Lying Decreases Relying: Deceiver's Distrust in Online Restaurant Reviews

Authors : Jenna Barriault, Reeshma Haji

Abstract : Online consumer behaviourand reliance on online reviews may be more pervasive than ever, andthis necessitates a better scientific understanding of the widespread phenomenon of online deception. The present research focuses on the understudied topic of deceiver's distrust, where those who engage in deception later have less trust in others in the context of online restaurant reviews. The purpose was to examine deception and valence in online restaurant reviews and the effects they had on deceiver's distrust. Undergraduate university students (N = 76) completed an online study where valence was uniquely manipulated by telling participants that either positive (or negative reviews) were influential and asking them to write a correspondingly valenced review. Deception was manipulated in the same task. Participants in the deception condition were asked to write an online restaurant review that was counter to their actual experience of the restaurant (negative review of a restaurant they liked, positive review of the restaurant they did not like). In the no deception condition, participants were asked to write a review that they actually liked or didn't like (based on the valence condition to which they were randomly assigned). Participants' trust was then assessed through various measures, includingfuture reliance on online reviews. There was a main effect of deception on reliance on online reviews. Consistent with deceiver's distrust, those who deceived reported that they would rely less on online reviews. This study demonstrates that even when participants are induced to write a deceptive review, it can result in deceiver's distrust, thereby lowering their trust in online reviews. If trust or reliance can be altered through deception in online reviews, people may start questioning the objectivity or true representation of a company based on such reviews. A primary implication is that people may reduce theirreliance upon online reviews if they know they are easily subject to manipulation. The findings of this study also contribute to the limited research regarding deceiver's distrust in an online context, and further research is clarifying the specific conditions in which it is most likely to occur.

Keywords : deceiver's distrust, deception, online reviews, trust, valence