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A Study on the Impact of Reviews and Ratings on Customer Buying Decisions on Digital Marketing Platforms

Keerthana.N
BMS College of commerce and Management, VV Puram, Bangalore-560004
Contact Email: kkeerthana.n2006@gmail.com.in
Theme-5: Digital economy, business analytics and strategic management

ABSTRACT - Development of market platforms has influenced the manner by which consumers seek for information and make purchasing decisions. Reviews and ratings are now sources of information for consumers before they purchase any product or service. The current study seeks to explore the effect of online reviews and ratings on the buying decisions made by consumers in digital market platforms. The study will consider the following variables; usefulness and credibility of online reviews and ratings, number of online reviews and ratings, star ratings, positive and negative online reviews and customer trust. A survey-based research methodology will be used to obtain primary data from the consumers of digital market platforms. Statistical techniques will then be applied to analyze the obtained data so as to find out the relationship between online reviews and ratings and buying decisions of consumers. This study will help understand how consumers utilize online reviews when making evaluations and purchase decisions. It will also show the significance of customer reviews in influencing consumer behavior in digital marketplaces.

Keywords: Online Reviews, Online Ratings, Customer Buying Decisions, Digital Market Platforms, Consumer Behaviour

1. INTRODUCTION:

Technological advancements and the growth of internet usage have changed the way people search for information, compare products, and make purchasing decisions. Online shopping platforms such as Amazon, Flipkart, and Myntra allow customers to compare brands, prices, discounts, and customer feedback before buying a product.

Online reviews and ratings play an important role in helping customers understand a product's quality, performance, and value for money. Positive reviews and high ratings can build confidence and encourage purchases, while negative feedback may lead customers to consider other brands. Factors such as the number of reviews, their authenticity, and the experiences shared by other customers can influence buying decisions.

Customer feedback also helps businesses understand consumer preferences, improve their products and services, and develop better marketing strategies. However, fake reviews and biased ratings may mislead customers and reduce their trust in online information.

Therefore, this study aims to examine how online reviews and ratings influence customers' product evaluations, brand choices, and purchasing decisions. It also seeks to understand the role of customer feedback in building trust between consumers and businesses in the digital marketplace.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Online reviews and ratings help customers evaluate products before making a purchase. While positive feedback can build trust and encourage buying, fake reviews and misleading information may create confusion. Therefore,

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this study examines how online reviews and ratings influence customer trust, product evaluation, and purchasing decisions on marketing platforms.

1.2 RESEARCH GAP

Previous studies have examined factors affecting buying decisions, such as price, quality, brand image, and online feedback. However, more attention is needed to understand how customers use online reviews and ratings when choosing products. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how positive and negative reviews, overall ratings, and trust in customer feedback influence purchasing decisions on digital marketing platforms.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

i. To look at how online reviews and ratings affect customer buying decisions on marketing platforms.
ii. To study how positive and negative online reviews affect consumer trust and the desire to buy.
iii. To find out how important the trustworthiness of reviews and product ratings are in how customers choose products.
iv. To suggest ways for businesses to build trust and encourage buying by managing reviews and ratings properly.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE

2.1 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Qiu and Zhang (2024) – "How Online Reviews Affect Purchase Intention: A Meta-Analysis Across Cultural Factors"- Qiu and Zhang (2024) analysed 156 studies involving 69,006 observations to understand how online reviews influence purchase intentions. Their findings showed that review tone, usefulness, trustworthiness, and ratings can affect customers' buying decisions. This study is relevant because it explains how online feedback influences consumer choices.

2. "The Impact of Online Reviews on E-Commerce Sales in India: A Case Study" (2021)- This study examined how online reviews influence purchasing decisions across different Indian cities. It found that reviews help customers make decisions when they cannot physically examine products before buying. The study highlights the importance of customer feedback in online shopping.

3. "Measuring the Impact of Online Reviews on Consumer Purchase Decisions – A Scale Development Study" (2022)- This study collected data from 431 online shoppers and identified four important factors: source credibility, number of reviews, clarity of language, and relevance. It showed that customers consider more than just positive or negative opinions when making purchasing decisions.

4. Ahn and Lee (2024) – "The Impact of Online Reviews on Consumers' Purchase Intentions: Examining the Social Influence of Online Reviews, Group Similarity and Self-Construal"- Ahn and Lee (2024) studied how social influence and similarities between reviewers and buyers affect purchase intentions. Their findings suggest that customers may trust reviews more.

2.2 KEY CONCEPTS

I. Online Reviews: opinions or experiences shared by customers about a product, service, seller or shopping experience.

II. Online Ratings: Numerical scores or star ratings used by customers to show their level of satisfaction with a product or service.

III. Customer Buying Decision: The process through which a customer identifies a need evaluates options chooses a product and decides to buy it.

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IV. Digital Marketing Platforms: tools and services like e-commerce websites, shopping apps and social media that businesses use to promote products and talk to customers.

V. Consumer Trust: The confidence a customer has in a product, seller, platform or information shared by customers.

VI. Review Credibility: How much a review is seen as real, reliable, clear and believable by someone who is thinking about buying.

VII. Purchase Intention: A customer willingness or likelihood to buy a product after looking at the information available.

2.3 SIGNIFICANCE, OF THE STUDY

The significance of this research is that online reviews and ratings have become an additional source of information for consumers who use digital marketing channels. This research will provide some insight into the way customer reviews can influence evaluation of products, trust in the brand as in a product and making a purchase decision. This research will assist companies and marketers in understanding the importance of having real reviews, rating system and providing prompt response to customer reviews. This research may motivate companies to improve their products and customer service based on consumer reviews. In case of consumers the research will show the importance of reading reviews and taking into consideration different opinions before making purchasing decisions.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The current research applies the research design for the purpose of analyzing the influence of the online reviews and rating on the buying decisions made by customers via digital marketing mediums. Descriptive research design is highly appropriate for this study because of the need for gathering data on how customers feel about reviews and ratings. It is necessary to analyze the effects of negative reviews, importance of product ratings, credibility of reviews, brand trust and purchase intentions. The research design will help to describe and find some patterns in customers' opinions about shopping and reviews.

3.2 Population and Sampling Techniques

The target population in this research includes consumers who use different marketing tools such as e-commerce sites, mobile shopping apps and social media sites to obtain product information or make purchasing decisions. It would be hard to obtain information from all the consumers of the platforms and therefore only a certain number of people would be selected for the research. It would be easy to select respondents who can easily be accessed and who are ready to respond to the questionnaire. The total number of respondents will be based on the number of people who answered the questionnaire.

3.3 Research Instrument and Data Collection

The method used is the questionnaire for the purposes of data collection. The questionnaire can be created using the platform called Google Forms. The form sent to the people through the internet. The questions in the survey have to include topics about how much the people use digital marketing tools the extent to which they concentrate on online reviews and ratings how much they depend on the customer reviews and how much these things influence their purchase decision. The type of questions in the survey that will help in collecting data includes rating scale questions. Data collection will be done directly by sending the questionnaire to the people. The secondary data collection can be done from articles journals and other credible sources for gaining knowledge on the topic.

3.4 Data Analysis Tools and Techniques

Analysis of data gathered from the questionnaire was done using Microsoft Excel. The use of frequency analysis was to help in establishing the number of people who chose each particular answer. The use of percentage analysis

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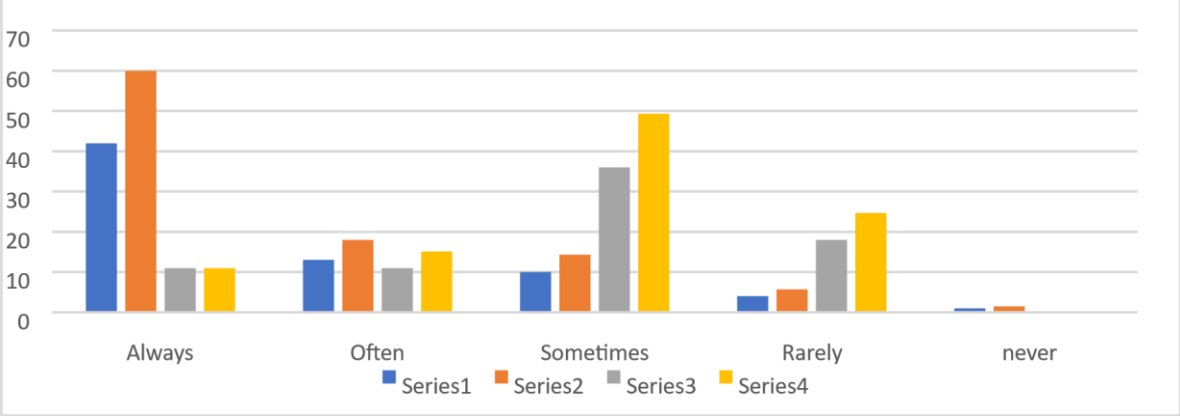
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was employed in order to know the proportion of the answers chosen by each participant. Graphs and tables were prepared to present the data in an organized manner. Rankings were used to find out the most common answers. The mean was used when necessary to know the average answers from the rating scale questions.

4.DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

4.1 How often do you check. Compare online review and ratings of different product

Response	Checking online review before purchasing	Percentage	Comparing online reviews before purchasing	Percentage
Always	42	60%	11	11%
Often	13	18%	11	15.1%
Sometimes	10	14.28%	30	42.8%
Rarely	4	5.73%	18	24.7%
never	1	1.52%	0	0%
total	70	100	70	100



Interpretation

The table and chart below show respondents' views regarding whether they tend to check and compare online reviews and ratings when they want to buy something. These views were gathered from 70 respondents, categorized into 5 levels such as Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely and Never. For those who check reviews, 42 respondents (60%) chose the level Always. Another 13 respondents (18%) opted for Often, 10 (14.28%) chose Sometimes, 4 (5.73%) chose Rarely and 1 (1.52%) chose Never. It means that most respondents tend to look at online reviews before purchasing. As regards comparing online reviews, 30 respondents (42.8%)

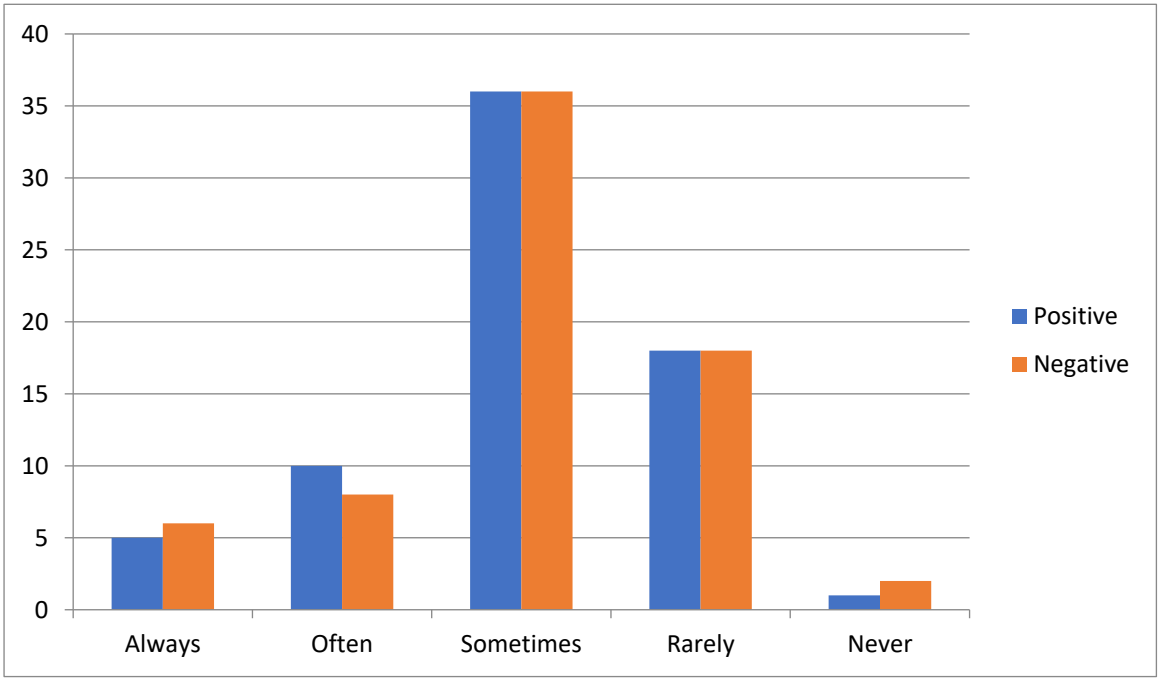
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chose Sometimes, 18 (24.7%) chose Rarely, 11 (15.1%) chose Often, 11 (11%) chose Always and 0 (0%) chose Never.

4.2 Do which type of review will encourages you to purchase a product

Positive	Positive	Rank	Negative	Rank
Always	5	**4**	6	**4**
Often	10	**3**	8	**3**
Sometimes	36	**1**	36	**1**
Rarely	18	**2**	18	**2**
Never	1	**5**	2	**5**



Interpretation

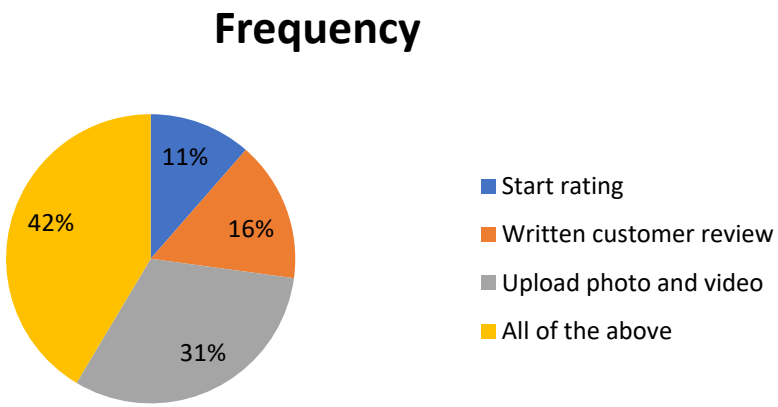
The above table and graph depict the views of the respondents on how positive and negative online reviews motivate them to buy a product. The data was obtained from 70 respondents who were categorized into Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely and Never. When it comes to positive online reviews, 36 respondents chose Sometimes, 18 chose Rarely, 10 chose Often, 5 chose Always and 1 chose Never. This means that positive online reviews may at times motivate the respondents to buy a product but they don't always dictate their decision. On the other hand, for negative online reviews, 36 respondents chose Sometimes, 18 chose Rarely, 8 chose Often, 6 chose Always and 2 chose Never.

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4.3 Which type of feedback do you usually check before purchasing a product

Which type of online feedback do you usually check before purchasing a product	x	Frequency
Start rating	1	8
Written customer review	2	11
Upload photo and video	3	22
All of the above	4	29
total		70



Interpretation

Table and Pie Chart shows types of online feedback that consumers use before buying a product. There are four options for the study including star rating, written customer review, uploaded photos and videos and all of the above. Out of 70 respondents 29 people said that they use all types of feedback including star rating, written customer review and uploaded photos and videos.

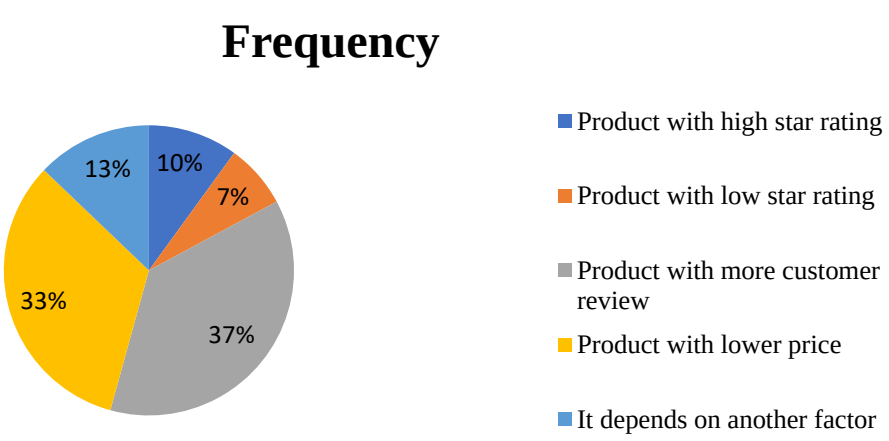
It shows that many consumers use types of feedback before buying a product. Another 22 people said that they use photos and videos, which means that pictures give them an idea about a product. Also 11 people said that they use written customer reviews, which can give them an idea about opinions of other consumers. 8 People use star rating, which shows that fewer people use only star rating.

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4.4 When two similar products are available which product would you prefer

When two similar products are available which product would you prefer	Frequency	Percentage
Product with high star rating	7	9.6%
Product with low star rating	5	6.8%
Product with more customer review	26	35.6%
Product with lower price	23	32.8%
It depends on another factor	9	12.3%



Interpretation

From the table and the graph above, one can determine the determinants of consumers when choosing between two products. Such determinants include star ratings, low star ratings, the number of customer reviews, low prices and others. From the above table, 26 (35.6%) consumers would prefer to have products that have customer reviews, while 23 (32.8%) consumers would go for the products with a lower price. This suggests that customer reviews and pricing of the product are very crucial determinants of the consumer's choice of the product. Moreover, 9 other respondents (12.3%) preferred to consider their choice based on certain factors. Also, 7 other (9.6%) chose a product with a star rating while only 5 others (6.8%) went for a product with a low star rating.

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5. FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Research Topic: A Study on the Impact of Online Reviews and Ratings on Customer Buying Decision in Digital Market Platforms

5.1 Findings

In this study, the impact of reviews and ratings on buying decisions is analyzed. Based on the findings of four data analysis segments mentioned above, following observations could be made

1. **Product Reviews Awareness**: Most customers are aware of product reviews and ratings available through digital marketing platforms such as Amazon, Flipkart, and Myntra. The reviews and ratings help customers gain knowledge about products before purchasing them.
2. **Impact on Buying Decision-Making**: Product reviews and ratings have an important impact on customer buying decisions. Customers tend to look at the review or rating before buying or selecting any product.
3. **Impact of Product Rating**: Customer usually likes products with good ratings because they tend to view them as more reliable and satisfying. But the ratings alone cannot ensure the buying decision in many cases.
4. **Impact of Positive Reviews**: Good or positive reviews create positive perception of a product. Reviews may make customers feel confident, build their trust, and make customers buy those products.
5. **Impact of Negative Reviews:** Negative reviews may create questions regarding quality, performance, delivery, and reliability of the product. If the same comments or reviews occur frequently then customers usually avoid the products.

5.2 Suggestions

1. Sellers on digital marketplaces need to encourage consumers to provide truthful and genuine reviews after purchasing a product.

2. The product pages need to display customer reviews and ratings to help the buyers compare the products easily.

3. The business organizations need to make it easy for the consumers to upload pictures and videos of products since visual feedback is something that was selected by most people.

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4. The consumers need to consider the negative reviews as well before making the buying decision.

5. The platform needs to look into misleading and non-useful reviews and give options to the customers to report them.

6. The sellers need to provide product descriptions and respond to the complaints of the customers in a polite manner.

7. The consumers need to take into account the quantity and quality of reviews, along with other aspects like price, features, and suitability of the product rather than focusing on one aspect only.

8. The digital platforms need to make the review information accessible and current.

5.3 Conclusion

The research seeks to analyze the impact of online customer reviews and ratings on decision making when shopping online. As a result of the study, it becomes clear that customers take into consideration user feedback when forming their purchase intentions. Customers consider such types of user feedbacks as stars rating, comments from users, and images or video clips uploaded by customers. It is also found out from respondents' answers that good and bad reviews can influence consumers' decision to some extent. In deciding among different products the number of reviews and price were one of the factors chosen by many respondents. Thus, online consumer reviews and ratings may help to provide consumers with feedback, and proper feedback rules can increase online platforms trust.

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The following references are important for the study topic. The first four are known sources about online reviews and electronic word-of-mouth; the last one is the survey data used in this study.

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