째 실험에서는 담화표지가 리뷰수신자의 확증편향에 미치는 영향을 살펴보았다. 본 연구는 온라인 리뷰 관리 및 온라인 구전 마케팅에 실행에 관한 실무적 시사점을 제시하였다.

주요어: 온라인 리뷰, 온라인 구전, 확증편향(Confirmation bias), 담화표지(Dispreferred marker)
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