How Business Students Use Online Faculty Evaluations and Business Faculty's Perception of Their Students' Usage

Susan Geringer
California State University, Fresno

Andreas Stratemeyer
California State University, Fresno

Denise Patterson
California State University, Fresno

Student evaluations are an important aspect of business pedagogy. Social media-based evaluations, such as RateMyProfessors.com, empower students to evaluate faculty anonymously. A perusal of the literature indicates little to no prior research conducted on faculty perceptions of student usage of online evaluations. We posit that business students embody unique characteristics that influence their usage. We examine whether business students use RateMyProfessors.com in an ethical manner (i.e., honestly and without grade-related bias) and moderately (i.e., not only to rant or rave), whether gender differences exist in evaluations, and how confident students are in their evaluative abilities. We also posit that business faculty will understand how their students use online faculty evaluations. We summarize and discuss the empirical analysis of the hypotheses.

Keywords: faculty evaluations, faculty perceptions, business faculty, business students, social media, ratemyprofessors.com

INTRODUCTION

The debate over online, anonymous evaluation websites continues across both commerce and academia. Within higher education, students use online faculty rating websites to share opinions and to gain insight for selecting (or avoiding) specific classes. In recent years, several professors have complained that comments posted on such websites are libelous and have great potential for unethical behavior, with some faculty even pursuing litigation. Despite the debates, it appears that public, online evaluation mechanisms are here to stay.

In the current study, we evaluate business students' use of RateMyProfessors.com and investigate their ethical leanings. We also look at the business faculty's perception of their student's use of Rate My Professor. The paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we provide an overview of the literature related to student evaluations of teaching (SET) as well as that addressing student evaluations posted to RateMyProfessor.com (RMP). The literature includes studies comparing SET and RMP evaluations as well

as those focusing strictly on RMP. The hypotheses follow the literature review. Following the literature review is a description of the methodology. The results and conclusions are in the final section.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Student Evaluations of Teaching

Previous literature addressing faculty evaluations investigates those used officially by universities. A review of the literature indicates a plethora of studies that identify the primary uses of student evaluations of teaching (SET), including faculty retention, promotion, salary decisions, and tenure decisions (Ahmadi, et al., 2001; Emery, et al., 2003; Germain & Scandura, 2005; Preston et al., 2016). Additional research looked at the validity of these student evaluations.

Shevlin et al. (2000) report that the SET ratings are affected by students' perceptions of faculty charisma, a variable unrelated to teaching ability. Ahmadi et al. (2001) found the primary factors students use to evaluate faculty are the amount of homework, the difficulty of exams, difficulty in grading, and faculty's sense of humor. In addition, they state that the students in their studies are moving toward a demand for more faculty accountability. Morgan et al. (2003) report that accounting faculty perceive student evaluations as popularity contests rather than good measures of teaching effectiveness. Faculty recognize that certain factors bias student evaluations. These factors include the type of course, course difficulty, grades assigned, and teachers' personalities. In this same study, accounting department chairs recognize that students' evaluations can be biased by these factors. However, the department chairs generally perceive students reliably to evaluate teaching effectiveness.

Worthington (2002) reports that, among finance majors, expected grade, ethnic background, gender, and age significantly influenced ratings of teaching effectiveness. Students who expect higher grades in the course assign higher ratings. Females and students over twenty years of age have a higher probability of assigning lower ratings. The perceived purpose of the teaching evaluations also affects ratings. Students assign lower ratings when they expected the teaching evaluations are used in tenure, promotion, and salary decisions. However, those who perceive the evaluations will be used to improve future teaching have a higher probability of giving higher ratings.

Balam and Shannon (2010) compare the perceptions of students and faculty on certain myths surrounding student evaluations. They report that students believe they can accurately evaluate the effectiveness of faculty teaching, whereas faculty do not hold this same belief; rather, faculty perceive that student evaluations of teaching are "unreliable and invalid" (p. 215). Some gender differences occurred among student participants. Females conveyed more agreement with the statement that "students are qualified to make accurate judgments of college professors' teaching effectiveness" (p. 211). However, males believe that the evaluations represent a "popularity contest" (p. 216) based on the personality of the faculty. Additionally, males agree that student evaluations of teaching effectiveness are more accurate when such evaluations occur after students have completed the course. Males and faculty concur that evaluations are unreliable and invalid; they also agree that factors outside an instructor's control (e.g., instructor's rank, the time the course is offered, and gender of students) affect evaluations.

From the prior literature, one can argue a variety of factors bias student evaluations of teaching effectiveness. Faculty can control some factors to improve their overall ratings of teaching effectiveness (course difficulty or workload, grades assigned). Outside a faculty member's control (student gender, age, ethnicity), other factors affect teaching effectiveness ratings. Although many universities continue to use student evaluations of teaching, results are rarely presented to the public. As a result, online teaching evaluation websites have been developed. The most prominent of these sites is RateMyProfessors.com.

RateMyProfessors.com

The lack of transparency of faculty evaluations ended in 1999, with the introduction of social media sites aimed at making such information public. As of 2011, there were 28 such sites available for public use (Hinz, 2011). Although many sites are available, RateMyProfessors.com (RMP) is by far the most popular (Kindred & Mohammed, 2005). As of July 2022, RMP is the "largest online destination for

professor ratings," boasts more than 19 million postings, evaluates1.7 million professors, and includes 7,000 schools (RateMyProfessors.com/about). DellaGioia (2008) did not find that students based their decisions for course selection on knowledge obtained from other students. However, Carr (2013) indicates that RMP provides students a means of making decisions about the course and faculty selection. She states, "from the Ratemyprofessors.com perspective, teachers are equated to actual purchases" (Carr, 2013, para. 7). Although faculty may wish to discount such online evaluation sites, primarily because they are not mandated nor monitored by universities, Otto et al. (2008), warn professors to take them seriously. The increased usage of (RMP) creates the need for research that is "timely and important." (Otto et al., 2008, p. 355). The research over the past decade has swung to the assessment of online faculty evaluation sites.

RMP is considered a "controversial website" (Miles & Sparks, 2013, p. 513) for numerous reasons including, but not limited to, the anonymity of those who post. Participants on RMP are not required to pay any fees and they may rate faculty through ordinal methods (a 5-point Likert Scale), as well as through open-ended questions. Many researchers claim that this anonymity lessens the credibility of the evaluations (Emery et al., 2003; Kindred & Mohammed, 2005).

In addition, faculty are not afforded the right to face their accuser. According to Emery et al. (2003), if students identify themselves, the reliability of the posts can be tremendously improved. Emery et al. (2003) further comment that with anonymous student evaluations, "instructors have no due process for false and libelous statements" (p. 44). Otto et al. (2008) echo this statement of concern for the accuracy of RMP posts by stating that one never knows who is posting, and that "online ratings may be biased" (p. 356). Notably, the website does provide a feedback option for professors to address students' comments and ratings. According to the RMP website, faculty are encouraged "to engage with students on the site by creating a Rate My Professors account. With a Professor account, you can post a reply and get alerted when new ratings are posted on your profile" (RateMyProfessors.com/guidelines).

Several studies address the validity of RMP evaluations as compared to traditional institutional SET. Legg and Wilson (2012) conducted a study in which students completed an RMP evaluation of faculty at the beginning of a course. In-class evaluations were conducted toward the end of the course term; the last RMP evaluation was administered after the in-class evaluation. Concerning evaluations of Clarity and Easiness, the RMP evaluations prepared at the beginning of the course were lower than the SET and RMP evaluations conducted at the end of the course. Legg and Wilson (2012) suggest these results reflect a bias. Students who voluntarily participate in RMP evaluations provide more negative responses than those who participate in SET or who are prompted to provide ratings on RMP. These results support the comments of Otto et al. (2008). Tipoe (2013) also found that ratings of faculty are significantly lower on online-rating sites, such as RMP, in comparison to their official university counterparts. Not all research agrees with these findings, as another study indicates that RMP ratings are reflective of the in-classroom evaluations of the same faculty (Bleske-Rechek & Michels, 2010).

Lewandowski et al. (2012) report that information gleaned from prior evaluations affects students' perceptions of faculty. They report that students give higher evaluations when they previously read positive RMP comments that focus on faculty characteristics such as organization and knowledge. Students' perception of the credibility of RMP is another factor that affects RMP evaluations. The authors report that positive comments based on a more superficial criteria, such as a faculty member's appearance, result in higher evaluations when a student perceives RMP to be credible. Lewandowski et al. (2012) conclude that prior information used by students to evaluate faculty creates a "confirmation bias" (p. 998) during the evaluation process. Students look for faculty characteristics and performance to support their perceptions based on the previously provided information.

In contrast to the concern for potentially biased evaluations, Coladarci and Kornfield (2007) report that RMP overall Quality is highly correlated with the Overall instructor rating on the university SET. RMP ratings are not skewed. However, RMP ratings are highly correlated with results measured by university teaching evaluations. Timmerman (2008) found similar results for university faculty as a whole and specifically for business faculty. Sonntag et al. (2009) correlated RMP Quality ratings with instructor and course quality ratings from traditional SET forms. RMP Quality rating is "significantly positively" (p. 502) related to excellent faculty and class ratings shown on the traditional SET form (Sonntag et al., 2009). The

teaching quality ratings, from both RMP and the traditional SET form, are significantly correlated with grades, indicating that students prefer "grading leniency" (p. 502). Dommeyer et al. (2002) report that among business faculty surveyed, "twice as many faculty indicated a preference for the paper method rather than the online method" (p. 458). Faculty review university evaluations more frequently than RMP evaluations. Faculty also consider university evaluations as being more serious and more accurate than RMP evaluations (Boswell, 2016). However, Boswell also reports that faculty react to RMP evaluations in the same manner as university evaluations (2016).

When Katrompas and Metsis (2021) compared RMP ratings to SET of their university, they found that although correlations between RMP and university teaching are relatively weak, differences were found for female faculty in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM courses); the lowest difference in ratings was for women in " soft' areas such as art, languages, theater, etc." (p. 538). Katrompas and Metsis (2021) indicated that these results reflect a potential bias against women on RMP ratings.

These studies attempt to address the validity of RMP evaluations as compared to traditional university teaching evaluations. However, the results are mixed. Some studies find evaluations between SET and RMP to be equivalent. However, other results indicate RMP evaluations are lower than SET. RMP evaluations can also present a bias against certain faculty teaching specific courses. The following paragraphs present additional research, focused solely on RMP evaluations.

McKeachie (1997) and Hobson and Talbot (2001) state that evaluations indicate students are found to be excellent judges of teaching effectiveness, although Kindred and Mohammed's (2005) findings disagree with this observation. In relation to demographics of students completing evaluations, Kindred and Mohammed (2005) state that findings related to gender are mixed.

McKeachie (1997) found that more senior-level students had more efficient and reliable evaluations. Davison and Price (2009) state that the ratings-related questions found on the RMP site establish "an anti-intellectual tone" (p. 55). They make additional criticisms of the RMP ratings and conclude the RMP evaluations focus on faculty personality and appearance rather than on teaching effectiveness (Davison & Price, 2009). Baker (2019) states that although their study sample size was small but acceptable, their findings indicated "white privilege status" toward the faculty at their university in Pennsylvania (p. 1). Felton et al. (2008) report that the highest average Quality ratings occurred for faculty teaching in the areas of sociology, political science, and languages. The lowest Quality rankings are in the fields of STEM, business, accounting, economics, and finance. Similarly, Rosen (2018) found that the lowest Quality and Easiness ratings occur in the technical disciplines (i.e., STEM, finance, computer science, and accounting) as compared to the fields of arts and humanities. Additionally, when reviewing written comments, he found that male faculty receive written comments with more positive words (e.g., excellent) than their female counterparts.

Constand and Pace (2014) report on students' ratings of overall Quality in light of the rating of Easiness. They find that students evaluate Finance instructors as being more difficult than all other disciplines, except accounting. The Difficulty rating is associated with the overall Quality rating. Students rate Finance professors as more difficult than non-business professors. However, faculty in the sciences (math, statistics, chemistry, and physics) had lower ratings than other non-business faculty. These ratings for science professors are still higher than the ratings of Finance faculty. Constand and Pace (2014) concluded that the ratings could be the result of factors other than faculty teaching ability. Such factors could include "the complexity of the class content", "type of exams given (multiple choice versus essay exams), grading policies, whether the class is a required class or an elective, the scheduling of the class during the day or week, the class structure" (p. 38). The combination of these various factors influences the student's perception of the ease of a course, which in turn affects the overall Quality rating of the faculty member.

Contrary to Constand and Pace (2014), Lee and Deale (2019) report that Easiness was the least important variable in assessing overall Quality. Rather, Clarity and Helpfulness were the primary variables driving overall Quality among hospitality and tourism students. In written comments, Constand and Pace (2014) report more positive comments than negative ones. Positive comments are more frequently related to instructor facilitation and personality. However, negative comments relate to instructor facilitation and the characteristics of the course.

Katrompas and Metsis (2021) report strong, negative correlations between Difficulty and Quality in quantitative courses (e.g., math, engineering, finance, accounting). The authors conclude that when students rate a faculty member low on the Quality score, they are influenced more by the level of difficulty of the course and are not truly evaluating quality. This negative correlation, between Difficulty and Quality, is more pronounced for women faculty teaching quantitative courses than for women teaching courses such as art, languages, or theater.

Reid (2010) compared RMP ratings across gender and race. He reports that students evaluate racial minorities (Blacks, Asians, Latinos, Other) significantly more negatively than White faculty on overall Quality; these faculty are also rated as being easier than White faculty. Men are rated as being easier, with respect to gender, than women. However, "Black men were rated more negatively by students than all other faculty" (p. 147). Using cluster analysis, Reid (2010) reports that students did not perceive faculty of color to be among the best instructors. They perceive them as being good but not great. Reid (2010) concludes that a faculty member's demographic characteristics affect students' evaluations. The demographic characteristics represent a systemic bias. When using student ratings, administrators and faculty should consider this bias.

Germain and Scandura (2005) comment that previous research agrees that the primary factor in students participating in faculty evaluations is the amount the student believed they learned. According to Gregory (2011), students indicate preferences toward faculty who were helpful and demanding, and courses that were "rigorous, fair and informative" (p. 169). However, Germain and Scandura (2005) argue that the likeability of the faculty may be more valuable to students than the knowledge they gleaned in class. In support of Germain and Scandura (2005), Clayson (2014) states that the RMP instrument is more of a "likability" (p. 696) scale and may bias students toward faculty because the site develops a halo effect. Their results indicate that students gave higher ratings when courses were easier. This finding supports that of Felton et al. (2008). Additionally, Clayson (2014) suggests that when students like a faculty member, the easiness of the course is less relevant. Clayson's overall conclusion is that RMP ratings "are an invalid measure of teaching effectiveness if effectiveness is tied to learning" (p. 695). As Felton et al. (2008) commented, students, are "influenced by the easiness of the course and the appearance of the professor" (p. 58).

Although Tipoe (2013) found it was uncommon for students to use sites such as RMP for "grade retaliation" (p. 1), Ahmadi et al. (2001) raise one issue concerning the validity of faculty evaluations. In their evaluation, Ahmadi et al. (2001) report that faculty feel that only extreme students, characterized by those who either like or dislike a class the most, will participate in the evaluation. It is thus worrisome that such a practice would eliminate the "median group of students," from filling out the evaluation (p. 12). Bosch (2004) states that online faculty rating sites might be misleading because of the student grudges found within the evaluations. In support of this idea, Katrompas and Metsis (2021) find greater variation in the RMP data in their study. They report that this result supports prior conclusions that individuals, motivated to submit their opinions in online course reviews, typically prepare the RMP evaluations. They conclude, "anonymous self-reporting without compensatory validation is likely biased and inaccurate" (p. 542). Preston et al. (2016) caution universities against using ratings from sites such as RMP in the development of a variety of important decisions.

Much of the previous studies focus on the RMP evaluations of specific faculty. The findings generally point to a bias in the RMP evaluations. Specific biases include gender, race, and subject area. Prior studies support the correlation between overall teaching Quality and Easiness. However, these studies did not generally address students' perceptions of RMP.

Student Ethics and Usage of RMP

Research indicates conflict in student opinions of RMP. Brown et al. (2009) report that 83% of the students surveyed visited RMP. A majority of their participants (58%) believe students are more honest on RMP ratings than they are on university-administered SET. The authors report that 47% of the participants believe RMP ratings are better representations of faculty performance than university evaluations. This finding is important as students use RMP to make decisions about courses to take. However, Brown et al.

(2009) found that RMP ratings were generally lower than university-administered evaluations. As a result, if the RMP ratings of faculty are lower, and students are using these ratings to make decisions about future enrollment, they may be using biased information.

A study of university Business Administration students (Slocombe et al., 2011), suggests that although 100% of the students surveyed believe they are honest in their faculty ratings, they believe that only 33% of other students are honest in their evaluations. Kindred and Mohammed (2005) further comment that students, although finding RMP useful, trust their friends' judgment of faculty more highly. Davison and Price (2009) found that 95% of the students involved in their RMP study indicate that they find the information provided by the site to be credible. The importance of word-of-mouth is evident in the popularity of sites such as RMP.

Miles and Sparks (2013) attempted to measure how RMP affected students' selections of courses and faculty. They initially posited a model of three factors that influence students. However, their final model included six factors. Each of the factors includes RMP variables that influence students. Miles and Sparks (2013) conclude, "RMP has some influence on students, but it may not be a significant influence" (p. 523). They encourage additional research to determine the influence of RMP on student decisions.

Although critics of RMP believe that students use the site primarily to criticize faculty, Bleske-Rechek and Michels (2010) and Hartman et al. (2014) state that postings were more positive than previously thought. Silva et al. (2008) and Kindred and Mohammed (2005) echo this sentiment with their statements that overall student postings are positive.

Furthermore, Villalta-Cerdas et al. (2015) and Lee and Deale (2019) find that, contrary to popular opinion, students do not use RMP "to gather information about course/instructor easiness" (p. 196). According to Felton et al. (2008), students' motives for posting on RMP range from a true desire to compliment faculty "to a desire to retaliate, that, at its worst, is not much removed from the graffiti on the walls of restrooms" (p. 45). Research by Ahmadhi et al. (2001) indicates that students with neutral opinions regarding faculty or courses are not motivated to post on RMP.

Business Students' Ratings on RMP

Although the majority of research concerning student usage and perceptions of RMP includes a mixture of students representing various majors in their samples, few have focused solely on Business Administration majors. Researchers who have used such a sample include Mukherji and Rustagi (2008), Slocombe, et al. (2011), and Deepa and Seth (2014). The majority of Business Administration majors stated difficulty of the class did not affect their ratings of faculty members (Slocombe et al., 2011). Mukherji and Rustagi (2008) found that Business Administration majors consistently gave higher evaluations to faculty in more challenging courses as well as in courses for which they earned higher grades.

Past research has focused on similarities between SET and RMP evaluations as well as the factors that may affect student evaluations. Traditionally, the research focused on the evaluations made, how faculty judge the results, or how the student perceives the evaluations. Coladarci and Kronfield (2007) suggest that universities promote students' posting of evaluations, including open-ended comments to RMP. These evaluations need to be "responsible contributions" (p. 12) that are "constructive and respectful" (p. 12). Such evaluations should reflect the students' "sense of decency and fair play" (p. 12). A perusal of the literature indicates a lack of empirical research related to faculty perceptions of their students' use of course evaluations, whether said evaluations are online or not. This study looks at the students' use and opinions specific to RMP. Additionally, faculty perceptions of the students' use and opinions of RMP are a primary consideration.

HYPOTHESES

Although a plethora of research addresses student usage of RMP, the apparent lack of previous research addressing faculty perceptions of students' RMP usage habits causes us to state the faculty-based hypotheses on a like version of the hypotheses related to student usage of RMP. Based on the growing research into online faculty evaluation websites, as well as research on traditional faculty evaluations (SET),

we developed hypotheses regarding business students' usage of RateMyProfessors.com. More importantly, we will compare the hypotheses regarding students' perceptions to their concomitant professor perceptions of how students use RMP. First, we follow Hartman and Hunt (2013) who reported that students' evaluations of marketing instructors were bi-modal; that is, mostly positive or mostly negative versus mixed or neutral. Thus, we hypothesize:

H1a: *Business students' evaluations will be bi-modal; that is, they post reviews that are either mostly positive or mostly negative, rather than mixed/neutral.*

H1b: *Business faculty will perceive that business students' evaluations will be bi-modal; that is, they post reviews that are either mostly positive or mostly negative, rather than mixed/neutral.*

Further, Kindred and Mohammed (2005) found equivocal results regarding gender differences in students' usage of the RMP website. In line with gender studies in business and organizational behavior, we hypothesize that business undergraduates will demonstrate gender differences in their evaluations of professors.

H2a: *The usage of RMP will be different across gender.*

H2b: *Business faculty will perceive the usage of RMP will be different across gender.*

H3a: *The reasons students post faculty evaluations on RMP will be different across gender.*

H3b: *Business faculty will perceive the reasons students post faculty evaluations on RMP will be different across gender.*

Additionally, research suggests that business undergraduates have distinct, discipline-related personalities. Business majors report being tough-minded (making difficult decisions by using logic), assertive, conscientious, and extraverted while lacking in agreeableness (Lounsbury et al., 2009). Given these distinct personality traits, we expect distinct usage of RMP.

H4a: *Business students will use RMP in an ethical manner; that is their evaluations are likely to be honest and unbiased.*

H4b: *Business faculty will perceive business students will use RMP in an ethical manner; that is, their evaluations are likely to be honest and unbiased.*

H5a: *A majority of business students feel qualified to evaluate their professors.*

H5b: *Business faculty will perceive a majority of business students feel qualified to evaluate their professors.*

METHODOLOGY

Sample

This research is an exploratory investigation of the relationships that lead to an understanding of business students' usage and opinions regarding RateMyProfessors.com (RMP) and the business faculty's perception of these opinions. As such, we utilized a convenience sampling procedure. The sampling units consist of university students and professors from a large, public, western university. A separate questionnaire was developed and administered to these students and professors in various undergraduate business classes by the authors. Marketing majors represent the largest group (45%) in the student sample.

Further, a majority of respondents were senior-level students (52%). Most of the professor samples were composed of Caucasian (64%) part-time lecturers and tenured faculty (70%). To ensure that a student only completed the questionnaire once, students were sampled without replacement. One hundred eighty-eight student questionnaires were collected; after eliminating unusable questionnaires due to significant omissions or non-qualifying responses, 151 student questionnaires remained. After the elimination of one faculty questionnaire due to significant omissions, 25 usable questionnaires remained. Table 1 and Table 2, respectively, present the relevant characteristics of the student and professor samples.

TABLE 1
STUDENT SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Demographics	Frequency	%
Gender:		
Male	74	49.0
Female	77	51.0
Ethnicity:		
Hispanic	43	28.5
Asian-American	23	15.2
Caucasian	64	42.4
African American	7	4.6
Other	14	9.3
Academic Level:		
Freshman	0	0.0
Sophomore	1	0.7
Junior	71	47.0
Senior	79	52.3
Graduate Student	0	0.0
Option/Major:		
Accountancy	23	15.2
Finance	9	6.0
International Business	6	4.0
IS/DS	3	2.0
Management	19	12.6
Marketing	69	45.7
Other	22	14.6

TABLE 2
PROFESSOR SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Demographics	Frequency	%
Gender:		
Male	11	44.0
Female	14	56.0
Ethnicity:		
Hispanic	1	4.0
Asian-American	3	12.0
Caucasian	16	64.0
African American	1	4.0
Other	4	16.0

Academic Assignment:		
Part-time Lecturer	9	37.5
Full-time Lecturer	3	12.5
Tenure-track Faculty	4	16.7
Tenured Faculty	8	33.3
Option/Major:		
Accountancy	6	25.0
Finance	3	12.5
International Business	0	0.0
IS/DS	4	16.7
Management	2	8.3
Marketing	3	12.5
Other	6	25.0

Measures

Most of the scales used to measure the variables in this study were derived from two instruments that were designed in previous studies (Fiedler et al., 2004; Bleske-Rechek & Michels, 2010). Eighteen of the items, used in Belske-Rechek and Michels (2010), present reasons why students post to RMP. Using these items, Belske-Rechek and Michels (2010) does not identify a specific pattern for why students decide to post faculty evaluations to RMP. Due to the exploratory nature of this research, all items were retained in their original form to provide a consistent measure, as conceptualized by these authors. Certain items were reverse-coded according to their wording. An overall analysis of the individual items shows that the elimination of any individual item would not improve internal consistency. Forty-six items derived from prior studies measured RMP attitudes. Four demographic items were also included in both questionnaires.

RESULTS

The hypotheses were tested using simple univariate and/or bivariate analysis. To synthesize the data for easier analysis, summated scores, based on the two previously cited scales, are used as needed.

Hypotheses 1a and 1b

For the student sample, an analysis of the summated scores from the cited scales (Fiedler et al., 2004; Bleske-Rechek & Michels, 2010) suggests that the answers are not bi-modal. The first scale (Fiedler et al., 2004) measures students' usage of RMP and shows an average of 3.2 (s.d. = 0.68; 1 = never, 5 = always) concerning attitudes regarding ratings on RMP. The second scale (Bleske-Rechek & Michels, 2010) measures the reasons student post faculty evaluations on RMP and shows an average of 3.2 (s.d. = 0.33; 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). For these scales, the averages and standard deviations imply that the results are rather normal. The data does not support hypothesis 1a.

For the professor sample, the first scale shows an average of 3.7 (s.d. = 0.5) concerning faculty perceptions of student ratings on RMP. The second scale shows an average of 3.5 (s.d. = 0.4) concerning their perceptions regarding the reasons student post faculty evaluations on RMP. For both scales, the professor sample was significantly higher ($t = 4.23$ & 3.75, respectively; $p < .05$), suggesting that professors may believe student evaluations are more bi-modal in nature. Therefore, the data does not support hypothesis 1b.

Hypotheses 2a and 2b

The second hypothesis, concerning gender and the usage of RMP for students, was tested using an independent-sample t-test on the respective summated scales mentioned above. The analysis shows that gender has no impact on the usage patterns of RMP ($t = -0.92$; $p > .05$). Both means were relatively equal (males = 3.12 and females = 3.22; 1 = never, 5 = always). Consequently, gender has no effect on the personal usage of RMP for students. Hypothesis 2a is not supported.

Similarly, the same analysis performed on the professor sample suggests that their perception of student gender has no impact on the usage patterns of RMP ($t = 0.72$; $p > .05$). Both means were also relatively equal (males = 3.7, females = 3.6), suggesting that Hypothesis 2b is not supported.

Hypotheses 3a and 3b

The results suggest there is no difference between genders when it comes to the reasons that students post faculty evaluations on RMP ($t = 0.04$; $p > .05$). Both means were approximately 3.18 on a scale from 1 to 5 (5 = strongly agree), suggesting that gender does not play a role for students in the reasons for posting faculty evaluations on RMP. Hypothesis 3a is not supported.

According to the professor sample, there is also no difference between genders regarding the reasons that students post faculty evaluations on RMP ($t = 0.46$; $p > .05$). For professors, both means were equal (males and females = 3.5). As a result, Hypothesis 3b is also not supported.

Hypotheses 4a and 4b

Hypothesis 4a suggests that students will use RMP in an ethical manner. Their evaluations are expected to be honest and unbiased. To test this hypothesis, several items from the first scale (i.e., personal usage of RMP) were summated and tested against an average of 3 on a 5-point scale. The results indicate a significant difference between our expected mean (3.0) and the actual mean (3.6) on a 5-point scale (1 = never; 5 = always). This suggests that students are indeed more ethical and honest than expected when using RMP ($t = 8.50$; $p < .05$). Students were more likely to put thought into each item when rating professors, they were more likely to rate their professors without considering their grade in the course, and they thought it was important, to be honest when evaluating professors. Hypothesis 4a was supported.

Using the same analysis for the professor sample, the results show that there is also a significant difference between the expected mean (3.0) and the actual mean (3.3), thus indicating that professors perceive that students are more ethical and unbiased when using RMP ($t = 5.36$; $p < .05$). Hypothesis 4b was also supported.

Hypotheses 5a and 5b

A one-sample t-test was used to test whether students feel qualified to evaluate their professors. The results suggest that the majority of business students feel even more qualified to evaluate their professors ($t = 5.43$; $p < .05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 5a is supported.

The same analysis performed for the professor sample indicates the opposite results. Specifically, there was a significant difference between the expected mean (3.0) and the actual mean (2.7), which suggests that professors perceive that students are not as qualified to evaluate faculty ($t = -4.75$; $p < .05$). As a result, Hypothesis 5b is not supported.

LIMITATIONS

As with most research papers, the current study is not without limitations. Future studies may gather extended knowledge by the inclusion of the following suggestions:

- The students and faculty involved in the current study were primarily within the School of Business. A future study would benefit by including faculty and students from a wide variety of schools and/or majors within a university.
- The current study primarily included university students who were of upper-division status. A future study could benefit by also including a larger number of lower division students.
- Only 4-year university students were included in the subjects of the current study. A future study may wish to conduct the study with community college students as the subjects.
- The current study was conducted solely at a public university. Future studies may wish to include private university students in their research.

- Student subjects used in the current study attended a large, public, western U.S. university. Future studies may wish to include students from a wider U.S. geographic area, and/or students at an international university.

CONCLUSION

Faculty evaluations are an essential aspect of marketing and business administration pedagogy. The advent of websites, such as RateMyProfessors.com, is a natural extension of an educational process that is increasingly influenced and intertwined with social media. This study contributes to the body of literature surrounding RMP evaluations by comparing the perceptions of the students with those of faculty members. The current study finds that business students share some evaluative tendencies of the general student population. They perceive they post evaluations that provide mixed/neutral reviews rather than primarily negative or positive reviews. Faculty believe that students post bi-modal reviews. Contrary to some prior research, no gender differences were found concerning how students use RMP or the reasons they choose to post evaluations to RMP. Coladarci and Kornfield (2007) suggested that students need to provide "constructive and respectful" (p. 12) comments. This study finds that students and faculty perceive that the students provide honest and ethical evaluations, without considering the effect of the grade earned in the course. While both students and faculty perceive the students will be honest and ethical in posting evaluations, it is interesting to note their perceptions differ when considering whether students are qualified to evaluate faculty. Students feel more qualified to evaluate faculty whereas faculty do not believe students are qualified to provide evaluations. These findings provide important implications for business students, faculty, and administrators and add to the body of knowledge that appears to lack any empirical studies related to faculty perceptions regarding student usage of RMP.

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