

Influence of Online Ratings and Reviews on Consumer Pre-Purchase Behaviour: A Review

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Abstract

The goal of this review article is to examine previous research on how customer purchasing decisions are influenced by online ratings and reviews of goods and services. As is common knowledge, individuals write online reviews of goods or services based on their personal experiences, and these reviews influence other potential customers whether to purchase or not. This review paper has taken into consideration a few of the chosen studies that have been conducted in the field that deal with the influence of reviews and ratings on consumer purchasing behaviour and how consumers make decisions about what to buy while they are online. Most of the papers were written in the last two to three years, although those written during the last seven years were given special consideration. The author's contribution and the results of their research work are clearly indicated in the summarization table that has been prepared at the end. The summarization provides a current perspective of the studies, contributions, and results produced, as well as the scope for additional research in this field.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour, Customer Reviews, Online Ratings, Customer Ratings

Introduction

A literature review or narrative review is a form of research paper. One kind of scholarly work that examines current advancements in a certain topic, including significant findings as well as theoretical and methodological contributions, is a literature review. The effects of online ratings and reviews on online customer purchasing behaviour are reviewed in this article. Online advertising is impacted by these factors, which constitute an influencing factor. The customer goes through several rounds of decision-making before leaving without buying any goods or services. Before making a purchase, it is crucial to understand the behaviour of potential customers in order to predict how they will respond to a new product or service. Additionally, it forces businesses to recognise their unrealized potential. According to this study, a review's length affects its persuasiveness, as was found in earlier research, however in situations where there is a significant degree of buy uncertainty, The influence of length is not to be as great as the influence of the information substance. This suggests to researchers that depending only on the length of the review content result in biased estimations. Considering that positive reviews and ratings have a "stronger influence on consumers' purchase decisions than other reviews do," this study assist managers in determining which reviews to include on a website as well as the type of informational content and length that managers should encourage to make their site more helpful. (Chen et al. 2014, Page2).

2. Objectives of the Study

To examine how online ratings and reviews influence consumer decision-making during the pre-purchase stage, focusing on the extent to which these digital feedback mechanisms affect consumers' perceptions, trust, and intention to buy.

3. Account of Previous Studies:

As Liu et. al (2019) in their study examined the impact of electronic word of mouth (e-WoM) feedback

like online reviews and ratings on the buyer's decision by conducting an investigation to find out the degree to which the feedback from electronic word of mouth influences the buyer's valuation after the purchase behaviour by taking into account 'Aggregate Rating' (AR) and 'Individual Reviews' (IR) and their influence on 'Cognitive Evaluation' (CE). From further analysis it was found by the researchers that the influence of 'Social Comparison' have been raised from the dimensions of electronic word of mouth feedback on after purchase valuation. Also, by looking at 'Aggregate Rating' and 'Individual Reviews', the authors in their study claim that 'Individual Reviews' is the principal driver in the post-buy stage. In spite of the fact that 'Aggregate Rating' is no longer, however significant as it could be in the pre-buy stage, it actually assumes an indispensable part in developing a positive brand picture, even in the post-buy stage. So, this research work has given a direction towards a 360-degree inference regarding the way the buyers evaluate the electronic word of mouth feedback before during the pre-buy stage, while 'Aggregate Rating' and 'Individual Reviews' are crucial towards decision making. On the managerial front, this research suggested that the service providers must focus on delivering high quality service and subsequently encourage the customers to share positive reviews as this is how the impact of negative reviews can be negated.

Pourfakhimi et. al (2020) in their paper attempted to close the gap regarding the influence of electronic word of mouth (e-WoM) on buyer behaviour in context to tourism and hospitality sector by combining the existing works, giving a theoretical structure to the different constructs of this influence. In this paper the authors have utilized the meta-amalgamation, and a basic reasonable investigation of important scholastic writing recognized utilizing a 'keyword' search of papers through the 'Web of Science' and 'Scopus' databases, trailed by a compounding interaction involving following the references to the resources alluded to in the recognized research papers. This reasonable investigation represents how the full range of the influence of electronic word of mouth on tourist behaviour traverses past the restricted extension customarily 3150ocused on by the travel, tourism and hospitality industry researchers. This extension, enveloping various mental, standardizing and full of feeling aspects, is delineated in a proof based theoretical structure proposed in this research work done by the authors, giving a methodical device to distinguish the less researched areas of this significant phenomena.

Aureliano-Silva et. al (2021) in their study examined the impact of reviews on buyers' intention towards visiting of restaurants along with the controlling role of involvement. The research model is based on 'signalling theory', 'message appeals' and 'involvement theory'. To test the model, three experiments were carried out by the researchers through online mode with real buyer samples. The outcomes from this study disclosed that online evaluations with 'higher online ratings' and 'emotional appeal' resulted in higher intentions of visiting the restaurants by the customers. This research work contributed towards the expansion on the insights of impacts of online reviews directed by levels of consumer participation. In this study the author made an attempt to synthesize the 'signaling theory' with 'involvement theory' it includes worth to the writing on consumers' online conduct, particularly in the foodservice setting. There were certain limitations in this study and they are that it considered only the 'TripAdvisor scores' and therefore only the positive reviews are put into this study but the consumer intentions dealing with negative reviews were not investigated in this study. This study shows the significance of online remarks for the 'promotion' of restaurants having low assessment scores. At the same time, they should welcome clients to share their enthusiastic service encounters at the restaurants, and in addition to their perspectives on service quality delivered at the restaurant. This research work done by the authors contributes to the knowledge about the impact of the online reviews which also includes online ratings controlled by certain level of consumer participation. This study also additionally increases the value of the client online behaviour writing showing that clients with low participation are more delicate to 'emotional

content' as they utilize the emotional course to handle information rather than the focal course.

Li et. al (2021) in their research paper attempted to examine the influence of online reviews on the return of the product by the customer. According to the authors in order to maximize the gains that can come from customer reviews, online vendors must avoid the unfavourable results linked with consumer feedback like 'loss of reputation' or 'product returns made after the purchase'. In fostering a superior comprehension of the links between 'online reviews' and their 'potential for negative impacts', this examination meant to investigate the product returns made by the customer. The outcomes of this study display the result that both valence' (i.e., average star ratings) and the 'number of reviews can expand the likelihood of product returns made by the customer because of the 'high expectations' that outcome from positive reviews already posted on the web. Further, the impact of 'review valence' on the returns of the product made by the customer is more grounded for the first-time buyers at a store. In wording of moderation, the examination shows that reciprocal communications among sellers and purchasers can treat the unreasonable assumptions set by 'positive reviews', may result in comparatively less product returns made by the customer. This study gives clarity regarding the impact of positive online reviews on the 'expectation rise' of the customer and if the product doesn't meet the expectations that has been created by watching the positive online reviews, it could result in product returns. The findings from this paper counter the findings of Sahoo et al. (2018) that the quantity of reviews accessible at the hour of purchase has a huge adverse consequence on the likelihood of the product getting returned by the customer.

Azer and Alexander (2020) conducted a study to reveal the influence of 'direct' and 'indirect' consumers' negatively valenced influencing behaviour' (NVIB) on other players in online social communities. In this research work, the reviews from TripAdvisor were chosen for the explanation of fittingness rather than representativeness by selecting two service providers for this study and they were the 'restaurant' as well as the 'hotel'. The researchers carried out four experiments in a web-based review setting that includes both 'restaurant' and 'hotel for lodging purpose' reviews. The primary review thinks about the effect of direct and indirect 'negatively valenced influencing behaviour'. The second, third and fourth investigations measure this effect directed by 'aggregate ratings', the 'volume of positive reviews' and 'managerial responses. Focussing on the latest studies of 'customer engagement behaviour', 'online reviews' and 'social influence theory', this research work gave the main observational consequences of the effect of 'direct' and 'indirect' negatively valenced influencing behaviour, uncovering the significant contrast in their effect and the directing job of the 'total aggregate ratings', 'number of positive reviews' and 'managerial responses' on the cause and effect relationship between 'direct' and 'indirect' negatively valenced influencing behaviour and other players' mentalities and social expectations towards the providers of the service. The work done in this research paper is relatively the very first time in which has delivered the empirical result regarding the significant contrast of 'direct' and 'indirect' 'negatively valenced influencing behaviour' on players' attitudes and their behavioural intentions on the organisations providing the restaurant and hotel services.

Several studies done already attempted towards the investigation of 'online word of mouth' factors that affect the business generated by the movie at the ticket counters, but what lacked was the examination of the utility and the helpfulness of the movie reviews on the box office business. Lee and Choeh (2018) attempted to bridge this gap through their study. In their paper they tried to examine the helpfulness of online word of mouth feedback given by the movie viewers on the box office business. This study used certain box office review features such as the 'number of reviews', 'review rating', review length interacts' with 'review helpfulness' to have an impact on the movie business. For this research, the author took a sample of 2090 movies and their review information from public domain 'www.naver.com'. The study had some interesting outputs. It was found that in cases where

reviews are useful, the factors like 'the number of reviews which indicate the volume of reviews and 'review length' which indicates the duration of the reviews given, have immensely impacted the box office performance. So overall it was found that 'review rating', 'review extremity', and 'helpfulness for reviewer' are important determinants for review helpfulness. Managers can focus on the 'review ratings, review limits of online consumer reviews, and helpful reviewers in the plan of the development of online sites for motion pictures. Further, the movie viewer who posts more favourable reviews than the others ought to be likewise featured in the site so that it would encourage other reviewers to post favourable reviews as well. This paper has explained the implications to the people working in this field of movie industry, with an intensive investigation towards the understanding of the box office revenues generated by the Korean market.

Tamimi and Sebastianelli (2016) examined the attributes that would impact the 'perceived quality' of the customers towards e-tailing. The reason for which the study has been done is to report results from a trial study in which members rank e-tailer quality based on portrayals that include five characteristics ('reputation of retailer', 'site usability', 'security', 'delivery' and 'customer support'). The paper further investigates how the relative significance of these properties to saw e-posterior quality is affected by the consumers' demographic and social attributes (like 'gender', 'age', 'frequency of online purchasing' and 'use of online reviews'). The conjoint analysis procedure was used in this case to carry out the analysis work. After the careful observation and analysis, it was found that the overall significance of the five characteristics towards the 'perceived quality' of e-tailer are affected by the consumers' explicit attributes and online practices, in particular, 'age', 'the frequency of prior online purchasing', 'the frequency of use of online reviews', and the significance connected to the accessibility of countless internet-based reviews posted for the products. The outcome of this research work helps the e-tailers to foster more powerful, designated techniques for upgrading the nature of their sites and expanding 'customer loyalty' are introduced. It offers a sensible method for seeing how online consumers see and assess e-tailer quality. This furnishes e-tailer with extra knowledge for creating designated procedures for working on quality, improving consumer loyalty, also expanding on the web-based sales.

Venkatesakumar et. al (2021) in their paper have thought about the appropriation of star appraisals across 11 items and among the retailers as the 'star ratings' sums up the 'review content' and passes on the message quicker than other components of the 'review' process. Star appraisals impact supportiveness of the 'reviews', and outrageous (extreme) reviews' are considered as less favourable in the consumers' decision-making process. In any case, the available literature has seldom tended to the fluctuations in star ratings across product classifications and fluctuations between two internet-based retailers. For the purpose of this study, online reviews for 11 product categories were gathered, and the researchers thought about the dissemination of star appraisals across 11 products and retailers. Correspondence examination was applied to show the relationship between 'star ratings and product categories for the e-retail firms. After the analysis was completed and subsequently the results were obtained, it was found that the website of 'Amazon' contains proportionately a greater number of '1-star evaluated reviews' than 'Flipkart'. In 'Amazon' reviews, scarcely any product classifications are firmly connected with 1-star and 2-star reviews, while no product classifications are firmly connected with '1-star and 2-star reviews' posted by the customers in 'Flipkart'. The outcomes demonstrate two unmistakable correspondence methodologies followed by the organizations in overseeing web shopper reviews. This paper has drawn out a particular dissemination example of online surveys among Amazon and Flipkart. Amazon permits a more serious level of 'negative reviews', while Flipkart permits a greater number of positive surveys.

Cui et. al (2021) through their research paper investigated the impact of online audits on new item deals for consumer gadgets and computer games. They conducted observations of board information

of 332 new items from Amazon.com more than nine months uncover that the valence of audits and the volume of site hits strongly affect search items, while the volume of surveys is more significant for experience items. The outcomes likewise show that the volume of reviews altogether affects new product sales in the early period and such an impact diminishes over the long run. Albeit every one of the measurements of online surveys independently influence buyer buys, their joined effect enormously affects new product sales. Experience items are more dependent upon the impact of the volume of reviews, which flags the ubiquity of an item and a mindfulness impact from the sheer volume of reviews. Valence, be that as it may, greatly affects the deals of search items, showing a more grounded powerful impact of item appraisals for more perplexing items and buyers encountering an elevated degree of inclusion. The impact of the volume of site visits by pursuers is huge for both experience and search items, however the volume of site hits applies to a more noteworthy impact than the volume of reviews just for search items, proposing the huge pretended by supporters or mavericks in this product classification. This is like the discoveries from virtual experiences. The significant discoveries of the concentrate in any case, the review has a few impediments that pursuers should know about. To start with, we gathered information from only one internet-based retailer. Albeit the information from Amazon.com is dependable and numerous analysts have utilized information from this Site, the outcomes ought to be approved and contrasted and information from different sources since web-based business might vary in their audit and rating frameworks. Although Amazon.com and this study incorporate “different stores” that might be physical stores, there could be no different factors to control for advancement and rivalry of similar items from disconnected stores’ Image picture. Future analysts ought to consider direct proportions of brand picture when it is possible. Since numerous shoppers’ access product reviews at online discussions and afterward make their buys disconnected, the impact of electronic word of mouth on disconnected buys requests more prominent consideration in future exploration.

The research work is done by Fagerstrom et. al (2016) used a probabilistic model to study the consumer choices made with respect to the online reviews. Buyers are every now and again in circumstances that incorporate assessing the likelihood of the result of a specific decision. It is along these lines fundamental to investigate what likelihood (probability) means for the decision to comprehend the buyer’s behaviour completely. This paper research how probability limiting adds to the comprehension of the effect of online reviews on shopper decisions. An investigation with 25 members was led. Members were given an internet shopping situation in which they needed to pick between two web-based shops: one with (positive) customer reviews (on conveyance unwavering quality and client care) what’s more, higher product prices, while the other had lower prices, however no client reviews by any stretch of the imagination. The researchers in their study utilized a titration system over deals cost for the web shop without client audits; this was run more than seven likelihood conditions. Where members exchanged between one web shop and one more was recorded, and the likelihood limiting factors were determined. The outcome feature is that internet-based audits are marks of effective online transactions (i.e., aim to buy) and along these lines work as decision benchmarks. In the illumination of these outcomes, the paper presents down-to-earth suggestions, as well as bearings for future exploration. The outcomes feature how clients split the difference among certain and dubious outcomes; thus, a client’s emotional worth of an item factors in a relatively higher markdown when any vulnerability related to the product (in this case, its conveyance also, client service) rises. Additionally, the outcomes show a solid match with the standard limited utility model. The most significant useful and administrative suggestion is that one can contend with a contender’s better web-based client surveys by decreasing the prices.

Shen et. al (2015) conducted an empirical study in order to investigate the strategic behavioural

pattern of the customers. Top internet-based analysts who dependably gain customers' consideration stand to make huge monetary benefits and adapt how much consideration and notoriety they have acquired. This study investigates how online reviewers decisively pick the right product to review and the right appraising to post so they can acquire consideration and upgrade notoriety. Utilizing book reviews from Amazon and Barnes and Noble (BN), the authors tracked down those analysts on Amazon, where an analyst positioning framework measures commentators' web-based notorieties, are touchy to the contest among existing surveys and in this way will often stay away from swarmed audit portions. Notwithstanding, on Barnes and Noble, which does exclude such a positioning system, analysts don't answer the opposition impact. Furthermore, analysts on Amazon post more separated appraisals contrasted and commentators on Barnes and Noble since the opposition for consideration on Amazon is more serious than on Barnes and Noble. Analysts on Amazon act all the more decisively than analysts on Barnes and Noble. This study yields significant administrative ramifications for organizations to work on their plan of online review frameworks and improve how they might interpret commentators' essential ways of behaving. This paper analyses how online commentators seek consideration and gain notoriety under two unique review frameworks. Apparently, this is the first endeavour to test how online analysts' ways of behaving experimentally are driven by the craving to acquire consideration and online standing. This review also adds to the writing by giving observational proof on how acquiring consideration and notoriety might influence commentators' ways of behaving.

Computer games have turned into a significant supporter of the United States of America and worldwide economy. This paper authored by the researchers Liu et.al (2015) concentrates on network externalities in the internet-based computer game industry. Even though network externalities are perceived as a significant driver of new item dissemination, testing the presence and the effect of organization externalities at the singular level has been a test. By utilizing on the web item evaluations in the assessment, we observe that for online computer games: (1) a bigger introduced base creates higher item appraisals by people; (2) network externalities display nonlinear elements over item life cycle nonsignificant at first, profoundly critical next, and less huge in the later period; and (3) network externalities vary across purchaser portions: the effect of the introduced base is more grounded on less experienced buyers than on more-experienced ones. The outcomes of this study propose that network externalities ought to be treated as dynamic instead of a period invariant peculiarity and heterogeneous as opposed to homogeneous across shoppers. Authoritatively, our discoveries give valuable directions on whether, when, and on whom vital advancements ought to be led. The nonlinearity over item life cycle proposes that organizations can't depend on a lot of available power while presenting another item, in any event, for items that are likely to arrange externalities. Before the introduced base arrives at an adequate level, limited time exercises are vital to create early deals with the goal that the impact of organization externalities can kick in rapidly to help item dispersion.

4. Summary of the Previous Studies:

Table 1: Summary of the Previous Studies

1	Examined the impact of electronic word of mouth (e-WoM) feedback like online reviews and ratings on the buyer's decision	Inference regarding the buyers' evaluation of E-WoM during the pre-buy stage.	Liu et. al (2019)
2	Attempted to close the gap regarding the influence of e-WoM on buyer behaviour in context to tourism and hospitality sector.	This study represents how the full range of the influence of e- WoM on tourist behaviour traverses past the restricted extension customarily focussed on by the travel, tourism and hospitality industry researchers.	Pourfakhimi et. al (2020)
3	Investigation of the impact of reviews on buyers' intention towards visiting of restaurants	This study shows the significance of online remarks for the 'promotion' of restaurants having low assessment scores.	Aureliano-Silva et. al (2021)
4	Examination of the influence of online reviews on the return of the product by the customer	The study gives clarity regarding the impact of positive online reviews on the 'expectation rise' of the customer and if the product doesn't meet the expectations that have been created by watching the positive online reviews, it could result in product returns.	Li et. al (2021)
5	Conducted a study to reveal the influence of 'direct' and 'indirect' 'consumers' 'negatively valanced influencing behaviour' (NVIB) on other players in online social communities.	Delivered the empirical result regarding the significant contrast of 'direct' and 'indirect' 'negatively valanced influencing behaviour' on players' attitudes and their behavioural intentions on the organisations providing the restaurant and hotel services.	Azer and Alexander (2020)

6	Investigation of ‘online word of mouth’ factors that affect the business generated by the movie at the ticket counters	It was found that ‘review rating’, ‘review extremity’, and ‘helpfulness for reviewer’ are important determinants for review helpfulness.	Lee and Choeh (2018)
7	Attempts to examine the attributes that would impact the ‘perceived quality’ of the customers towards e-tailing.	It was found that the overall significance of the five characteristics towards the ‘perceived quality’ of e-tailer are affected by the consumers’ explicit attributes and online practices, in particular, ‘age’, ‘the frequency of prior online purchasing’, ‘the frequency of use of online reviews’, and the significance connected to the accessibility of countless internet-based reviews posted for the products.	Tamimi and Sebastianelli (2016)
8	Appropriation of star appraisals across 11 items and among the retailers	This research work draws out a particular dissemination example of online survey among Amazon and Flipkart. Amazon permits a more serious level of ‘negative reviews’, while Flipkart permits a greater number of positive surveys.	Venkatesakumar et. al (2021)
9	Investigated the impact of online audits on new item deals for consumer gadgets and computer games.	The information from Amazon.com are dependable and numerous analysts have utilized information from this Site, the outcomes ought to be approved and contrasted and information from different sources since web-based business might vary in their audit and rating frameworks.	Cui et. al (2021)
10	Used a probabilistic model to study the consumer choices made with respect to the online reviews.	The outcomes feature how clients split the difference between certain and dubious outcomes; thus, a client's emotional worth of an item factors in a relatively higher markdown when any vulnerability related to the product (in this case, its conveyance also, client service) rises.	Fagerstrom et. al (2016)
11	Conducted an empirical study to investigate the strategic behavioural pattern of the customers.	Analysts on Amazon post more separated appraisals contrasted and commentators on ‘Barnes and Noble’ since the opposition for consideration on Amazon is more serious than on Barnes and Noble.	Shen et. al (2015)
12	Concentrating on network externalities on the internet-based computer game industry.	Network externalities ought to be treated as dynamic instead of a period invariant peculiarity and heterogeneous as opposed to	Liu et.al (2015)

		homogeneous across shoppers.	

5. Findings:

The study highlights that online ratings and reviews, as key components of electronic word of mouth (e-WoM), exert a strong influence on consumer behaviour during the pre-purchase phase across various industries. Consumers increasingly depend on these digital cues to assess the credibility, quality, and value of products and services before making purchasing decisions. Positive reviews often boost consumer confidence, build trust, and increase purchase intentions. However, negative reviews, particularly those that are detailed or appear credible can significantly discourage potential buyers. In sectors like tourism, hospitality, and restaurants, e-WoM plays an extended role by influencing not just the purchasing decision but also destination choice and service preferences. Reviews can be particularly impactful for promoting lower-rated businesses, helping to improve consumer perceptions. However, overly positive reviews can also elevate consumer expectations, which, if unmet, may result in dissatisfaction and product returns. This reflects a gap between perceived and actual product experience shaped by online feedback.

The helpfulness of online reviews is largely determined by factors such as the extremity of opinions, the number of stars given, and the credibility of the reviewer. These factors influence the consumer's ability to judge the usefulness of reviews, which in turn affects product performance in the market. Platform-specific behaviours also emerged; for instance, Amazon tends to host a broader mix of positive and negative reviews, whereas Flipkart generally showcases more positive feedback, thereby influencing consumer perception differently on each platform. Additionally, the study reveals that demographic factors such as age, frequency of online purchases, and prior engagement with online reviews play a critical role in how consumers interpret e-WoM. Strategic consumer behaviour, combined with dynamic network externalities, adds another layer of complexity to how online reviews are processed and acted upon. Overall, managing online feedback has become a strategic necessity for businesses aiming to influence pre-purchase consumer behaviour effectively.

Conclusion

From the summarization of the above literature review, quite a few studies have been done in the area of reviews and ratings impact towards the purchase behaviour of the consumers. Collections were considered mainly from the recent studies which have been made. It has been found that the studies have covered the various industrial sectors like the restaurant business, computer gaming industry, movie business as well as the retail sector and variety of results and findings were recorded and each finding obtained by the concerned authors have also ensured that there is a significant managerial implication of their studies and investigations conducted. This review paper also suggests the novelty of the work done earlier by the researchers. Though in this area a lot of work has already been done before, still in the very research work listed in this article there has come up with some new findings. But every work has a certain scope and direction for future research. Going along those directions, new findings can be obtained that can close the gap of previous research.

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