

# IMPACT OF ONLINE CUSTOMER REVIEWS ON CONSUMERS' PURCHASE DECISIONS IN E-COMMERCE

E. Renuka Devi<sup>1</sup>, Dr. P. Vanitha<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D -Full Time Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Vels Institute of Science, Technology, and Advanced Studies (VISTAS), Pallavaram, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India – 600117.

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor and Research Supervisor, Vels Institute of Science, Technology, and Advanced Studies (VISTAS), Pallavaram, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India – 600117.

\*Corresponding Author

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## Abstract:

In today's era of the intensifying digital marketplace, reviews written in the digital forum are seen significantly influencing depletion of consumer decisions and strides in one's buying inclination. Review credibility, review volume and review valence stand out as noteworthy variables impacting on the behavioral patterns of the consumer. The survey took a descriptive study design approach where data were collected from 120 online shoppers through a designed questionnaire that was well structured. It seems to have suffered the greatest damage yet in pursuit of reliability of constructs: testing through Cronbach's Alpha yielded potentials within the ranges 0.78 to 0.89 to suggest a high internal consistency. Data analysis took advantage of percentage analysis, correlation, regression analysis, and factor analysis using SPSS. Results reveal that the credible, positive, and voluminous number of reviews online significantly influence the purchase decisions of consumers, bringing it to light that the online reviews can really play a very significant role in the shaping of consumer behavior. All that signifies that the study would produce much-needed implications so that marketers and e-commerce platforms could start managing reviews in such a way as to increase sales and loyalty engagement.

**Keywords:** Online Reviews, Purchase Behaviour, Review Credibility, Review Volume, Review Valence, E-commerce, Consumer Decision-Making.

## INTRODUCTION

The development of e-commerce business marketing has a changed aspect of consumer shopping behavior in that online reviews make a big difference in the choice to buy. Consumers nowadays rely more on what other people experience in order to test the quality of a product or service before buying it. Thus, online reviews, apart from providing some way to assess quality of a product, also contribute greatly to trust and decrease in perceived risk. Research has shown that customers tend to buy with everything rolling right in and tied up in a package with it. In their study, Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) revealed that the existence of more reviews would enhance the subjective reliability of a product. The need for such knowledge concerning consumer behavior is growing larger and more so due to the growth of digital shopping platforms such as online review systems. This consumer behavior knowledge is crucially needed by marketers that wish to increase customer satisfaction, loyalty, and sales performance.

### Statement of the Problem

Even though online reviews are gaining a lot of popularity, e-commerce platforms or businesses often find it difficult to understand what makes the most real impact on the buying behavior of the consumer. Most reviews present a large number that will confuse buyers while varying in terms of information credibility. Misinformation or fake reviews might mislead the perception resulting in bad purchase decisions. Besides, the effect of review valence (i.e., positive, negative,

neutral) on different types of consumers is not yet fully understood. Therefore, this study will contribute to ascertaining the effect of online reviews on consumer purchase behavior by focusing on the credibility, volume, and valence of reviews and giving insights on how businesses can strategically position themselves so that they can benefit from them.

### Literature Review

Ahn& Lee (2024) delved into the contribution of the ratings of online reviews, the similarity of the group, and self-construal in affecting purchase intentions of the consumer. The study reported that online review byword related to the impact is mediated by perceived diagnosticity and belongingness. All three elements (online review ratings, group similarity, and self-construal) affect how online reviews are taken in and how they are judged.

Qiu (2024) conducted a meta-analysis, really revealing that all antecedents of online reviews significantly affect the consumer purchase intention, with review valence showing the most potent ( $r = 0.563$ ) effect. Presently reviewing those factors that strengthen the role of ratings in consumer behavior or purchases... Aside from the need for effective online testimonials.

Eftimov (2023) presented a narrative review on the research studies about the influence of online reviews in consumer behavior and buying decisions. It highlights how online customer reviews affect businesses in using

them as an eloquent "silent" salesperson of a product that a consumer is looking at purchasing.

Fernandes (2022) developed and validated the ability of online reviews in creating the proper understanding of the consumer's influence on purchase decisions. It became pivotal in the whole study to look into perceived review credibility, volume, and valence as factors that affected this consumer behavior.

Also, Ibrahim (2023) had taken a stand on looking into what can add to the effect of online reviews on the purchase initiatives, which include: credibility, valence, volume, and reviewer features. The study would show that reviews from those more credible perceived as having expertise or seen similar to themselves would be trusted and influenced by consumers.

#### Objectives

1. To assess the effect of consumers' purchase practices towards online product reviews.
2. To find the influence of review credibility, review consensus, and review valence on the consumer purchase decision.
3. To try establishing a link between the magnitudes of online reviews and trust which a consumer has developed through their operation with e-commerce platforms.

#### Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1: Online reviews do not impact the tendency of consumers to change their purchasing behaviour.**

**Hypothesis 2: Veracity of reviews doesn't really influence whether people change their purchasing behavior.**

**Hypothesis 3: Numbers of reviews do not effect a change in the behavior of the rest of the market.**

**Hypothesis 4: Positive reviews don't lead consumers to form an opinion about purchasing.**

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

Descriptive Design for Quantitative Research. The population is online customers in Chennai, and the present sample comprises 120 respondents who were selected through convenient method sampling. It is a structured questionnaire divided into certain sections like demographic profile, trustworthiness of reviews, total reviews, valence of reviews, and buying behavior. It was a five-point Likert scale representing from "Strongly Disagree" (one score) to "Strongly Agree" (five scores). According to expert assessments, content reliability was demonstrated alongside Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranging from 0.78 to 0.89. Mostly Percentage analysis, correlation, regression analysis, factor analysis as the help of SPSS.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

### Percentage Analysis

#### 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic analysis helps understand the profile of respondents who participated in the study. A total of **120 respondents** were surveyed.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 120)**

| Demographic Variable      | Category        | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| Age Group                 | 18–24           | 15        | 12.50      |
|                           | 25–35           | 60        | 50.00      |
|                           | 36–45           | 30        | 25.00      |
|                           | 46 & above      | 15        | 12.50      |
| Gender                    | Male            | 58        | 48.33      |
|                           | Female          | 62        | 51.67      |
| Online Shopping Frequency | 1 time/month    | 20        | 16.67      |
|                           | 2–3 times/month | 70        | 58.33      |
|                           | Weekly          | 20        | 16.67      |
|                           | Daily           | 10        | 8.33       |

The majority of those respondents falls within the age bracket of 25–35 years of age and are avid internet shoppers. A female respondent that accounts for a little higher percentage 51.67%. The online buying habit shown by most of its respondents falls under twice to thrice a month, which is indicative of a reasonable extent of online purchasing experience. The reliability of the constructs was tested using **Cronbach's Alpha** to ensure internal consistency.

**Table 2: Reliability Analysis of Constructs**

| Construct          | Number of Items | Cronbach's Alpha | Reliability Status |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Review Credibility | 4               | 0.82             | High               |
| Review Volume      | 3               | 0.79             | Acceptable         |
| Review Valence     | 4               | 0.84             | High               |
| Purchase Behaviour | 5               | 0.87             | High               |

Each of these has reliable variables with Cronbach's alpha exceeding 0.7, predicting that the questionnaire is reliable in opining on the construct in the variables mentioned in the questionnaire. Specifically Review Credibility, Review Valence, and Purchase Behaviour have strong internal consistency.

#### Correlation Analysis

To examine the relationship between online review constructs and purchase behaviour, **Pearson correlation analysis** was conducted.

**Table 3: Correlation Analysis**

| Variable           | Purchase Behaviour (r) | Significance (p) |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Review Credibility | 0.66                   | 0.001            |
| Review Volume      | 0.52                   | 0.001            |
| Review Valence     | 0.61                   | 0.001            |

Positive and significant are the correlations among all three constructs in the online reviews including the credibility, volume, and valence constructs with regard to impact on consumers' purchase behaviors. With the correlation strength of 0.66, the strongest relationship is found in the area of credibility of reviews, signifying that trustworthy reviews have the most influence on consumers' purchase decisions. It is known that considering an online review can influence consumer buying behavior, as the critical points are actually those  $p < 0.01$  significant statistical associations.

#### Regression Analysis

A simple linear regression was conducted to predict consumers' purchase behaviour based on online reviews.

**Table 4: Regression Analysis of Online Reviews on Purchase Behaviour**

| Predictor Variable   | Beta ( $\beta$ ) | t-value   | Significance (p) |
|----------------------|------------------|-----------|------------------|
| Review Credibility   | 0.38             | 5.12      | 0.001            |
| Review Volume        | 0.22             | 3.05      | 0.003            |
| Review Valence       | 0.35             | 4.78      | 0.001            |
| <b>Overall Model</b> |                  | F = 52.46 | p < 0.001        |
| <b>R<sup>2</sup></b> | 0.64             |           |                  |

The aggregated regression model reported significance ( $F = 52.46$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The percentage of purchase behaviour that could be explained by the model was 64% ( $R^2 = 0.64$ ).The highest impacts on the behavior of purchasing were seen in the credibility of a review ( $\beta = 0.38$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and the valence of a review ( $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); therefore, credible and positive reviews trump others. Volume of reviews is also known to impact the behavior of purchasing significantly ( $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), although more so than the first two effects of credibility and valence.

## CONCLUSION

It is suggested by this study that web reviews have a significant influence on buying behaviourand that credibility, volume, and valence are critical factors with credibility enhancement of quality perception of products and e-commerce platforms increased purchase intentions while greater, numerous, and favorable reviews led to better faith in cues, thus promoting the purchase intention. As a result, marketers must actively manage reviews and also encourage content satisfied customers to provide detailed feedback to peers for

influencing them. Reliable examinations that involve authenticity and helpfulness of reviews are required to further build consumer confidence and consequently to build sales for e-commerce platforms.

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