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An Analysis of Online Reviews: How Positive and Negative Reviews Influence Purchase Intentions

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Abstract

Introduction: Online reviews are increasingly becoming the key drivers of consumer purchase decisions in the digital age. Due to the increasing popularity of e-commerce websites and social media, consumers are relying more and more on the views and experiences of others before buying. Understanding the impact of online reviews, particularly their opinions, on consumers is crucial for firms that want to enhance their marketing strategy and customer satisfaction.

Purpose of Study: The aim of this study is to examine the impact of positive and negative online reviews on consumers' purchasing intentions. The aim of this study is to examine a database of online reviews of varied product categories in an attempt to determine how different types of reviews affect consumers' decision-making.

Objective of the study: The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of positive online reviews on consumers' purchase intention across various product categories. Investigate the effect of negative online reviews on consumers' propensity to buy and determine if the effect is moderated by the product category.

Methodology: Individuals who use the internet to purchase goods from various e-commerce websites and review websites are the subject of this primary research. The questionnaire is based on variables like dependent (purchase intentions) and independent (online review valence—positive reviews and negative reviews).

Results: The findings indicate that although positive reviews will enhance purchase intentions, negative reviews can impact consumers' attitudes in different ways. In some product categories, negative reviews can convey authenticity and honesty and hence have a positive influence on purchase intentions. Nevertheless, the extent to which these effects occur differs based on considerations such as product nature and the credibility of the reviewer..

Keywords: Consumer, Cosmetics, Skin Care

Introduction

In today's digital economy, online reviews have become a key driver of consumer purchasing behavior. As e-commerce has grown and user-generated content has become more important, consumers increasingly look to online reviews to guide their purchasing decisions. Positive online reviews, in fact, are thought to enhance consumer trust in a product or service, tending to drive higher purchase intentions. Existing literature shows that consumers view good reviews as social proof, legitimizing their purchase decision and fostering brand or product confidence (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). Such an effect illustrates the power of positive reviews in potentially making a huge difference to the sales and overall market performance of a firm. Negative reviews, on the other hand, may have a sizeable and even detrimental impact on consumer sentiments and actions. Negative reviews are more likely to evoke stronger emotional responses, because consumers will tend to perceive them as signals of the quality of the product or the reliability of the service. Decision-making, according to studies, is more likely to be led by negative than positive information, a phenomenon called the "negativity bias" (Baumeister et al., 2001). This leads to deterrence among prospective buyers, causing decreased purchase intention and consumer loyalty shift.

Given these opposing impacts, it is important to understand the relative impact of positive and negative online reviews on purchasing behavior for businesses looking to optimize their online presence. While both reviews have an impact on consumer behavior, it is unclear which has a stronger impact in some cases. Therefore, in the current research work, the researcher seeks to analyze the influence of positive consumer online reviews on the purchase intention among consumers, examine the effect of negative reviews on consumer purchase decision, and compare the relative significance of positive versus negative reviews' influence on the consumer choice decision. By exploring these dimensions, this study aims to provide practical insights for marketers and companies on how to manage online reviews in a way that will influence consumer purchasing behavior in a competitive online market.

Literature Review

The growing body of literature on the role of online reviews highlights their pivotal function in shaping consumer behavior and purchasing decisions. Online reviews, often regarded as an electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), provide consumers with valuable information about products and services, which influences their attitudes and guides purchasing choices (Dellarocas, 2003). In recent years, empirical studies have moved to both the positive and negative aspects of online review, trying to gain more insight into differential impacts on purchase intentions and consumption behavior. This literature review examines current research in three broad objectives: the effect of positive online reviews on consumers' purchase intention, the effect of negative reviews on purchasing behavior, and a comparison of the relative influence of positive and negative reviews on purchase intention.

The Influence of Positive Online Review valence on Consumer Purchase Intentions

Evidence always indicates that positive reviews posted online increase consumer purchase intentions by building consumer trust, lowering perceived risk, and acting as a kind of social endorsement. In accordance with Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006), consumers who are exposed to positive reviews are likely to be more confident with their buying decisions since positive reviews act as a kind of word-of-mouth endorsement by fellow users. This social evidence not only establishes the value of the product but also eliminates uncertainty that is normally associated with online shopping. For instance, in online shopping, Pavlou and Dimoka (2006) found that positive comments tend to contribute considerably towards establishing consumers' confidence in the vendor, which ultimately gives rise to purchase intent.

Positive reviews also play a significant role in creating positive dispositions toward the brand and establishing brand perception. Lee et al. (2008) showed that positive criticism on the web can have a positive influence on the evaluation of a product, especially if the criticism is straightforward and credible. Additional studies verify that preferred feedback enhances the product's desirability, and therefore directly impacts consumers' intentions to buy (Park et al., 2007). Notably, studies have shown that vast volumes of positive feedback even more reinforce consumer confidence (Duan, Gu, & Whinston, 2008).

The Impact of Negative Online Review valence on Consumer Purchase Behaviour

Whereas favorable reviews can engender trust and encourage buying, unfavorable reviews have a more complex and, in many cases, a greater influence on the shaping of consumer behavior. Unfavorable web reviews typically instill fears of product quality and thus cause consumers to reconsider purchasing or, in the majority of cases, avoid the product. This is also due to the "negativity bias," a psychological tendency in which individuals place more significance on bad information than good information when judging or deciding (Baumeister et al., 2001).

Several studies have found that negative feedback has the ability to significantly reduce purchase intentions. For instance, Park and Lee (2009) found that consumers who were exposed to negative comments were likely to avoid a product since the comments generated doubt regarding its reliability. Similarly, a study by Lee and Youn (2009) found that negative comments heighten perceived risk and uncertainty, leading consumers to reconsider their purchase intentions. These findings are consistent with the hypothesis that threats of possible product failure or inferior service tend to deter consumers, leading them to assign higher priority to giving negative feedback while making decisions.

Moreover, the severity and genuineness of negative reviews have a significant impact on their influence. Negative reviews highlighting substantial issues, such as defects or poor customer service, tend to have more influence in undermining consumers than those mentioning trivial annoyances (Sen & Lerman, 2007). In addition, lengthier or credible negative reviews are more likely to have a stronger negative effect.

The research on online reviews indicates that positive and negative reviews both have important, but different, roles to play in shaping consumer buying behavior. Positive reviews enhance purchase intentions by offering social proof and minimizing perceived risk, whereas negative reviews tend to generate avoidance behaviors by creating concerns regarding product quality and reliability. Nevertheless, negative reviews typically impact more intensely on account of the negativity bias, although relative influences of positive versus negative reviews would differ on parameters like product type, credibility of reviews, and number of reviews. Based on these insights merged together, organizations can ascertain their approach towards controlling online reviews better to influence buyers' decisions optimally.

Objectives:

- To study and analyze the demographic variables with respect to online reviews on purchase intention towards consumer durable goods
- To examine the impact of positive online reviews on the purchase intentions of consumers.
- To evaluate the impact of negative online reviews on customer purchase intentions.

Theoretical framework:

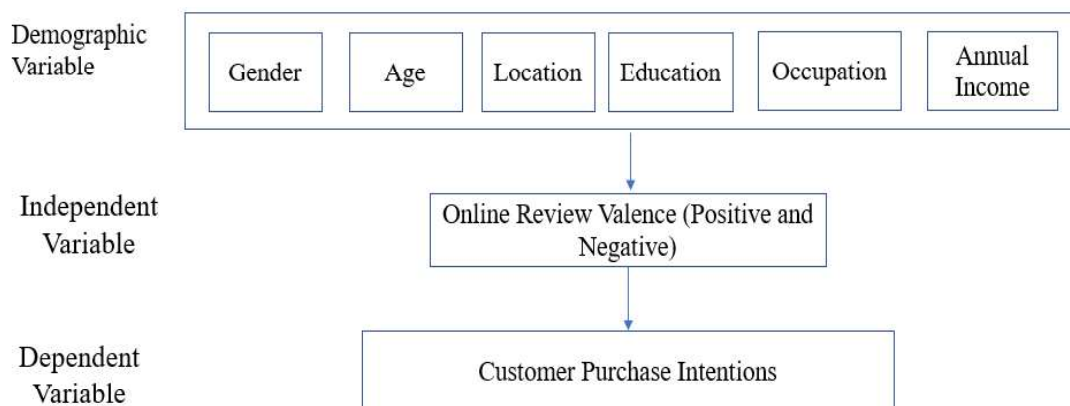


Figure 1 Theoretical framework

The figure illustrates the theoretical model that emphasizes the interaction between demographic variables, online review valence, and purchase intentions by customers. Demographic factors, including gender, age, location, education, occupation, and yearly income, affect how people feel and react to online reviews. Online review valence, characterized by its polarity, either positive or negative, is used as the independent variable and mediates the influence of consumer demographics on purchasing decisions. This is consistent with the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), which highlights that information processing depends on individual differences and the persuasive content of messages. Positive reviews have been found to increase purchase intentions by building trust and lowering perceived risk (Cheung et al., 2008), while negative reviews may discourage purchase behaviors by inducing skepticism regarding product quality. As a result, this model emphasizes the interaction between consumer characteristics and review sentiment in determining purchasing intentions.

Methodology:

Research Design

Primary and secondary data are the two forms of data employed in research studies. Secondary data assist in the identification of variables. Primary data include pilot studies and factor analysis. The pilot study is done first to validate and ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire. Pilot study, which comprises 104 individuals, is followed by a comprehensive primary research or study. We undertook the study to evaluate the validity of a questionnaire containing independent, moderate, and dependent variables, and thereafter finalized the same.

Sample Design

We carry out face-to-face interviews with the respondents by appointment, employing a random sampling strategy. We shall utilize Google Forms in areas where it is impossible to hold face-to-face interviews because of the pandemic and other logistical reasons. We will use a structured questionnaire to gather information and used 104 respondents for this research. We looked at the product knowledge of the customer, the authenticity of the online review source, and their probability of buying the product.

Questionnaire Design

It is pilot exploratory study. Pilot testing was performed in order to justify the questions and measure validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The questionnaire tackled the demographic factors which drive purchase intention of the customers. Customer purchase intentions are driven by factors that include online reviews of the consumer durable goods. We've applied these tools to measure, forever, what do customers know, how much do they like it, if they will purchase and what do they do.

A systematic questionnaire is designed by integrating demographics such as age, gender, educational qualification, marital status, occupation, and annual income, which are quantified in terms of percentage analysis. There are different sets of questions for each variable, namely online positive review valence and online negative review valence. They are quantified on a 1–5 scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree) by Sutanto and Aprianingsih (2016).

Results

We segregated the identified variables into independent and dependent variables based on the secondary research. Our independent variables in our study are online positive review valence and online negative review valence. The dependent variable is customer purchase intentions.

Table 1 Descriptive summary of Demographic data

| | Characteristics | Frequency | % |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------|--------|
| Gender | Male | 64 | 61.54% |
| | Female | 40 | 38.46% |
| Age group | 20-30 Years | 56 | 53.85% |
| | 30-45 Years | 32 | 30.77% |
| | 45-60 Years | 16 | 15.38% |
| Place | Pune | 70 | 67.31% |
| | Mumbai | 34 | 32.69% |
| Education | Doctorate | 16 | 15.38% |
| | Post Graduate | 72 | 69.23% |
| | Graduate | 16 | 15.38% |
| Occupation | Student | 48 | 46.15% |
| | Business | 16 | 15.38% |
| | Service | 40 | 38.46% |
| Annual income | Less than 5L | 32 | 30.77% |
| | Rs.5L-Rs.10L | 64 | 61.54% |
| | More than 10L | 8 | 7.69% |

The demographic information in this research gives us an idea about the respondents who took part in the study of the effect of online reviews on consumer purchase intention for durable products. Out of the participants, 61.54% were male and 38.46% were female, reflecting a minor male dominance in the sample. Age-wise distribution had the majority (53.85%) falling in the 20–30 years group, followed by 30.77% in the 30–45 years group, and 15.38% in the 45–60 years group. Geographically, 67.31% of the respondents belonged to Pune, and 32.69% were from Mumbai. Educational qualification-wise, the majority (69.23%) were postgraduates with an equal number of doctorate holders and graduates at 15.38% each. By occupation, students dominated the category with 46.15%, followed by service professionals at 38.46%, and business professionals at 15.38%. On the basis of annual income, 61.54% of the respondents belonged to the Rs. 5L–10L bracket, 30.77% had less than Rs. 5L income, and just 7.69% earned more than Rs. 10L. This demographic information gives a better picture of the participant pool within the study that is representative in its diversity for consumer views concerning online reviews and their impact on buying behavior.

Hypotheses 1:

H01: There is no impact of the online positive review valence on customer purchase intention.

H1: There is an impact of the online positive review valence on customer purchase intention.

Table 2 Kruskal-Wallis-Test for hypotheses 1

| Ranks | | | |
|---|-----|--------|-----------|
| Groups | n | Median | Mean Rank |
| Positive online reviews increase my trust in a product/service. | 104 | 4 | 251.96 |
| The number of positive reviews influences my perception of a product's quality. | 104 | 4 | 242.67 |
| I am more likely to purchase a product that has many positive reviews. | 104 | 4 | 251.96 |

| | | | | | |
|--|----------------|------------|---------------------|-------|--------|
| Positive reviews from verified buyers impact my purchasing decisions. | 104 | 4 | 251.96 | | |
| Customer Purchase Intention | 104 | 5 | 303.94 | | |
| Total | 520 | 4 | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Kruskal-Wallis-Test | | | | | |
| Chi ² | df | p | | | |
| 13.8 | 4 | 0.008 | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Dunn-Bonferroni-Tests | | | | | |
| | Test Statistic | Std. Error | Std. Test Statistic | p | Adj. p |
| Positive online reviews increase my trust in a product/service. - The number of positive reviews influences my perception of a product's quality. | 9.29 | 18.74 | 0.5 | 0.62 | 1 |
| Positive online reviews increase my trust in a product/service. - I am more likely to purchase a product that has many positive reviews. | 0 | 18.74 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Positive online reviews increase my trust in a product/service. - Positive reviews from verified buyers impact my purchasing decisions. | 0 | 18.74 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Positive online reviews increase my trust in a product/service. - Customer Purchase Intention | -51.98 | 18.74 | -2.77 | 0.006 | 0.055 |
| The number of positive reviews influences my perception of a product's quality. - I am more likely to purchase a product that has many positive reviews. | -9.29 | 18.74 | -0.5 | 0.62 | 1 |
| The number of positive reviews influences my perception of a product's quality. - Positive reviews from verified buyers impact my purchasing decisions. | -9.29 | 18.74 | -0.5 | 0.62 | 1 |
| The number of positive reviews influences my perception of a product's quality. - Customer Purchase Intention | -61.27 | 18.74 | -3.27 | 0.001 | 0.011 |
| I am more likely to purchase a product that has many positive reviews. - Positive reviews from verified buyers impact my purchasing decisions. | 0 | 18.74 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| I am more likely to purchase a product that has many positive reviews. - Customer Purchase Intention | -51.98 | 18.74 | -2.77 | 0.006 | 0.055 |
| Positive reviews from verified buyers impact my purchasing decisions. - Customer Purchase Intention | -51.98 | 18.74 | -2.77 | 0.006 | 0.055 |
| Adj. p: Values adjusted with Bonferroni correction. | | | | | |

Hypothesis 1 (H01) in this research examines whether positive online reviews influence customer purchase intentions. The null hypothesis (H01) states that there is no impact of positive online review valence on customer purchase intention, while the alternative hypothesis (H1) posits that positive online reviews do affect customer purchase intention. To test this, the study employed the Kruskal-Wallis test, which yielded a statistically significant result ($\text{Chi}^2 = 13.8$, $p = 0.008$), indicating that positive online reviews play a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions. The analysis also found that customers are more likely to believe in a product if it carries many positive reviews, especially those of verified purchasers, and would be more willing to buy it. The Dunn-Bonferroni post-hoc test also verified the correlation and exhibited strong correlations between customer intention to buy and belief in the product's quality from the volume of positive reviews ($p = 0.011$). Against these findings, the null hypothesis (H01) is rejected in favor of the conclusion that positive online reviews have a significant impact on customer purchasing behavior. This reinforces the need for online reputation management as companies are able to use positive reviews to build consumer confidence and boost sales.

Hypothesis 2

H02: There is no impact of the online negative review valence on customer purchasing behavior.

H2: There is an impact of the online negative review valence on customer purchasing behavior.

Table 3 Kruskal-Wallis-Test for hypotheses 2

| Ranks | | | | | |
|--|----------------|------------|---------------------|-------|--------|
| Groups | n | Median | Mean Rank | | |
| Negative online reviews make me doubt the quality of a product/service. | 104 | 4 | 197.31 | | |
| I am less likely to purchase a product if it has several negative reviews. | 104 | 4 | 204.73 | | |
| A single negative review can impact my perception of a product. | 104 | 4 | 187.46 | | |
| Customer Purchase Intention | 104 | 5 | 244.5 | | |
| Total | 416 | 4 | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Kruskal-Wallis-Test | | | | | |
| Chi ² | df | p | | | |
| 16.13 | 3 | 0.001 | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Dunn-Bonferroni-Tests | | | | | |
| | Test Statistic | Std. Error | Std. Test Statistic | p | Adj. p |
| Negative online reviews make me doubt the quality of a product/service. - I am less likely to purchase a product if it has several negative reviews. | -7.42 | 15.26 | -0.49 | 0.627 | 1 |
| Negative online reviews make me doubt the quality of a product/service. - A single negative review can impact my perception of a product. | 9.85 | 15.26 | 0.65 | 0.519 | 1 |
| Negative online reviews make me doubt the quality of a product/service. - Customer Purchase Intention | -47.2 | 15.26 | -3.09 | 0.002 | 0.012 |
| I am less likely to purchase a product if it has several negative reviews. - A single negative review can impact my perception of a product. | 17.26 | 15.26 | 1.13 | 0.258 | 1 |
| I am less likely to purchase a product if it has several negative reviews. - Customer Purchase Intention | -39.78 | 15.26 | -2.61 | 0.009 | 0.055 |
| A single negative review can impact my perception of a product. - Customer Purchase Intention | -57.04 | 15.26 | -3.74 | <.001 | 0.001 |
| Adj. p: Values adjusted with Bonferroni correction. | | | | | |

Hypothesis 2 (H02) in this research investigates whether negative online reviews impact customer purchasing behavior. The null hypothesis (H02) states that there is no impact of negative online review valence on customer purchasing behavior, whereas the alternative hypothesis (H2) suggests that negative online reviews do influence consumer purchasing decisions. The Kruskal-Wallis test results ($\text{Chi}^2 = 16.13$, $p = 0.001$) indicate a statistically significant effect, demonstrating that negative reviews contribute to doubts about product quality and decrease the likelihood of purchase. The analysis further reveals that customers are less inclined to buy a product when it has multiple negative reviews, and even a single negative review can impact their perception. The Dunn-Bonferroni post-hoc test confirms this, showing significant associations between negative reviews and purchase intention ($p = 0.012$ for general negative reviews, $p < 0.001$ for a single negative review affecting perception). Given these findings, the null hypothesis (H02) is rejected, confirming that negative online reviews significantly influence consumer hesitation and reduce purchase confidence. Overall, the findings highlight the substantial role that online reviews play in shaping consumer purchase intentions, with positive reviews

enhancing trust and likelihood of purchase, while negative reviews create hesitation and decrease purchase confidence.

Discussion:

The account of this research, framed around its general objectives, provides a methodical description of online reviews' contribution to influencing consumer purchasing intent on durable products. Considering the demographic attributes in relation to online reviews and purchasing intent—the research highlights that the majority of the respondents are young working professionals aged 20–30 possessing postgraduate degrees. Such population demographics mean that well-educated, technology-empowered consumers rely on online reviews to make purchasing decisions. The findings suggest that companies must aim their online marketing campaigns at this consumer segment by making it convenient, interactive, and trustworthy in their online review management practices. Examining the effect of positive online reviews—the research determines that positive reviews indeed lead to greater consumer trust and product perception, influencing buying behavior. The Kruskal-Wallis test results confirm a high correlation between review valence and buying intention, with customers likely to trust and purchase the product if there are a huge number of reviews, particularly by verified purchasers. The results further reiterate the need for businesses to source satisfaction from customers as positive word of mouth to promote brand confidence and strategically present reviews to create credibility in their brands. Measuring the effect of negative word of mouth online—the study finds that negative feedback has a notable deterrence effect on consumer purchasing behavior. Statistical testing shows that multiple negative feedback as well as even one negative comment can lead to hesitation on the part of consumers and less purchase intention. This shows that firms need to employ active reputation management strategies, such as a positive reply to negative feedback, resolution of customer complaints, and transparency to avoid potential damage to brand image.

Managerial implications:

The managerial implications of this study are beneficial insights for companies in terms of the effect of online reviews on consumer purchase intentions, consistent with the primary aims of the study. The evidence indicates that companies should engage in encouraging satisfied consumers to post positive reviews, especially verified buyers, since their endorsements greatly promote consumer trust and buy likelihood. Firms can adopt review solicitation tactics, including post-purchase follow-ups and rewards, to maintain a constant stream of positive feedback. Moreover, placing positive reviews in prominent positions on online platforms can also help support product credibility. This highlights the importance of businesses adopting proactive reputation management. Managers need to respond to negative reviews immediately through active customer service, problem resolution, and open communication. By realizing the concerns of their customers and presenting efforts to rectify, companies can reduce the adverse impact and gain back the confidence of consumers. As a whole, the study underlines the need for companies to incorporate online review management into their overall marketing and customer relationship frameworks. Positive reviews can be harnessed and the impact of negative reviews offset to affect consumer choice markedly, enhancing brand reputation and boosting sales.

Limitations:

The limitations of this study, offer essential feedback on the study's limitations and scope for future development. Firstly, in regards to the aim of examining demographic variables with regard to online reviews and purchasing intentions, the study is limited by sample size and geographical focus. Since the respondents were mostly from Pune and Mumbai, the results might not be entirely generalizable to wider consumer groups in other regions or nations with different digital habits and buying behaviors. Future studies can increase the sample size to a more representative demographic base for a more complete analysis. Consumers might overreport or underreport their dependence on positive reviews based on personal taste or previous experiences. Besides, the research fails to vary across product categories or industries, which may affect how positive reviews shape purchase intentions. Future studies may investigate whether review effects differ across product categories. The research verifies that negative reviews have a strong effect on consumer choice, but it does not consider other controlling factors like brand loyalty, word-of-mouth communications, or offers that may mitigate against negative reviews. In addition, the research does not take into account the intensity of negative reviews (e.g., minor issues vs. severe product defects), which may affect consumer responses differently. Future studies may further investigate the subtleties of negative review influence and examine how companies can effectively counteract them. Overall, though this study sheds important light on the influence of online reviews on consumer purchasing behavior, these constraints indicate areas where subsequent studies may improve and extend these findings by including wider demographics, industry-specific data, and other factors influencing purchasing behavior.

Conclusion:

The finding of this study, brings to the limelight the overwhelming influence of internet reviews on durable goods purchase decisions of consumers. The research confirms that young working professionals, specifically those belonging to the 20–30 years age group and postgraduate degree holders, are a predominant category among the respondents. This demographic understanding advises companies to put emphasis on digital engagement methods designed for technologically advanced customers who actively make smart buying choices through online reviews. The good feedback greatly reinforces the consumer confidence, product quality impression, and intention to purchase. Consumers are more affected by reviewed buyer reviews and the quantity of positive reviews in general. Consequently, companies should focus on getting happy customers to post reviews, making positive feedback visible, and using it for promotional purposes in order to build consumer trust and boost sales. The study sets up that negative feedback will discourage prospective buyers and raise questions regarding a product's quality. One negative review alone will have a serious effect on consumer sentiment. This highlights the importance of proactive reputation management, where businesses must address customer concerns promptly, resolve complaints effectively, and maintain transparency to mitigate the adverse effects of negative reviews.

Future direction:

The direction of this future research, offers various paths for further investigation to increase the knowledge base on how online reviews impact consumer purchase intentions of durable products. Future research may increase the sample size and gather participants from various geographic areas and cultural affiliations. As this research addressed mainly the consumers of Pune and Mumbai, by bringing in a more diverse demographic sample pool, one would be able to make a larger generalization of results. Moreover, future studies may look at how other factors like gender, income level, and digital literacy further shape consumer dependence on online reviews. It may study the efficacy of various forms of positive reviews, including video testimonials, influencer reviews, and expert reviews, in building consumer trust and influencing purchasing decisions. Furthermore, longitudinal research would be conducted to analyze how consumer sentiment shifts over time due to repeated positive feedback or product rating fluctuations. Companies would also benefit from research on the impact of sentiment analysis and AI review suggestions in enhancing consumer choice-making. It could study the various degrees of negative review impact. For instance, studies might differentiate between smaller problems and larger product defects to test whether customers are assigning varying degrees of weight to different types of criticism. And the efficacy of a set of responses by the brand—public apology, refund, and individual customer service—might inform researchers how to respond to bad criticism most effectively.

Overall, future studies would need to analyze industry differences in the impact of online reviews depending on how these types of factors like brand loyalty, price competition, and product category influence responses from consumers to reviews. Through the use of sophisticated data analysis, sentiment analysis, and AI-powered review moderation, future studies can provide deeper insights into the ever-changing realm of online consumer behavior and allow businesses to optimize their digital marketing and reputation management efforts.

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