

INFLUENCE OF ONLINE RATINGS AND REVIEWS ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR - A STUDY OF SELECT E-COMMERCE PRODUCTS

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Abstract

The primary purpose of the article is to acquire quantitative data on the reality of internet shopping in India to explain the industry's growth and its impact on customer behavior. The paper draws on relevant literature while also examining customer behavior using questionnaires. Furthermore, the future evolution of online purchasing will be assessed, as well as a thorough comparison of consumer behavior. Research evaluates which matters more between numerous product reviews and their overall quality when consumers make purchasing decisions. An evaluation of how online ratings and reviews affect consumer purchasing decisions when selecting products or services completes the research. The key issues include consumer trust, privacy concerns, and security problems.

1. Introduction

Electronic commerce, or e-commerce, refers to the trading of goods and services through a website, which makes it easier to access. It comprises B2C – business to consumer, B2B- business to business, C2C- Consumer to Consumer, C2B- Consumer to Business. Some of the most famous B2B marketplaces are Amazon, eBay, and Alibaba. E-commerce is diverse, that is, it covers different types of niches, including fashion, electronics, groceries, and food delivery niches. Being located in the technology sector, it benefits from such areas as mobile commerce, digital payments, logistics, influential factors such as social marketing, and most importantly the online reviews of consumers. In the context of e-commerce, social proof gives potential buyers an insight into what other customers have gone through. This mechanism is especially important for an organization in a world where physical assessment of products is not possible. The information from prior customers minimizes the risks arising from uncertainty to a great extent. Concerning online purchasing, they are indispensable and directly influence consumer attitudes by evaluating different products in the e-commerce category and consumers' experience with them. Investment responses, this research aims to give practical recommendations to marketers, businesses, and platform developers. Perceiving these phenomena is beneficial in the enhancement of product presentation and review management, and thereby enhances decision-making.

2. Literature Review

1] **“Emerging Trends and Future Research Directions: Sharma and Singh (2022)** discussed the rise of social media influencers and their impact on online reviews, noting that **influencer reviews are increasingly influencing consumer perceptions and purchase behaviour.”**

2] **“Ghosh and Banerjee (2019)** found that while a higher number of reviews enhances credibility, the quality of these reviews is more crucial. Detailed reviews that provide specific insights into **product performance and user experiences are more likely to affect consumer decisions.”**

3] **“The authenticity of online reviews is a significant concern for Indian consumers. Chaudhuri and Sinha (2017)** noted that consumers are increasingly wary of fake reviews and often scrutinize the credibility of the reviews they read. Genuine reviews, especially those from verified buyers, are more likely to be trusted.”

4] **“S. Sathiyaraj, 2015).** This study aimed to identify consumer choices for online grocery shopping in Chennai. The researcher used primary and secondary data as a source of research. The survey method is collecting primary data, the sample size to collect primary data is 200 Respondents in Chennai. The study found that 29% of respondents said they shop online because they want to find the best price for unique and special items.

This study also found that demographic factors, such as gender and age group, did not affect customer satisfaction”.

5] “Hu, N., Bose, I., Gao, Y., & Liu, L.* (2011) explored the issue of fake reviews and their impact on consumer trust. Their study found that the prevalence of fake reviews can lead to consumers who may become more critical of the information they find online. Consumers tend to scrutinize the content, reviewer profiles, and review patterns more closely in environments where fake reviews are suspected. This research is crucial in understanding how consumer scepticism toward online reviews shapes behaviour and purchasing decisions”.

3 Research Methodology

Objective of the study:

- 1) To evaluate the differences in consumer responses to online ratings and reviews based on demographic factors.
- 2) To investigate Cross-Platform Influence: examine how ratings and reviews from different platforms (e.g., Amazon, Flipkart) influence consumer decisions for the same product.
- 3) To explore the relationship between the quantity and quality of reviews and consumer purchasing decisions on different e-commerce websites.
- 4) To analyze the impact of online ratings and reviews on consumer decision-making when selecting products or services on e-commerce platforms.

Scope of Study

This research aims to investigate the influence of online ratings and reviews on consumer behaviour in the e-commerce sector, focusing on the following key areas:

Consumer Demographics: Examine how demographic factors (age, gender, income, education) impact responses to ratings and reviews. Identify demographic preferences for specific rating formats or review styles.

Cross-Platform Comparison: Analyse how ratings and reviews on various e-commerce platforms (e.g., Amazon, Flipkart, eBay) affect consumer decisions for the same products. Evaluate differences in consumer trust and credibility perceptions across these platforms.

Review Quantity and Quality: Explore the relationship between the quantity (number of reviews) and quality (sentiment, detail) of reviews on purchasing decisions. Assess how review metrics vary across product categories on different e-commerce sites.

Consumer Decision-Making Process: Investigate the impact of ratings and reviews on different stages of the consumer decision-making process, from awareness to post-purchase evaluation. Analyze how reviews influence perceptions of

product value, quality, and trustworthiness. This structured approach aims to yield insights that can enhance understanding of consumer behaviour in e-commerce, leading to actionable recommendations for businesses.

Research Design :

- **Research Type:** This study will be an EXPLORATORY RESEARCH that employs the survey approach by design..
- It will concentrate on certain features or dimensions of the problems that have been identified.
- The study's goal will be to collect descriptive data.
- The information will be gathered through the use of a questionnaire.
- The data will be analysed using statistical procedures that are in line with the study's goals.

Sample Design

• **Population:** A population is a whole group that you want to conclude about, known as a population. The population of this study is a random age group between 18 to 30 based on their demographic factor, level of confidence, preferences, and psychological factors

Sampling Universe: The sample size chosen for this study is 110 Respondents

Sampling Techniques: Random sampling divides the population into subgroups (strata) based on key demographic factors and platform usage patterns, ensuring balanced representation. This is crucial for analyzing differences in consumer responses based on:

1. **Demographics:** Age, gender, income level, etc.
2. **Platform Usage:** Consumers using Amazon, Flipkart, Myntra, etc.
3. **Product Categories:** Fashion & Apparel, Online Grocery, Electronics, Decorative, and Online Food Delivery.

4. Collection of Data

Data Collection Method: Primary and Secondary Data

The study will draw its necessary data from primary and secondary information sources.

1. Primary Data - The data collectors will achieve primary data through convenience for respondents using questionnaires. More than 200 individuals use E-Commerce websites to purchase products, which constitutes the study population. The demographic group consists of headcounts

representing students, business operators, workers, and other participants.

- ❖ The sampling frame contains all people who plan to shop through E-Commerce websites. The participants who supplied responses for this research were divided into age groups.
- ❖ The survey involved 110 individuals as part of the sample group. The researcher distributed self-administered questionnaires to respondents, which they completed via Google Forms.
- ❖ The conditions and procedures used to select elements from the population for sample inclusion are referred to as the random sampling method. The research uses a standard random sampling strategy as its sample collection approach.

2. Secondary Data- The data collection will focus on various secondary sources, ranging from topic-related books to good journal articles and newspapers, together with government documents and Google Search.

Data Collection Tool: Questionnaire, Focus Groups

5. Data Analysis

Analyses of the Data are based on primary data collected from Google Forms. Total Responses Size - 110

Q1 A) Demographic Factors

Gender	Percentage
Male	67.3%
Female	32.7%
Total	100

The provided table represents gender distribution among the 110 survey responses. Below is an explanation along with a table summarizing the data

- The total number of responses is 110
- 67.3% of respondents are Male
- 32.7% of respondents are Female
- The data shows a higher proportion of male respondents compared to female respondents.

B) Age Group

Age Group	Percentages
Below 18	10%
18 to 25	36%
26 to 30	25%
32 to 35	19%
More than 35	9%

There are 110 participants in the study. Among the participants, the "31-35" years-old segment represents 25.5% or 28 individuals. 26-30 years accounts for 19.1% "Below 18" accounts for

10% . The category "18-25" contains the least number of respondents as it represents 9.1% of the total survey participants.

Q2 How important are online reviews in influencing your decision to purchase a product?

- This helps analyze how demographic factors (like age, gender, and income) influence the perceived importance of reviews.

Total Responses Size - 110

Response	Count	Percentage
Extremely Important	77	70%
Moderate Important	25	24%
Important	9	8.2%
Neutral	9	8.2%

In total respondent 110 - Most respondents (70%) consider it Extremely Important, while 24% find it Moderately Important. Only 8.2% rate it as Important or Neutral.

Q3. How much do you trust reviews from different platforms (e.g., Amazon vs. Flipkart) for the same product?

- Directly measures trust variations across platforms for the same product.

Responses	Count	Percentages
I trust them equally	66	60%
I trust reviews on a certain platform more	34	30.9%
I don't trust reviews on the same platform at all	20	17%
I don't compare platforms	14	12.7%

Total Responses Size - 110

In total size of respondent 110 - Most respondents (60%) trust reviews equally across platforms, while 30.9% trust certain platforms more. Only 17% distrust same-platform reviews, and 12.7% don't compare platforms.

Q4. If you find conflicting reviews about the same product on different platforms, what do you do?

- Explores how consumers respond to inconsistent reviews across platforms.

Total Responses Size - 110

Response	Count	Percentage
I chose the platform with the best reviews	67	39.1
I look for third-party expert reviews	42	19.1
I ignore conflicting reviews and proceed with the purchase	36	26
I avoid buying the product	21	15.5

In total respondent size of 110 - Most respondents (39.1%) choose the platform with the best reviews, while 26% ignore conflicting reviews and still buy. Only 15.5% avoid the product altogether.

Q5 . How does the combination of high review quantity and high-quality content affect your confidence in purchasing a product?

- Directly assesses the impact of both review quantity and quality on purchase confidence.

Total Responses Size - 110

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Greatly increases my confidence	94	59.1%
Moderately increases my confidence	38	23.9%
Slightly increases my confidence	17	10.7%
Does not influence my confidence	10	6.3%

In this most respondents (59.1%) say online reviews greatly boost their confidence, while 23.9% report a moderate increase. Only 6.3% feel reviews have no influence.

Q6 . How do you rate the overall impact of review quality (e.g., length, detail, relevance) on your purchase decision in the fashion category?

- Measures how review quality influences consumer decisions in a key product

Total Responses Size - 110

Responses	Percentage
Very high impact	58.2%
Some impact	26%
Neutral	10%
Less impact	5%

In total respondent size 110. The survey reveals that respondents who rated the impact on their ability to deliver care as Very High outnumber those with Some Impact (58.2% compared to 26.4%). Neutral responses amount to 10%, and only 5.4% selected Less Impact.

6 Key Findings from the Study:

Influence of Online Reviews: Results show that sixty percent of survey participants allow online customer feedback to guide their purchasing decisions.

External information obtained through reviews receives validation from 68.2% of respondents.

Trust in Verified Reviews: The majority of consumers (64.5%) place the most faith in reviews that undergo verification. Customer trust rises significantly when reviews contain photographic, video or expert-published content.

Cross-Platform Review Trust: A majority of 49.1% of customers maintain the same level of review trust throughout all available platforms. Reviews obtained from particular platforms gain confidence from 20% of users to a greater extent than reviews from other platforms.

Consistency in Trust: 49.1% of online users maintain their trust in reviews from all platforms despite such reviews showing contradictory information.

7 Suggestions :

Enhancing Review Reliability: E-commerce manufacturers need to confirm customer reviews to build trust within their platform. Fraud detection through artificial intelligence should be implemented to eliminate authentic reviews that appear incorrect or false.

Improving Review Quality: Users should be motivated to supply images and videos together with their review submissions. Customers should get access to expert reviews, together with customer reviews, to make improved decisions.

Cross-Platform Consistency: Businesses should establish common processes for verifying review authenticity between platforms to enhance trust in the system. The system should enable users to review and compare the content from various customer platforms through aggregation tools.

Building Consumer Trust: Users should find complete transparency since product reviews will display authenticity verification markers ("Verified Purchase" and "Expert-Reviewed"). The system should address user safety concerns about particular platforms through equal implementation of moderation rules.

8 Limitations of the Study

- The study mainly focuses on online consumers' buying behaviour.
- In this study, the questionnaire was based on Google Forms, so personal presence was not there.
- Another drawback in this research was that the majority of the respondents completed the questionnaire very inadequately.
- Another drawback of this research is that while gathering primary data, it was hard to locate the respondents who are online shoppers.

9 Conclusion

The Indian electronic commerce market has become a fast-growing market in the last two decades. Decades. E-Commerce increased the use of internet access and cell phones could be ascribed

to the mentioned cause of sickle cell. Penetration. Moreover, brands also received growth of Internet purchases besides the favourable demographic, and have changed how organizations interact, communicate, and indeed transact with consumers. They have transformed the way the e-Commerce business of India functions. As the Internet remains high and performs the function of linking information and people, the requirement for markets that have already embraced online services, the more markets where selling of goods is done online, is new, and has increased. In this study, to gather primary data a questionnaire was adopted among 110 respondents. The research work, therefore, established factors such as time and quality. Availability, the speed at which a product is delivered, customer service, and the number of commodities available are some of the aspects that lead to purchases. The implication, as highlighted in this study, is that the preferred e-shopping sites are Amazon and Flipkart Meesho for online shopping, and Zomato, Swiggy are used in online food delivery.

Suggestions

1] The delivery speed and accessible product inventory need improvement.

The key decision factors for purchases include shortened delivery cycles and uninterrupted product stock which e-commerce platforms should prioritize.

2] Improve Customer Service Quality

Better service to customers through efficient help lines merged with convenient return protocols increases satisfaction and maintains customer loyalty in the long run.

3] Leverage Mobile and Internet Penetration

Companies should allocate additional funding to implement mobile-friendly interfaces and

applications because mobile and internet usage continues to rise within India.

4] Personalized Marketing and Recommendations

Customer purchasing behavior data help companies provide personalized recommendations that result in better user satisfaction and higher sales volumes.

5] Focus on Trust and Transparency

Customers need secure payment systems combined with genuine reviews together with transparent return policies for building trust in online platforms.

6] Expand Product Range Strategically

Platforms need to increase their product range with quality standards so they can satisfy different customer preferences.

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