

# MISQ Archivist

## Anger in Consumer Reviews: Unhelpful but Persuasive?

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### Abstract

A common assumption in prior research and practice is that more helpful online reviews will exert a greater impact on consumer attitudes and purchase decisions. We suggest that this assumption may not hold for reviews expressing anger. Building on emotions as social information (EASI) theory, we propose that although expressions of anger in a negative review tend to *decrease* reader perceptions of review helpfulness, the same expressions tend to *increase* the negative influence of the review on reader attitudes and decisions. Results from a series of laboratory experiments provide support for our claims. Our findings challenge the widely accepted assumption that more “helpful” reviews are ultimately more persuasive, and they extend current understanding of the interpersonal effects of emotion in online communication. Our findings also suggest implications for review platforms, retailers, marketers, and manufacturers faced with the task of managing consumer reviews.

**Keywords:** Anger, online reviews, review helpfulness, consumer attitudes, online word-of-mouth, discrete emotions, emotions as social information