TripAdvisor vs. Yelp: How Prior Attribute Rating Influences Overall Evaluation

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Research Motivation / Abstract

• User-generated online reviews and ratings are an important input into online and offline purchase decisions
• Ratings are susceptible to cognitive biases
• RQ: What are the effects of prior attribute ratings on overall ratings?

Background

Online Reviews
• Textual comments and numerical (star) ratings
• Considered more credible than marketing information
• Low ratings: potential of hurting future business
• Positively biased ratings \(\rightarrow\) suboptimal purchase decisions

Anchoring

Definition: Tendency of individuals to make judgments or estimates close to an anchor even though the anchor is not or only partly informative.

Theories:
• Anchoring-and-Adjustment Heuristic (e.g., Epley & Gilovich, 2001)
  \(\rightarrow\) Starting with the anchor individuals insufficiently adjust
  \(\rightarrow\) Evidence primarily for self-generated anchors
• Selective Accessibility Model (e.g., Mussweiler & Strack, 1999)
  \(\rightarrow\) Anchor-consistent information is assumed to be more accessible
  \(\rightarrow\) Evidence primarily for externally provided anchors

Hypotheses:
H1: Prior ratings of attributes work as anchors and bias overall ratings.
H2: Rating decision times are substantially reduced if attributes were previously rated.

Methodology

Study 1
• Observational study (50 random restaurants from Chicago)
• Data from TripAdvisor (attribute rating) and Yelp (without attribute rating)
• Group comparison of overall ratings

Studies 2 to 4
• Between-group experimental design
• DV: Overall rating of some item
• DV: Decision time (to come up with overall rating)
• Treatment: attribute rating present/absent

Study 2: University Rating
• Field Experiment with 143 students form the University of Liechtenstein (mean age 24.1 years, 63.7 % women)

Study 3: Restaurant Rating
• Online Experiment with 508 participants via Prolific.ac (mean age 33.3 years, 48 % women)

Study 4: Movie Rating (to be analyzed)
• Online Experiment with 200 participants via Prolific.ac (mean age 33 years, 51 % women)

Preliminary Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Mean diff.</th>
<th>95% HDI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) TripAdvisor vs. Yelp</td>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>[0.74, 1.49]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) University</td>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>[0.17, 1.41]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Restaurant</td>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>[0.01, 0.52]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) University</td>
<td>Rating time</td>
<td>-2.10</td>
<td>[-3.71, -0.55]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Restaurant</td>
<td>Rating time</td>
<td>-2.05</td>
<td>[-2.48, -1.58]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

• Overall ratings are influenced by prior attribute ratings
  • Mean ratings
  • Decision time
• Prior ratings serve as anchors
• How to balance response burden and quest for “true” rating score?

References

References available on request

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