

Impact of Online Customer Reviews on Consumer Buying Behaviour: An Empirical Study

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Abstract— The rapid growth of e-commerce and digital platforms has significantly changed the way consumers search for information before purchasing products and services. Among the various forms of online information, customer reviews and ratings have become an important source of guidance for consumers. Before making a purchase, consumers frequently examine the experiences and opinions shared by previous buyers to assess product quality, reliability, usefulness, and value for money.

Online customer reviews can influence consumers by reducing uncertainty, increasing confidence, creating product awareness, and shaping perceptions about a particular product or brand. Positive reviews may encourage consumers to consider a product, whereas negative reviews may create doubts and reduce purchase interest. The influence of reviews may also depend on factors such as review credibility, review quality, number of reviews, ratings, recency of reviews, and the perceived similarity between the reviewer and the consumer.

The present study proposes to examine the impact of online customer reviews on consumer buying behaviour. The research will adopt a quantitative approach and collect primary data through a structured questionnaire from consumers who use online platforms for product or service-related information and purchasing. The study will examine consumers' perceptions regarding the usefulness, credibility, quality, and influence of online reviews on their buying behaviour.

The findings of the study are expected to provide useful insights into how online reviews affect consumer evaluation and purchasing decisions. The study may also help businesses understand the importance of maintaining reliable customer feedback and developing strategies to encourage authentic and informative reviews.

Keywords: Online Customer Reviews, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Online Ratings, Review Credibility, E-commerce, Purchase Decision, Digital Consumer Behaviour

2. Introduction

The emergence of the internet and digital technologies has transformed the traditional process of buying and selling goods and services. Consumers today have access to a large amount of product information before making a purchase.

Instead of depending only on advertisements or information provided by sellers, consumers can compare products, examine ratings, read customer experiences, and evaluate alternative brands through online platforms.

E-commerce websites, mobile applications, social media platforms, and online marketplaces have made customer-generated information an important part of the purchasing process. One of the most influential forms of such information is the online customer review.

Online customer reviews are opinions, experiences, comments, and evaluations posted by individuals who have purchased or used a product or service. These reviews may provide information about product quality, performance, durability, delivery, customer service, value for money, and overall satisfaction. Star ratings or numerical ratings are also commonly provided along with written reviews.

Consumers often consider reviews because they provide information from the perspective of other buyers. A potential customer may perceive such information as more realistic than promotional messages produced directly by a company. Reviews can therefore influence the consumer's expectations and perception of product performance.

The availability of a large number of reviews may also help consumers reduce uncertainty. For example, when a consumer is considering purchasing an unfamiliar electronic product, clothing item, cosmetic product, restaurant service, or household item, reviews from previous users may help the consumer determine whether the product is worth purchasing.

However, not all online reviews have the same level of influence. Consumers may question reviews that appear exaggerated, extremely short, repetitive, outdated, or unreliable. The credibility of the reviewer and the quality of information provided in the review can therefore influence the usefulness of online feedback.

The number of reviews and the overall rating may also affect consumer perception. A product with thousands of positive ratings may appear more trustworthy than a product with very few ratings. Similarly, detailed reviews that explain both positive and negative aspects may be considered more useful than reviews containing only general statements.

The growing dependence on online information makes it important to understand how consumers interpret and use customer reviews while making purchasing decisions. Therefore, the present study focuses on examining the

relationship between online customer reviews and consumer buying behaviour.

3. Background of the Study

Consumer buying behaviour refers to the process through which individuals identify their needs, search for information, evaluate alternatives, make purchasing decisions, and assess their experiences after purchasing a product or service.

In the digital environment, information search has become an important part of consumer decision-making. Consumers can obtain product-related information from advertisements, company websites, influencers, social media, comparison websites, and online customer reviews.

Among these sources, customer reviews have a distinctive role because they are generated by consumers themselves. Such reviews may provide practical information regarding actual usage experiences.

For businesses, online reviews can influence reputation and customer perception. Positive reviews can support consumer confidence, while negative reviews can highlight problems related to products or services. Consequently, online reviews have become an important element of digital consumer behaviour.

The present study attempts to understand whether and to what extent online customer reviews influence consumer buying behaviour.

4. Statement of the Problem

Consumers are exposed to a large amount of product information on digital platforms. Although this availability of information can make purchasing easier, it can also create confusion because consumers may encounter numerous opinions, ratings, and reviews.

Consumers may find it difficult to determine whether an online review is genuine, reliable, detailed, or biased. Some consumers may depend heavily on ratings and reviews, while others may consider them only as supplementary information.

The increasing importance of online reviews creates a need to examine the factors that make customer reviews influential in consumer buying behaviour.

The present study therefore seeks to examine the impact of online customer reviews on consumer buying behaviour, with particular emphasis on review credibility, review quality, ratings, usefulness, and consumer trust.

5. Research Gap

Existing discussions on digital consumer behaviour have examined several online influences, including digital advertising, social media communication, electronic word-of-mouth, and online consumer interaction. However, consumer-generated reviews represent a distinct source of information because they are based on users' reported experiences.

The influence of online reviews may differ depending on how consumers perceive their credibility, relevance, quality, and usefulness. Furthermore, consumers may not simply respond to positive or negative reviews; they may also consider the number of reviews, overall ratings, detailed information, and consistency among different customer experiences.

Therefore, there is scope for an empirical study that examines multiple characteristics of online customer reviews and their relationship with consumer buying behaviour.

The proposed research intends to address this area by studying how consumers evaluate online reviews and how these evaluations influence their purchase-related behaviour.

6. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the proposed study are:

1. To examine the influence of online customer reviews on consumer buying behaviour.
2. To study the role of review credibility in shaping consumer purchase decisions.
3. To examine the influence of online ratings on consumer product evaluation.
4. To determine whether the perceived usefulness of customer reviews affects consumers' willingness to purchase.
5. To examine the relationship between the quality of online reviews and consumer buying behaviour.
6. To study the role of consumer trust in information obtained from online reviews.
7. To identify whether demographic characteristics influence consumers' dependence on online customer reviews.

7. Research Questions

The study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Do online customer reviews influence consumer buying behaviour?
2. Does the credibility of online reviews affect consumer purchase decisions?
3. Do online ratings influence consumers' evaluation of products?
4. Does the usefulness of online reviews increase consumers' willingness to purchase?
5. Does the quality of customer reviews affect consumer buying behaviour?
6. Does trust in online reviews influence purchase-related decisions?

7. Are there differences in the use of online reviews across different demographic groups?

8. Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses may be tested empirically:

H01

There is no significant relationship between online customer reviews and consumer buying behaviour.

H01a

There is no significant relationship between review credibility and consumer buying behaviour.

H01b

There is no significant relationship between online ratings and consumer buying behaviour.

H01c

There is no significant relationship between perceived usefulness of online reviews and consumer buying behaviour.

H01d

There is no significant relationship between review quality and consumer buying behaviour.

H01e

There is no significant relationship between consumer trust in online reviews and consumer buying behaviour.

Alternative Hypotheses

H1

There is a significant relationship between online customer reviews and consumer buying behaviour.

H1a

Review credibility has a significant relationship with consumer buying behaviour.

H1b

Online ratings have a significant relationship with consumer buying behaviour.

H1c

Perceived usefulness of online reviews has a significant relationship with consumer buying behaviour.

H1d

Review quality has a significant relationship with consumer buying behaviour.

H1e

Consumer trust in online reviews has a significant relationship with consumer buying behaviour.

9. Conceptual Framework

The proposed conceptual framework considers online customer reviews as the major independent construct and consumer buying behaviour as the dependent construct.

Independent Variables

- Review Credibility
- Review Quality
- Online Ratings
- Perceived Usefulness
- Review Information

Supporting Variable

- Consumer Trust

Dependent Variable

- Consumer Buying Behaviour

The conceptual relationship can be represented as:

Review Credibility

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Review Quality

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Online Ratings

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Perceived Usefulness

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Consumer Trust

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Consumer Buying Behaviour

The study assumes that more credible, useful, informative, and trustworthy reviews may positively influence consumers' buying behaviour.

10. Research Methodology

10.1 Research Approach

The study will follow a **quantitative research approach**. Quantitative research is suitable because the study intends to measure consumer perceptions and examine relationships between predefined variables.

10.2 Research Design

A **descriptive and empirical research design** will be adopted.

The descriptive component will help understand consumers' opinions and patterns regarding online customer reviews, while the empirical component will help examine the

relationships between review-related factors and consumer buying behaviour.

10.3 Nature of the Study

The proposed study will be based primarily on primary data collected directly from respondents. Secondary sources such as books, research papers, journals, reports, and relevant academic literature will be used to develop the theoretical foundation of the study.

10.4 Population of the Study

The population will consist of consumers who use online platforms to search for product or service information and/or make online purchases.

The study may include students, working professionals, self-employed individuals, and other adult consumers who have experience with online shopping or online product research.

10.5 Sampling Technique

A **convenience sampling technique** may be used because respondents who use online platforms can be reached conveniently through digital channels.

The questionnaire can be distributed through:

- Google Forms
- WhatsApp
- Email
- Social media groups
- College/student networks
- Professional networks

10.6 Sample Size

A sample of approximately **150–200 respondents** may be targeted for the study.

A sample of 150 respondents can be considered as a practical minimum for a small empirical study, while collecting around 200 responses would provide a stronger dataset for analysis.

11. Data Collection Method

Primary Data

Primary data will be collected through a structured questionnaire.

The questionnaire will use mainly closed-ended questions and a **five-point Likert scale**.

Example:

- 1 – Strongly Disagree
- 2 – Disagree
- 3 – Neutral

- 4 – Agree
- 5 – Strongly Agree

Secondary Data

Secondary information will be collected from:

- Research journals
- Academic books
- Research articles
- E-commerce and digital marketing reports
- Relevant websites
- Published studies
- Academic databases

Secondary literature will be used for developing the literature review and theoretical background.

12. Proposed Questionnaire Structure

The questionnaire may be divided into the following sections:

Section A – Demographic Information

- Age
- Gender
- Education
- Occupation
- Monthly income
- Frequency of online shopping

Section B – Online Shopping Behaviour

Questions related to:

- Frequency of online purchases
- Preferred online platforms
- Product categories purchased
- Time spent searching for product information

Section C – Online Customer Reviews

Questions measuring:

- Review availability
- Review reading behaviour
- Review frequency
- Review information

Section D – Review Credibility and Quality

Questions measuring:

- Trustworthiness
- Authenticity
- Detail
- Relevance
- Reliability
- Perceived honesty

Section E – Ratings and Usefulness

Questions measuring:

- Importance of star ratings
- Number of reviews
- Usefulness of reviews
- Comparison of reviews
- Helpfulness in decision-making

Section F – Consumer Buying Behaviour

Questions measuring:

- Purchase intention
- Product selection
- Brand preference
- Purchase confidence
- Willingness to purchase
- Final purchase decision

13. Variables of the Study

Variable	Type	Possible Indicators
Review Credibility	Independent	Trustworthiness, authenticity, reliability
Review Quality	Independent	Detail, clarity, relevance, information
Online Ratings	Independent	Star ratings, overall score
Perceived Usefulness	Independent	Helpfulness, decision support, information value
Consumer Trust	Supporting Variable	Confidence, reliability, belief in reviews
Consumer Buying Behaviour	Dependent	Purchase intention, product choice, purchase decision

14. Data Analysis Techniques

After collecting the responses, the data will be organized and analysed using suitable statistical techniques.

Descriptive Analysis

The following techniques may be used:

- Frequency
- Percentage
- Mean
- Standard deviation

These techniques will help describe respondents' demographic characteristics and their opinions about online reviews.

Inferential Analysis

Depending on the final sample and measurement quality, the following tests may be used:

- Correlation analysis
- Regression analysis
- t-test
- ANOVA

Correlation analysis may be used to examine the relationship between review-related factors and consumer buying behaviour.

Regression analysis may be used to determine whether review credibility, quality, ratings, usefulness, and trust significantly predict consumer buying behaviour.

15. Reliability and Validity

Before conducting the final survey, a small pilot test may be conducted with approximately **15–20 respondents**.

The pilot study will help identify:

- Ambiguous questions
- Difficult terminology
- Repeated questions
- Problems with questionnaire structure
- Approximate time required to complete the questionnaire

The internal consistency of the questionnaire may be assessed using **Cronbach's Alpha** where appropriate.

Content validity will be supported through appropriate review of the questionnaire items against the study objectives and relevant academic literature.

16. Ethical Considerations

The study will follow basic ethical principles of academic research.

Respondents will be informed about the purpose of the research. Participation will be voluntary, and respondents will have the option to discontinue participation.

The questionnaire will avoid unnecessary personal or sensitive information. The information collected will be used only for academic research purposes.

Respondents' identities will not be disclosed in the final research report.

17. Expected Outcomes of the Study

The proposed study is expected to provide an understanding of the role played by online customer reviews in consumer buying behaviour.

It is expected that:

1. Consumers who consider online reviews useful may demonstrate greater confidence in making online purchases.
2. Credible and detailed reviews may have a stronger influence than vague or incomplete reviews.
3. Product ratings may affect consumers' initial perceptions of products.
4. Positive and consistent customer experiences may strengthen purchase intention.
5. Negative reviews may make consumers reconsider a purchase or search for alternative products.
6. Trust may play an important role in determining whether consumers accept information provided through online reviews.
7. The influence of online reviews may vary across different demographic groups and levels of online shopping experience.

These outcomes will ultimately be determined through the actual data collected from respondents and will not be assumed before analysis.

18. Significance of the Study

For Consumers

The study may help consumers understand how online reviews influence their perceptions and purchasing decisions. It may also encourage consumers to critically evaluate reviews rather than depending solely on ratings.

For Businesses

The research may help businesses understand the importance of customer feedback and online reputation. Companies may use the findings to improve product quality, customer service, and review-management strategies.

For Digital Marketers

The findings may provide useful insights into consumer-generated content and its influence on online purchase behaviour.

For Researchers

The study can provide a foundation for further research on electronic word-of-mouth, online reviews, consumer trust, digital marketing, and online buying behaviour.

19. Scope of the Study

The study will focus on consumers who use digital platforms for product or service-related information and online purchasing.

The research will specifically examine:

- Online customer reviews
- Review credibility
- Review quality
- Online ratings
- Perceived usefulness
- Consumer trust
- Consumer buying behaviour

The study will not attempt to cover every aspect of digital marketing. Its primary focus will remain on consumer-generated online reviews and their influence on buying behaviour.

20. Limitations of the Study

The proposed study may have the following limitations:

1. Convenience sampling may limit the generalizability of the findings.
2. The study may be based on a relatively small sample.
3. Responses will depend on the honesty and understanding of participants.
4. Consumer behaviour may change over time as digital platforms and online shopping practices evolve.
5. The study may primarily reflect the experiences of respondents who are familiar with online shopping.
6. Self-reported responses may not always perfectly represent actual purchasing behaviour.

21. Proposed Chapter Scheme

Chapter 1 – Introduction

- Background of the Study
- Problem Statement
- Research Gap
- Objectives
- Research Questions
- Hypotheses
- Scope
- Significance
- Limitations

- Demographic Analysis
- Descriptive Statistics
- Review Behaviour Analysis
- Hypothesis Testing
- Correlation Analysis
- Regression Analysis
- Interpretation of Findings

Chapter 5 – Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

- Major Findings
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- Practical Recommendations
- Limitations
- Suggestions for Future Research

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Chapter 2 – Review of Literature

- Concept of Consumer Buying Behaviour
- Online Customer Reviews
- Electronic Word-of-Mouth
- Review Credibility
- Review Quality
- Online Ratings
- Consumer Trust
- Previous Empirical Studies
- Research Gap

Chapter 3 – Research Methodology

- Research Approach
- Research Design
- Population
- Sampling Technique
- Sample Size
- Data Collection
- Questionnaire Design
- Variables
- Reliability and Validity
- Data Analysis Techniques
- Ethical Considerations

Chapter 4 – Data Analysis and Interpretation