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THE ROLE OF ONLINE CUSTOMER REVIEWS IN CONSUMER BUYING PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

Online customer review contains positive or negative suggestions related to seller, and its products and services. It is one of the important e-word of mouth marketing activities. Nowadays, particularly young consumers have been interested in searching information online and reading comments online about the products and services that they plan to buy. In this study, the role of online customer reviews in buying process of young college-aged consumers was examined. The aim of the study was to identify whether positive or negative online customer reviews have any impacts on buying decision. A qualitative study was formed, and two focus group studies were conducted with seven participants in two different cities of Turkey, which take part in different regions and also have different subcultural characteristics. Focus group construct was formed by three parts as demographic questions, the questions related to online customer reviews, and the ranking questions about online customer reviews. Data was transcribed from the recorders and analyzed by two researchers separately. Findings were interpreted and shown in tables in order to give a clear explanation. As a result of the study, it was obtained that young college-aged consumers have been affected by online customer reviews of previous customers. There were some limitations in the study. The limitations and future research suggestions were shown lastly.

Keywords: Online customer reviews (OCRs), electronic word of mouth marketing (e-WOMM), focus group, Izmir, Adana.