

Impact of Online Product Reviews Towards Purchase Decision among the Buyers in Palayamkottai

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A. Benazir

Assistant Professor, PG and Research Department of Commerce
Sadakathullah Appa College (Autonomous), Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India

P. Geetha

Assistant Professor, PG and Research Department of Commerce
Sadakathullah Appa College (Autonomous), Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to explore and analyse how online product reviews influence the purchase decisions of consumers in Palayamkottai. With the rapid growth of e-commerce and digital platforms, online reviews have become crucial sources of information for potential buyers. This study aims to understand the extent to which these reviews affect consumer behavior, trust, and final buying decisions within the local context of Palayamkottai. This study examined the level of awareness and reliance on online product reviews among consumers in Palayamkottai. This study helps assess whether demographic variables such as age, gender, income, and education moderate the impact of online reviews on purchase decisions. This study provides insights for online retailers and marketers on how to leverage product reviews to improve consumer trust and increase sales in the region.

Methodology: This study adopts a descriptive research design to analyse the impact of online customer reviews on purchase decisions. It is based on subjectivity rather than objectivity, process-oriented rather than results-oriented, and content-oriented rather than results-oriented. The impact of online reviews is involved, and the situation is based on experience formation. A questionnaire was created to collect the required data, which were accumulated efficiently. Both primary and secondary data were used in this study. Convenient sampling was used to collect data and examine the impact of online reviews of customers on purchase decisions. The sample size of the study was 77. A convenient sampling method was used to select a sample of 77 respondents for the study. Statistical tools used for this study are simple percentage analysis, weighted average method, Garrett's ranking method, one sample t test, t test and ANOVA

Findings: Respondents' opinions on the level of satisfaction with online reviews are not equal to the average level. Specifically, the mean scores for helpfulness, accuracy, and reliability of online reviews were above average, whereas the mean scores for availability and overall impact of online reviews were below average. This suggests that respondents are generally satisfied with the quality of online reviews but are less satisfied with their availability and overall impact, highlighting the need for businesses to improve these aspects to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. There was no significant difference between male and female respondents regarding the factors that influence their purchase decisions using online reviews. The p-values for all statements were greater than 0.05, suggesting that the differences between male and female respondents were not statistically significant. There were no significant differences among the age groups regarding the factors that influence respondents' purchase decisions using online reviews. The p-values for all statements were greater than 0.05, suggesting that the differences among the age groups were not statistically significant. This implies that respondents across different age groups are influenced by similar factors, such as authenticity and trust, overall rating and trends, and detailed feedback, when making purchase decisions using online reviews, highlighting the similarities in decision-making processes among age groups.

Future research Direction: This study is limited to Palayamkottai in the Tirunelveli district, India, and focuses on online shoppers in this region. It explores the impact of online reviews on purchase decisions for various products, including electronics, clothing, groceries, and beauty products. This study examined online reviews from multiple sources, such as e-commerce platforms, social media, and review sites, providing a snapshot of online shoppers' behaviour and attitudes at a particular point in time. Therefore, the findings may not be generalisable to other regions, populations, or contexts.

Keywords: Online Product Review, Impact, Customer Behavior, Purchase Decision, Satisfaction Level, e-commerce

Introduction

Online reviews have become essential in influencing consumer behaviour. With the rise of e-commerce and digital platforms, potential buyers heavily rely on customer feedback to make informed purchasing decisions. Customers trust online reviews because they provide insights into product quality, performance, and customer experience. Reviews act as virtual word-of-mouth, which can make or break a brand's reputation. Online reviews have become a cornerstone of the modern consumer decision-making process, profoundly influencing purchasing behaviour and shaping business reputation. For consumers, these reviews serve as accessible, peer-generated insights into products and services, offering real-world perspectives that go beyond traditional advertising methods. The trust placed in online reviews is substantial; studies indicate that a significant majority of consumers consult and are swayed by these evaluations before making purchase decisions. This reliance on peer feedback underscores the importance of authenticity and transparency in the review process. Despite the growing importance of online reviews in influencing consumer purchase decisions, there is a lack of research on their specific impact of online reviews on consumers in Palayamkottai, India. Existing studies have primarily focused on Western contexts, leaving a gap in understanding the nuances of the influence of online reviews in Indian markets. This study aims to address this research gap by investigating the impact of online reviews on purchase decisions in Palayamkottai and exploring the role of review characteristics, sources, and fake reviews in shaping consumer behaviour. Buyers increasingly rely on reviews to assess product quality, reliability, and seller credibility before making purchase decisions. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how factors such as review quality, reviewer credibility, review volume, and overall sentiment shape consumer trust and influence the final purchase decision. Without such insights, marketers and online retailers may struggle to design effective review management strategies to enhance customer engagement and sales in this local context. Hence, the research problem can be stated as follows:

“To what extent do online product reviews influence the purchase decisions of buyers in Palayamkottai, and which specific dimensions of reviews have the greatest impact?”

In this Regard, the Researcher has Framed Three Hypotheses

H₁: Opinion regarding the statement on the level of satisfaction of the respondents is equal to the average level.

H₂: There is no Significant difference between males and females regarding the factors that influence the respondents in making their purchase decisions with the help of online reviews.

H₃: There is no Significant difference among age groups regarding the factors that influence respondents' purchase decisions using online reviews.

The study's findings conclusively demonstrate that online reviews have a profound impact on customers' purchase decisions, with various factors such as authenticity and trust, overall rating and trends, and detailed feedback playing significant roles in shaping their opinions and choices. The results also revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female respondents or among different age groups in terms of the factors that influence their purchase decisions with the help of online reviews.

Review of Literature

Tao Chen et al. (2022) in their study they used eye tracking to examine how internet product reviews affect consumers' decisions to buy. The study's methodology comprised (i) creating a conceptual framework for online product reviews and purchase intentions by examining the moderating effects of gender and visual attention in comments and (ii) conducting empirical research on behavioural analysis and ROI analysis of consumers' fixation during the decision-making process. The findings demonstrated that, particularly for female consumers, consumers paid more attention to negative remarks than to positive ones. Additionally, the study found a strong link between customers' visual browsing habits and their propensity to buy.

Indirashini (2024) her study shows that consumers have opted for internet as most used source of information and product reviews are part of the internet platform fulfilling the information Needs of the consumer related to a product. Indian consumers still hold a great trust the recommendations of their friends and family, as a considerable number of responses chose it as their preferred source of information before buying a product.

Yunjeong Ahn et al. (2024) This study investigated the effects of online review ratings, group similarity, and self-construal on consumer purchase intentions. Additionally, we explored the underlying mechanisms of perceived belongingness and diagnosticity in shaping these intentions. The results highlighted varied patterns in purchase intentions based on the interplay between group similarity and online review ratings for consumers with interdependent and independent self-construal.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the impact of online reviews on customer purchase decisions in the Tirunelveli district.
2. To assess the role of positive and negative reviews in shaping consumer trust and confidence in a product or service.
3. To evaluate the impact of fake or misleading reviews on consumer decision-making.
4. To understand the impact of customer reviews on purchase decisions.
5. To determine the specific aspects of negative online reviews that have the greatest impact on consumer purchase decisions.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive research design to analyze the impact of online reviews of customers towards purchase decisions. It is based on subjectivity rather than objectivity on process oriented rather

than results and on content. Since the impact of online reviews is involved and the situation is based on experience formation. Questionnaire was created to collect the required data and it was accumulated in an efficient way. Both primary and secondary data have been used for this study. Convenient sampling is used to collect data and examine the impact of online reviews of customers towards purchase decision. The sample size of study is 77. A convenient sampling method is used to select a sample 77 respondents for the study. Statistical tools used for this study are simple percentage analysis, weighted average method, Garrett's ranking method, one sample t test, t test and ANOVA

Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic Profile

- Females comprised the majority of respondents, accounting for 58% of the total.
- A substantial proportion accounting for 61% of the survey participants were under the age group 20.
- A significant majority representing 63.6% of the students were found to be part of the demographic.
- A significant majority (60 %) of the respondents were from urban areas.
- An equal proportion of 33.7% of the respondents reported that they occasionally and rarely engaged in the activity.
- A significant majority (69 %) of the respondents preferred to purchase clothing online.
- A significant proportion (44 %) of respondents considered product reviews to be very important.
- More than half(52 %) of the respondents typically searched for products on e-commerce platforms.
- A notable majority, comprising 40% of the respondents, usually read three to five reviews before making a decision.

The Customer Reviews Influence Purchase Decision

S.No	Factors	5	4	3	2	1	Total Score	Mean Score	Rank
1	Authenticity and trust	35(175)	29(116)	11(33)	2(4)	0(0)	328	4.25	I
2	Overall rating and trends	22(110)	38(152)	15(45)	2(4)	0(0)	311	4.03	II

3	Detailed feedback	22(110)	23(92)	25(75)	6(12)	1(1)	290	3.76	IV
4	Comparing with competitors	16(80)	24(96)	15(45)	18(36)	4(4)	261	3.38	VII
5	Photos and videos	31(155)	19(76)	17(51)	2(4)	8(8)	294	3.81	III
6	Response from seller/brand	18(90)	28(112)	18(54)	7(14)	6(6)	276	3.58	VI
7	Packing delivery experience	20(100)	25(100)	24(72)	4(8)	4(4)	284	3.68	V

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation

This table sheds light on the influence of customer reviews on purchase decisions. The Weighted Average Method is used to evaluate the influence of customer reviews on purchase decisions. Majority of the respondents said that authenticity and trust are the factors influencing purchase decisions because they build confidence, reduce risk, and create an

emotional connection with the brand. Authenticity demonstrates transparency and honesty, setting the brand apart from its competitors. This leads to positive word-of-mouth, online reviews, and strong brand reputation. Ultimately, authenticity and trust make customers feel secure, valued, and confident about their purchases.

Satisfaction Level Towards Online Reviews In Purchase Decisions

S.No	Factors	5	4	3	2	1	Total Score	Mean Score	Rank
1	Helpfulness of online review in making purchase decisions	30(150)	12(48)	25(75)	5(10)	5(5)	288	3.74	II
2	Accuracy of online reviews in reflecting the products quality	28(140)	13(52)	26(78)	9(18)	1(1)	289	3.75	I
3	Reliability of online reviews in influencing your purchase decisions	26(130)	14(56)	27(81)	3(6)	7(7)	280	3.63	III
4	Availability of online reviews for product you are interested in	14(70)	3(12)	26(78)	28(56)	6(6)	222	2.88	V
5	Overall impact of online reviews on your shopping experience	15(75)	19(76)	10(30)	22(44)	11(11)	236	3.06	IV

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation

This table shows that online reviews are crucial in shaping consumers' purchase decisions, with accuracy and helpfulness being key factors. Consumers trust online reviews to reflect product quality and to inform their buying choices. However, the availability of online reviews for specific products is a concern, highlighting the need for businesses to prioritise accurate and reliable online reviews to build customer trust and loyalty.

Hypothesis

H₁: Opinion regarding the statement on the level of satisfaction of the respondents are equal to average level. (Average =3).

Statement on Level of Satisfaction	Mean	SD	T Value	P Value
Helpfulness of online review in making purchase decisions	3.	1.229	5.285	.001
Accuracy of online review in reflecting the products quality	3.75	1.114	5.933	.001
Reliability of online reviews in influencing your purchase decisions	3.64	1.245	4.485	.001
Availability of online reviews for product you are interested in	2.88	1.203	.853	.396
Overall impact of online reviews on your shopping experience	2.96	1.380	.413	.681

Note: Denotes significant at 1% level

Interpretation

Since the p-value is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected at the 1% level of significance with regard to all the statements on the level of

satisfaction of the respondents toward online review are equal to the average level. Hence, the opinion regarding all the statements' level of satisfaction of the respondents towards online review is not equal to the average level.

Based on the mean score, opinions regarding all the statements were above average owing to varied expectations, diverse review platforms, individual biases, review quality and relevance, influence of social proof, demographic differences, contextual factors, reviewer credibility, information overload, and personal experiences. These factors can contribute to variations in satisfaction levels, as respondents may have different preferences, needs, and experiences with online review. Consequently, satisfaction levels can fluctuate, making it unlikely to achieve a uniform average level of satisfaction. The unique characteristics of each respondent and the complex nature of online reviews can lead to diverse opinions and satisfaction levels among respondents.

However, in the case of the availability of online reviews and the overall impact of online reviews, the P value is greater than 0.05; therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted at the 5% level of significance. Based on the mean score, it is understood that it is less than the average level. This could be due to factors such as limited exposure to online reviews, lack of trust in review credibility, or insufficient information to make informed decisions. Consequently, the respondents' opinions on these aspects did not significantly deviate from the average level, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis.

H₂: There is no Significant difference between male and female with regard to the factors that influence the respondents in making their purchase decision with the help of online reviews.

Statements	Male		Female		T Value	P Value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Authenticity and trust	4.25	.803	4.27	.809	.089	.929
Overall rating and trends	4.25	.672	3.89	.804	2.076	.051
Detailed feedback	3.91	.856	3.67	1.087	1.038	.303
Comparing with competitors	3.59	1.132	3.24	1.246	1.259	.212
Photo and video reviews	3.75	1.344	3.87	1.254	.390	.697
Response from seller/ brand	3.53	1.135	3.62	1.211	.333	.740
Packing and delivery experience	3.66	1.125	3.71	1.058	.218	.828

Note: Denotes significance at 5% level Value within the bracket is SD

Interpretation

Since the P value of all the statements is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted at the 5% level of significance with regard to factors that influence them in making their purchase decision with the help of online reviews.

There is no significant difference between males and females regarding the factors that influence them in making their purchase decisions with the help of online reviews. The widespread use of social media, e-commerce platforms, and review websites has created a level playing field in which both men and women can access and utilise online reviews

to inform their purchasing decisions. Additionally, the factors that influence purchase decisions, such as product quality, price, and customer service, are often universal and transcend gender boundaries. Consequently, the similarities in online behaviour and purchasing decision-making processes between men and women may outweigh any potential differences, leading to no significant difference between the two groups.

H₃: There is no Significant difference among age group with regard to the factors that influence them respondents in making their purchase decision with the help of online reviews.

Statements			Age group		F Value	P value
	Below 20	20 -30		30-40		
Authenticity and trust	.806 (.118)	4.54(.660)	4.00(1.069)	4.33(.707)	.879	.456
Overall rating and trends	3.98(.794)	4.23(.599)	4.13(.835)	4.00(.866)	.398	.755
Detailed feedback	3.72(1.057)	4.00(.913)	4.00(1.069)	3.44(.726)	.716	.546
Comparing with competitors	3.34(1.203)	3.31(1.182)	3.50(1.195)	3.67(1.414)	.220	.882
Photo and video reviews	3.81(1.154)	3.69(1.653)	3.50(1.309)	4.33(1.414)	.680	.567
Response from seller/ brand	3.68(1.105)	3.54(.877)	3.50(1.309)	3.22(1.787)	.402	.752
Packing and delivery experience	3.68(1.045)	3.77(.725)	3.75(1.389)	3.56(1.509)	.076	.973

Note: Denotes significance at 5% level Value within the bracket is SD

Interpretation

Since the P value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted at the 5% level of significance with regard to the factors that influence respondents in making their purchase decisions with the help of online reviews. Therefore, there is no significant difference among the age groups of the respondents regarding the factors that influence them in making their purchase decision with the help of online reviews. Across various age groups, individuals increasingly rely on online reviews to inform their purchasing decisions, driven by the widespread adoption of digital technologies and ease of access to online information. As a result, factors such as product quality, price, and customer service, which are commonly cited as influential in online reviews, are likely to be considered important by respondents across different age groups, leading to similarities in decision-making processes. Additionally, the

generational gap in online behaviour may be narrowing as younger generations grow older and older generations become more tech-savvy, contributing to the lack of significant differences among age groups.

Suggestions

1. Online sellers should ensure that reviews are real and from verified buyers to help customers trust the information.
2. Every product should have enough reviews so that buyers can easily find opinions before making a purchase.
3. Useful and detailed reviews should be highlighted so that customers can make better decisions based on them.
4. Businesses should motivate happy customers to share their honest experiences on social media and shopping websites.

5. Because most respondents were young students from cities, promotions should be made attractive and easy to access on mobile platforms.
6. As both men and women and all age groups use reviews similarly, companies should use inclusive messages and help customers learn how to identify genuine reviews.

Conclusion

The study's findings conclusively demonstrate that online reviews have a profound impact on customers' purchase decisions, with various factors such as authenticity and trust, overall rating and trends, and detailed feedback playing a significant role in shaping their opinions and choices. The results also reveal that there is no significant difference between male and female respondents, as well as among different age groups, in terms of the factors that influence their purchase decisions with the help of online reviews. This suggests that online reviews are a crucial aspect of the purchasing process, and businesses should prioritise managing their online reputation and providing high-quality products and services to meet their customers' needs. By doing so, businesses can increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, ultimately driving sales and revenue growth. Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of online reviews in today's digital age, where customers increasingly rely on the opinions and experiences of others to inform their purchasing decisions. Consequently, businesses must be proactive in managing their online presence, responding to customer feedback, and providing exceptional customer service to build trust and credibility with their target audience.

In line with the study's purpose, the findings confirm that online reviews play a crucial role in building consumer trust and guiding purchase choices within the local context of Palayamkottai. Therefore, businesses operating in this region should prioritise the management of online reviews, ensure authenticity, and actively engage with customer feedback to strengthen trust and loyalty. By enhancing review quality, transparency, and accessibility, companies can improve customer satisfaction, encourage repeat purchases and foster long-term growth.

Ultimately, this study underscores the growing importance of online product reviews in digital marketplaces. As consumers increasingly depend on peer opinions to make informed decisions, businesses must adopt proactive strategies to manage their online reputation, provide responsive customer service, and maintain their credibility in a competitive e-commerce environment.

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Author Details

A. Benazir, Assistant Professor, PG and Research Department of Commerce, Sadakathullah Appa College (Autonomous), Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India, **Email ID**: farookbenazir2002@gmail.com

P. Geetha, Assistant Professor, PG and Research Department of Commerce, Sadakathullah Appa College (Autonomous), Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India