



# The impact of self-construal on consumers' intention to write reviews: A trait activation perspective

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## ABSTRACT

Identifying which consumers are more likely to write reviews and when they are more likely to do so is of paramount importance for marketing management. Applying trait activation theory, this research explores how brand strength and consumption experience affect the intention of consumers with varying self-construals to write reviews. The findings suggest that, in general, consumers with an independent self-construal are less inclined to write reviews compared to those with an interdependent self-construal generally. However, for weak brands, consumers with an interdependent self-construal are less inclined to write reviews compared to those with an independent self-construal, irrespective of whether they have a positive or negative experience. When dealing with strong brands, consumers with an independent self-construal are more likely to generate reviews following a negative experience rather than a positive one. These findings improve our understanding of consumers' review-writing behavior and offer insights for practitioners to enhance consumer review management.

## 1. Introduction

Understanding why and when consumers would write reviews is an important issue for e-commerce platforms. As reviews have been shown to have a significant impact on consumer purchase behaviour, companies value and use a variety of strategies to encourage and manage consumer review writing behaviour (Cui, Chung, Peng, & Zheng, 2022; Zhang, Wei, & Zeng, 2020). For instance, Amazon uses email invitations or incentive recommendations to encourage consumers who have consumed to write reviews (Cui et al., 2022). Observationally, it is frequently noticed that some consumers are reluctant to write reviews, while others are enthusiastic about doing so. However, this difference seems to change with variations in the consumption context. For example, there are scenarios where consumers who usually refrain from writing reviews may break their silence, and sometimes those who are usually eager to share their views become reluctant. Businesses would greatly benefit from understanding the variations in consumers' intentions to write reviews. Such insights are crucial for enhancing the efficacy of online review management and for implementing effective marketing strategies.

Prior research on consumer review writing has predominantly concentrated on exploring consumers' psychological perceptions,

investigating the impact of factors such as social influence and technical features (e.g., altruistic motives, platform design) on their willingness to write reviews (Dixit, Badgaiyan, & Khare, 2019; Xiao et al., 2022). However, there has been limited research on the differences in the inclination of different consumers to write reviews from an individual differences' perspective. A recent stream of research has confirmed the significant connection between consumers' intention to write reviews and various personality traits (Kapoor, Balaji, Maity, & Jain, 2021). Additionally, these findings imply that consumers with varying levels of certain personality traits might exhibit distinct intentions when it comes to writing reviews. Hence, it is crucial to delve into the identification of specific personality trait factors that drive varied intentions to write reviews among different consumer segments. Furthermore, it is noted that although individual behavioural tendencies are typically stable under the influence of personality traits, they may also undergo unexpected changes when exposed to specific contextual stimuli (Bisht & Mahajan, 2021; Perez-Fernandez, Cacciotti, Martin-Cruz, & Delgado-Garcia, 2022). Consumers' intentions to write reviews thus appear to have certain patterns and changed dynamically under different conditions. Nevertheless, previous studies have paid limited attention to this phenomenon in consumers' intentions to write reviews in response to different contextual stimuli. It is essential to broaden the investigation

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of factors influencing consumers' intentions to write reviews by considering the influence of contextual cues during consumption, and to exploring the patterns and internal relationships and regulations. Adopting this comprehensive approach will provide a more systematic and objective theoretical understanding of the practical phenomenon of dynamic changes in consumers' intentions to write reviews.

Writing reviews, as a behavior that either expresses oneself or aids others, is intricately linked to consumers' perceptions of social connectedness (De Angelis, Bonezzi, Peluso, Rucker, & Costabile, 2012). Self-construal is a personality trait that reflects how individuals view themselves in relation to others and has been widely used in the study of online behaviour to identify behavioural differences between individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Yang, Stamatogiannakis, & Chattopadhyay, 2015). Due to different perceptions of one's relationship with others, consumers with different self-construals (i.e., interdependent and independent self-construals) may have different value perceptions for the act of writing reviews, which may lead to significantly different intentions to write reviews. Furthermore, consistent with previous research on the relationship between personality traits and contextual cues (Perez-Fernandez et al., 2022; Tett & Burnett, 2003), these differences in writing intentions could potentially be altered by contextual cues present in the consumption environment. Contextual cues in consumption are the various contextual stimuli that consumers are exposed to throughout the consumption process (Baek, Huang, & Lee, 2021). These contextual cues, such as those related to the product characteristics (e.g., brand strength) or to the consumption process (e.g., consumption experience), can influence not only the consumers' purchase decision but also their post-purchase feelings and behaviours (Muhlbacher, Raies, Grohs, & Koll, 2016; Philp & Pyle, 2021). While brand strength can influence consumers' product judgments and choices (Chen, Zhang, Lu, & Wang, 2022), it is still unclear whether brand strength affects different consumers' intentions to write reviews. Different levels of brand strength may induce different levels of social identity, group membership and perceptions of uniqueness in consumers (Miyazaki, Grewal, & Goodstein, 2005; Page & Herr, 2002). This may lead to changes in the intention to write reviews for consumers with different self-construals under conditions of strong and weak brand strength. It has also been confirmed that consumption experiences influence consumers' perceptions of relevant benefits or goals, and thus directly affect the valence of their reviews, with positive experiences leading to positive reviews and negative experiences leading to negative reviews (Berger, 2014). However, it remains unclear whether consumers with different self-construals show similar changes in their intention to write reviews when they have different consumption experiences. Due to the differences in their focus on personal versus collective interests, consumers with different self-construals may also show changes in their intentions to write reviews when faced with different consumption experiences. Examining the variations in different consumers' intentions to write reviews in different situations would facilitate a deeper understanding of the patterns underlying consumers' review writing behaviour. For businesses, recognizing the shifts in various consumers' intentions to write reviews is crucial for implementing management strategies.

In summary, understanding whether there are differences in consumers' intentions to write reviews across individuals and how these differences change in different contexts has become an intriguing question in both industry and academia. Self-construal reflects an individual's perception of their connection to themselves and others, and consumers with different self-construals may have different cognitions and intentions when it comes to sharing their consumption experiences with others. Importantly, given that brand strength (strong vs. weak) and consumption experience (positive vs. negative), as two typical contextual cues in consumption, may also influence consumers' perceptions such as social identity and personal interests, it appears that the relationship between self-construal and intention to write reviews can be varied. Based on this assumption, this research aims to answer the

following two questions:

RQ1: Does self-construal influence consumers' intention to write reviews?

RQ2: How do brand strength and consumption experience moderate the relationship between self-construal and intention to write reviews?

Based on trait activation theory, this research has developed a research model to address the above questions. Trait activation theory posits that the behavioural effects of personality traits depend in part on the situation in which the individual is embedded (Tett & Burnett, 2003); this theory has been used to explain how personality traits affect the behaviour of individuals with different contextual cues (Bisht & Mahajan, 2021; Perez-Fernandez et al., 2022). Supported by previous research using trait activation theory to examine the moderating effects of contextual cues on the relationship between personality traits and individuals' behaviour, we found that the theory provided an appropriate theoretical lens through which to analyse the effects of self-construal on intention to write reviews as well as the moderating roles of brand strength and consumption experience.

Four studies were conducted to test the research model and its proposed hypotheses. The results show that consumers with an independent self-construal are less likely to write reviews than those with an interdependent self-construal. However, this difference diminishes in case of a negative experience. Moreover, when dealing with weak brands, consumers with an interdependent self-construal are less likely to write reviews than those with an independent self-construal, regardless of whether the experience was positive or negative. Conversely, in situations involving strong brands, consumers with an independent self-construal are more likely to write reviews after a negative experience rather than a positive one.

This paper is organised as follows: Section 2 reviews the literature on consumers' intention to write reviews, self-construal, brand strength, consumption experience and trait activation theory. Section 3 presents the hypotheses. Section 4 describes a set of four studies. Section 5 discusses theoretical implications, practical implications, limitations, and future research directions.

## 2. Theoretical background

### 2.1. Consumers' intention to write reviews

Consumer reviews are considered to be authentic and unbiased reflections of their experiences with products or services, which other consumers often rely on when making purchase decisions (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Zhang, Ma, & Cartwright, 2013). Moreover, it has become important to identify factors that influence consumers' intention to write reviews. Previous studies have examined antecedents of consumers' intention to write reviews from different research perspectives (see Table 1). For example, from a social influence perspective, Dixit et al. (2019) indicated that attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and ego involvement influence consumers' intention to write reviews drawing from the theory of planned behaviour. Based on self-enhancement theory. Moreover, Yan and Wang (2018) demonstrated, based on self-enhancement theory, that power and experience congruity influence consumers' intention to write reviews. Additionally, the impact of technical features, such as platform design and mobile device usage, on consumers' intention to write reviews has been analysed by (Kim, Han, & Jun, 2020) and (Xiao et al., 2022). Researchers also have extensively examined the impact of companies' incentive strategies and invitation messages on consumers' cognitions, subsequently affecting their intention to write reviews (Zhang & Yang, 2019; Zhang et al., 2020). While these studies have predominantly focused on consumers' cognitions and psychological perceptions regarding the intention to write reviews, they have not fully addressed why these factors influencing the intention to write reviews might vary across consumers.

For a comprehensive understanding of these issues, another research

**Table 1**  
Studies on consumers' intention to write reviews.

Research perspective	Key variables	Theoretical foundation	Sources
Social Influence	Altruistic Motives, Attitude, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioural Control, Ego Involvement, Power	Theory of Planned Behaviour, Self-Enhancement Theory, Social Exchange Theory	Dixit et al. (2019), Yan and Wang (2018), Wu, Mattila, Wang, and Hanks (2016)
Technical Features Company Management	Salespeople's Online Profile Pictures, Mobile Device Usage, Platform Design Invitation Message, Monetary Rewards	Social Exchange Theory, Construal Level Theory, Social Support Theory Accountability Theory, Social Capital Theory	Yim et al. (2023), Park, Kim, and Kim (2023), Xiao et al. (2022), Kim et al. (2020) Labsomboonsiri, Mathews, Luck, and Mulcahy (2022), Zhang et al. (2020), Zhang and Yang (2019)
Personality Trait	Extroversion, Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Openness, Narcissism, Machiavellianism, Psychopathy, Moral Disengagement	The Big-Five Personality Framework, Moral Disengagement Theory	Kapoor et al. (2021), Picazo-Vela et al. (2010),

approach examines personality trait theories to explore why different consumers exhibit varying tendencies to write reviews (Kapoor et al., 2021; Picazo-Vela, Chou, Meicher, & Pearson, 2010). The central concept within these studies suggests that consumers' personality traits influence their cognitive and psychological perceptions, thereby shaping their intentions to write reviews. From this perspective, researchers have investigated the influence of consumers' personality traits. For example, Picazo-Vela et al. (2010) offered insights into the relationship between the big five personality traits and consumers' intent to write reviews. Additionally, Kapoor et al. (2021) demonstrated that dark personality traits such as narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy influence the inclination to exaggerate in online reviews through moral disengagement.

According to these research, it is clear that consumers with certain personality traits generally have a stable propensity to write reviews. However, these research studies have not yet delved further into exploring an overlooked but remarkable fact: even the same consumer's propensity to write reviews is variable. For example, in some situations a consumer may be eager to write a review, while in other situations the same consumer may be reluctant to do so. Writing reviews is a behavior in the context of consumption, which is influenced by the contextual cues present throughout the entire process. Despite the previous studies on the internal process mechanism of review-writing behaviour, the role of contextual cues on consumers' intention to write reviews has not been well investigated. Studies have suggested that different contextual cues may influence individuals' behavioural intentions by promoting or inhibiting individual personality traits (Liu, Chiang, Fehr, Xu, & Wang, 2017; Tett & Guterman, 2000). Contextual cues in consumption may also lead to changes in consumers' intentions to write reviews by interfering with their personality traits. Investigating the joint influence of consumers' personality traits and contextual cues on their intentions to write reviews would contribute to a deeper understanding of the variability in the intentions to write reviews among different consumers in different contexts.

## 2.2. Self-construal

Self-construal reflects the extent to which people define themselves as either an independent unit or an interdependent unit, and has been divided into independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Both types of self-construal exist concurrently in an individual, with an independent or interdependent self-construal typically taking a dominant position (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Zhang & Shrum, 2009). Individuals with a predominantly independent self-construal tend to be more independent and autonomous, distinguishing themselves from the group and pursuing individualistic goals, emphasizing personal uniqueness, achievements, and personal accomplishments. Whereas individuals with a predominantly interdependent self-construal tend to perceive themselves as part of a larger group, pursuing collectivist goals, and placing value on connectedness, consistency, and group harmony (Singelis, 1994; Yang

et al., 2015).

The relationship between self-construal and behavioural differences has been examined in the contexts of entertainment, consumption, and the workplace (Yang et al., 2015; Zhang & Shrum, 2009). Individuals with an interdependent self-construal value stability and continuity in social relationships more than those with an independent self-construal, and they tend to engage in more activities that promote stability and harmony, whereas individuals with an independent self-construal tend to engage in more progress-related activities (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). However, recent research has found that the effect of self-construal may vary depending on contextual cues. For instance, Ma, Yang, and Murali (2014) found that the popularity cues and scarcity cues can reverse the effect of self-construals on consumers' adoption of different types of new products, and Wu, Moore, and Fitzsimons (2019) found that consumers with different self-construals show differences in their consumption choices when they engage in collective consumption with groups of different sizes.

## 2.3. Brand strength and consumption experience

Brand strength is the consumers' perception of a particular brand in terms of its overall strength, including quality, market position, and innovativeness (Muhlbacher et al., 2016; Page & Herr, 2002). A priori brand knowledge and brand strength influence product perception and brand association (Muhlbacher et al., 2016). Compared to weak brands, strong brands give consumers confidence in the product itself and also in their judgement of its quality (Miyazaki et al., 2005; Wood & Lynch, 2002). Strong brands also have larger consumer groups and stronger brand resonance than weak brands (Keller, 2012; Wang & Ding, 2017). Previous studies have confirmed the important role of brand strength in consumer product choice (Chen et al., 2022). However, it remains unknown whether and how brand strength affects consumers' intention to write reviews.

Consumption experience refers to a set of perceptions generated during the process of either purchasing or using a product (Manthiou, Hickman, & Klaus, 2020; Ruth, Brunel, & Otnes, 2002). Product quality, service quality, and the consumption environment are antecedents of this experience (Tezer & Bodur, 2020). Consumption experience plays a crucial role in predicting consumer reactions during the purchase process (Choi, Jung, Oyunbileg, & Yang, 2016; Manthiou et al., 2020). Moreover, it not only significantly influences consumers' reactions throughout the consumption process (Choi et al., 2016; Manthiou et al., 2020), but also plays a crucial role in affecting several post-purchase reactions. For instance, previous research has shown that consumption experiences influence consumers' word-of-mouth valence, repurchase intentions, and brand and firm loyalty (Berger, 2014; Philp & Pyle, 2021). However, there is currently a lack of research that explores how consumption experience leads to differences in the intention to write reviews between different consumers.

Brand strength influences consumers' perceptions of their social image or personal identification with the brand's consumer group (Page

& Herr, 2002), while consumption experience influences consumers' perceptions of their personal or collective interests (Ruth et al., 2002). Consumers with different self-construals might adjust their review writing behavior under varying conditions of brand strength (strong vs. weak) and consumption experience (positive vs. negative) to fulfill distinct individualistic goals, such as showcasing individual uniqueness, or collectivist goals, like connecting with and assisting others. Hence, under diverse conditions of brand strength and consumption experience, the inclination to write reviews could differ among consumers with distinct self-construals. This study focuses on exploring the combined impact of these two contextual cues in consumption, alongside self-construal, on the intention to write reviews.

#### 2.4. Trait activation theory

According to Tett and Burnett (2003), trait activation theory posits that contextual cues play a pivotal role in influencing the impact of personality traits on behavior. These cues can either activate or deactivate specific personality traits, indicating that traits may not manifest consistently across diverse situations but can be influenced or moderated by the surrounding context. For instance, an individual who is typically introverted may become more outgoing and sociable in a context that encourages extroverted behaviour, such as a party or social gathering (Liu et al., 2017). Trait activation theory provides a theoretical framework for exploring the interplay between individuals and contextual cues in explaining behavioural variability. It has been used to explain how the relationship between individual traits and behavioural outcomes is influenced by various contextual cues (Bisht & Mahajan, 2021; Perez-Fernandez et al., 2022).

Drawing on trait activation theory, we propose a research model that examines the influence of self-construal on consumers' intention to write reviews. Specifically, we examine the relationship between self-construals as a personality trait and consumers' intention to write reviews, and identify potential heterogeneity in the intention to write reviews across consumers with different self-construals. Furthermore, we focus on the moderating role of brand strength and consumption experience in the relationship between self-construals and consumers' intention to write reviews, respectively. We hypothesize that variations in the intention to write reviews among consumers with different self-construals may vary under the influence of diverse brand strengths or consumption experiences. Furthermore, our study aims to explore the combined moderating impacts of brand strength and consumption experience to offer insights into the variation in the relationship between self-construal and the intention to write reviews. Fig. 1 illustrates the research model.

### 3. Hypotheses development

#### 3.1. Self-construal and intention to write reviews

Individuals with an interdependent self-construal place a high value on interpersonal relationships and often modify their words and actions to cultivate harmonious social relationships (Cross, Hardin, & Gercek-Swing, 2011; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). They prioritize information sharing and self-expression as a way of gaining group attention and cultivating a sense of belonging (Hofmann, Schwyer, Stokburger-Sauer, & Wanisch, 2021). As a result, they may be motivated to share their perspectives by writing reviews as a means of making connections and facilitating communication with others. In addition, they seek to connect with others through prosocial behaviours such as helping others in social interactions (Cross & Madson, 1997). Since writing reviews can be seen as a form of prosocial behaviour that helps other consumers make informed decisions (Chen, Zhang, Zhang, & Zhang, 2023; Zhang et al., 2013), consumers with an interdependent self-construal may have a strong inclination to write reviews due to their desire to foster social connections, help others, and promote interpersonal harmony. Moreover, if these consumers have benefited from helpful reviews in the past, they may feel compelled to reciprocate by sharing their own experiences with others. Conversely, individuals with an independent self-construal tend to be more self-oriented (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Yang et al., 2015) and may view review writing as a lower priority or a futile activity. Furthermore, they may prioritize personal privacy to a greater extent (Zhang, Cui, & Yao, 2021), and therefore, may not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences with others. Based on these observations, we hypothesize that:

H1: Self-construal affects consumers' intention to write reviews. Specifically, consumers with an independent self-construal are less likely to write reviews than those with an interdependent self-construal.

#### 3.2. The moderating role of brand strength

Individuals with an interdependent self-construal employ a 'prevention focus' as a mode of self-regulation (Higgins and Tory, 1997), wherein they prioritize maintaining conformity with others and strive to fulfill their expected roles in society (Brodscholl, Kober, & Higgins, 2007). Thus, consumers with an interdependent self-construal would generate self-satisfaction, belongingness, and perceive less social risk by using products with strong brands, and they prefer to share information about strong brands with others (Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, & Sen, 2012). Weak brands are often characterized by associations with poor quality, affordability, and limited social recognition (Miyazaki et al., 2005). This suggests that such brands may present higher social risks for

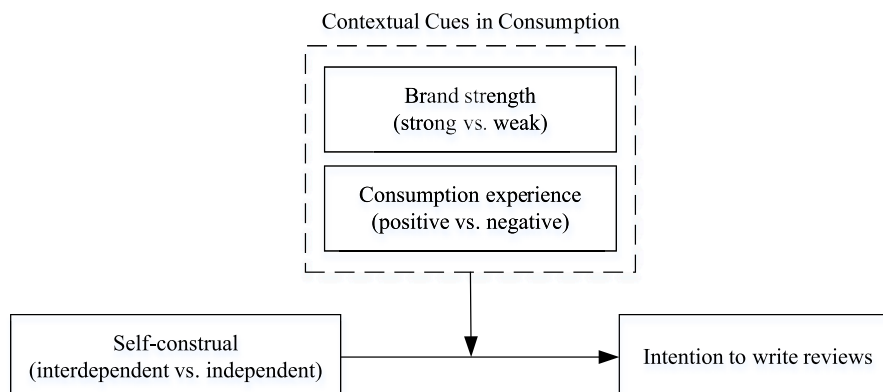


Fig. 1. Research model.

individuals with an interdependent self-construal (Hupp & Powaga, 2004). Consumers with an interdependent self-construal may perceive it as socially risky to write reviews about weak brands, resulting in a lower intention to express themselves and share experiences.

Individuals with an independent self-construal employ a 'promotion focus' as a mode of self-regulation (Ruvio, 2008). They tend to engage in more promotion-related activities and construct their self-concept and self-image in diverse ways (Higgins and Tory, 1997; Ruvio, 2008). Compared to weak brands, the consumer group associated with strong brands demonstrates a more consistent attitude towards the product or service (Muhlbacher et al., 2016). For consumers with an independent self-construal, expressing their opinions about products from strong brands may pose challenges in gaining a sense of uniqueness and achievement, as numerous other consumers have likely already expressed their opinions. They might reason that their unique voice could be overshadowed by the multitude of existing opinions already expressed by numerous other consumers. Yet, with weaker brands that lack public recognition, consumers with an independent self-construal may be inclined to emphasize their opinions about products, engaging in more self-expressive behaviors to achieve individualistic goals. Thus, in the case of weak brands, consumers with an independent self-construal are more likely to share information to express their individuality and liberal thoughts compared to those with an interdependent self-construal. We hypothesize that:

H2: Brand strength moderates the relationship between self-construal and intention to write reviews. Specifically, for strong brands, consumers with an independent self-construal are less likely to write reviews than those consumers with an interdependent self-construal, but for weak brands, consumers with an interdependent self-construal are less likely to write reviews than those with an independent self-construal.

### 3.3. The moderating role of consumption experience

In the case of a positive experience, consumers may enter a mental state characterized by enjoyment, excitement, and happiness (Ruth et al., 2002). For consumers with an interdependent self-construal who prioritize social consequences, a positive consumer experience is perceived as a reflection of competence and a wise decision (Berger, 2014). This perception can enhance their social image and attract admiration from others (Kitirattarkarn, Tao, & Tsai, 2020). Consequently, such positive experiences may serve to enhance their image and impress others, leading individuals to enjoy sharing these experiences with others (Wang & Lalwani, 2019). As such, they are likely to write reviews that express their opinions as they derive emotional benefits from doing so (Jun, Kim, & Tang, 2017). Conversely, individuals with an independent self-construal, characterized by high levels of self-regulation, tend to act based on their "independent self" or "true self", which exhibits a high degree of consistency across contexts (Cheng & Lam, 2013). As a result, if they have a positive consumption experience, they may perceive it as a routine event and therefore be less likely to write reviews and share about it.

In the case of a negative experience, consumers with an independent self-construal may feel that their own rights, interests, and social image are being challenged (Cheung & To, 2017). In order to protect their self-concept and address their need for self-expression, they may seek catharsis and alleviate their stress through providing feedback (Cheng & Lam, 2013; Pusakrakit & Kang, 2016). Previous studies have indicated that individuals residing in cultures characterized as more individualistic tend to be less proficient in employing the emotional regulation strategy of expressive suppression (Butler, Lee, & Gross, 2007). Therefore, consumers with an independent self-construal tend to fulfill their need for self-consistency through expressive behavior rather than suppressing their emotions (Wei, Su, Carrera, Lin, & Yi, 2013). For consumers with an interdependent self-construal, the concept of the self is

defined by considering the opinions, preferences, and responsibilities of others (Aaker & Lee, 2001). Given their inclination towards collectivism, individuals with an interdependent self-construal may find it challenging to tolerate subpar products or services from companies, as they prioritize serving the needs of others (Akpınar, Verlegh, & Smidts, 2018). Therefore, negative experiences not only prompt them to share their experiences to manage negative emotions and express dissatisfaction, but also stimulate a strong prosocial motivation. This motivation drives them to provide informative references to potential consumers, aiming to help them avoid similar negative experiences (Small & Cryder, 2016). Furthermore, consumers with an interdependent self-construal, who prioritise social responsibility and collective consciousness (Joo, Lee, & Yoon, 2022), may also write negative reviews to hold companies accountable and encourage them to improve their products or services. We hypothesize that:

H3: Consumption experience moderates the relationship between self-construal and intention to write reviews. Specifically, consumers with an independent self-construal are less likely to write reviews than those with an interdependent self-construal in the case of positive experience, but this difference is attenuated in the case of negative experience.

### 3.4. Self-construal, brand strength, consumption experience, and intention to write reviews

According to trait activation theory, the impact of personality traits on behaviour depends on the trait relevance of the situation (Tett & Burnett, 2003). When various contextual cues simultaneously stimulate an individual, those most closely related to the individual's specific personality trait will have a more significant impact (Huang, Tan, Ke, & Wei, 2018; Kim, Zhang, & Li, 2008). Given that individuals with different self-construals differ in their focus on self and others, they are likely to be differentially influenced by contextual cues associated with distinct goal orientations. Specifically, individuals with an independent self-construal are more susceptible to cues related to individualistic goals, whereas individuals with an interdependent self-construal are more influenced by cues related to collectivist goals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Zhang & Shrum, 2009). Since brand strength mainly leads to consumers' perceptions of social image or relationship with the consumer group (Keller, 2012; Page & Herr, 2002), and consumption experience mainly leads to consumers' perceptions of their own interests and personal goals (Ruth et al., 2002; Tezer & Bodur, 2020), we propose that consumers with interdependent self-construal are more influenced by brand strength, whereas consumers with independent self-construal are more influenced by consumption experience.

As previously hypothesized, when brands are weak, consumers with an interdependent self-construal are less likely to write reviews to avoid threats to their social identity. Because they are more concerned with how others perceive them (Zhang & Shrum, 2009), they are more likely to remain silent about negative experiences associated with consuming products of weaker brands. Consumers with an independent self-construal emphasise individual uniqueness and concerned with their own rights (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). They are more likely to express themselves with weak brands, and when they have negative experiences, they also provide feedback to advocate for their personal interests. In the case of strong brands, consumers with an interdependent self-construal perceive themselves as part of a cohesive consumer group associated with the brand. They will not only share positive consumption experiences to gain recognition from others, but also share negative experiences for the benefit of the group to maintain the concept of group harmony and mutual support. For consumers with an independent self-construal, who maintain the separation between themselves and others, value independence, and emphasize personal interests, they are less likely to share the positive experience of strong brands, but more likely to share the negative experience. Accordingly, we hypothesize that:

H4: In the case of weak brands, consumers with an interdependent self-construal are less likely to write a review than those with an independent self-construal, irrespective of their consumption experience, whether positive or negative.

H5: In case of strong brands, consumers with an interdependent self-construal have similar intention to write reviews when they have positive or negative experiences; while consumers with an independent self-construal have higher intention to write reviews in case of a negative experience than in case of a positive experience.

#### 4. Methodology

We applied survey (Study 1 and Study 2) and experimentation (Study 3 and Study 4) methods to test the research model. The survey method aimed to assess consumers' self-construal and their habits or experiences in writing reviews, while the experimentation method examined the impact of the interaction between self-construal and contextual cues through the priming of self-construal and scenario simulation. The use of a mixed-methods approach enhances the robustness of the findings. In Study 1, we aimed to examine the hypothesis regarding the relationship between self-construal and intention to write reviews. In Study 2, we explored the moderating roles of brand strength. In Study 3, we concentrated on consumers' self-construal and manipulated consumption experience to investigate the moderating effect of consumption experience. In Study 4, we manipulated the two contextual cues, namely brand strength and consumption experience, to further test their joint moderation effect.

##### 4.1. Study 1

In Study 1, our aim is to provide initial support for the main hypothesis of this research by investigating the relationship between consumers' self-construal and their intention to write reviews using survey research.

###### 4.1.1. Procedure

We conducted a questionnaire-based survey on [idiaoyan.com](http://idiaoyan.com), one of the largest online survey platforms in China. 300 consumers with online shopping experience were recruited for this study (each offered an incentive of \$0.50). Out of 300 responses, 44 respondents were excluded from the analysis. Of these, 24 provided responses within unreasonably short completion time (e.g., less than 5 s for each measurement item), 11 did not provide complete answers and 9 provided conflicting feedback. This resulted in a final sample size of 256 responses (50.4 % female;  $M_{age} = 23.2$ ).

The questionnaire for this study consists of three parts. The first part measures interdependent and independent self-construals. There were 12 items to measure the interdependent self-construal (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.920$ ) and 12 items to measure the independent self-construal (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.921$ ) (Singelis, 1994) (see Appendix A). The second part measures the intention to write reviews. The three measurement items were adapted from Bock, Zmud, Kim, and Lee (2005) (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.885$ ) (see Appendix A). It should be noted that the respondents were asked to answer the measurement items based on their usual habits. The third part comprises the demographic information of the respondents. All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale.

###### 4.1.2. Results

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis indicate that the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values of the measurement scales ranged from 0.885 to 0.921, and the composite reliability values ranged from 0.885 to 0.926. These findings suggest that the scales used demonstrate good reliability. The factor loadings of all indicators ranged from 0.637 to 0.871, and the average variance extracted values were all greater than 0.5. These results suggest that the scales exhibit good convergent validity. The

measurement model was found to provide an acceptable fit ( $\chi^2/df = 1.499$ , RMSEA = 0.044, CFI = 0.959).

Structural equation modelling was employed to analyse the path coefficient of the influence of the independent self-construal and the interdependent self-construal on intention to write reviews ( $\chi^2/df = 1.495$ , RMSEA = 0.044, CFI = 0.959). The interdependent self-construal was positively correlated with intention to write reviews ( $\beta = 0.704$ , SE = 0.085,  $p < 0.001$ ), whereas the independent self-construal was negatively correlated ( $\beta = -0.211$ , SE = 0.082,  $p < 0.001$ ). Following previous research practice (Escalas & Bettman, 2005), a self-construal score was created by subtracting the independent self-construal score from the interdependent self-construal score, with a higher self-construal score reflecting greater interdependence. The results of the regression analysis showed that the influence of the self-construal score was significantly positive ( $\beta = 0.578$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). These results indicate that consumers primarily characterized by an independent self-construal were less likely to write reviews than those predominantly characterized by an interdependent self-construal, thus supporting H1.

##### 4.1.3. Discussion

Study 1 provided preliminary confirmation of distinct associations between different self-construals and intention to write reviews. Specifically, consumers primarily characterized by an interdependent self-construal showed a higher propensity to engage in review writing. Next, relevant information about consumers' previous purchase experiences will be examined to further investigate the moderating effect of brand strength.

##### 4.2. Study 2

Study 2 aims to test the moderating effect of brand strength. We tested the hypotheses by collecting data on consumers' online purchase experiences and review writing behaviour.

###### 4.2.1. Procedure

A total of 184 online consumers (48.4 % female;  $M_{age} = 26.13$ ) were recruited as respondents from [idiaoyan.com](http://idiaoyan.com). Each respondent received \$0.5 as compensation for their time and effort.

All the respondents were first asked to complete the measurement scales of interdependent self-construals (12 items; Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.896$ ) and independent self-construals (12 items; Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.911$ ) (Singelis, 1994) (see Appendix A). They were then asked to recall a recent online purchase of approximately \$10. They were instructed to access an online shopping site to retrieve their purchase records and provide a brief description of the product they bought in the questionnaire.

Afterward, respondents completed scales measuring the brand strength of the product ("Please rate the brand according to your judgment: 1 = Weak brand, 7 = Strong brand"; "Please rate the brand according to your judgment: 1 = Ordinary brand, 7 = Leading brand") (Sheng Goh, Chattaraman, & Forsythe, 2013). Finally, we asked participants whether they had written reviews about the purchase (0 = no, 1 = yes) and asked those who had written reviews to provide the content of their reviews.

###### 4.2.2. Results

A self-construal score was calculated by subtracting the score for independent self-construal from the score for interdependent self-construal (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Respondents with a self-construal score greater than 0 were classified as interdependent ( $n = 92$ ) and those with a score less than 0 were classified as independent ( $n = 92$ ). A binary logistic regression on the review writing behaviour reveals significant differences between independents and interdependents ( $b = 0.632$ , Wald  $\chi^2(1) = 4.345$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , Exp(B) = 1.882). This result supported our prediction that consumers with an interdependent self-construal are more likely to write reviews than those with an independent self-construal, H1 was supported. In addition, the results indicated a significant interaction between self-construal and brand strength ( $b =$

1.340,  $z = 4.563$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). As predicted, for weak brands ( $M - 1SD$ ), independents are more likely to write reviews than interdependents ( $P_{independents} = 56.8\%$  vs.  $P_{interdependents} = 33.0\%$ ;  $b = -0.992$ ,  $z = -2.134$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). However, for strong brands ( $M + 1SD$ ), interdependents are more likely to write reviews than independents ( $P_{independents} = 14.1\%$  vs.  $P_{interdependents} = 68.0\%$ ;  $b = 2.563$ ,  $z = 4.467$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). H2 was supported.

#### 4.2.3. Discussion

Study 2 has again confirmed the existence of different review writing tendencies among consumers with different self-construals. Furthermore, it has demonstrated that the variations in these tendencies change under different brand strength conditions, supporting the moderating effect of brand strength. Next, we will use a scenario-based experiment to manipulate consumption experience and examine the moderating effects of consumption on the relationship between self-construal and intention to write reviews.

### 4.3. Study 3

Study 3 aims to investigate the moderating effect of consumption experience. We devised a virtual shopping platform wherein participants could engage in a simulated purchase of tissues (specifically toilet rolls, commonly bought online) and subsequently write reviews.

#### 4.3.1. Procedure

The experiment was conducted on [wjx.com](http://wjx.com), a platform with a global respondent pool of over 2.6 million individuals, facilitating online research for researchers. A total of 248 participants (51.2% female;  $M_{age} = 23.61$ ) recruited from [wjx.com](http://wjx.com) participated in a 2 (self-construal priming: independent self-construal vs. interdependent self-construal)  $\times$  2 (consumption experience: positive vs. negative) between-subjects design. All participants were experienced online shoppers.

A priming method according to [Trafimow, Triandis, and Goto \(1991\)](#) was used. In this task, Participants were asked to read a story about Sostoras, a Sumerian warrior who had to choose an officer for an upcoming battle. In the independent self-construal priming condition, Sostoras' decision was based solely on personal interests. In the interdependent self-construal priming condition, Sostoras' decision was based entirely on collective interests. Participants were then asked three questions to measure independent self-construals (e.g., "At this moment, I am focused on myself"), and interdependent self-construals with three items (e.g., "At this moment, I am focused on others I care about") (see [Appendix A](#)). These measurement scales are used to measure an individual's self-construal after priming ([Winterich & Barone, 2011](#)). A self-construal score was calculated by subtracting the independent self-construal score from the interdependent self-construal score. A pretest involving 46 graduate students showed that, relative to the independent self-construal priming condition ( $n = 23$ ), individuals exhibited higher self-construal scores in the interdependent self-construal priming condition ( $n = 23$ ;  $M_{independent} = -4.130$ ,  $M_{interdependent} = 3.246$ ;  $t(44) = 17.601$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Consequently, in the main study, 248 participants engaged in the identical self-construal priming task, subsequently completing assessments for both independent ( $Cronbach's \alpha = 0.861$ ) and interdependent self-construal ( $Cronbach's \alpha = 0.882$ ).

All participants were presented with a virtual shopping platform and provided with \$20 in virtual currency to simulate a realistic shopping experience. They were instructed to use the virtual currency to purchase tissue products from the virtual shopping platform. The tissue products displayed on the platform have analogous specifications and are priced at \$13 each. Participants completed the purchase and then received stimulus materials about the consumption experience. They were asked to imagine experiencing what was described in the stimulus materials. For example, in the case of a positive experience, they read "The tissues are soft, thick and the packaging are nice and colourful", and in the case of a negative experience, they read "Looks like fake stock. Rough and just

very basic tissue".

We included an option on the web page inviting participants to click and write reviews about their purchase, informing them that their reviews could be seen by others. Importantly, participants voluntarily decided whether to write reviews, mirroring the process on an actual webpage. We recorded whether participants wrote reviews (0 = no, 1 = yes).

#### 4.3.2. Results

We calculated the self-construal score was calculated by subtracting the independent self-construal score from the interdependent self-construal score. As expected, participants in the independent self-construal priming condition exhibited lower self-construal scores compared to those in the interdependent self-construal priming condition ( $M_{independent} = -3.317$ ,  $M_{interdependent} = 2.936$ ;  $t(246) = 51.556$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, the self-construal priming method was successfully implemented.

The results of a crosstab analysis showed that participants primed with an interdependent self-construal were more likely to write reviews than those primed with an independent self-construal (80.6% vs. 65.3%;  $\chi^2 = 7.383$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), H1 was supported. Furthermore, in the positive experience condition, participants primed with an interdependent self-construal were more likely to write reviews than those primed with an independent self-construal (77.4% vs. 54.8%;  $\chi^2 = 7.057$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). However, this difference disappeared in the negative experience condition (83.9% vs. 75.8%;  $\chi^2 = 1.253$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). These results show the moderating effects of brand strength, supporting H3.

#### 4.3.3. Discussion

Study 3 confirmed that under conditions of positive consumption experiences, consumers with an interdependent self-construal are more likely to engage in review writing than those with an independent self-construal. Conversely, under conditions of negative experiences, both types of self-construal consumers show an increased intention to write reviews, thus confirming the moderating role of consumption experiences. We will further examine the joint moderating effects of consumption experiences and brand strength by simultaneously manipulating these factors to assess their impact on the relationship between self-construal and intention to write reviews.

### 4.4. Study 4

Study 4 aims to simultaneously manipulate two contextual cues, namely consumption experience and brand strength and test their joint moderation effect. We used a different priming method to manipulate self-construals and a different focal product (earphones) to improve the robustness of the results.

#### 4.4.1. Stimuli development

For the brand strength manipulation, an unaided free recall task and a brand strength measurement pretest were conducted ([Wang & Zhang, 2018](#)). 42 experienced online consumers, who were participants in the study, were asked to identify brands associated with earphones. They were given 30 s to list all the brands that came to mind (in order), which represented categories of familiar brands. To complement these brands, we identified several unknown brands (not listed by the participants). We then created a comprehensive list that included both familiar and unfamiliar brands. Next, we invited an additional 46 experienced online consumers rated the brand strength of each brand listed ("Please rate the brand according to your judgement: 1 = Weak brand, 7 = Strong brand"; "Please rate the brand according to your judgement: 1 = Ordinary brand, 7 = Leading brand") ([Sheng Goh et al., 2013](#)). Brand A and Brand B received the highest and lowest strength ratings, respectively, and were therefore selected as the strong and weak brand stimuli ( $M_A = 6.152$ ,  $SD = 0.57$ ;  $M_B = 3.185$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ;  $t = 16.469$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

#### 4.4.2. Procedure

A total of 360 participants (50.8 % female;  $M_{age} = 25.69$ ,  $SD = 4.43$ ) recruited from [wjx.com](http://wjx.com) participated in a 2 (self-construal priming: interdependent self-construal vs. independent self-construal)  $\times$  2 (brand strength: strong brand vs. weak brand)  $\times$  2 (consumption experience: positive vs. negative) between-subjects design. They all had experience of online shopping.

Another priming method proposed by Trafimow et al. (1991) was used in this experiment. Specifically, participants in the interdependent self-construal priming condition were instructed: “For the next two minutes, you will not need to write anything. Please think about what you have in common with your family and friends. What do they expect you to do?” Participants in the independent self-construal priming condition were instructed: “For the next two minutes, you will not need to write anything. Please think of what makes you different from your family and friends. What do you expect yourself to do?” To confirm that participants had been successfully primed, they were asked to complete the independent self-construal (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.888$ ) and the interdependent self-construal (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.898$ ) measurement items (Winterich & Barone, 2011). These measures are the same as in Study 3 (see Appendix A).

All participants were provided access to a virtual shopping platform and allocated \$30 in virtual currency. On the platform, they encountered three earphones, all visually similar and priced at \$20 each. They were instructed to select one earphone based on personal preference and proceed to purchase it using the virtual currency. In the strong brand condition, all earphones were labelled with Brand A, whereas under the weak brand condition, all earphones were labelled with Brand B. All participants were asked to rate the brand strength using a scale from 1 to 7 (“Please rate the brand according to your judgement: 1 = Weak brand, 7 = Strong brand”; “Please rate the brand according to your judgement: 1 = Ordinary brand, 7 = Leading brand”) (Sheng Goh et al., 2013).

After completing the purchase on the virtual shopping platform, participants received stimulus materials describing the consumption experience. They were instructed to imagine experiencing what was described in the stimulus materials. For example, for a positive experience, they read “The sound quality is absolutely amazing and it’s very easy to carry in your pocket while traveling”, and in case of a negative experience, they read “Unfortunately, the sound quality isn’t very good at all, and they seem underpowered”. We then measured participants’ intention to write reviews (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.849$ ) using the same scales as in Study 1 (see Appendix A).

#### 4.4.3. Results

As expected, the self-construal scores of participants in the independent self-construal priming condition were lower than those of participants in the interdependent self-construal priming condition ( $M_{independent} = -2.706$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ;  $M_{interdependent} = 3.278$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ;  $t(358) = 58.403$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, the self-construal priming method was successfully implemented. Brand strength scores were higher in the strong brand condition than in the weak brand condition ( $M_{strong} = 5.981$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ;  $M_{weak} = 2.336$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ;  $t(358) = 44.553$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The brand strength manipulation was successful.

When compared to participants primed with an independent self-construal, those primed with an interdependent self-construal had higher intentions to write reviews ( $M_{independent} = 4.680$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ;  $M_{interdependent} = 5.328$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ;  $F(1, 356) = 31.710$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). H1 was supported. A two-way ANOVA shows an interaction effect between self-construal and brand strength ( $F(1, 356) = 314.109$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\hat{I}_p^2 = 0.469$ ). Planned contrast (see Fig. 2) indicated that for strong brand condition, participants primed with an independent self-construal had lower intentions to write reviews than those primed with an interdependent self-construal ( $M_{independent} = 3.696$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ;  $M_{interdependent} = 5.793$ ,  $SD = 0.63$ ;  $F(1, 356) = 329.10$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). However, for the weak brand condition, participants primed with an independent self-construal had higher intentions to write reviews than those primed with an

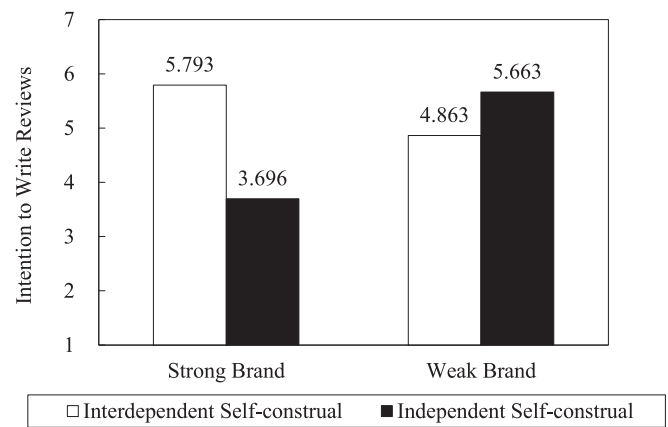


Fig. 2. Self-construal  $\times$  Brand strength interaction.

interdependent self-construal ( $M_{independent} = 5.663$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ;  $M_{interdependent} = 4.863$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ;  $F(1, 356) = 47.93$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). H2 was supported.

Another two-way ANOVA on the intention to write reviews shows an interaction effect between self-construal and consumption experience ( $F(1, 356) = 9.845$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $\hat{I}_p^2 = 0.027$ ). Planned contrast (see Fig. 3) indicated that in case of positive experience, participants primed with an independent self-construal had lower intentions to write reviews than those primed with an interdependent self-construal ( $M_{independent} = 4.219$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ ;  $M_{interdependent} = 5.211$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ;  $F(1, 356) = 40.88$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). However, this difference disappeared for negative experiences ( $M_{independent} = 5.141$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ;  $M_{interdependent} = 5.444$ ,  $SD = 0.67$ ;  $F(1, 356) = 3.83$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). H3 was supported.

Furthermore, a three-way ANOVA of 2 (self-construal priming: interdependent self-construal vs. independent self-construal)  $\times$  2 (brand strength: strong vs. weak)  $\times$  2 (consumption experience: positive vs. negative) revealed a significant three-way interaction ( $F(1, 352) = 38.121$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\hat{I}_p^2 = 0.098$ ). Further analysis shows that in the weak brand condition, the interaction effect between self-construal and consumption experience was not significant ( $F(1, 176) = 0.959$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Specifically, participants primed with an interdependent self-construal had lower intentions to write reviews than those primed with an independent self-construal, regardless of whether they had positive ( $M_{independent} = 5.882$ ,  $M_{interdependent} = 5.170$ ,  $F(1, 176) = 47.93$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) or negative ( $M_{independent} = 5.444$ ,  $M_{interdependent} = 4.556$ ;  $F(1, 176) = 30.67$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) experiences (see Fig. 4). H4 was supported. However, in the strong brand condition, the interaction effect between self-construal and consumption experience was significant ( $F(1, 176) = 52.786$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,

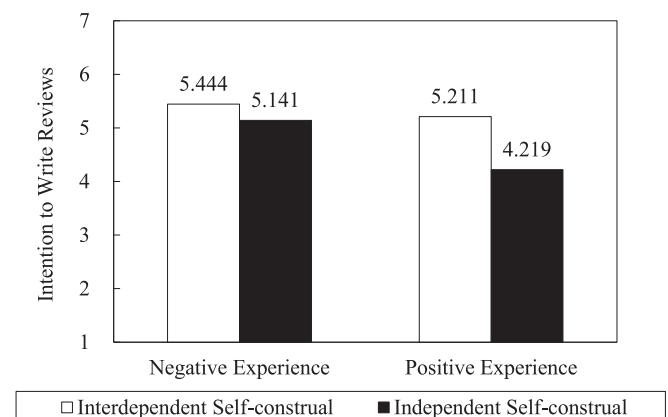


Fig. 3. Self-construal  $\times$  Consumption Experience interaction.



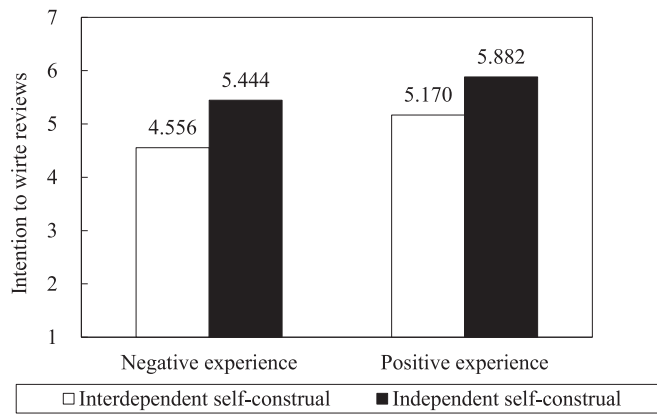


Fig. 4. Self-construal × consumption experience interaction in weak brand condition.

$\hat{I}_p^2 = 0.231$ ). Specifically, participants primed with an independent self-construal had higher intentions to write reviews in case of negative experience than in case of positive emotion ( $M_{positive} = 2.993$ ,  $M_{negative} = 4.400$ ;  $F(1, 176) = 86.42$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), whereas participants primed with an interdependent self-construal did not show such a difference ( $M_{positive} = 5.867$ ,  $M_{negative} = 5.719$ ;  $F(1, 176) = 0.96$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) (see Fig. 5). H5 was supported.

4.4.4. Discussion

The results of Study 4 once again support the relationship between self-construals and willingness to write reviews, and the moderating effects of brand strength and consumer experiences were also confirmed. In addition, the results of the study are consistent with the hypothesis that self-construal, brand strength and consumer experiences together influence the willingness to write reviews.

5. General discussion

The increasing impact of consumers’ reviews emphasizes the growing significance and urgency in comprehending the factors that influence consumers’ intention to write reviews (Dixit et al., 2019; Yim, Price, Agnihotri, & Cui, 2023). This research introduces a novel perspective on studying consumers’ review-writing intentions, specifically by examining the interaction effects of personality traits and contextual cues. Grounded in trait activation theory, this study compares the differences in consumers’ intentions to write reviews based on varying self-construals and investigates how brand strength and consumption experience influence these differences.

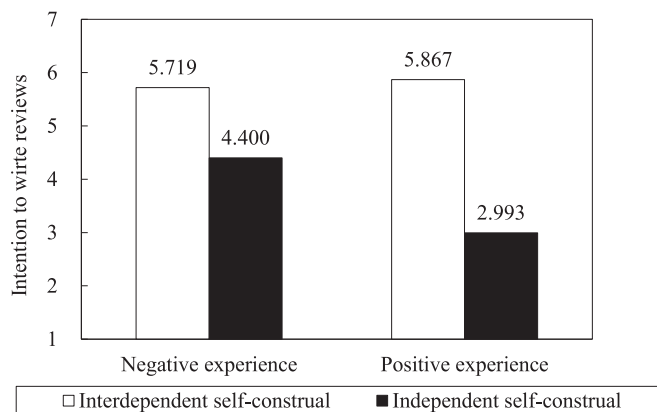


Fig. 5. Self-construal × Consumption experience interaction in strong brand condition.

The empirical results indicate that consumers with an interdependent self-construal are more likely to write reviews than those with an independent self-construal, thus supporting H1. These findings illustrate distinct differences in review-writing intentions among consumers with varying self-construals, aligning with prior studies that highlight the influence of consumers’ self-construals on their information-sharing behaviors (Hofmann et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2012).

The results also unveiled that brand strength acts as a moderator in the relationship between self-construal and consumers’ intention to write reviews. Specifically, consumers with an interdependent self-construal are more inclined to write reviews for strong brands, whereas those with an independent self-construal are more likely to write reviews for weak brands. This outcome supports the hypothesis (H2). Past research indicates that brand strength mirrors consumers’ perceptions of product quality and reputation recognition (Muhlbacher et al., 2016). This factor significantly impacts not only consumers’ product purchases but also various non-purchase behaviors, such as judgments regarding brand-related word-of-mouth (Ullrich and Brunner, 2015). Our findings align with this perspective, emphasizing the significant role of brand strength in influencing consumers’ intentions to write reviews.

Moreover, the results supported the moderating effects of consumption experience on the relationship between self-construal and consumers’ intention to write reviews. Specifically, the findings indicated that differences in review-writing intentions between consumers with varying self-construals would be reduced in the case of a negative consumption experience. Therefore, this outcome validated Hypothesis 3 (H3).

The findings are consistent with previous research indicating that individuals with different self-construals may exhibit similar behavioural tendencies in certain situations, even when the underlying motivations differ (Wei, Miao, Cai, & Adler, 2012). Negative experiences may motivate consumers with an interdependent self-construal to write negative reviews, primarily with the expectation that their experiences can provide decision-making references for other consumers to avoid similar negative experiences. While consumers with an independent self-construal may write negative reviews primarily to express their dissatisfaction and protest.

Finally, the research results also reveal the joint moderating effect of brand strength and consumption experience on self-construals. Hence, H4 and H5 were supported. These findings are also in line with a broader range of literature, which suggests that various situational factors may have complex interactive effects on individuals’ information-sharing behaviours, leading to dynamic changes in these behaviours (Berger, 2014; Brandes & Dover, 2022). This result implies that whether and how consumers with different self-construals write positive and negative reviews is influenced by both brand strength and consumption experience.

5.1. Theoretical implications

This research contributes to the literature in several ways. Primarily, it explicitly examines the characteristics of consumers with varying self-construals and presents a theoretical model that describes the relationship between consumers’ self-construal and their intention to write reviews. Building upon earlier studies exploring the correlation between personality factors and consumers’ review-writing intentions (Kapoor et al., 2021; Picazo-Vela et al., 2010), this research suggests that consumers with diverse self-construals display varying propensities toward writing reviews. These findings deepen our understanding of how self-construal influences consumers’ intentions to write reviews, thereby extending the applicability of self-construal theory in the study of consumer behavior.

Secondly, this research enriches the literature on consumers’ intentions to write reviews. Prior studies propose that the intent to write reviews is shaped by various consumer personality traits, cognitions,

and psychological perceptions (Dixit et al., 2019; Garnefeld, Helm, & Grotschel, 2020; Kapoor et al., 2021; Picazo-Vela et al., 2010). However, little focus has been directed toward understanding the dynamic shifts in consumers' intentions to write reviews in diverse scenarios. In its initial attempt, this research explores and confirms the perspective that consumers' review-writing intentions are influenced not only by personality traits and psychological perceptions but also by contextual cues within consumption. The study analyzes and validates the fluctuation in consumers' intentions to write reviews under various conditions of brand strength and consumption experiences, providing comprehensive insight into the influences of personality traits and contextual cues on review-writing intentions. Additionally, it contributes to the literature on brand strength and consumption experiences.

Thirdly, this research contributes to trait activation theory by examining the joint moderating role of multiple contextual cues. While the trait activation theory suggests that personality traits can be activated by various trait-relevant "presses," many studies based on this theory tend to focus on single situational factors (Liu et al., 2017; Thoroughgood, Lee, Sawyer, & Zagenczyk, 2022). Focusing solely on single situational factors offers a limited perspective and may lead to oversimplified conclusions about the dynamic shifts in individual behavior. Through exploring the joint moderating effect of brand strength and consumption experience, this research advances our understanding of how consumers with different self-construals adjust their review-writing intentions in diverse contexts. Furthermore, it makes a significant contribution to the trait activation theory literature.

## 5.2. Managerial implications

This research offers insights into managing consumers' review-writing behavior. Firstly, it emphasizes the differences in the inclination to write reviews among consumers with varying self-construals. Companies can appropriately gather individual differences in consumer information, for instance, by incorporating self-construal measurement items (e.g., items from Singelis (1994)) in questionnaires during online account applications or membership registration processes. These measurement items may be modified and condensed based on practical considerations to enhance collection efficiency. By analysing the distinct self-construal traits of consumers, tailored management strategies and incentive plans can be developed. For instance, consumers with an interdependent self-construal can be enticed by incentives that enhance social recognition and a sense of belonging (e.g., community membership badges). On the other hand, consumers with an independent self-construal might be motivated by incentives focusing on personalization (e.g., an exclusively tailored gift). This approach could effectively encourage them to actively engage in review writing with purpose.

Moreover, this research has revealed that consumers with an independent self-construal are typically less inclined to write reviews for strong brands. In addition to employing incentives to foster a sense of uniqueness, practitioners can also utilize self-construal priming techniques, validated in both previous research (Trafimow et al., 1991) and the present study, to temporarily enhance the interdependent self-construal of these consumers. This can be accomplished through methods such as providing advertisements designed to evoke collective consciousness or interactive cues (e.g., "12 consumers are waiting for your opinion!"). These strategies can effectively enhance the willingness of consumers with an independent self-construal to engage in review writing. Conversely, consumers with an interdependent self-construal are often less inclined to write reviews for weaker brands. In this scenario, practitioners can bolster their willingness to write reviews by presenting advertisements that evoke a sense of uniqueness (e.g., "Share your unique experience with friends!"), thereby amplifying their sense of autonomy and perceived distinctiveness.

This research further confirms that consumers with both interdependent and independent self-construals are more inclined to engage in review writing in response to negative consumer experiences. Negative experiences have the potential to generate negative reviews, potentially impacting the brand's reputation or the company as a whole. To address this, companies can implement timely and effective mechanisms for monitoring negative reviews. Moreover, considering the inherent differences in motivations for writing negative reviews among consumers with different self-construals, tailored service feedback and remediation strategies can be implemented. For instance, efforts focused on collective benefit can be emphasized when addressing consumers with an interdependent self-construal (e.g., "We are committed to addressing the concerns you have raised for the benefit of all our customers"), while providing individualized attention can be emphasized when addressing consumers with an independent self-construal (e.g., "You are a valued customer, and we will make every effort to address your concerns").

## 5.3. Limitations and future work

Several limitations of this research should be noted. Firstly, this research represents an initial exploration of the combined effects of consumer personality traits and contextual cues on the intention to write reviews, concentrating on two typical consumption contextual cues—brand strength and consumption experience. Future research could delve deeper into the role of additional contextual cues, such as product type and community atmosphere. Secondly, this research focuses on examining the moderating effects of brand strength and consumption experience on the relationship between self-construal and consumers' intention to write reviews within the framework of trait activation theory. Future research could investigate the underlying processes of this variation using different theoretical perspectives, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamic changes in consumers' intention to write reviews. Finally, this research primarily relied on a scenario simulation methodology, experimental manipulation of stimuli, and self-report measures. Future research could consider employing field experiments and multiple data sources to reinforce and validate the findings.

### *CRedit authorship contribution statement*

**Chunfeng Chen:** Validation, Resources, Project administration, Methodology. **Kevin Lü:** Supervision, Methodology, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Depeng Zhang:** Validation, Funding acquisition, Conceptualization.

### **Declaration of competing interest**

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

### **Data availability**

Data will be made available on request.

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## Appendix A. Measurement items table

Variables	Items	Sources
Intention to write reviews (Study 1, Study 4)	IWR1 I will write a review about the product.	Bock et al. (2005)
	IWR2 I will say something on the forum about my own experience.	
	IWR3 I will provide my opinions and information I know about the product.	
Interdependent self-construal (Study 1, Study 2)	INT1 It is important for me to respect decisions made by the group.	Singelis (1994)
	INT2 I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in.	
	INT3 I would offer my seat in a bus to others.	
	INT4 I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are more important than my own accomplishments.	
	INT5 It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group.	
	INT6 My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me.	
	INT7 I respect people who are modest about themselves.	
	INT8 I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.	
	INT9 I will stay in a group if they need me, even when I'm not happy with the group.	
	INT10 If my good friends fail, I feel responsible.	
	INT11 I should take into consideration my parents' advice when making education/career plans.	
	INT12 Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid an argument.	
Independent self-construal (Study 1, Study 2)	IND1 I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects.	Winterich and Barone (2011)
	IND2 My personal identity independent of others, is very important to me.	
	IND3 Having a lively imagination is important to me.	
	IND4 I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I've just met.	
	IND5 Speaking up during a class is not a problem for me.	
	IND6 I feel comfortable using someone's name soon after I meet them, even when they are much older than I am.	
	IND7 I am the same person at home that I am at school.	
	IND8 I value being in good health above everything.	
	IND9 I act the same way no matter who I am with.	
	IND10 I'd rather say "No" directly, than risk being misunderstood.	
	IND11 I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards.	
	IND12 Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me.	
Interdependent self-construal (Study 3, Study 4)	INT1 At this moment, I am focused on others I care about.	Winterich and Barone (2011)
	INT2 This research encourages me to think of others I care about.	
	INT3 Right now, the sense of "we" is at the top of my mind.	
Independent self-construal (Study 3, Study 4)	IND1 At this moment, I am focused on myself.	Winterich and Barone (2011)
	IND2 This research encourages me to think of myself.	
	IND3 Right now, the sense of "I" is at the top of my mind.	

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