

THE ROLE OF ONLINE REVIEWS ON SHOPPING APPS IN INFLUENCING PURCHASE DECISION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN BHOPAL

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ABSTRACT

Online reviews now play a big part in how consumers make buying choices across shopping apps. This research examines how positive and negative reviews affect customers and shows how visual details in reviews plus product reviews and trust levels lead buyers to make decisions. Customers make purchases more often through positive reviews than negative ones and visual elements boost their trust and buying readiness. Customers base their purchase decisions on product reviews and trust more extensively when reviews reach a high volume. Customers depend on online reviews differently when buying specific products such as clothing, accessories and skincare. People trust shopping apps more than any other platform when buying things online. This research helps e-commerce companies improve their review handling systems to build customer trust while helping shoppers make better buying choices.

Keywords: Purchase Decision, Online Reviews, Positive Reviews, Negative Reviews, Review Volume and Trust, Visual Content in Reviews

INTRODUCTION

Online reviews- People use online reviews to provide digital feedback about products and services that significantly impacts customer purchase decisions and shapes brand perception as well as business operational success. Reviews hosted on Amazon and Zomato and Google My Business alongside social media platforms contain rating scores and written feedback together with visual content and time stamps and business responses. Reviews create a vital framework for consumer intelligence which helps individuals choose wisely and develop brand confidence and allows comparison of products alongside driving business success through better reputation and search engine visibility and increased sales numbers and better customer relationships. The online review space contains both positive and negative as well as neutral feedback which appears on sites such as Yelp and Amazon and corporate websites. Several persistent problems with online reviews include deceitful feedback, unbalanced assessment content, overwhelming number of reviews and competitor review manipulation. Organizations can solve these issues through their commitment to real customer reviews while providing quick feedback responses to complaints and active review monitoring. AI advancements enable technology systems to recognize patterns while forecasting customer behaviour and detecting false reviews which establishes online reviews as a force for growth and trust creation..

Shopping apps-The behaviour of digital shoppers depends on mobile and web-based shopping applications which facilitate convenient product selection and online checkout. Users can access product catalogs and utilize search filters through these platforms while enjoying multiple payment options and tracking their orders and receiving personalized recommendations. The e-commerce marketplaces Amazon serve as examples alongside brand-specific apps such as Nike alongside category-specific apps such as Myntra. Shopping apps deliver benefits such as savings opportunities and time efficiency and convenience though they encounter problems with marketplace competition and technical bug issues and consumer trust concerns. The modern shopping experience has been transformed because shoppers can acquire products quicker and reach goods from anywhere.

Purchase decision-Consumers undertake a specific buying process during their purchases of products or services. The consumer experience starts when they identify an actual need such as replacing their phone. Consumers find information about different brands and models online and choose the best option from their available options using price factors together with quality scores and feature analysis and product reviews. Customer experiences shape

what they will buy in the future. Consumer decisions are shaped by their individual requirements alongside financial ability and personal taste together with promotional materials and community feedback. People make simple purchasing decisions like food shopping automatically yet they need extensive research for decisions that require more complexity such as car purchases. Business success depends on companies who understand what customers want and deliver it properly.

LITERATURE REVIEW

(Jain et al., 2016) in his study *"Impact of Online Reviews on Purchasing Decisions; An Empirical Study among Indian Academicians"* he examined the influence of online consumer reviews. A form of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on buying behavior. He highlighted the shift in consumers roles from being passive recipients to becoming active influencers through reviews especially when it comes to electronic products. Through a survey conducted among Indian professors the research found that online reviews play a role in affecting consumers purchase choices. The results underscored the significance of these reviews in shaping consumer behavior and delved into their implications, for e-commerce and consumer decision making processes.

(Fernandes et al., 2022) in his research paper *"Measuring the impact of online reviews on consumer purchase decisions – A scale development study"* he stated that the study concluded that online reviews significantly influence consumer purchase decisions by affecting trust and credibility. It developed and validated a standardized scale, based on four factors—source credibility, volume, language comprehension, and relevance—that online retailers can use to guide consumer decision-making and enhance the shopping experience

(C et al., 2024) in his research paper *"E-commerce: An Insight into Impact of Online Review on Customer Buying Behaviour"* he highlighted the key findings on how online reviews shape consumer decisions. It reveals that online reviews significantly influence purchasing behavior, replacing traditional word-of-mouth as a primary information source. The study identifies factors like credibility, review volume, language, and relevance as critical to their impact. Using both primary and secondary data, the research confirms the validity of its findings. The study emphasizes the importance for e-commerce businesses to manage reviews effectively, encouraging positive feedback and addressing negatives to build trust and boost sales.

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the influence of positive reviews versus negative reviews on purchase decision
2. To study the impact of visual content (photos,videos) in reviews on consumer decision making
3. To analyze the impact of online reviews on consumer trust and purchase decision across different product categories.

HYPOTHESIS

H₀ (Null hypothesis)

There is no significant impact of positive and negative reviews on purchase decisions among young adults in Bhopal

H₁ (Alternative hypothesis)

There is significant impact of positive and negative reviews on purchase decisions among young adults in Bhopal.

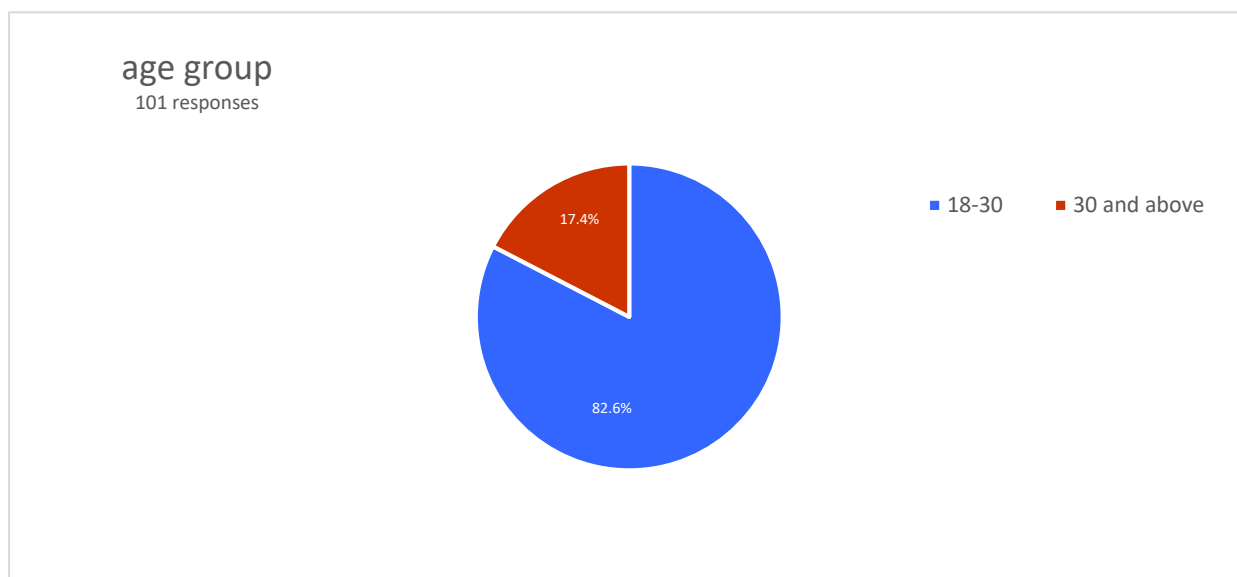
RESEARCH DESIGN

This study used basic methods to discover what impact online reviews have on purchasing choices. Through descriptive research methods the study examined online review impact on consumer shopping behaviours. A questionnaire was prepared using google form 101 responded filled it

The study surveyed people to understand which reviews help them decide, how important visual content is, and how reviews build trust in different product types. To gather data the researcher selected participants based on convenience sampling which meant finding willing people who were close at hand. Basic statistical methods helped us find common trends from the collected data including what people prefer between positive and negative reviews plus how visual content and shopping apps affect consumer trust. Our research method produced useful results that show how online reviews influence trust and purchasing choices on digital shopping websites.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

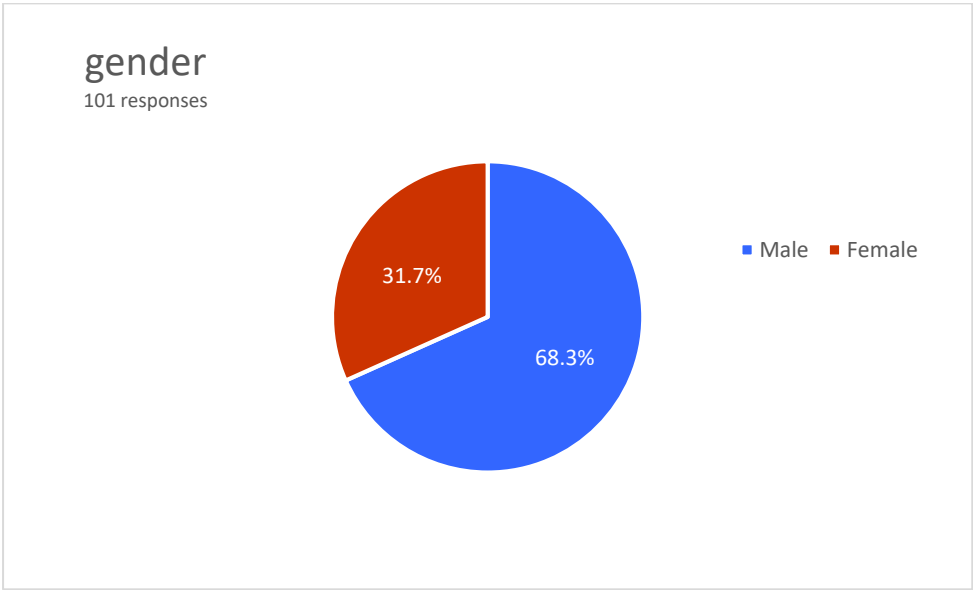
Particular	Percentage
18-30	82.6
30 and above	17.4



18-30 Age Group (82.6%, 83 respondents): Most of the people who took the survey are between 18 and 30 years old, showing that younger individuals are the main audience.

30 and Above Age Group (17.4%, 18 respondents): Fewer people in this age group took the survey, but they still represent an important part of the audience.

Particular	Percentage
Male	68.3
Female	31.7



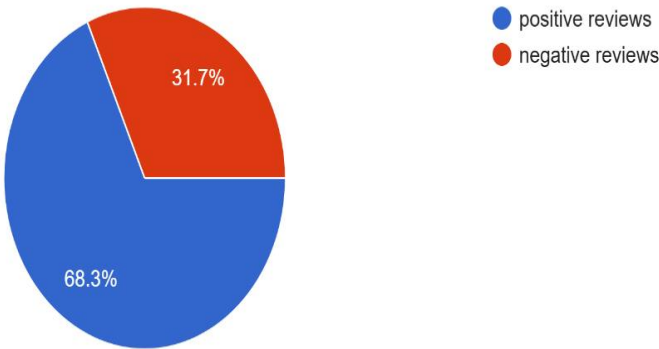
Male Percentage (68.3%):This indicates that 68.3% of the respondents are male, showing a majority of the participants in the group are men.

Female Percentage (31.7%):This indicates that 31.7% of the respondents are female, meaning women form a smaller portion of the total respondents compared to men.

What affects your purchase decision more?

Particular	Percentage
Positive reviews	68.3
Negative reviews	31.7

What affects your purchase decision more?
101 responses



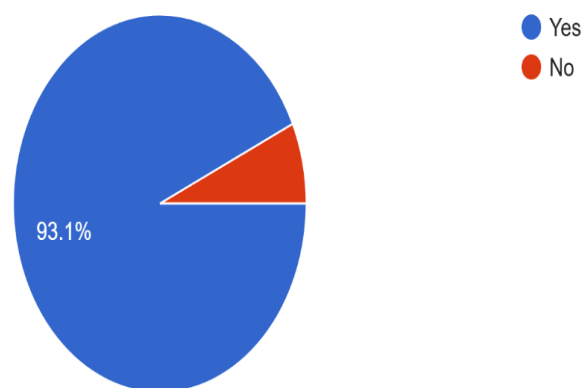
- The data highlights that consumers get more influenced by positive reviews i.e positive information about a product or service. This suggests that people often look for validation and reassurance before making a purchase decision.
- While negative reviews influence the consumer less compared to positive ones, they affect 31.7% of consumers shows that negative reviews also have notable impact. From business point of view this means addressing negative feedback is crucial to avoid losing potential customers.

Does online reviews (either positive/negative) affects your purchase decision?

Particular	Percentage
Yes	93.1
No	6.9

Does online reviews (either positive/negative) affects your purchase decision

101 responses



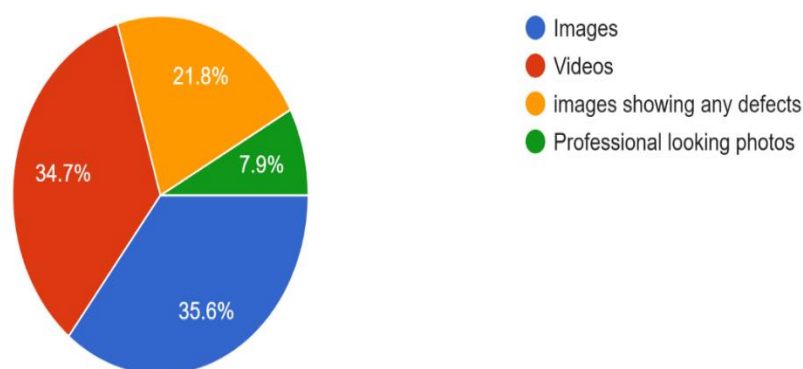
As 93.1% of respondents stating that the online reviews impact their purchase decisions, it's clear that consumers rely on the positive and negative of the peer group and it helps them to make wise decision about purchase.

What type of visual content do you find most useful in reviews?

Particular	Percentage
Images	35.6
Videos	34.7
Image showing any defect	21.8
Professional looking photos	7.9

What type of visual content do you find most useful in reviews?

101 responses



- Images in reviews are the most preferred type of visual content, stating that users value clear and simple pictures to evaluate products or services.
- Videos are almost equally popular, stating that detailed demonstrations of the product play a significant role in influencing decisions.
- Images showing defects help consumer know about the importance of transparency. Consumers find it useful to see any flaws or issues in a product before purchasing.
- Professional-looking photos are the least preferred indicating that consumers focus on authenticity and practicality over polished, studio-quality visuals.

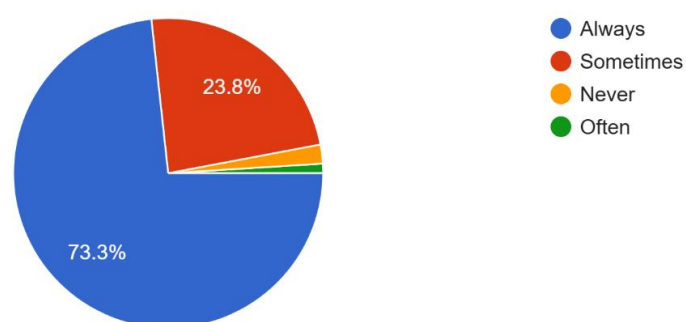
How often do you pay attention to photos or videos in product reviews?

Particular	Percentage
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Always	73.3
Sometime	23.8
Never	2
Often	1

How often do you pay attention to photos or videos in product reviews?

101 responses



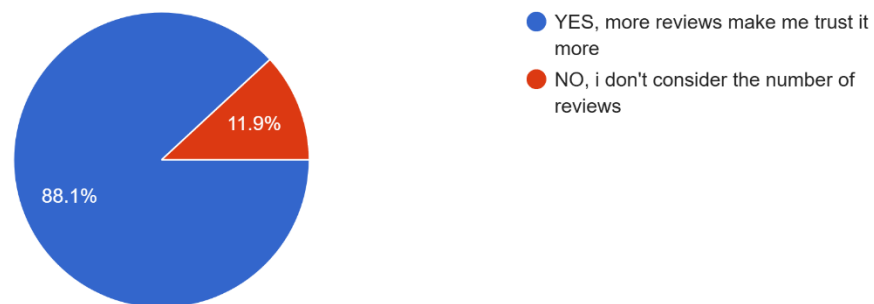
- **Always:** The majority of respondents uniformly focus on visual content in reviews, stating its importance in influencing purchase decisions.
- **Sometimes:** A notable portion sometimes considers visual content, indicating that it plays a secondary role for some.
- **Never (minimal):** A very small percentage pays regular but not constant attention to photos or videos.
- **Often (minimal):** Almost no respondents ignore visual content entirely, showing its near-universal relevance.

Does the number of reviews for a product affects your decision to trust it?

Particular	Percentage
Yes	88.1
No	11.9

Does the number of reviews for a product affects your decision to trust it?

101 responses



For the majority of respondent the numbers of reviews play an important part in influencing their purchase decision and trusting the product or service more and a higher chance of buying that product. While 11.9 percentage responded do not consider the number of reviews in influencing their purchase decision. Higher the number of reviews higher is the chance of trusting the product

Do photos or videos in reviews make you trust the product more?

Particular	Percentage
Yes	72.3
No	25.7
Sometime	2

- **Majority Trust More with Visuals:** a considerable 72.3% of respondents indicated that photos or videos in reviews make them trust the product more. This states that visual evidence plays an important role in influencing consumer perception and purchase decisions.
- **"No" Group:** Only 25.7% of respondents stated that photos or videos do not affect their trust in the product. This suggests that most consumers find visual content valuable when evaluating products.
- **"Sometimes" Category:** 2.0% of respondents said "sometimes," indicating that visual content may be influential in some cases but not in others. This suggests that the impact

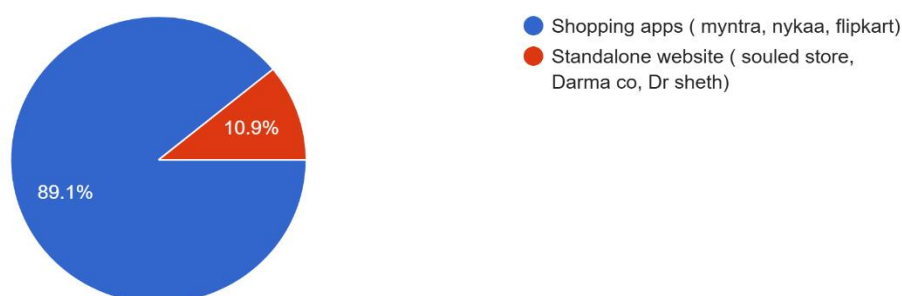
of photos or videos can vary depending on the product category, individual preferences, and other factors.

Where do you prefer to buy products from?

Particular	Percentage
Shopping apps	89.1
Standalone website	10.9

Where do you prefer to buy products from?

101 responses



The vast majority of respondents (89.1%) prefer to buy products from shopping apps like Myntra, Nykaa, and Flipkart, compared to standalone websites like Souled Store, Darma Co, and Dr. Sheth. Only 10.9% of respondents preferred to buy from standalone websites.

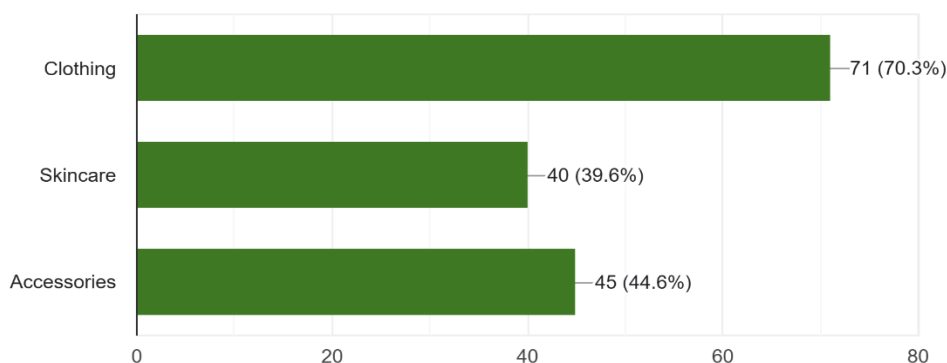
This suggests that shopping apps are the dominant platform for online shopping when compared to standalone website.

What product category do you rely on online reviews the most before purchasing?

Product type	Percentage
Clothing	71
Skincare	40
Accessories	45

What product category do you rely on online reviews the most before purchasing?

101 responses



- When it comes to buying clothes, people really trust what others have to say! Most shoppers rely heavily on online reviews to decide if something is worth buying.
- Skincare seems a little different. While reviews still matter, many people don't let them sway their decision too much. Maybe it's because skincare is so personal - what works wonders for one person might not do anything for another.
- Accessories are a lot like clothes - people mostly trust on the reviews what others have said.

Online reviews are a big deal for clothes and accessories, but people are a bit more cautious when it comes to skincare.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

To evaluate how the role of online reviews on shopping apps in influencing purchase decision among young adults in Bhopal , a chi-square test was conducted to examine the relationship between the positive/negative reviews and the effect on purchase decision.

H₀ (Null hypothesis)

There is no significant impact of positive and negative reviews on purchase decisions

H₁ (Alternative hypothesis)

There is significant impact of positive and negative reviews on purchase decisions among young adults in Bhopal.

Chi-square tests work best with larger sample sizes because the test assumes sufficient data for expected frequencies to be meaningful. Scaling the data ensures all expected values are

above the minimum threshold (usually 5), as required for chi-square validity. To make this happen we multiplies all the values by 4

Observed frequency table- using the collected data, we arranged responses according to the above stated categories

Particular	Positive reviews	Negative reviews	Total
Affects purchase decision	252	124	376
Does not affects purchase decision	24	4	28
Total	276	128	404

Expected frequency table-

Particular	Positive reviews	Negative reviews	Total
Affects purchase decision	256.77	119.23	376
Does not affects purchase decision	19.23	8.77	28
Total	276	128	404

Calculation of chi-square statistics

$$\text{Chi-Square } (\chi^2) = \sum [(O - E)^2 / E]$$

Substituting value we get

$$(\chi^2) = 4.033$$

Critical value - 3.841.

Determine Degrees of Freedom= (Number of Rows - 1) * (Number of Columns - 1)= (2 - 1) * (2 - 1) = 1

The critical value of chi square at the degree of freedom 1 and 5% level of significance is 3.814 and where the calculated value is 4.033 (calculated with the help of google sheets) which is greater than the critical value.

Consequently, the calculated Chi-Square value is more than the critical value, we **reject the null hypothesis**. This suggests that there is **statistically significant association** between the presence of positive and negative online reviews and the purchase decisions of young adults in Bhopal, based on the collected data.

Chi-square tests work best with larger sample sizes because the test assumes sufficient data for expected frequencies to be meaningful. Scaling the data ensures all expected values are above the minimum threshold (usually 5), as required for chi-square validity.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the significant influence of online reviews, visual content, and trust levels on consumer buying behaviour, particularly across shopping apps. Positive reviews are the most impactful, driving purchase decisions more frequently than negative ones. However, negative reviews still hold substantial weight, with over 31.7% of consumers reconsidering their choices after encountering them. The age group of 18-30 years accounts for the majority of respondents (82.6%), showcasing that younger consumers are the most engaged in online review platforms. Additionally, while gender was not explicitly analysed, it remains an essential dimension that businesses should factor into future studies to refine targeting strategies further.

Visual content, such as images (35.6%) and videos (34.7%), significantly enhances trust and readiness to buy, with consumers preferring authentic and transparent visuals over professional or heavily edited content. These preferences align with younger audiences' demand for authenticity and relatability when evaluating products online.

The research also identifies that high review volumes build greater trust and have a stronger influence on purchase decisions. Product categories such as clothing, accessories, and skincare are more dependent on detailed reviews and visual content, as these items often require a higher level of reassurance before purchase. Furthermore, consumers express a stronger reliance on shopping apps compared to other platforms, highlighting the need for e-commerce companies to optimize these channels for review management and user engagement.

SUGGESTIONS

Encourage Positive Reviews

Since positive reviews are shown to have a stronger impact on consumer purchasing decisions, businesses should actively encourage satisfied customers to leave feedback. This can be achieved through follow-up emails, incentives, or loyalty programs, helping to create a steady stream of positive reviews that influence future buyers.

Monitor and Address Negative Reviews

Although negative reviews are less influential, they still play a significant role in shaping decisions. Businesses should implement a robust system for quickly addressing negative feedback, offering resolutions or apologies where necessary. Proactively managing negative reviews can help minimize their impact on potential customers and demonstrate a commitment to customer satisfaction.

Use Authentic Visual Content

Consumers, particularly younger audiences, value authenticity over polished visuals. Businesses should focus on displaying real-life images and videos that accurately represent products. Encouraging customers to share their own photos and experiences can foster trust and provide valuable content that resonates more with potential buyers.

Optimize Review Systems on Shopping Apps

Given the strong reliance on shopping apps for making purchasing decisions, e-commerce businesses should ensure their review systems are easily accessible and user-friendly. Enhancing the visibility of reviews and ensuring that reviews are sorted by relevance can improve customer experience and foster trust in the platform.

Increase Review Volume for Better Trust

As high review volumes build greater trust, businesses should encourage customers to leave reviews consistently. Having a large number of reviews not only builds credibility but also boosts product visibility, making it more likely that potential buyers will engage with the content before making a purchase.

LIMITATIONS

Limited Sample Size and Scope: The study was conducted among 101 respondents based on which it may not be said that the views are representative of all young adults in Bhopal. A bigger sample group would be better for deeper understanding.

Demographic Constraints: The study is targeted only young adults in Bhopal and hence, findings cannot be generalized to other age groups or different locations having diverse shopping habits.

Self-Reported Data: The study relies on survey responses that are susceptible to biases such as social desirability bias or misinterpretation of questions, thus impacting the accuracy of the findings.

Limited Product Categories: The research focuses primarily on apparel, skincare, and accessories. Consumer behaviour regarding other product categories, such as electronics, groceries, or home appliances, is likely to be very different.

Influence of Other Factors: The study ignores external factors such as brand reputation, pricing strategy, influencer marketing, or seasonal discounts which might also affect the consumer's choice.

Dynamic Nature of Online Reviews: The trust and veracity of online reviews are constantly undermined by fraudulent reviews, sponsored posts, or review manipulation-issues that were not seriously addressed in this research.

Psychological and Behavioural Aspects: The study does not consider deeper psychological factors, including brand loyalty, emotional influence, and impulse buying tendencies, which may also be significant in determining purchasing choices.

Reliance on Chi-Square Test: While the chi-square test does help establish a relationship, it does not quantify the level of influence or causality that online reviews have on purchasing decisions. More sophisticated statistical methods, such as regression analysis, can delve into much more detail.

Exclusion of Standalone Websites: The study focuses mainly on shopping apps and therefore limits the findings to online reviews' influence on purchases made through separate e-commerce websites or social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook Marketplace.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Expansion of Sample Size and Demographics

Research expansion must enhance participant count and add diversity by adding subjects who live in cities and rural areas along with various age categories to reveal generalized consumer tendencies.

Comparative Study Across Regions

The analysis of digital shopping patterns and review trust between urban residents and rural residents together with state-by-state comparisons tells us about regional differences in India.

Exploration of Different Product Categories

Research should investigate how online reviews affect various product categories starting from electronics through home appliances to groceries and luxury goods because purchase decision factors differ substantially between these categories.

Longitudinal Study on Changing Consumer Preferences

A research study across multiple time points enables scientists to monitor the development of customer practices together with their trust in review content and their choice of shopping applications throughout technological and marketing industry developments.

Role of AI and Personalization in Review Influence

Future investigations should examine the effects of AI suggestions along with customized advertising and automated customer service agents on buyer confidence regarding website reviews and shopping choices.

Effect of Fake Reviews and Review Authenticity

Research on fake reviews and paid reviews and manipulated ratings helps explain consumer abilities to distinguish authentic from deceptive reviews during buying decisions.

Psychological and Behavioural Analysis

Future examinations should explore how psychological factors affect customer purchase behavior including brand loyalty patterns along with spontaneous buying reactions and emotional reactions and social acceptance in review evaluation.

Influence of Social Media and Influencers

An investigation of purchase decisions should analyze the influence of influencers as well as user-generated content and short-form video reviews on social media platforms that include Instagram, YouTube and TikTok since these platforms are dominant forces in online shopping.

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