Business to Consumer Interaction in the Post COVID Era. A Case Study on Customer Reviews for Electronics and Cosmetics

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Abstract

The current paper discusses the topic of business to consumer interaction in the post COVID era. It briefly reviews key literature on aspects related to business communication practices and trends, and analyses a corpus of customer reviews selected from leading online e-commerce sites to see how customers interact with service/product providers to express satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The analysis will try to identify how the language used reflects the relation between participants, their credibility or lack of credibility in front of each other, and whether such aspects may be said to influence online sales trends.
Keywords: Business-to-Consumer (B2C); pre and post COVID 19 pandemic e-commerce trends; usefulness of customer feedback; customer reviews
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Introduction

The purpose of the present paper is to examine how Business to Consumer interaction takes place after the COVID 19 pandemic, which has put a strain on both people and companies, and has prompted both to re(de)fine existing patterns of communication so as to be able to continue to sell and buy products and services. We first review a selection of key literature on Business to Consumer interaction, to provide

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the background for the second part of the paper – a detailed analysis of customer reviews for a series of consumer goods; the paper ends by highlighting key findings of the analysis undertaken.

In the literature, there are two main approaches to the concept of Business-to-Consumer (B2C) interaction. On the one hand, "Business-to-consumer (B2C) refers to the process of selling products and services directly to customers who are the end-users of the company's products or services"; the seller and the buyer interact directly, "without the need of an intermediary or a third party like a broker or a retailer" (cf. Faiz et al., 2021: 19, a.o.). B2C commerce happens both in brick-and-mortar establishments (such as retail stores or restaurants, see Josan, 2018, a.o.) but also in the online environment[4]. On the other hand, noticeably, Jewels & Timbrell (2001: 4) point out that leading IT companies – such as Oracle and IBM – consider Business-to-Consumer (B2C) interaction not merely as the act of selling and buying goods or services, but as a means of "communication between" the two parties involved.

With respect to trends in Business-to-Consumer (B2C) interaction, several studies have pointed to the continuous increase of this particular direct contact between good and service providers and their end customers, especially as a result of increasing tendencies in using e-commerce as a means to sell/purchase goods and services. This increase in the use of e-commerce was noticed before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

In pre-pandemic times, for instance, OECD (2001), pointed to "B2C e-commerce still accounting for a very small share of all retail trade in OECD countries, usually less than 1%", but it was perceived as rapidly developing (p. 14). After a decade, Drigas & Leliopoulos (2013: 3) wrote about the increase in internet use between 2000-2010, considering aspects such as: the number of users worldwide (an increase of over 28%), speed and line quality (improved to counteract potential business losses due to slow downloads), the development of several industry specific services (such as e-mail or search engines). The researchers then presented data on how these aspects have led to the uneven increase in the e-commerce business dealings in three geographical areas – the USA, China and the European Union. Examining the share of B2C commerce in the overall e-

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[4] The invention of online shopping is credited to English inventor and entrepreneur Michael John Aldrich in 1979 (cf. Norman, not dated, and Wikipedia, not dated).

commerce business dealings, the authors found the highest weight of B2C, of "about 25% of the overall e-commerce in Western Europe" (p. 8).

As for the trends observed during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, in a study published by the International Monetary Fund, Alcedo et al. (2022: 2-3) examine "e-commerce across 47 economies and 26 industries during the COVID-19 pandemic […] for the period between January 2018 and September 2021" focusing on "the share of transactions online". The analysis reveals the fact that the effect of the lockdowns imposed in early 2020 was such that e-commerce increased in all countries under scrutiny[5]. The size of the increase, however, differed depending on the status of e-commerce development in the respective countries. In other words, "the share of online spending rose more in economies where e-commerce was already large […]. Economies and sectors that already knew some of the technologies could go online to a larger degree." (idem: 14). Moreover, Alcedo et al. notice that in the post-pandemic world, the increase in e-commerce is not maintained throughout - "the increase is reversing as the pandemic recedes", except in sectors such as "retail, restaurants, and healthcare, which are still affected by limited social mobility" (ibidem). Other studies point to the expectation that e-commerce is here to stay and that direct sales to end consumers become increasingly important and "81% of consumers intend to purchase products from a DTC [direct to consumer] brand during the next 5 years" (FedEx, 2020: 11).

Given the ascending trends in customer reliance on (e-commerce and) Business-to-Consumer dealings, it is only natural for both parties to try to know each other better. Against this background, we have found an abundance of literature on recommendations and best practices in B2C interaction, such that – on the one hand, the business maintains existing customers and attracts new ones with a view to making profit, and – on the other hand, the customer not only remains loyal to the company but also attracts other customers to it. Some such recommendations refer to the aspects mentioned in Table 1 below:

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[5] See also similar results published by OECD (2020), UNCTAD (2020), Coface (2021), the United States Census Bureau (2022). In Romania, e-commerce has also increased in the post-pandemic world ("by 30% in 2020" according to Deloitte, 2021; see also Cursdeguvernare.ro, 2022, which writes that Romania was responsible for nearly half of Eastern European e-commerce in 2021, citing the "Europe E-Commerce Report" 2022).

Recurrent issues in literature on Business-to-Consumer interaction

Table 1

Areas to consider		Selected references
on the business/ company side:	-marketers' use of various traditional and modern marketing and communication tools and instruments (social media, emailing etc.) to interact with the consumer	Karakaya (2012), Josan (2018), Kang et al. (2021)
	-customer relationship management	Sobotkiewicz &Waniowski (2022)
	-web design, web site quality (usability)	Cao et al. (2005), Faiz et al. (2021)
	-transaction and payment specificities	Josan (2018)
	-distribution channels	Josan (2018)
on the consumer side:	-customer behaviour	Josan (2018), Kang et al. (2021)
	-customer satisfaction	Sheikh & Basti (2015)
other issues:	-quality of internet infrastructure	Drigas & Leliopoulos (2013), Kang et al. (2021)
	-macroeconomic trends (price levels and inflation, unemployment etc.)	Kang et al. (2021)

Source: Authors' analysis of data from the selected references

From among the recommendations made in the literature on increasing the value of B2C interaction, we would like to highlight a few key aspects related to effective communication between the two partners. Based on literature reviewed therein, Rėklaitis & Pilelienė (2019) highlight the fact that, although general business communication strategies apply to B2C, there are also some specificities to the latter. For instance, when aiming to attract customers so as to increase sales, companies involved in B2C dealings should always keep in mind the emotional nature of the interaction with their customers, "whose choice is often irrational" (p. 78). Hence, the marketing communication strategies should allow for a dialogue with the latter – beside the presentation of product/ service features and benefits, efforts are made to "include such marketing elements as influencers, pricing, merchandising tricks into a communication strategy" (p. 81), there is immediate call for action (e.g. "to use coupon, to register for newsletter, to buy with discount or other", p. 78). After sale communication generally also includes customer service, with the

observation that in B2C the latter "will be focused on after-sales activities, mainly, like building loyalty, servicing sold goods, providing information on up-coming products, on-line activities, up-dates, etc." (p 81).

An important part of the dialogue between companies and customers is considered to be the collection of customer opinions or feedback. The literature identifies several ways of collecting customer feedback, such as: customer interviews (either in person or via support call lines), questionnaires and surveys, mobile applications, prototype testing and evaluation involving customers, customer reviews etc. (cf. Fabijan et al., 2015, and Mourtzis et al., 2018, and references cited therein). Since customer feedback can be both positive and negative, companies are encouraged not to fear negative feedback from unsatisfied customers, but to consider it a useful tool for further development: "offering a great deal of attention to unsatisfied customers will drive your business to success, because based on their opinions you can develop and increase your business's performance" (Atton Institute, 2018: 56).

Along these lines, with reference to customer feedback obtained through reviews, Vasquez (2014) points out that "reviews are far more powerful than traditional forms of advertising […], products that have received positive reviews online tend to sell better than similar products without positive reviews" (p. 2). Surprisingly, negative reviews have also been found to "help to increase sales" if they provide enough detail on the product/ service in question, as they draw clients' attention "to the existence of a brand or product type that they may not have been aware of otherwise"; hence, "negative reviews, especially ones that are rich in detail, are actually better for product sales than no reviews at all" (idem). Noticeably, the US Federal Trade Commission recommends for companies to ensure that "reviews truly reflect the feedback received from legitimate customers about their real experiences" so as to establish consumer trust and avoid "potentially deceptive conduct" (Federal Trade Commission, 2022: 2). To achieve this aim, several recommendations are made:

**Federal Trade Commission's 2022 Recommendations
on business conduct with respect to customer reviews (pp. 3-6)**

Table 2

- Don't ask for reviews only from people you think will leave positive ones.
- If you offer an incentive to consumers for leaving a review, don't condition it, explicitly or implicitly, on the review being positive […].
- Don't prevent or discourage people from submitting negative reviews.
- Have reasonable processes in place to verify that reviews are genuine and not fake, deceptive, or otherwise manipulated.
- Don't edit reviews to alter the message. For example, don't change words to make a negative review sound more positive.
- Treat positive and negative reviews equally. Don't subject negative reviews to greater scrutiny.
- Publish all genuine reviews and don't exclude negative ones.
- Don't display reviews in a misleading way. For example, it could be deceptive to feature the positive ones more prominently.
- If you display reviews when the reviewer has a material connection to the company offering the product or service […] that relationship should be clearly and conspicuously disclosed.
- Clearly and conspicuously disclose how you collect, process, and display reviews, and how you determine overall ratings […].
- Have reasonable procedures to identify fake or suspicious reviews after publication […].

In sum, this section has referred to the concept of Business to Consumer, providing a working definition, some background information on the trends in the field, and touching upon key aspects in effective communication between companies and their clients, so as to maintain existing clients happy and loyal, and attract new ones. The next section focuses on customer reviews as a tool for clients to provide feedback on products/services bought – a key tool for companies to gather data on customer (dis)satisfaction, which may in turn be used for remedial /improvement strategies in B2C interaction.

2. Customer reviews for electronics and cosmetics

2.1 Customer reviews– an outline

Customer reviews represent an important feature of business-to-consumer communication nowadays, and it is for this reason that we are writing the present research, aiming to raise awareness of the phenomenon and to highlight the most important characteristics thereof, the main

challenges in writing customer reviews, as well as the ways in which both positive and negative reviews are drafted so as to come across as credible and legitimate.

Indeed, when analysing customer reviews, we find that one of the most important constructs associated with them is **credibility**, and we also find that credibility works both ways. In other words, on the one hand, they must be credible themselves, in order to have an impact on their audience (and, in the following, we will provide an overview of the elements that bestow credibility upon them). On the other hand, answering them, thanking for them if they are positive or, on the contrary, explaining what went wrong if they are negative and making amends bestows credibility on the company itself. However, for the purpose of the present study, we will focus solely on reviews, while analysing how they are tackled by the company will constitute the aim of future research.

In this day and age, it is unlikely for a company to exist without an online presence. With the exception of small neighbourhood convenience stores and other minor business ventures, almost all companies have some activity on the internet, and this trend has only accelerated during the COVID 19 pandemic. Not only are companies happy to accept online orders even if they have brick-and-mortar stores as well but, equally importantly, potential customers may become suspicious if they do not find a company online. The simplest explanation that may come to the prospective customer's mind is that the business is trying to hide feedback from disgruntled customers and negative reviews if they do not operate an internet and a social media page. These considerations also bring us to another observation: broadly speaking, based on location, there are two types of customer reviews we can encounter: those we can find on a company's website (such as famous online retailers like Amazon or, in Romania, the market leader eMAG), and those we can find on social media.

The two types of reviews are similar in nature, the only differences between them stemming from extraneous factors. For instance, to read reviews on a company's website, one has to actually access that website and search for information for a specific product, while reviews on a company's social media page may be instantaneously seen by the reviewer's friends, thus having a wider reach. Similarly, reviews on social media may be more easily traced and answered by the company's representatives and may naturally spawn a dialogue that other customers or potential customers might find useful. However, the scope of the present

study does not include analysing the similarities and differences between website reviews and social media reviews, which may be a line to investigate in further research.

In the following, we concentrate on another significant distinction, that between positive and negative reviews, and we attempt to shed light on their main characteristics and on the elements that bestow legitimacy upon them, making them credible in the eyes of future customers. For purposes pertaining to conciseness and focus, we shall exclusively analyse reviews found on the Romanian giant seller, eMAG[6] and, more specifically, reviews written for two categories of products: electronics (laptops) and cosmetics. We have selected these two categories of products because they cover a wide range of customers, they are bought with specific goals in mind, and they are likely to generate a large number of views from other interested future or potential buyers.

2.2 Positive customer reviews

To begin with, we can say that positive customer reviews are more likely to raise suspicion, as they are easier to fake. It is relatively easy to have a bot fabricate positive reviews that praise a product, and difficult for customers to find out that the review is not genuine. Therefore, to be credible in an online environment that has become increasingly deceptive, a positive review must meet at least two important criteria: it must be **specific** and **detailed**. Vagueness is an instant suspicion generator, while details help convey the impression that the writer is actually familiar with the product and knows what they are talking about. Additionally, if a positive review also includes reference to some minuses of a product, it becomes more reliable, as it appears to be **objective**.

Amongst the main characteristics of products that positive reviews highlight, the most important are the following: a good quality, a low price (or, alternatively, a good price-quality ratio), best value for money, a wide range of features, customized suitability for a certain goal (for instance, in the case of electronic products such as laptops, users sometimes specifically refer to the goal for which the product was purchased – office work or gaming; similarly, in the case of makeup, the user might want a wide range of shades or a long-lasting product; in either case, the more specifically the reviewer refers to the goal with which they purchased the product and to

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[6] www.emag.ro

the manner in which the product meets that specific goal, the more credible a review becomes). On a related note, it is important to specify that, broadly speaking, products can compete either on price or on quality. You cannot be the best AND the cheapest at the same time; you can, however, achieve a good price – quality ratio that will make buyers believe they have made a good decision and have received their money's worth.

Ex.1. **Foarte bun.** *Este un produs foarte bun! A fost cumpărat la ofertă. Am instalat Windows și se mișcă foarte bine.*[7]

*(**Very good.** It is a very good product! It was on special offer. I installed Windows and its speed is very good).*

The review above can be classified as standard. It is concise and to the point, and common as far as its content goes. The initiator begins by praising the product, stating it is "very good" (a general, vague description that, in itself, would not be enough to generate credibility); then, they go on to mention the price (the product was on special offer, thus enhancing the purchaser's impression that they made a good decision); the final part of the review becomes more specific, the buyer mentioning two very clear elements: they installed Windows and the speed is good. Given the fact that, at the moment we are writing the present research, the price listed for the item described is average (3.499 lei), we can conclude that, overall, the money is worth paying and the choice is a good one.

Ex. 2. **Recomand.** *L-am achizitionat prin programul Rabla. Un laptop foarte bun, prima reacție a copilului a fost:"e racheta". Trebuie instalat Windows*[8].

*(**I recommend this product.** I bought it through the "Rabla" programme*[9]. *A very good laptop, the child's first reaction was "it's red-hot". Windows must be installed.)*

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[7] https://www.emag.ro/laptop-gaming-acer-nitro-5-an515-57-cu-procesor-intelr-coretm-i5-11400h-pana-la-4-50-ghz-15-6-full-hd-ips-144hz-16gb-512gb-ssd-nvidiar-geforce-gtxtm-1650-4gb-no-os-black-nh-qekex-009/pd/DM7KLZMBM/?#reviews-section, accessed on January 27, 2023.

[8] https://www.emag.ro/laptop-gaming-acer-nitro-5-an515-57-cu-procesor-intelr-coretm-i5-11400h-pana-la-4-50-ghz-15-6-full-hd-ips-144hz-16gb-512gb-ssd-nvidiar-geforce-gtxtm-1650-4gb-no-os-black-nh-qekex-009/pd/DM7KLZMBM/?#reviews-section, accessed on January 27, 2023.

The second review we get for the same product is also succinct, and the initiator begins by mentioning a price reduction (via a special voucher programme they joined). To enhance the credibility of their impression, they mention the child's reaction (which serves a two-fold purpose since, on the one hand, children are known for their sincerity and, on the other hand, they are much more knowledgeable about electronics than adults and hence make for better assessors). The final detail, that Windows must be installed on the laptop, further boosts the appearance of objectivity while providing useful information for future buyers.

Ex. 3. **Culori superbe şi pigmentate.** *Culorile sunt pigmentate, iar textura este placuta la atingere, matasoasa. Nu este necesara o cantitate mare de produs pentru a vedea culoarea pe pleoape (valabil daca exista o baza de machiaj sau daca se aplica pe un strat de fond de ten).*
Baza de machiaj ajuta foarte mult la pastrarea fardului pe parcurusul intregii zile. Sunt multumita de faptul ca rezista de dimineata pana seara fara sa-l retusez. De asemenea, produsul nu se intinde sau nu se scutura de pe pleoape.
Imi place f mult. Merita 5 stele[10].

*(***Gorgeous, pigmented colours.*** The colours are pigmented, while the texture is pleasant to the touch, silky. You don't need a large quantity of product for the colour to be visible on the eyelids (this applies if there is a make-up base or if it is applied over a layer of foundation).*
The make-up base helps a lot to keep the shade on throughout the day.
I am happy because it lasts from morning till night without adjustments. Also, the product does not spread and is not shaken off the eyelids. I like it very much. It deserves 5 stars.)

The review above is for a make-up product (eye shadow) and it is written by a girl. It ranks high in terms of credibility due to its specificity, to the details it provides and to the overall impression of objectivity.

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[9] The "Rabla" [Junk] programme is a programme run by the Romanian Ministry of the Environment, Water and Forests to collect old household appliances, electronics, cares etc. from the population in exchange of a voucher to encourage the latter to buy a more energy efficient similar product.

[10] https://www.emag.ro/fard-de-pleoape-l-oreal-paris-color-riche-l-ombre-pure-201-saint-germa-5-g-30110595/pd/DVPLQBBBM/?ref=fam#reviews-section, accessed on January 28, 2023.

Moreover, the writer seems knowledgeable about makeup, she speaks like a person who has tried a variety thereof, which helps boost her reliability.

The user begins her review with a targeted word that is used specifically for make-up: pigmented, an adjective meaning that the color is visible on the eyelid rather than dull, which is generally considered a plus and a very desirable feature. She also describes the product in detail, praising its texture and the way it feels to the touch. She brings up the quantity used and clearly states that it is not large if makeup base is used. This particular detail not only helps convey credibility, as it in fact describes a minus of the product, (a plus would be to say it can be used without makeup base) and therefore the reviewer comes across as objective and reliable, but it is also helpful to future buyers as they know what to expect and what other related products, if any, are necessary when using this particular eye shadow. The reviewer does in fact repeat that the product should not be used on its own, as it will not last long. At the end of her review, she reiterates the fact that she is happy with the product and provides two additional, useful details: it does not spread, nor will it be shaken off the eyelids. The conclusion, that it deserves five stars, is a credible one, since the buyer has provided a detailed explanation of her opinion – thus, we as internet users are entitled to believe that she is neither excessively emotional, nor is her review fake or placed "on command", to boost the company's image undeservingly.

One aspect we find relevant is that, unlike the two preceding reviews, which were for electronics, price is not mentioned, and we can think of two possible explanations for this difference. On the one hand, the first two reviews analysed were for a laptop – laptops being sophisticated electronics that are not inexpensive and that one sees as a long-term investment, be it for work or for entertainment purposes. A laptop is an expense one cannot make on an impulse, since it will take its toll on one's personal budget – hence, a person will think thoroughly before buying a laptop, they will weigh the pros and cons for each product considered, they will analyse the price range they can afford and the number of years they are likely to use the product, its lifespan and who will use it (an adult, a child, both, or any other possibilities). Therefore, purchasing a laptop is a well thought-out undertaking that will take serious time, money and consideration.

By contrast, while not all makeup is inexpensive, it is generally seen as a minor expense. Unless you buy large quantities thereof, makeup is not

considered either an investment or a significant expenditure. It is something that users buy regularly, an activity which takes less deliberation and has a minor impact on one's budget. Therefore, one's mindset when buying makeup is different from one's mindset when buying electronics, and for this reason, we believe that reference to price is not generally included in reviews for makeup (with the exception of negative reviews given to very expensive yet disappointing makeup, where customers feel that they have been defrauded and have not got their money's worth).

Also, another reason why we believe the cost is not mentioned in this particular makeup review or in similar ones is that the price is average at most, especially since L'Oréal customers are generally upper-middle class with acceptable incomes, while the company is known to provide good value for money and to have a good price-quality ratio. Hence, in this case, reference to the product's price would be irrelevant, which is why there is none.

*Ex. 4. **Chiar este altceva decât plasticele windows.** La pretul asta primesti cel mai bun display si cel mai bun sunet. Nu face zgomot, este ultraportabil si are autonomie de 15 ore, il incarc la 3 - 4 zile. Am renuntat la windows pe care il foloseam doar pentru jocuri. Calitatea materialelor si experienta de folosire sunt inegalate[11].*

*(**It really is different from Windows plastics.** For this price you get the best display and the best sound. It is not loud, it is very light and it has a 15-hour autonomy, I charge it once every 3-4 days. I gave up on Windows, which I only used for games. The quality of the materials and the usage experience are unrivalled.)*

The review above, written for a MacBook, is atypical, in that its title puts forward a comparison to Windows products, a comparison not flattering for the latter, since the product reviewed emerges as clearly superior. The next thing mentioned is the price, again an unusual perspective to employ when referring to an Apple laptop, considering that

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[11] https://www.emag.ro/laptop-apple-macbook-air-13-inch-true-tone-procesor-apple-m1-8-nuclee-cpu-si-7-nuclee-gpu-8gb-256gb-space-grey-int-kb-mgn63ze-a/pd/DQ5BL 7MBM/#reviews-section, accessed on February 6, 2023.

Apple is a company known to compete not only on price in itself (their products are generally more expensive than other similar items on any market), but also on a certain snob appeal deriving from the status statement that owning an iPhone, an iPad or a MacBook puts forward. Indeed, over the years, the company has built up an elitist image for reasons including high quality, high price and above all else, exclusivity – once you own an Apple product, you have to switch to Apple with all your electronics, otherwise technical incompatibilities may make your life more difficult. Moreover, Apple owners see themselves as belonging to a social caste superior to all other electronics users. The company has staked a firm claim to the world of luxury and state-of-the-art technology, while never alleging its products are inexpensive. Therefore, it may come as a surprise that this particular user seems happy with the price (which is not low, 4799 lei for a laptop is a lavish amount, significantly above the average price) – indeed, upon a closer look, we find that he does not praise the price in itself, but the price-quality ratio, which makes the product worth the money and definitely better than others in the same price range. Also, the final part of the review reinforces the idea of exclusivity that everyone is familiar with when thinking of Apple – the buyer says he has given up on Windows altogether, as Apple quality is unrivalled. To conclude this part of our study, we will highlight the way in which this atypical review does, in fact, reinforce our preexisting beliefs regarding a well-known company with a special reputation: that its products are high quality and their market is an ostensibly exclusive one.

2.3 Negative customer reviews

Negative reviews appear to be extremely relevant for potential customers since, as we have pointed out above, positive reviews are easier to manufacture, while a credible negative review includes specific details that contribute to the readers deciding whether a product is worth purchasing or not. As is the case with positive reviews as well, enhanced credibility is given by a combination of details, specificity and conciseness – they all convey an impression of objectivity and reliability. Emotion, which is frequently expressed in negative reviews, may turn out to be a two-edged sword: on the one hand, if a customer is really mad, their judgement may appear to be clouded, hence they may be perceived as less objective; on the other hand, emotion is known to enhance the overall impression of authenticity. Thus, it is difficult to state with certainty if it helps or hinders

one's perspective; what we can say, though, is that credibility stems from the combination of these factors and is to be assessed on an individual basis.

Broadly speaking, there are two main causes underlying customer disappointment. Firstly, customers may be disappointed because the initial expectations they had when purchasing a product have not been met. Here, again, we can speak of several factors that may account for a customer's high expectations, but this research transcends the scope of the present paper – hence, we will limit ourselves to contending that the main reason for a customer's initial expectations stems from the company's good reputation.

Secondly, customers may end up disappointed because the company explicitly made them a promise they failed to deliver on – in other words, somewhere in the marketing process accompanying a certain product, an explicit commitment was found, but then the product did not abide by it. There are several ways in which a company can make an explicit promise to its customers – they can, for instance, provide information on their website, in the advertising campaign, or they can highlight some characteristics on the very packaging of the product they sell – in either one of these situations, if the respective features do not come through, we believe that customers are right to be unhappy; equally, it is a very unfortunate marketing strategy that almost always results in damage to the company's reputation.

Ex. 5. **Nu prea face banii.** *Principalul dezavantaj e problema (adica lipsa) driverilor pt win 10 - a fost o adevarata bataie de cap sa il fac functional. Si chiar si asa am ramas cu ceva "unknown devices" pt OS: D*
Placa grafica si procesorul sunt (desigur) punctul forte dar, din pacate, cam singurele puncte forte. Display, tastatura, coolers sunt ok, as zice, not bad but also not great.
Avand in vedere ca e un laptop destul de scumput, as zice ca mizeaza prea mult DOAR pe placa grafica si per total nu prea se merita.

*(***Not really worth the money***. The main disadvantage is the problem, that is, the lack of drivers for Windows 10 – it was really difficult to make it work. And even so, I still have some "unknown devices" for OS. The graphic board and processor are, of course, the main strengths, but sadly they are the only strengths. The display, keyboard and coolers are okay I would say, not bad but also not great.*

Given that it is a rather pricey laptop, I would say it relies excessively ONLY on the graphic board and overall, it is not really worth it[12]).

The review above is detailed, presenting a comprehensive description of the purchased product. The buyer rates the product two stars, which is close to the minimum possible rating, and explains why. The first thing he mentions is a technical problem – a lack of Windows 10 drivers, which precludes the laptop from functioning correctly. He then brings up the positives, also technical aspects, as well as some average features that are not enough to make the product stand out. The final part of the review contends that the product is expensive, which it is (4,699 lei) and, overall, from this buyer's perspective, the price-quality ratio is not satisfactory and the product, not worth purchasing. The review is also marked as a "verified purchase", an additional credibility enhancer. The tone of the complaint is neutral, detached, fact-based, devoid of any emotion whatsoever, while the reviewer is male; sadly, in a society still dominated by gender-based misconceptions, a review for an electronic product given by a male user is likely to come across as more credible than one written by a female. Overall, for all the reasons stated, this review appears to be very credible and totally legitimate.

*Ex. 6. **Horror!** Pana acum am avut palete de machiaj profesionale. Tin sa mentionez ca e sub asteptari, cred ca daca cumparam din piata o paleta de machiaj "no name" era mult mai buna. Imi pare rau de fiecare leu cheltuit pe aceasta paleta. Nu are pigment nici macar cu baza, fardul ramane ca si cum ar fi o carioca uzata. Nu recomand sub nici o forma![13]*

*(**Horror!** So far I have had professional makeup pallettes. I have to say it is below my expectations, I think that, had I bought a "no name" makeup pallette, it would have been much better. I regret every leu I spent on this pallette. It has no pigment*

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[12] https://www.emag.ro/laptop-gaming-acer-nitro-5-an515-58-cu-procesor-intelr-coretm-i5-12500h-pana-la-4-50-ghz-15-6-full-hd-ips-144hz-16gb-1tb-ssd-nvidiar-geforce-rtxtm-3050-4gb-no-os-black-nh-qfjex-007/pd/D1N5K1MBM/?ref=smart-history_google_1_1&provider=rec&recid=rec_84_42e2fdbd05e875db9732602671ab98c19d6b0dc58c258f7ce97f452b63169c9a_1674897826&scenario_ID=84#reviews-section, accessed on January 28, 2023.

[13] https://www.emag.ro/paleta-de-farduri-maybelline-new-york-the-blushed-nudes-9-6-g-3600531293178/pd/DW05X3BBM/#reviews-section, accessed on February 4, 2023.

whatsoever, not even in the base, the makeup looks like a wornout marker. I absolutely do not recommend!

The review above is written in a language meant for connaisseurs. The review title sums up the user's overall impression, which is a very bad one, for several reasons. Firstly, it is obvious that one of the main reasons this particular user is disappointed stems from the high expectations she had when purchasing the product. Indeed, people familiar with makeup know that Maybelline is a household name on the market. The company has a very good reputation amongst average-income buyers, as it is known to provide relatively good quality at a moderate price. Therefore, when one purchases a Maybelline product, one starts from the assumption that it has to be good, unlike "no name" companies that one buys knowing there is a risk attached. Hence, we can state that this particular user's main source of disappointment stems from her high initial expectations based on the brand's reputation and on her previous experience.

This buyer, in fact, tells us that she has extensive previous experience with makeup, as she has only acquired professional products, and the language she uses, a kind of makeup users' jargon, proves that she is not a beginner in this domain. The review is emotionally charged, she expresses regret at having spent money on this disappointing product, she uses the exclamation mark, emotionally charged words ("horror") and she strongly advises others not to purchase this particular pallette. She also uses the specialized terms "pigment" and "base", alongside a comparison meant to be understood by laypeople as well: the makeup looks like a wornout marker. Overall, compared to the previous review, which was also negative and detailed, this one is clearly more emotional. We cannot issue a judgement as to which of the two is more compelling, what we can say without a doubt is that they have different audiences (reliant on the target market) and that audiences may respond in different, often unpredictable ways.

Ex. 7. Eu am luat aceasta oja Alba cod 401 si sincer nu e buna de nimic. Am incercat-o doar pe o unghie si intr-adevar, dupa cum spun unele review-uri aici, oja e apoasa, curge de pe unghie si pensula lasa dâre si oricate straturi dai, tot nu este opaca ci intr-un fel transparenta caci se vede unghia pe-alocuri. Sa nu mai spun ca oja nu se usuca nici daca o dai intr-un singur strat f subtire de se vede unghia, oricat ai lasa-o nu se usuca deloc. Deci calitatea este extrem de slaba. Pe

sticluta scrie ca se usuca si fara lampa UV...; vezi sa nu! Am lasat-o si asa o gramada de timp si tot nu s-a uscat noci macar un pic. Dupa un timp indelungat am sters-o de pe unghie pur si simplu cu un servetel uscat, deci s-a luat ca si cum ar fi fost orice altceva, dar nu o oja. Nici macar o oja normala nu s-ar fi luat asa dintr-o singura miscare cu un servetel uscat fara sa lase nici macar o urma cum lasa ojele banale.. O returnez[14]!

I bought this nail polish in white, code 410, and frankly it's not good at all. I only tried it on one nail and indeed, as some reviews here say, the polish is watery, it leaks from the nail, while the brush leaves traces and, no matter how many layers you apply, it is still not opaque; it is somehow transparent, as you can see the nail here and there. Not to mention that it won't dry, not even if you only apply one thin layer so you can see the nail, no matter how much you wait, it won't dry. So, the quality is very low. On the bottle they say that it will dry without a UV lamp… nonsense! I waited a long time and it didn't dry at all. After a long time I simply wiped it off the nail with a dry tissue, so it came off like it was anything but nail polish. Not even regular polish would come off just like that, one swipe with a dry tissue, without leaving as much as a trace, like average polish… I am returning it!

The review above is not only emotional, betraying the buyer's anger, it is also as legitimate as a complaint can get, since the main source of disappointment does not reside in the buyer's expectations, but in promises not delivered upon by the producer. In fact, in this case, the producer is a no-name company and the product is very inexpensive (7 lei per bottle), hence we can understand why no expectations can stem from the company's reputation, unlike the preceding case, where we were looking at a well-established company with a tradition that goes back for more than a century (Maybelline was founded in 1914). Therefore, the only legitimate expectations a buyer might have in this case come from what is promised by the seller –the nail polish bottle explicitly says that the polish will dry even in the absence of a UV lamp.

The seller fails to deliver on their promise, as the buyer indignantly points out. Not only does the latter explain the situation, providing many

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[14] https://www.emag.ro/oja-semipermanenta-canni-3-in-1-one-step-7-ml-406-30917-406/pd/D7ZLN7MBM/?X-Search-Id=555ab0dcba45467c7944&X-Product-Id=65845264&X-Search-Page=1&X-Search-Position=1&X-Section=search&X-MB=0&X-Search-Action=view, accessed on February 4, 2023.

details, they have also attached two photos that support what they said – the product does not appear to be homogeneous on the nail, and the overall impression is hugely unappealing. Photos give enhanced credibility to reviews due to their powerful visual impact, and the more disapproving a review is, the more it helps to support your views with visual aids, so as to show that your negative opinion is justified. The internet has become an increasingly elusive space, where future or potential customers are more and more skeptical and reluctant to believe everything they read. Therefore, in a fiercely competitive environment where opinions can be easily fabricated and you cannot trust anyone, any feature that enhances credibility is helpful and makes a review stand out. In this particular case, after having built a powerful case against the nail polish, in a review that is one hundred percent negative and gives the product one star, the lowest possible rating, the customer concludes they will return it, which is the ultimate proof of disappointment.

3. Conclusions

The current paper has tackled the topic of Business to Consumer interaction in the aftermath of the COVID 19 pandemic. The paper started by providing a working definition of the term and by highlighting the increasing reliance on direct communication between companies and their clients, facilitated by the expansion of online commerce in the recent decades and years.

While B2C is an umbrella term generally used to describe the relationship between a company and its customers, covering several aspects such as the marketers' use of various communication tools to interact with customers, customer relationship management, the usability of websites (web design, website quality, user friendliness) and others (on the company's side) and customer behaviour and customer satisfaction on the customers' side, as well as other general aspects like macroeconomic trends (prive levels, inflation, unemployment etc.), aspects whose ultimate aim is to ensure repeat business and loyal customers for a company, in our research, we have focused on one wedge of this extremely complex construct, namely customer reviews, as we believe they constitute the ultimate indicator of a business' reputation and success.

Customer reviews represent the backbone of business-to-consumer communication nowadays, as they have been proved to impact the

consumers' evaluation of products as well as their purchasing decisions. A wide range of aspects are covered in reviews, aspects including price, quality, quantity, price-quality ratio and value for money. In terms of register, reviews are generally written in informal language, as they do not represent an official form of communication – they are the internet equivalent of word-of-mouth advertising and they help shape the mindset of potential and future buyers.

Out of all the characteristics of reviews, in the present research, we have attempted to shed light on those that make them credible to readers and likely to be remembered and have an impact. Credibility, in our view, stems from a combination of features including attention to detail, specificity and the appearance of objectivity. Emotion, which is present in many negative reviews, represents a controversial facet since, on the one hand, it could raise doubt as to the reviewer's objectivity, while on the other hand could enhance the impression of authenticity. All things considered, we believe that, when writing a review, one finds oneself on slippery grounds, since the way a review is received depends to a large extent on factors extraneous to the writer, such as the audience and their preexisting mindsets and beliefs. However, we can firmly state that these three aspects – specificity, attention to detail and the appearance of objectivity – play a significant role in making reviews come across as credible and legitimate. The way in which they are tackled by sellers shall constitute the subject of future research.

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