



# The Relationship Between Justifying Choices and Seeing Stars in Consumer Choice

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## Justifying and Deciding

Nearly 80% of consumers frequently use online consumer feedback when making purchases. Several steps may occur between seeing the stars and checking out, one of which is justifying one's own purchase intention (e.g., why should I purchase this product?).

Our goals:

- 1) Identify types of justifications people give.
- 2) Examine the relationship between the type of justifications and their purchase intentions.

## Exp Design

- Participants as personal shoppers in hypothetical shopping scenarios
- 5 product categories: TV, under-desk elliptical, mobile phone, headphones, loudspeaker
- Manipulated relevance of **1-star** and **5-star** reviews to clients

Indicated purchase intention  
(1 = definitely will not purchase the product to 6 = definitely will purchase the product)

Justify purchase intention

## Participants (N = 177)

Each participant provided 20 product justifications, and only those that were intelligible were included in the analysis.

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## Shopping Scenarios (N = 20, 5 reviews in each scenario)



Sally is a 60-year-old telemarketer who hopes to incorporate more activity into her sedentary lifestyle to keep her metabolism up. Being in a shared office, she wants a quiet, under-the-desk exercise machine that **can be used while she works next to co-workers**. Despite her younger colleagues telling her how amazing new technology is, she is reluctant to adopt new technologies. **She is especially concerned with wireless technologies due to security risks.**



I'm 47 and spend virtually all my working hours at a desk, which has made me too sedentary. With this device, I find I can just keep pedaling and working no problem. it makes such a **quiet whir** that no one knows when I'm using unless they enter my office and see my thighs moving up and down.



Not a fat torcher, but definitely a fat burner. At my typical 5mph rate, I estimate that I burn calories at roughly the same rate as a leisure bike ride or walk - about 150- 200 calories an hour. I am not where I want to be yet, but I already lost 30 pounds and went down 2 pant sizes!



Solidly built machine. However, it certainly isn't something you'll be moving around often or carrying back and forth between your home office and work.



The company did not send me a complimentary rubber mat which stops the machine from slipping.



Display was not thought out well. It only tracks up to 99 minutes which does not even allow me to track daily usage before having to reset. I **wish it were Bluetooth enabled** so I can track progress on my smartphone and compete with my colleagues.



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We have invested in many home gym components and machines and this has to be the best way for anyone to sneak more exercise into their day. The Bluetooth app integration is really worth it for tracking and motivational purposes for challenges and **Fitbit integration**.



I like the cycle very much. It has very smooth cycling rotations so that I'm not jerking my knee joints and it's very sturdy. The only problem I had with it was that it tends to slowly slide forward as I cycle (whether on rug or vinyl floors). Doorstops seem to be an easy and cheap fix.



Quality product. I can easily pedal/glide for leg strengthening. The machine would be more versatile if it also included carabiner clips for resistance tubes that allow upper body workouts.



I like the premise here. However, this heavy little thing has no handle. I think this could be greatly improved by adding a carrying handle and making the pedals somewhat more free in the range of motion.



This was for use at work and is **too squeaky** to use there. I'll take it home and try it there but it will probably be sent unused since I don't sit much when I'm at home. A lot of money for something I can't use now.

## Six Common Types of Choice Justifications

- **Numerical Information Only:** Mention aggregated statistics only  
*E.g., The average rating is lower than I am comfortable with.*
- **Positive Aspects Only:** Mention only what's good about a product → **Desire to purchase**  
*E.g., The elliptical does not make much sound, which aligns with what the client is looking for.*
- **Negative Aspects Only:** Mention only what's bad about a product → **Desire to avoid**  
*E.g., This speaker meets almost none of the needs for Olivia. Bad battery life, bad WIFI connection, and does not pair well.*
- **Two-sided Justifications But The Good Does Not Matter:** Cover both the good and the bad of a product, but the positivity is deemed irrelevant → **Desire to avoid**  
*E.g., While one review says that the sound works well, that is not the most important thing to John. Also another review says that they smell really bad after one use and must not be meant for active people. That will definitely not work for John.*
- **Two-sided Justifications But The Bad Does Not Matter:** Cover both the good and the bad of a product, but the negativity is deemed irrelevant → **Desire to purchase**  
*E.g., It has great sound quality which is the most important thing and it doesn't seem to have cords. The complaints about low battery life are not a problem for Emily who has many outlets to charge it.*
- **Request More Information:** Request more information for an informed decision  
*E.g., It does not provide enough information about the volume of this speaker.*

1. Nobody was consistent in the type of choice justifications they provided.
2. Purchase intentions varied significantly with choice justification type.
3. Desires to purchase or avoid were more extreme when justifications were one-sided than two-sided.