

# The Impact of Online Negative Reviews on Consumer Purchasing Intention in the Apparel Industry: The Mediating Role of Perceived Risk

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## Abstract

This paper constructs a model that examines how online negative reviews impact consumer purchasing intention in the apparel industry under the mediating role of perceived risk. A questionnaire survey was conducted among consumers in the clothing industry, and the collected data underwent *descriptive statistical analysis*, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. The results indicate that the quantity, content quality, and perceived risk of online negative reviews negatively affect purchasing intention, with the inhibitory effect of content quality being particularly prominent. Furthermore, the mediating impact of perceived risk is validated. To better understand the perceptual processes behind consumer behavior, this study reveals this connection and provides targeted online reputation management recommendations for apparel businesses. The managerial implications of this paper lie in the necessity for clothing enterprises to establish effective feedback mechanisms for online negative reviews and implement measures to reduce consumers' perceived risk in purchasing decisions.

**Keywords:** online negative reviews, apparel industry, consumer purchasing intention, perceived risk, mediating effect

## 1. Introduction

Online consumer reviews have gained widespread attention, especially in the apparel industry. Online shopping is currently a primary mode of daily shopping for people (Zhang, 2023). As a dominant product in the e-commerce market, clothing items face a series of risks in online consumption, including insufficient product information, inability to try on or experience the product, and issues such as exaggeration in advertising (Ke, 2016). Therefore, to better understand product performance accurately, consumers make decisions by collecting information, consulting, viewing online reviews, and comparative filtering (Lou et al., 2023), with online reviews being a critical factor in purchasing decisions. Therefore, the clothing industry is selected as the research subject as its products have the highest online sales, which makes this study more representative.

Online reviews influence consumer purchasing intention, predominantly negative reviews. Online reviews, as statements by potential or actual consumers on e-commerce or third-party websites, support the exchange of product reputations (Huang & Liang, 2021) and intuitively express consumers' descriptions and feelings about various aspects of products (Minnema et al., 2016), thereby offering a more comprehensive and objective reflection of product information. The credibility and influence of online reviews far surpass the impact of statements released by merchants (Liu & Ren, 2014). Online negative reviews, in particular, reflect consumers' experiential feelings about products, making them more informationally useful. Therefore, consumers rely on online negative reviews to evaluate effects and make final purchasing decisions (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

The perceived risk significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions in the clothing industry. Since its introduction into consumer behavior studies, perceived risk has become a crucial perspective for researching consumer decision-making (Wang & Lv, 2018). For experiential products, the quality is often challenging to judge (Qi et al., 2015), increasing consumer uncertainty and perceived risk. In particular, clothing products requiring personal fitting to assess suitability exhibit a noticeable tendency toward perceived risk in online shopping (Tian et al., 2021). Research (e.g., Murray & Schlacter, 1990; Yang et al., 2016; Rochanapon et al., 2021) has found that most consumers abandon online clothing purchases because of the difficulty in judging product performance. Thus, perceived risk holds practical

significance in exploring consumer purchasing intention in the clothing industry. Currently, there is a considerable amount of research (e.g., Shen, 2016; Du et al., 2016) on the impact of online reviews on consumer purchasing intention, but clothing products are rarely the focus. Based on the above research foundation and gap, this study defines perceived risk as an intermediary variable and investigates the impact of online negative reviews from the perspective of quality, quantity, and emotional intention.

The structure of this paper is organized as follows. The second part is the literature review and research hypothesis and the third part is the methodology followed by the module data and description. The last part is further discussion, including conclusion, management recommendations, and research limitations.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Online Negative Reviews and Consumer Purchasing Intention

Existing studies have discussed different dimensions of online negative reviews. Current research primarily focuses on characteristics of negative review information, sender features, receiver features, and distribution channels (e.g., Li et al., 2011; Cai et al., 2017; Wang & Zhang, 2021). Among these features, online negative review information highlights the traits of negative comments. For instance, Wu (2016) explored the potential impact of the quality, quantity, and intensity of online negative reviews on consumer purchasing decisions, while Yang (2016) empirically verified the influence of the power of online negative reviews, considering factors such as quantity, content quality, and importance of review attributes, on consumer cognition and brand trust. These two studies contribute to the understanding of online negative reviews' multifaceted impact. Building upon these studies, this paper selects three key dimensions to explore their potential impact on consumer behavior: quantity, quality, and emotional intensity.

#### 2.1.1 Quantity of online negative reviews and consumer purchasing intention

A close relationship exists between the quantity of online negative reviews and consumer purchasing intention. Studies show a significant positive correlation between the number of thoughts and consumer purchasing intention, indicating that when a product receives more attention and discussion, it attracts more consumers to make purchases (e.g., Song et al., 2014; Filieri, 2015; Yao, 2015). In this context, Huang and Mao's (2019) research suggests that the word count, content quality, and timeliness of negative review information positively influence consumers' perceived usefulness, moderated by consumer brand identification. Online negative reviews enhance consumers' perceived effectiveness of the studies, significantly reducing their willingness to purchase (Vellido, 2000). As for the clothing industry, there is a significant relationship between the quantity of online negative reviews and consumer purchasing intention. Therefore, this paper proposes the hypothesis:

**H1a:** The quantity of online negative reviews in the clothing industry negatively influences consumer purchasing intention.

#### 2.1.2 Quality of online negative reviews and consumer purchasing intention

Furthermore, a negative correlation exists between the quality of online negative reviews and consumer purchasing intention (Ludwig, 2013). Evaluation of the quality of online reviews in research usually relies on indicators such as accuracy, objectivity, relevance, comprehensibility, and completeness of review information (Sun, 2019). Zhang (2015) found that high-quality online reviews help enhance consumers' perceived product value, leading to decreased purchasing intention. Specifically, there is a positive correlation between review quality and consumers' perception of the usefulness of reviews, indirectly influencing purchasing intention through the impact on perceived usefulness (Yan, 2015). However, current research primarily focuses on the effect of online review quality on purchasing intention, and the discussion on the quality of online negative reviews is relatively limited, especially in the clothing industry. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1b:** The quality of online negative reviews in the clothing industry negatively influences consumer purchasing intention.

#### 2.1.3 The emotional intensity of online negative consumer reviews and consumer purchasing intention

The emotional intensity of online negative consumer reviews leaves a profound impression on consumers, subsequently influencing their purchasing intention. The expressive power of online reviews refers to the degree of emotional expression by consumers who have purchased a product in their post-purchase comments (Chen & Zhang, 2023). It is indicated in Wang et al.'s (2018) research that the negative tone and strong negative emotions in negative reviews decrease consumer purchasing intention. After careful consideration by the reviewers, online reviews with moderate emotional intensity are considered objective evaluations of product information and experiences. They enhance consumer understanding of the product, stimulate emotional identification, and hold significant reference value (Liu & Sun, 2020). However, there needs to be more research on the impact of the quality of online negative consumer reviews

in the apparel industry. Consequently, the hypothesis is posited as follows:

**H1c:** The emotional intensity of online negative consumer reviews in the apparel industry negatively influences purchasing intention.

### *2.2 Online Negative Reviews and Perceived Risk*

Previous studies indicate that consumers perceive risks when browsing electronic negative reviews, affecting their purchasing behavior. Perceived risk is typically defined as uncertainty arising from the inability to anticipate purchase outcomes, which may lead to consumer losses (Raymond, 1960; Mitchell, 1999; Cui, 2019; Zhao & Feng, 2021). Perceived risk is defined as the uncertainty about product or service attributes and the likelihood of potential losses when consumers shop for clothing online. Based on existing literature, this paper regards perceived risk as an intermediary between online reviews and consumer purchasing intention in the context of online shopping.

#### *2.2.1 The quantity of online negative reviews and perceived risk*

The degree of risk that consumers perceive is related to the quantity of online reviews. A higher amount of online negative consumer reviews increases the likelihood of consumers encountering negative information, strengthening their negative impressions of the product and brand (Liu, 2006; Brandão & Popoli, 2022). In an online environment, consumers shift attitudes when exposed to repeated viewpoints, leading to risk perception (Sebastianelli & Tamimi, 2018; He, 2022). However, research on the characteristics of online review information and perceived risk has mainly focused on industries such as hotels and sports equipment, with relatively few empirical studies in popular online shopping industries like apparel. In light of this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2a:** The quantity of online negative consumer reviews in the apparel industry positively influences consumers' perceived risk.

#### *2.2.2 The quality of online negative reviews and perceived risk*

Similarly, previous research has discussed the positive impact of online review quality on perceived risk. High-quality online reviews meet consumers' disclosure needs for product information and help them avoid shopping pitfalls (Lee et al., 2008; Zhu et al., 2020), possessing decision-making value. Authentic and objective negative reviews effectively change consumer attitudes toward product risk through cognitive processes (Baker & Kim, 2019), thereby increasing the severity and uncertainty of the consequences of online shopping. Reviews on clothing platforms involve the product and aspects such as consultation, after-sales service, and logistics. However, research on the quality of these reviews and perceived risk is relatively scarce. As a result, the proposition is put forward:

**H2b:** The quality of online negative consumer reviews in the apparel industry positively influences consumers' perceived risk.

#### *2.2.3 The emotional intensity of online negative reviews and perceived risk*

The emotional intensity of negative reviews positively influences the degree of perceived risk. Thoughts with strong negative emotions are perceived as more accurate and helpful for potential consumers to avoid risks (Cai et al., 2017; Chen & Zhang, 2022). The more comprehensive and certain the emotions expressed in negative reviews, the more likely they evoke a sense of identification and agreement, thereby increasing perceived uncertainty and severity of consequences (Park et al., 2007; Chen & Zhang, 2023). This prompts consumers to attribute negative information to problems with brand products and services (Wang et al., 2019; Wang & Zhang, 2021), increasing the perceived uncertainty and severity of consequences. However, negative reviews with high emotions tend to have greater subjectivity and ambiguity (He, 2021; Wang & Zou, 2023), which affects the perception process of consumers. It can be seen that the specific impact of the emotional intensity of negative reviews on the perceived risk of the apparel industry is still an area that needs in-depth research. Thus, the hypothesis advanced can be stated as:

**H2c:** The emotional intensity of online negative consumer reviews in the apparel industry positively influences consumers' perceived risk.

### *2.3 Perceived Risk and Consumer Purchasing Intention*

Previous research has primarily focused on the relationship between perceived risk and consumer purchasing intention. Perceived risk is an expectation of loss, and the greater the anticipation of failure, the more significant the impact on consumer behavioral intention (Verhagen et al., 2013; Ahn et al., 2014; Kamalul et al., 2018). The uncertainty of negative reviews causes potential consumers to experience cognitive dissonance, reducing the positivity and stability of attitudes and increasing risk perception (Chiou et al., 2013; Feng et al., 2013 ).

However, research on perceived risk as a mediating variable in the impact of online negative consumer reviews on consumer purchasing intention has yet to be comprehensive. For example, Ning & Sun's (2014) study demonstrates that

characteristic factors of online negative consumer review information positively influence consumers' perceived risk, subsequently affecting their purchasing intention. However, the study does not quantify the impact of specific information features of individual online negative consumer reviews and lacks empirical research on specific industries or platforms. Subsequent studies need more discussion on the mediating efficacy of perceived risk while conducting empirical analyses (Sun, 2023). This paper, therefore, puts forward the hypothesis:

**H3:** Consumers' perceived risk of online negative reviews negatively influences purchasing intention.

The proposed research model is presented in Figure 1 in light of the abovementioned assumptions. The model aims to empirically examine the direct or indirect relationships between online reviews and consumer purchasing intention. It seeks to investigate the mediating role of perceived risk in the pathways through which online reviews influence consumers' willingness to make purchases.

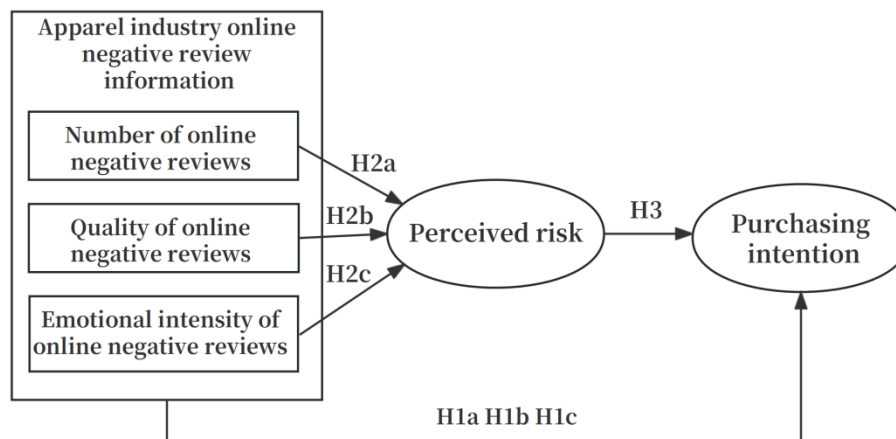


Figure 1. A research model on the mechanism of online negative reviews on purchasing intention

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Sample Selection

A questionnaire was used to target university students and young professionals. This group, characterized by frequent exposure to online information and substantial experience in online shopping, represents the primary demographic purchasing clothing across various online platforms (Yao & Song, 2022), aligning with the principle of universality among respondents. Additionally, this group tends to actively browse product information and buyer reviews while shopping online, demonstrating a deeper comprehension of the implications of online negative consumer feedback (Zhao & Xu, 2022), thus meeting the principle of respondent comprehension. Therefore, selecting these respondents facilitates a more authentic reflection of the questionnaire content.

#### 3.2 Variable Definitions and Measurement

The definitions of variables in this research are drawn from previous scholarly achievements. The three dimensions of online reviews are independent variables: the quantity, quality, and emotional intensity of online negative consumer reviews. Perceived risk is the mediating variable, while consumer purchasing intention is the dependent variable. The definitions of each variable and their respective references are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Definitions of variables in this study

	Variables	Definitions	References
Independent Variables	number	the total amount of information that can be added to the review	Park & Kim (2008); Zheng (2008); Bi (2010)
	quality	the authenticity and credibility of the review information and the degree of relevance of the content to the product being evaluated	Jin (2007); Yang (2016)
	emotional intensity	the intensity of consumers' emotions who have purchased the product in the post-event review	Li (2007); Chen & Zhang (2023)
Mediator	perceived risk	the uncertainty of the product or service attributes and the possibility of losses to consumers when shopping	Cunningham (2005) ; Wang & Zhang (2021)
Dependent Variable	the impact of online negative reviews on purchasing intention	the effect of online negative reviews on the impact of information recipients on the purchasing intention	Eggert (2002) Zhao & Xu (2022)

Based on existing theories and literature reviews (e.g., Park & Kim, 2008; Yang, 2016; Wang & Zhang, 2021), this study designed measurement items for the independent variable of online negative consumer reviews, the mediating variable of perceived risk, and the dependent variable of purchasing intention concerning clothing products (see Appendix). All measurements were taken on a 5-point Likert scale. The source reference of the relevant scales is detailed in the Appendix: The size of independent variables drew inspiration from studies by Park & Kim (2008), Zheng (2008), and Bi (2020), encompassing three dimensions—quantity, quality, and emotional intensity—comprising an 11-item scale. The mediating variable, perceived risk, referenced studies by Cunningham (1967), Wang & Zhang (2021), resulting in a 3-item scale. The measurement of the dependent variable, purchasing intention, primarily relied on studies by Eggert (2002) and Zhao & Xu (2022), comprising a 3-item scale.

### 3.3 Questionnaire Design

The three prerequisites for employing a questionnaire include focusing on individuals as the study subjects, the impracticality of directly observing the entire sample population due to its large size, and the aim to measure the attitudes of a large sample (Bi, 2010). This study fulfills these prerequisites.

The questionnaire comprises an introductory section and a central section. The introductory section aims to guide respondents, elucidating the research purpose and the background seeking their cooperation. The central section consists of two parts. The first part provides clear and concise explanations to ensure respondents understand the research objectives. This part emphasizes the purpose of questionnaire completion, provides clear instructions regarding the completion context, and requests the respondents' cooperation (Wu, 2016).

The second part is divided into two pieces. The first piece aims to collect basic information from respondents, including gender, age, and online shopping experiences. If the respondent has not engaged in online shopping or perused product reviews, the questionnaire concludes at this juncture. This design accounts for the specific circumstances of respondents, ensuring the inclusion solely of individuals with online shopping and review browsing experiences. The second piece surveys relevant measurement items encompassing independent, mediating, and dependent variables. Specifically, measurements are taken for the quantity, quality, and emotional intensity of online negative consumer reviews, perceived risk, and consumer purchasing intention. This part utilizes the Likert 5-point scale, where respondents rated each question from 1 to 5 based on their perceptions. Ratings ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), representing varying degrees of agreement.

### 3.4 Pilot Survey

A pilot survey was conducted after finalizing the preliminary draft of the questionnaire. The pilot survey consists of three stages. Firstly, the questionnaire was reviewed with the tutor's guidance to modify any ambiguous or repetitive questions and ensure their rationality and scientific validity. Secondly, communication sessions were held with non-major students from our school to enhance respondents' comprehension of the questionnaire items. During these sessions, professional terms were simplified to facilitate precise understanding by a broader range of respondents.

Finally, time constraints were implemented to ensure that respondents completed the questionnaire patiently and provided high-quality responses, limiting completion time to approximately 5 minutes. This preliminary investigation process established the final version of this paper's questionnaire.

#### 4. Data Analysis

In this paper, *SPSS 22.0* software was used for data analysis of the collected questionnaires. The primary analysis methods include *descriptive statistical analysis* (4.1), *reliability analysis* (4.2), *validity analysis* (4.3), *correlation analysis* (4.4), and *regression analysis* (4.5).

##### 4.1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis

This section conducts a statistical analysis of the valid samples from five aspects: gender, age, educational level, online shopping frequency, and experience in browsing online reviews. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Demographic analysis of the samples

Basic Information		Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Gender	male	51	17.8	17.8
	female	235	82.2	100
Age	under 18 years old	10	3.5	3.5
	18-30 years old	262	91.6	95.1
	over 30 years old	14	4.9	100
Educational attainment	below bachelor's degree	29	10.1	10.1
	undergraduate	255	89.2	99.3
	master's degree or above	2	0.7	100
Frequency of online shopping for clothing	1-3 months	212	74.1	74.1
	half a year	53	18.5	92.6
	one year and above	11	3.9	96.5
	never	10	3.5	100
Frequency of browsing online reviews	browse often	217	78.6	78.6
	browse occasionally	53	19.2	97.8
	never browse	6	2.2	100

Based on the statistical analysis results in Table 3, the analysis of the gender variable shows that females account for 82.2%, which is convincing given that females are the primary group for online clothing shopping (Bobalca et al., 2021). The analysis of the age variable indicates that the 18-30 age group constitutes 92.6% of the samples, suggesting a valuable segment with strong purchasing power and online shopping experience. The analysis of the educational level variable reveals that the majority have an undergraduate degree or higher, ensuring the reliability of the data as individuals with higher education generally possess richer online shopping experiences (Hsieh et al., 2013). In the variable analysis of online shopping frequency, 74.1% shop once every 1 to 3 months, indicating that most of the samples have extensive online shopping experience, enhancing the persuasiveness of the questionnaire results. The variable analysis of experience in browsing online reviews shows that 78.6% frequently browse, showing that the samples have a certain level of experience with online reviews, strengthening the persuasiveness of the data. Therefore, the collected sample data meets the requirements of this study.

##### 4.2 Reliability Analysis of the Questionnaire

Reliability is an indicator of the reliability of questionnaire design, and the consistency and stability of the questionnaire measurement results are determined through reliability analysis (Wu, 2016). Reliability testing aims to control and minimize random errors in measurements effectively. Reliability also serves as a standard for evaluating the magnitude of measurement errors, indicating the proportion of errors in the questionnaire measurement results. Generally, a *Cronbach's Alpha* value exceeding 0.6 is considered acceptable, and exceeding 0.7 suggests the high reliability of the questionnaire (Wu, 2010). The reliability analysis results for the questionnaire in this study are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of reliability analysis

Variables	Number of queries	Klonbach correlation coefficient ( $\alpha$ )
The number of online negative reviews	3	0.768
The quality of online negative reviews	4	0.852
The emotional intensity of online negative reviews	3	0.874
Perceived risk	3	0.841
Consumer purchasing intention	3	0.879

The analysis results show that *Cronbach's Alpha* values for the measurement scales of the five variables all exceed 0.7, indicating high reliability. This implies that the variables in this questionnaire exhibit high consistency, and overall internal consistency is good.

#### 4.3 Validity Analysis of the Questionnaire

Validity refers to the extent to which a test can measure the characteristic it intends to measure (Adcock & Collier, 2001). The most critical feature of a questionnaire survey is validity, and obtaining a high degree of validity in measurements and results is the goal of a questionnaire survey. Higher validity indicates the extent to which the measurement results of the questionnaire reflect the accurate level of the measured behavior, making the goals of the questionnaire test easier to achieve and reflecting the correctness and effectiveness of the questionnaire. The validity analysis results for the questionnaire in this study are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. *KMO* value and *Bartlett's sphere test* results

	The appropriateness quantity of the <i>KMO</i> value	<i>Bartlett's sphere test</i>		
		Approximate chi-square	Degrees of freedom	Significance (P)
Independent variable	0.842	1279.372	3	0.000
Intermediate variable	0.727	326.720	3	0.000
Dependent variable	0.696	490.596	3	0.000

The quantity, quality, and affective intensity of negative reviews were first tested on the *KMO* sample measure, and *Bartlett sphere test*, and the results are shown in Table 5. The *KMO* value was 0.842 ( $>0.7$ ), and the probability of significance of the *Bartlett sphere test* was 0.000 ( $<0.01$ ), which was suitable for factor analysis. The *KMO* sample measure and the *Bartlett sphere test* were performed for perceived risk; the results are shown in the table. The *KMO* value was 0.727 ( $>0.7$ ), and the probability of significance of the *Bartlett sphere test* was 0.000 ( $<0.01$ ), suitable for factor analysis. The *KMO* sample measure and *Bartlett sphere test* were performed on consumer purchasing intention, and the results are shown in the table. The *KMO* value was 0.696 ( $\approx 0.7$ ), and the significance probability of the *Bartlett sphere test* was 0.000 ( $<0.01$ ), which was suitable for factor analysis.

#### 4.4 Correlation Analysis

This study conducted separate analyses for the independent, mediating, and dependent variables. The correlation analysis results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Correlation analysis

Variable	Number	Quality	Emotional intensity	Perceived risk	Purchasing intention
<b>Number</b>	1.000				
<b>Quality</b>		1.000			
<b>Emotional intensity</b>			1.000		
<b>Perceived risk</b>	.385**	.605**	.714**	1.000	
<b>Purchasing intention</b>	.714**	-.417**	-.361**	-.433**	1.000

\*\* . At level 0.01 (two-tailed), the correlation was significant

Table 6 shows the correlation coefficients between the three independent variables (quantity, quality, and emotional intensity of online negative reviews) and perceived risk are 0.385, 0.605, and 0.714, respectively. The correlation coefficients between the four variables (quantity, quality, emotional intensity of negative reviews, and perceived risk) and purchasing intention are -0.288, -0.417, -0.361, and -0.433, respectively, all showing significant levels below 0.01. This indicates a positive correlation between negative reviews and perceived risk and a negative correlation between negative reviews, perceived risk, and purchasing intention.

#### 4.5 Regression Analysis

Next, linear regression analysis is employed to analyze the relationships between online negative reviews and perceived risk, online negative reviews and purchasing intention, and perceived risk and purchasing intention, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Regression analysis

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Beta( $\beta$ )	P	TOLER	VIF	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> (after revision)	F
Perceived risk	Number	0.136	0.003	0.840	1.190	0.553	0.548	109.758
	Quality	0.182	0.002	0.511	1.958			
	Emotional intensity	0.547	0.000	0.539	1.857			
Perceived risk	Number	-0.138	0.022	0.840	1.190	0.202	0.193	22.397
	Quality	-0.276	0.000	0.511	1.958			
	Emotional intensity	-0.129	0.084	0.539	1.857			
Purchasing intention	Perceived risk	-0.433	-7.861	0.000	1.000	0.187	0.184	61.789

The results of linear regression analysis in Table 7 show that the regression coefficient of the number of negative reviews and purchasing intention  $\beta=0.138$ ,  $P<0.01$ , and the number of negative reviews and purchasing intention show a significant negative correlation, and the H1a is valid. The regression coefficient of negative review quality and purchasing intention  $\beta=0.276$ ,  $P<0.01$ , and the content quality of negative reviews were significantly negatively correlated, and the H1b was valid. The regression coefficient between the emotional intensity of negative reviews and purchasing intention  $\beta=0.129$ , but the  $P>0.01$ , and it was impossible to conclude that the emotional intensity of negative reviews was significantly correlated with purchasing intention, and the H1c was not valid. At the same time, the negative impact of the number of negative reviews on purchasing intention is weaker than the quality of negative reviews.

Secondly, the regression coefficient of the number of negative reviews and perceived risk was  $\beta=0.136$ ,  $P<0.01$ , and the number of negative reviews and perceived risk showed a significant positive correlation, and the H2a was valid. The regression coefficient of negative review quality and perceived risk  $\beta=0.182$ ,  $P<0.01$ , and the content quality of negative reviews were significantly positively correlated, and the H2b was valid. The regression coefficient between negative review sentiment intensity and perceived risk  $\beta=0.547$ ,  $P<0.01$ , and the negative review sentiment intensity was significantly positively correlated with perceived risk, and the H2c was valid. In investigating the correlation between the above three types of review information dimensions and perceived risk, although the significance level is the same, the unit change of consumer emotional intensity will have more impact on the expectation of perceived risk ( $\beta=0.547>0.182>0.136$ ).

Finally, the regression coefficient of purchasing intention and perceived risk was  $\beta=-0.433$ ,  $P<0.01$ , indicating that consumers' perceived risk of online shopping was negatively correlated with purchasing intention, and the H3 was valid.

#### 4.6 Mediation Effect of Perceived Risk

Using the *Bootstrap* method (Wen et al., 2004), this study employed SPSS's *PROCESS* plugin to conduct a mediation analysis with online consumers' negative comments quantity, quality, and emotional intensity as independent variables. Table 8 summarizes each variable's direct, indirect, and total effects on purchasing intention, along with the effect values and percentages.



Table 8. Bootstrap method of significance test of intermediary effect

Examined Variables (mediators)		Perceived Risk	Perceived Risk	Perceived Risk
Independent Variables		Number of	Quality of	Emotional intensity
		negative reviews	negative reviews	of negative reviews
Indirect	Effect	-0.1712	-0.2388	-0.3112
Effect(s)	Boot 95% CI	(-0.246, -0.103)	(-0.340, -0.126)	(-0.444, -0.177)
	Effect			
	Percentage	50.62%	41.21%	70.70%
Direct	Effect	-0.1671	-0.3407	-0.1291
Effect	Boot 95% CI	(-0.304, -0.030)	(-0.526, -0.156)	(-0.318, 0.060)
	Effect Percentage	49.38%	58.79%	29.30%
Total	Effect	-0.3382	-0.5795	-0.4402
Effect	Boot 95% CI	(-0.474, -0.203)	(-0.731, -0.428)	(-0.577, -0.304)
	Effect Percentage	100%	100%	100%

The results show that both negative comments quantity and quality have significant total, direct, and indirect effects on consumer purchasing intention. Perceived risk partially mediates the mechanism of online consumers' negative comments on quantity and quality on purchasing intention, with mediation effect percentages of 50.62% and 41.21%, respectively. Additionally, as the direct effect of emotional intensity on consumer purchasing intention was insignificant, perceived risk plays a complete mediating role in the mechanism of emotional intensity on purchasing intention, with a mediation effect of 70.70%.

#### 4.7 Summary of Results

Based on the constructed research model and hypotheses, the study surveyed the clothing industry through statistical analysis and hypothesis testing. Table 9 summarizes the hypothesis test results:

Table 9. Summary of hypothesis test results

No.	Research hypothesis	Test results
H1a	The number of online negative reviews in the apparel industry negatively affects consumer purchasing intention.	Valid
H1b	The quality of online negative reviews in the apparel industry negatively affects consumer purchasing intention.	Valid
H1c	The emotional intensity of online negative reviews in the apparel industry negatively affects consumer purchasing intention.	Not valid
H2a	The number of online negative reviews in the apparel industry positively affects consumers' perceived risk.	Valid
H2b	The quality of online negative reviews in the apparel industry positively affects consumers' perceived risk.	Valid
H2c	The emotional intensity of online negative reviews in the apparel industry positively affects consumers' perceived risk.	Valid
H3	Consumers' perceived risk of negative reviews negatively affects consumer purchasing intention.	Valid

The validation results indicate that most hypotheses are confirmed, except for the hypothesis that the emotional intensity of online consumer negative comments positively influences purchasing intention. The lack of confirmation for this hypothesis may be attributed to consumers relying more on specific information, such as the quantity and quality of reviews, rather than subjective emotional complaints when shopping for clothing online (Wang & Zou, 2023). Additionally, consumers may seek information in reviews that align more with their preferences, making emotional intensity less influential in purchase decisions (Deng, 2023; Román et al., 2023).

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1 Key Findings

This study examines the main impacts of online negative consumer reviews on consumer purchasing intention in the clothing industry. The research reveals a negative correlation between consumer purchasing intention and critical features of online negative reviews. Specifically, the quantity and quality of reviews significantly negatively impact purchasing intention. In contrast, no significant association exists between emotional intensity and purchasing intention. Consumers tend to assess product issues through criteria such as review quantity, accuracy, and objectivity (Ming, 2013; Guo, 2023). Emotional or high-intensity negative reviews are considered subjective and vague (He, 2021), making it challenging to influence purchasing decisions.

Regression analysis indicates that the quality of online negative reviews has the most significant impact on purchasing intention. High-quality negative reviews can lead to a higher degree of brand attribution among potential consumers, thereby reducing their purchasing intention (Park & Kim, 2008; Zheng, 2015). In the clothing industry, consumers emphasize the authenticity and richness of online visual and textual reviews (Zhong, 2021). Therefore, the influence of online negative review quality on shopping intention is more pronounced in this domain.

Moreover, perceived risk plays an intermediary role in the impact of online negative reviews on purchasing intention. Perceived risk partially mediates the impact of review quantity and quality, while it completely mediates the impact of emotional intensity, accounting for 70.70% of the total effect. Reviews with strong emotions increase consumers' perception of uncertainty and the severity of consequences, influencing their trust in the brand and purchase decisions (Dowling & Staelin, 1994; Wang & Zhang, 2021). Because consumers can directly change their attitudes toward products through direct cognitive behavior (such as browsing many genuine negative reviews) (Lain et al., 2020), the mediating effects of review quantity and quality are relatively small, at 50.62% and 41.21%, respectively.

Overall, the key findings of this study indicate that in the clothing industry, consumers purchasing intention is negatively influenced by the quantity and quality of online negative reviews. Consumers pay more attention to the quantity, objectivity, and specificity of negative reviews, while the impact of emotional intensity on purchasing intention is relatively tiny. Perceived risk plays a complete mediating role in this process. This finding guides for improving product quality and negative review management for businesses.

### 5.2 Management Recommendations

Three critical strategies are proposed for online apparel retailers to maintain consumer trust and satisfaction: addressing online negative reviews promptly, establishing effective feedback mechanisms, and reducing perceived purchase decision risks. These strategies enhance the overall online shopping experience, foster positive consumer perceptions, and ultimately influence purchase decisions in the competitive online marketplace.

#### 5.2.1 Addressing online negative reviews promptly

Online retailers must prioritize addressing negative online reviews, particularly in the context of apparel product sales. The unique nature of apparel products necessitates businesses to comprehensively understand the issues highlighted by negative online reviews (Chen, 2022). By ensuring high-quality products and services, businesses can develop effective management strategies based on a thorough analysis of consumer characteristics and needs. This involves addressing the root causes behind negative reviews, actively improving product services and corporate activities, and minimizing the accumulation of detrimental consequences for consumer brand attitudes on online platforms.

#### 5.2.2 Establishing an effective feedback mechanism

Given consumers' reliance on online reviews for product information, it is imperative to establish a robust feedback mechanism that reduces both the quantity and impact of negative reviews. Retailers should promptly respond to negative reviews by addressing relevant issues and implementing remedial measures. Timely communication with consumers, identifying specific product problems, and offering solutions such as exchanges or compensation contribute to minimizing the influence of negative information (Wang, 2016). Responding promptly not only reduces the quantity of negative reviews but also mitigates associated costs over time, emphasizing the importance of a swift and effective response mechanism.

#### 5.2.3 Reducing perceived purchase decision risks

The study underscores the significant correlation between perceived risks and consumer purchase decisions in the apparel industry. To mitigate this, businesses should take measures to lower consumers' perceived risks. Providing comprehensive and truthful product information directly influences consumers' overall impressions and reduces uncertainty about product quality (Zhang, 2020). Additionally, establishing a robust supply service chain can decrease economic, service, and quality-related risks, enhancing consumer desire to purchase and satisfaction. This includes improving website security, leveraging information technology for efficient logistics, and implementing a

comprehensive service guarantee system.

### 5.3 Research Limitations and Research Prospects

This study has two limitations. First, the survey sample is limited, with a higher proportion of females, concentrated ages between 18 and 30, and a higher percentage of participants with undergraduate degrees. Regarding the research question, this paper only explores online negative reviews in terms of emotional intensity, quantity, and quality without considering the influence of other potential factors. Additionally, in terms of product categories, this study only investigates online shopping in a particular apparel industry without considering other relevant industries or product categories. This makes our model lack universality and extensibility.

To address these limitations, future research can improve two main aspects profoundly. Firstly, future research can enhance the representativeness and applicability of research outcomes by expanding the sample range and increasing the depth of research questions. For example, future research should cover a broader range of age groups and regional areas to ensure diverse and universal sample data. Additionally, future research can consider introducing other influencing factors, such as gender, age, and shopping preferences, as moderating variables to understand the impact of online reviews on consumer behavior more comprehensively. Secondly, future research can appropriately expand the scope of the study to deepen the comparative analysis of different industries or products, further exploring the role of online review information in perceived risk and consumer purchasing intention. This helps reveal industry differences and the moderating effects of product characteristics on online review effects, providing more specific recommendations for practical marketing and management. Furthermore, conducting in-depth research on online reputation information from platforms like *Dianping* and *Meituan* would be a forward-looking direction, aiding e-commerce platforms in providing more scientific business strategies and improving user experience.

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**Appendix: Sources of scales for this study**

Variables	Nos.	Questions
Number of online negative reviews	A1	There are a lot of online reviews made by consumers about this product.
	A2	Consumer reviews about the product are both positive and negative.
	A3	A lot of reviews about the product are very informative.
	A4	There are a lot of reviews about the item on the site.
Quality of online negative reviews	B1	Online reviews about the product are mostly objective.
	B2	Most of the online reviews have enough reasons to justify their point.
	B3	Online reviews about the item are all easy to understand.
	B4	Most of the online reviews come across as credible.
Emotional intensity of online negative reviews	C1	The negative review is impressive.
	C2	The negative commenter was adamant.
	C3	The negative review was generally emotionally intense.
Perceived risk	D1	I feel uncomfortable, worried, and anxious when I buy this product.
	D2	I bought the brand's products believing there was a financial problem.
	D3	I think that the actual wearing of the product does not meet expectations or there are hidden dangers in terms of function, quality, etc.
purchasing intention	E1	I will most likely buy the goods and services.
	E2	I have a high purchase interest in this good and service.
	E3	I am willing to recommend goods and services to others.

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