

THE POWER OF CONSUMERS

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ABSTRACT

The objective of our research is analyzing the traits that consumers exert when expressing their opinion in the online environment, compared to the ones when they interact with other persons, their preferences, what traits are empowering them and what they prefer, if they use the power offered to them and how they assert themselves, if they communicate with their peers through the use of online platforms and reviewing websites. It is an important thing to know if people have started to prefer to share their views regarding services products online to inform more people at once, and if they have preferences in doing so.

The research was conducted through the use of an online survey, placed in online groups. Through this survey a sample formed out of 120 people has been found, that were eligible for this research. The sample was made out of people that are active reviewers and participants in the online environment and reviewing groups, offering their opinions regarding products and services. The survey has been modified in order to be improved, before being used. The final form of the survey had a total of 18 questions and was created using Google Forms.

The conducted research has shown that people value most traits that the internet and network development has to offer, using them for their own advantage and empowerment. Ease of finding information, possibility of offering feedback and reading other people's feedback have all ranked high in the consumer's preferences.

KEYWORDS: *consumers, empowerment, power*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *M 31*

1. INTRODUCTION

In a multitude of domains, the research done on the subject of customer and its power is an important part of knowledge in knowing fully what defines the customer, the consumer, but most importantly, the human. At the same time, given the fact that we are all consumers, it's good to know what kind of power you have in relation to other people, companies, businesses, and even yourself. This concept of "consumer power" is based on the theories formed in the activity and works of research of many domains, and it focuses itself on creating a good environment for both the organizations and its clients.

These pieces of information have been formed in time, creating and improving in time the behavior of the consumer, improving his knowledge, innovation, capability of processing information, and the most important aspect, making it easier for him to share information with other consumers, in

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order to create improved products and services in an improved market, that empowers both consumers and companies.

Power and consumer are two different, yet related, even traditional pieces of knowledge that have lingered in domains such as psychology. Individuals have picked up these elements since the early beginnings of business, monetary transactions and services, marketing, etc. Consumers have grown to know what their real worth is when thinking of their wellbeing as a whole. Even so the cross study regarding "power" and "consumer" is still in development, both the theoretical part and the research itself arises with new works and theories that served as key points in various research papers done before. The evolution and meaning of what it means to have power as a consumer today is more dynamic and relative compared to earlier stages of the business, commercial and even the social environment. Does the consumer today have a bigger influence over the market than his predecessors? Do they have other values?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars suggest that power over others, known as social power, and freedom, also known as personal power are interconnected, even if they are different facets of power (Lammers, J., Stoker J.I., Stapel D.A., 2009).

Power has many facets, and depending on the perspective, it can be about truth, power of choice, freedom, etc. Most scholars agree with the fact that power does not exist at a "true" essence, mainly because that would be impossible. Various models of explaining power have appeared that in various research papers and works.

This area of study provides a limited number of papers regarding the connection between power and customers (Holt, D.B, 2002). The terms were used together to explain the role of marketing and how it influences the customer, and how the customer changes the environment he lives in and marketing mix (Wathieu, L., Brenner, L., Carmon, Z., Chattopadhyay, A., Drolet, A. et al. 2002). There have been studies that preached the negativism of marketing and influence on socio-political and economic aspects in the lives of the consumers. Mass consumption has been described as vile and oppressive, while others tend to see it as a clear sign of progress and diversity. Three main models have been summarized in order to explain customer power (Denegri-Knott, J., 2004).

Model of Sovereignty: This type of model enforces the idea of the consumer as an innovator, a pioneer. According to this model, the consumer is indispensable to the market, and even more, his subtle influence will shape the market dominance and its production, leading to progress in both the economic and social sphere, creating better products at a better price, increased production efficiency. Consumers are believed to have free will completely and that there are completely rational to choose, according to the studies that encourage this model. Thomas Hobbes itself described power of the citizen, of the consumer, as being the ability to carry out operations and accomplishing them through resistance, serving as the main power expression that people, mainly consumers, have. It has been argued that customers today are more able to be in power of their choices and power thanks to the world wide web (Moynagh, M., Worsley, R., 2002).

Model of Cultural Power: This model is almost opposite to the one of Sovereignty. According to this typology, the market is labeled as being an oppressive and limiting force for the citizens that will ultimately turn them into mindless consumers, reducing competitiveness and freedom of choice completely, even if modern theories of this model describe consumers as being aware of what is happening, using various methods of resisting the tactics used by corporations and the oppressive power of the market through the art of making use of what is enforced, some sort of agents or users not being completely dominated by the market and marketers, and that they are struggling to go against their oppression.

Consumers of the 21st century have started to see the market as an antagonist that has networks designed to put consumers under their control, people tending to lash out to the marketer if allowed

to do so (Zwick, D., Dholakia, N., 2004). From the point of view of this model, people do not get to reject products on the market in the true sense of the word, but they get better at adapting and resisting the manipulations of the marketers in how they gauge their products and ads.

Discursive Model: The most recent model regarding consumer power is the type of discursive power that studies the interaction between the consumer and supplier (producer), in order to determine how they interact in order to create the market. This model disregards the aspects of the first two, aspects such as complete power of the consumer from the sovereign model, and the so called opposition between the resisting consumers and the marketers that try to dominate the market from the second model. This model advocates the power to be a cooperative and creative force that does not go against the other (in our case the consumer and producer).

This is the most realistic perspective, and the most modern, companies and customers coexisting with each other, in order to bring down old ideologies regarding market control and dominance, creating opportunities together for each other, with new emerging concepts, ideas and processes. Other scholars preaching this model describe the actions and will of the customer to be congruent with the one of the producer, differing only in situation of conflicts that might arise between them. This means that a person is not just a mere follower, controlled completely by the so called oppressing market.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

We are aware of degrees of power and its relationships that are created between people in various, daily contexts (hierarchies, friendships, seller-buyer), even so, given the shift of power in favor of the consumer in the past few years, there is an increasing number studying the power of the consumer in the online environment.

The chosen sample is made from consumers that use online platforms such as Facebook and TripAdvisor and have made online reviews, sharing their opinion in the online environment.

3.1. Research Context

The purpose of this work of research is to designate the power of the consumer in the online environment, the importance of online reviews and how they affect the power of the consumer (influencing other people, or being influenced yourself), and the differences between the exertion of power between the online environment and also personal encounters (face-to-face situations).

Research Questions and Objectives

Our research started with a sum of questions, like: Do people post online reviews? Do consumers share their experiences with other people? What type of products and/or do people review? What type of reviews do people usually post? Do people prefer to post positive or negative reviews? What advantages of the online environment do consumers prefer? What are the most common platforms to post and read reviews? Are people influenced by the reviews of other consumers? Do people that spend more time online post more reviews than their peers?

Objectives of the Research

In order to reach the aim of the research, the proposed objectives have been formed to obtain information related to:

- 1) categories of products consumers usually review online;
- 2) the moment of the last review;
- 3) the perception regarding the power and influence a consumer's review has over another person and his power of making decisions;
- 4) the perception regarding the power other consumers and their reviews has over another person and his power of making decisions;
- 5) the intensity of the traits of power a consumer has in the online environment compared to personal (face-to-face).

Hypotheses:

- H1: People prefer to post negative reviews more than positive ones (Zwick, D., 2004).
- H2: People prefer to share their experiences with online consumers (Muniz, A.M., 2001; Lee, C.K.C, 2005).
- H3: There is a difference between the perception of exerted power and received power (influencing and being influenced) (Gigerenzer, G., 2000); Brynjolfsson, E., 2011).
- H4: There is a difference between the way people exert traits of power in the online environment and in personal (face-to-face) situations (Chevalier, J.A., 2006).

3.2. Methodology

The sample used for this research is made out of people that have used various online services and platforms. The survey was posted on Facebook on groups that were formed with people that have and still do review products such as electronics, cosmetics, appliances, and even services such as delivery and traveling services.

Most people are members of websites and groups such as eMag, TripAdvisor, and Medical Forums. The sample is made out of 120 persons, all having an equal chance of getting selected to answer the survey. In order to ensure the fact that the sample had the necessary and adequate type of consumer for this, a filter question has been used: "Have you ever made an online review?"

We can say that the result sample is composed by 85 men (70.8%) and 35 women (29.2%). Most of the respondents, 35 (29.1%) are in the 24-26 category of age.. The last category, with ages between 36 and 38 has the least members, with 5 (4.16%). The average age of the respondents is 26.3 years old. Most of the respondents spend on Internet on average 3 hours per day, 28 spend 4 hours per day, whereas only 4 respondents out of 120 spend up to 6 and more hours per day online. The final mean obtained from these results is 3.05 hours.

3.3. Method of Conduct

In order to accomplish what we have proposed, and to conduct a proper research to gather the necessary results, an online questionnaire has been used, through using Google Forms. The questionnaire is one of the most used methods of gathering information to conduct a research. The questionnaire has a low level of uncertainty, and the fact that you can use charts and graphs in order to determine percentages and obtain various stats make it a great option, useful for obtaining results that can be interpreted easily.

Taking into account that people have used these services such as reviews and online feedback, and their use is becoming more and more common, the questionnaire was understandable, with no difficulty of processing the questions, making it more preferable than interviews for gathering necessary information, assuring the proper number of respondents (no conflicting schedules or absenteeism).

The questionnaire has been modified in order to prevent and correct potential issues such as lack of clarity. The final version of the questionnaire had 18 questions.

- At first the questionnaire was created with the necessary questions to be answered in order to conduct the planned research
- The second stage was obtaining the necessary sample. The population used for this research was made from online consumers and reviewers active on Facebook. The sample consists from 120 respondents, active members and reviewers that had an equal chance of getting picked to answer the survey. The sampling method was Convenience sampling, the online active reviewers being relevant for this conduct of research.
- After searching for people with records of posting reviews or offering feedback for products and services, they were contacted and informed if they would like to participate in the research by completing the survey. The first respondent filled the survey on February 23, 2016.

- The data was gathered by using Google Forms.
- Interpreting the data was one of the final steps in the research, to identify answers and to determine if the proposed objectives and certain hypotheses are valid or not.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

Out of the selected sample to answer the survey, 120 respondents (100%), have answered that they have indeed posted at least one online review for products or services on various platforms and groups and 96 of them (80%), have answered the question regarding reviews made in the past six months with a positive answer; 24 respondents (20%), not posting online reviews in the past six months. This means that a majority of people have posted recent reviews, people using reviewing and feedback systems on a frequent basis.

O1. Identifying what categories of products consumers usually review online.

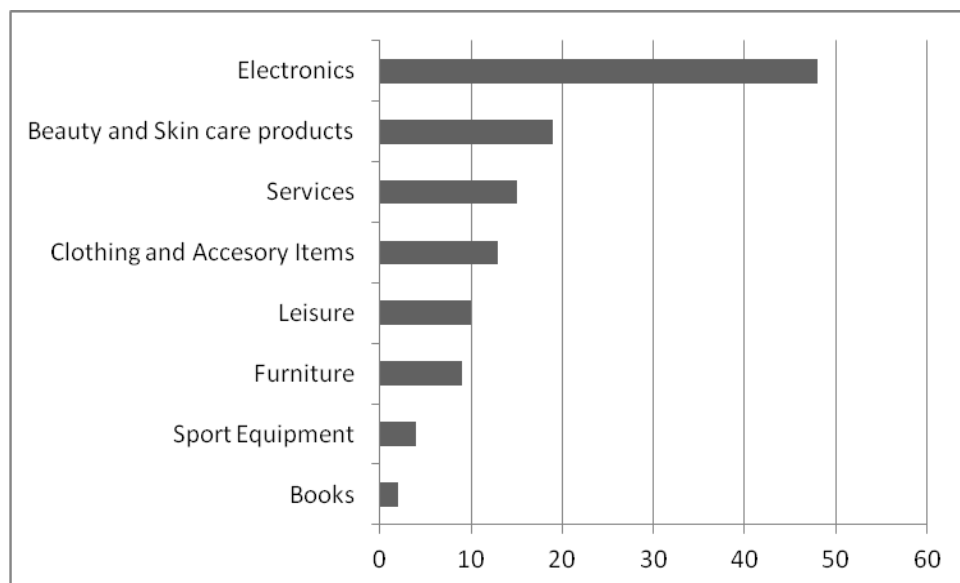


Figure 1. Categories of products consumers usually review online

The online consumer will post reviews and offer feedback on a lot of product categories, as it can be seen. Out of the 120 people, 48 of them reviewed products from the Electronics category, such as laptops and personal computers, making it the most popular category of products to be reviewed by far. Other categories include Beauty and Skincare (19 respondents), Services (16 respondents) plus other five categories.

O2. Assessing the moment of the last review.

Out of the respondents, 28 (23.3%) said that they used a reviewing within the last month. The category that has the most respondents is the second one, 42 respondents (35%) having made their last review between 1 and 3 months ago, meaning that customers use reviews quite often. The category with the fewest respondents is the one with reviews made over 6 months ago, only 22 respondents (18.3%), being a part of the category.

Respondents had to classify their last review. The answers ranged from 1 (mostly negative) to 5 (mostly positive), 22 of the respondents (18.3%) placing their last review/experience as being mostly negative, the second category having 10 people (8.3%). The third (neutral) category had 26 respondents (21.7%). The fourth category had 30 people (25%), while the last one had the most respondents, 32 (26.7%) rated their last review as being mostly positive.

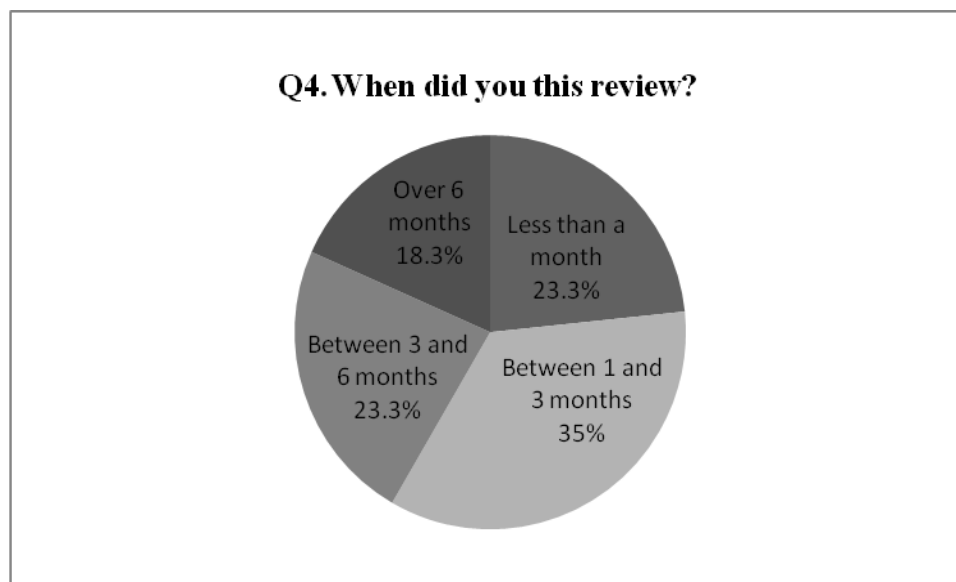


Figure 2. The reviews of the consumers

Out of 120 respondents, 85 of them (70.8%) said that they did share their last experience with a product or service that they have reviewed online, with somebody in person. The minority made out of 35 people (29.2%) said that they haven't disclosed anything about their last experience with someone in a personal situation.

At a first glance it has been identified that people usually post more negative than positive reviews. Only 31 respondents (25.8%) totally agree with posting positive reviews, less compared to 41 respondents (37.5%) that post negative reviews more frequently. The most similar category is the fourth one, where 51(42.5%) respondents agree with posting positive reviews and 52 (43.3%) with negative reviews.

Out of 120 respondents, 61 (50.8%) said that they share their experience with their friends, compared to 47(39%) with their family, and only 40 (33.3%) choose to share experiences frequently with other consumers, placing "Friends" in front of "Family" and "Other consumers".

All of the categories have been deemed important. Almost half of the consumers have placed the categories as being of very high importance. 51 (42.5%) of the respondents said that ease of finding information is important, 42 (35%) for expressing opinions, 49 (40.8%) for variety of choice of goods and services and 31 (25.8%) for reading other people's reviews and opinions.

Most people read reviews on eMag (57%), compared to Facebook (46.7%), TripAdvisor (41.7%), and Medical Forums, that placed last with only 20.8%.

44.1% of the respondents said they usually write reviews on eMag, Facebook coming close with 41.6%, TripAdvisor has 33.3%, and only 13.3% of the respondents usually write reviews on Medical Forums.

O3. Identifying the perception regarding the power and influence a consumer's review has over another person and his power of making decisions.

17 (14.2%) of the respondents said that they are very influenced by other opinions, 56 (46.7%) are influenced, 58(31.7%) are neutral, whereas 6 (5%) think they are not very influenced, and 3 (2.5%) not at all.

O4. Identifying the perception regarding the power other consumers and their reviews has over another person and his power of making decisions

9 respondents (7.5%) of the respondents think their reviews can influence other people very much, 34 (28.3%) considerably, 62 (51.7%) are neutral, whereas 11 (9.2%) think their reviews don't influence considerably, and 4 (3.3%) not at all.

O5. Identifying the intensity of the traits of power a consumer has in the online environment compared to personal (face-to-face).

When comparing the Item "Defending own beliefs" from both contexts, online and personal (face to face), the results are statistically different, even if the difference between them is not high. In the online context, a mean of (3.08), people feeling like they defend their own beliefs more than in a personal context, where the mean obtained was (2.99). Since N is 120, it means we have no missing values from the conducted analysis. The correlation between the two contexts is positive (.459), the two variables being weakly and positively correlated. We can observe that the difference in mean is (.083) very low and also that there was a very small difference between the two contexts ($t = .953$, $p > 0.001$). We can conclude the fact that there was no statistically significant difference between the two contexts. This means that in both contexts, respondents had the perception they were defending their beliefs with the same intensity.

When comparing the Item "Assertive" from both contexts, online and personal (face to face), the results are also statistically different, even if the difference between them is not high. In the online context, a mean of (3.73), people feeling like they are more assertive than in a personal context, where the mean obtained was (3.47). Since N is 120, it means we have no missing values from the conducted analysis. The correlation between the two contexts is positive (.484), the two variables being weakly and positively correlated. We can observe that the difference in mean is (.267) very low and also that there was a difference between the two contexts ($t = 3.718$, $p < 0.001$). We can conclude the fact that there is a statistically significant difference between the two contexts. This means that between both contexts, respondents had the perception they are more assertive in the online environment than in a personal situation.

When comparing the Item "Has strong personality" from both contexts, online and personal (face to face), the results are similar, the difference between the variables being insignificant. In the online context, a mean of (3.44), people feeling like they have a strong personality, like they have in a personal context, where the mean obtained was (3.43). Since N is 120, it means we have no missing values from the conducted analysis. The correlation between the two contexts is positive (.284), the two variables being very weakly and positively correlated. We can observe that the difference in mean is (.017), very low and also that there was a very small difference between the two contexts ($t = .119$, $p > 0.001$). We can conclude the fact that there was no statistically significant difference between the two contexts. This means that in both contexts, respondents had the same strong personality when expressing themselves.

When comparing the Item "Is forceful" from both contexts, online and personal (face to face), the results are different, the difference between the variables being existent. In the online context, a mean of (2.34), people feeling like they are less forceful than in a personal context, where the mean obtained was (3.43). Since N is 120, it means we have no missing values from the conducted analysis. The correlation between the two contexts is positive (.483), the two variables being very weakly and positively correlated. We can observe that the difference in mean is (-.367), very low and also that there was a difference between the two contexts ($t = -4.341$, $p < 0.001$). We can conclude the fact that there is a statistically significant difference between the two contexts. This means that in an online context, people feel less forceful than in a personal one when expressing themselves about products and services.

When comparing the Item "Has leadership ability" from both contexts, online and personal (face to face), the results are different, the difference between the variables being existent. In the online context, a mean of (2.98) was obtained, people feeling like they are less capable of being leaders than in a personal context, where the mean obtained was (3.16). Since N is 120, it means we have no missing values from the conducted analysis. The correlation between the two contexts is positive (.135), the two variables being very weakly and positively correlated. We can observe that the difference in mean is (-.183), very low and also that there was a difference between the two contexts ($t = -1.984$, $p > 0.001$). We can conclude the fact that there is a statistically significant difference between the two contexts. This means that in an online context, people feel less capable of being leaders than in a personal one when expressing themselves about products and services.

When comparing the Item "Taking a risk" from both contexts, online and personal (face to face), the results are different, the difference between the variables being existent. In the online context, a mean of (2.58) was obtained, people feeling like they are taking less of a risk when discussing products than in a personal context, where the mean obtained was (2.76). Since N is 120, it means we have no missing values from the conducted analysis. The correlation between the two contexts is positive (.341), the two variables being weakly and positively correlated. We can observe that the difference in mean is (-.183), very low and also that there was a difference between the two contexts ($t = -2.034$, $p > 0.001$). We can assess the fact that there is a statistically significant difference between the two contexts. This means that in an online context, people feel taking less of a risk than in a personal one when expressing themselves about products and services.

When comparing the Item "Is dominant" from both contexts, online and personal (face to face), the results are different, the difference between the variables being existent. In the online context, a mean of (3.17) was obtained, people feeling like they are more dominant when discussing products than in a personal context, where the mean obtained was (2.83). Since N is 120, it means we have no missing values from the conducted analysis. The correlation between the two contexts is positive (.205), the two variables being weakly and positively correlated. We can observe that the difference in mean is (.333), very low and also that there was a difference between the two contexts ($t = 3.433$, $p = 0.001$). We can assess the fact that there is a statistically significant difference between the two contexts. This means that in an online context, people feel more dominant than in a personal one when expressing themselves about products and services.

When comparing the Item "Is aggressive" from both contexts, online and personal (face to face), the results are different, the difference between the variables being existent. In the online context, a mean of (3.34) was obtained, people feeling like they are more aggressive when discussing products than in a personal context, where the mean obtained was (2.81). Since N is 120, it means we have no missing values from the conducted analysis. The correlation between the two contexts is positive (.310), the two variables being weakly and positively correlated. We can observe that the difference in mean is (.533), very low and also that there was a difference between the two contexts ($t = 5.726$, $p < 0.001$). We can assess the fact that there is a statistically significant difference between the two contexts. This means that in an online environment, people feel more aggressive than in a personal one when expressing themselves about products and services.

When comparing the Item "Is affectionate" from both contexts, online and personal (face to face), the results are different, the difference between the variables being existent. In the online context, a mean of (3.08) was obtained, people feeling like they are more aggressive when discussing products than in a personal context, where the mean obtained was (3.42). Since N is 120, it means we have no missing values from the conducted analysis. The correlation between the two contexts is positive (.527), the two variables being medium and positively correlated. We can observe that the difference in mean is (-.333), very low and also that there was a difference between the two contexts ($t = -5.032$, $p < 0.001$). We can assess the fact that there is a statistically significant difference between the two contexts. This means that in an online environment, people feel less affectionate than in a personal one when expressing themselves about products and services.

When comparing the Item "Is sympathetic" from both contexts, online and personal (face to face), the results are different, the difference between the variables being existent. In the online context, a

mean of (3.13) was obtained, people feeling like they are more aggressive when discussing products than in a personal context, where the mean obtained was (3.68). Since N is 120, it means we have no missing values from the conducted analysis. The correlation between the two contexts is positive (.338), the two variables being weakly and positively correlated. We can observe that the difference in mean is (-.550), low and also that there was a difference between the two contexts ($t = -6.582$, $p < 0.001$). We can assess the fact that there is a statistically significant difference between the two contexts. This means that in an online environment, people feel less sympathetic than in a personal one when expressing themselves about products and services.

When comparing the Item "Is Intuitive" from both contexts, online and personal (face to face), the results are different, the difference between the variables being existent. In the online context, a mean of (3.38) was obtained, people feeling like they are less intuitive in an online context when discussing products than in a personal context, where the mean obtained was (3.56). Since N is 120, it means we have no missing values from the conducted analysis. The correlation between the two contexts is positive (.522), the two variables being weakly and positively correlated. We can observe that the difference in mean is (-.183), very low and also that there was a difference between the two contexts ($t = -2.697$, $p > 0.001$). We can assess the fact that there is a statistically significant difference between the two contexts. This means that in an online environment, people feel less intuitive than in a personal one when expressing themselves about products and services.

When comparing the Item "Is understanding" from both contexts, online and personal (face to face), the results are different, the difference between the variables being existent. In the online context, a mean of (3.28) was obtained, people feeling like they are less understanding in an online context when discussing products than in a personal context, where the mean obtained was (3.72). Since N is 120, it means we have no missing values from the conducted analysis. The correlation between the two contexts is positive (.451), the two variables being weakly and positively correlated. We can observe that the difference in mean is (-.442), low and also that there was a difference between the two contexts ($t = -5.152$, $p < 0.001$). We can assess the fact that there is a statistically significant difference between the two contexts. This means that in an online environment, people feel less understanding towards others than in a personal context when expressing themselves about products and services.

When comparing the Item "Is warm" from both contexts, online and personal (face to face), the results are different, the difference between the variables being existent. In the online context, a mean of (3.03) was obtained, people feeling like they are less warm in an online context when discussing products than in a personal context, where the mean obtained was (3.56). Since N is 120, it means we have no missing values from the conducted analysis. The correlation between the two contexts is positive (.573), the two variables being weakly and positively correlated. We can observe that the difference in mean is (-.525), low and also that there was a difference between the two contexts ($t = -8.879$, $p < 0.001$). We can assess the fact that there is a statistically significant difference between the two contexts. This means that in an online environment, people feel less warm towards others than in a personal context when expressing themselves about products and services.

When comparing the Item "Is gentle" from both contexts, online and personal (face to face), the results are different, the difference between the variables being existent. In the online context, a mean of (2.98) was obtained, people feeling like they are less gentle in an online context when discussing products than in a personal context, where the mean obtained was (3.34). Since N is 120, it means we have no missing values from the conducted analysis. The correlation between the two contexts is positive (.511), the two variables being weakly and positively correlated. We can observe that the difference in mean is (-.367), low and also that there was a difference between the two contexts ($t = -5.862$, $p < 0.001$). We can assess the fact that there is a statistically significant difference between the two contexts. This means that in an online environment, people feel less gentle towards others than in a personal context when expressing themselves about products and services.

5. FURTHER ANALYSIS

H1: People prefer to post negative reviews more than positive ones

Table 1. Review comparison

Type of Review	Means
Positive	3.89
Negative	4

It has been determined that this hypothesis is valid given the fact that people tend to post negative reviews more often than positive ones, meaning that consumers are more prone into putting the company's services and questions to a doubt or to discredit them in case of a lack of satisfaction, a thing that was not possible years ago.

H2: People prefer to share their experiences with online consumers

Table 2. Groups comparison

Groups	Means (Preference)
Family	3.6
Friends	3.84
Other consumers (online)	3.33

It has been identified that this hypothesis has been deemed invalid, given the fact that consumers prefer to share experiences more with their families (3.6) and friends (3.84). Online consumers fell in the last category with a mean of (3.33).

H3: There is a difference between the perception of exerted power and received power (influencing and being influenced).

Table 3. Perception comparison

Perception	Means
The consumer being influenced by other customers	3.65
The consumer influencing other customers	2.75

This hypothesis has been determined to be valid, given the fact that the means are different. The consumer reported to have been influenced by other people's opinion online, which influenced his decisions (3.65), compared to his perception of being capable to influence other people through his opinion (2.75).

H4: There is a difference between the way people exert traits of power in the online environment and in personal (face-to-face) situations.

The hypothesis has been identified as being valid, obtaining a final difference between means, the online environment having a mean of 3.11 and personal context having a final mean of 3.25. It can be observed that individual traits are manifested differently, given a different context. For example, consumers are more dominant and aggressive online, and more sympathetic in a personal situation (sharing experiences with a known person).

Table 4. Traits of power in various contexts

Traits	Online Environment	Personal Context
	Means	
Defends own beliefs	3.08	2.99
Assertive	3.73	3.47
Has strong personality	3.44	3.43
Is forceful	2.34	2.71
Has leadership ability	2.98	3.16
Taking a risk	2.58	2.76
Is dominant	3.17	2.83
Is aggressive	3.34	2.81
Is affectionate	3.08	3.42
Is sympathetic	3.13	3.68
Intuitive	3.38	3.56
Is understanding	3.28	3.72
Is warm	3.03	3.56
Is gentle	2.98	3.34
Total Means	3.11	3.25

5. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose this research was initiated is to determine what means to be empowered as a consumer, what determines the power of one, and how they exert their power differently based on context. Theoretical aspects and information served as a main framework in order to conduct the research, concepts such as shift of power, online reviews and their importance, and empowering traits of modern networks and the internet being used.

The reason this topic was chosen is the fact that the consumer and the power that he owns is always relative, and dynamic. Through this research it has been determined what customers value in order to feel empowered and in control, how they act, with both close persons and unknown peers.

The research was conducted in the online environment, in order to determine the power of the consumer in the online environment, the importance of online reviews and how they affect the power of the consumer (influencing other people, or being influenced yourself), and the differences between the exertion of power between the online environment and also personal encounters (face-to-face situations).

A multitude of conclusions have been raised in order to find out if people are empowered by the internet, if they value the instruments offered by the internet such as offering feedback, rating and reviewing products, the ease of finding information and getting in touch with other people and their opinions, and if this creates a difference in perception of the customer's own power and the power of his peers.

- An impressive majority of the customers have posted a review recently, less than six months, people using a reviewing or feedback system frequently, being an important tool for the modern consumer, offering him the chance to spread information and being in control in the online environment.
- Consumers have a tendency to post negative reviews more than positive ones, in order to assess the fact that a service or product has created a sense of dissatisfaction, and through this written feedback on online pages, other consumers can see the information in order to take necessary measures, such as choosing an alternative product or service.

- Consumers are used to sharing their experiences with both personal, known persons and with other members of the online environment as well. Even if online consumers are not the most preferred choice of sharing experiences regarding products and services, they averaged a high enough mean to be noted, coming close to other groups.
- Consumers value every advantage created by the internet that can empower them. Ease of finding information, expressing opinions, product and service diversity and also the possibility to read the opinions of other people have all ranked high and similar scores, meaning that consumers are more adaptable and versatile, but most importantly more knowledgeable than their predecessors.
- Most respondents had different opinions on what power means from two different perspectives. Consumers have the sense that they don't have the power over another customer's decision through their reviews and opinion in the same manner that customers have upon him. Other customers are seen as a valuable source of information by other customers.

So, new modern concepts as the growth of the internet, social platforms, feedback systems and modified channels of purchase have served as instruments of empowerment for the consumer. These instruments have been used for assessing and creating an assertive behavior for the consumer that made him more knowledgeable, innovative, and better informed, in order to have a better sense of what his role in the market is and how he acts in the classical (personal) context, and the new online environment. This evolution of both the informational framework and the consumer overall, created better products and services in a better market, that empowers both consumers and companies, these things being expressed through brand loyalty, improved products, and overall a better understanding and empowerment of the modern consumer. A disadvantage found in such progress is the multitude of information, which is valued for its accessibility, research says, that can lead to an incapacity of making decision, and in a consumer-supplier relationship, it can lead to a decrease in brand loyalty, especially because of negative experiences that can offer the consumer the opportunity to "exit" the relationship between him and the supplier.

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