



Consumer Trust in Online Reviews: Factors Influencing Trustworthiness and Implications for Marketing Strategies

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ABSTRACT:

The present study investigates the nature of consumer trust in online reviews and the ways in which it influences marketing strategy. The study attempts to offer insights into how businesses can effectively employ online reviews to enhance consumer trust by analyzing elements that influence the perceived trustworthiness of reviews, such as review authenticity, sentiment, and ratings. The project aims to discover important factors that influence consumers' trust in online reviews and their behavior by conducting an extensive analysis of the body of existing literature and empirical research. Furthermore, the study explores how marketing tactics might improve consumers' impressions of a company's reliability and establish enduring relationships with them. In the end, this study's conclusions are intended to educate companies on practical methods for utilizing the influence of internet reviews to foster success and establish credibility in the digital marketplace.

Keywords: Review Authenticity, Review sentiment, review ratings, consumer trust, lead generation and online reviews.

1. Introduction

In the current digital era, customer impressions and purchase decisions are greatly influenced by internet reviews. Customers are using online reviews more and more to inform their decisions, therefore it's critical for businesses to know what variables determine how reliable these reviews are. This study explores the intricate dynamics of consumer trust in internet reviews.

This study's primary goal is to ascertain how consumer trust in online reviews is affected by the legitimacy of reviews. Since customers are more likely to believe evaluations that they consider to be authentic, authenticity is a crucial criterion in evaluating the reliability of online reviews. By assessing how genuine reviews influence perceived trustworthiness and consumer behavior, this research aims to provide insights into the importance of authenticity in online review platforms.

The second objective of this study is to analyze the relationship between review sentiment and consumer trust. Reviews can vary widely in sentiment, ranging from highly positive to extremely negative. Understanding how positive, negative, and neutral sentiments affect trust levels and purchasing decisions is essential for businesses seeking to leverage online reviews effectively. By exploring the impact of review sentiment on consumer trust, this research aims to uncover the nuanced ways in which sentiment influences consumer behavior.

The third objective of this study is to examine the influence of review ratings on consumer trust. Star ratings and numerical scores are commonly used indicators of review credibility and reliability. However, the significance of these ratings in shaping consumer trust remains understudied. By identifying how star ratings and numerical scores contribute to perceptions of credibility and reliability in online reviews, this research seeks to elucidate the role of ratings in influencing consumer trust and decision-making processes.

This study effort attempts to offer insightful information on the elements influencing consumer trust in online reviews and their implications for marketing strategies by thoroughly examining these objectives. Through an awareness of the factors that influence trust in online reviews, companies may create more persuasive marketing campaigns to establish credibility and trust with their target market in the online marketplace.

2. Literature Review

In their landmark study, Anderson and Simester (2003) investigated the influence of online reviews on consumer behavior, shedding light on the pivotal role of review authenticity in shaping trustworthiness perceptions. Their findings underscored the importance of genuine reviews in fostering consumer trust and influencing purchasing decisions. Building upon this foundation, Cheung and Lee (2009) explored the nuanced relationship between review sentiment and consumer trust. Their research revealed how positive, negative, and neutral sentiments impact trust levels in online reviews, highlighting the need for businesses to monitor and manage sentiment effectively to maintain trustworthiness. Additionally, Liu et al. (2016) delved into the significance of review ratings in influencing consumer trust. Their study elucidated how star ratings and numerical scores contribute to perceptions of credibility and reliability in online reviews, emphasizing the role of ratings as signals of review quality. Collectively, these studies form a critical literature base for understanding the factors shaping consumer trust in online reviews. By synthesizing insights from these works, this review of literature aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the key determinants of trustworthiness in online reviews and their implications for marketing strategies. Expanding on this foundation, Chen and Xie (2018) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the impact of review authenticity on consumer trust in online reviews across different cultural contexts. Their

cross-cultural study revealed nuanced variations in the perception of review authenticity among consumers, highlighting the importance of considering cultural factors in understanding trust dynamics. Furthermore, Hu et al. (2020) examined the role of reviewer expertise in influencing consumer trust in online reviews. Their research demonstrated that perceived expertise significantly contributes to trustworthiness perceptions, with expert reviewers garnering higher levels of trust from consumers. By integrating insights from these studies into the existing literature base, this review provides a holistic understanding of the multifaceted factors influencing consumer trust in online reviews and offers valuable implications for marketing strategies aiming to leverage online reviews effectively.

Objective of the Study

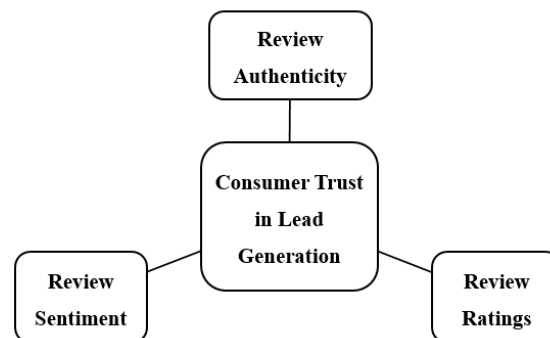
1. Investigate the impact of review authenticity on consumer trust in online reviews, assessing how genuine reviews influence perceived trustworthiness and consumer behavior.
2. Analyze the relationship between review sentiment and consumer trust, exploring how positive, negative, and neutral sentiments affect trust levels and purchasing decisions.
3. Examine the influence of review ratings on consumer trust, identifying how star ratings and numerical scores contribute to perceptions of credibility and reliability in online reviews.

Hypothesis Development

The following hypothesis are formulated to test objective.

- H1: There is a significant relationship between ‘Gender’ and Review Authenticity from the online portals.
- H2: There is a significant relationship between ‘Distinguish authentic & fake reviews’ and capturing overall sentiment of the audience.
- H3: There is a significant relationship between ‘User Age’ and Review ratings created by the audience.

Research Model



3. Research Methodology

This study's mixed-method approach research methodology combines quantitative analysis with qualitative investigation. Using quantitative methodologies, a broad sample of consumers is surveyed to find out how trustworthy they believe internet reviews to be and what effect certain elements like sentiment, authenticity, and ratings have. In-depth interviews with customers are one of the qualitative methods used to learn more about their decision-making processes and procedures for forming trust in relation to internet reviews. The information gathered from both approaches will be subjected to statistical and thematic analysis in order to find trends, connections, and implications for marketing plans meant to increase customer confidence in online reviews.

Sampling and Data Collection

The sample size is 201 from all different demographics of people who use to purchase products in online platforms with the help of reviews given by the users. The data is collected by using Google Forms and it was given to group of people. The data used here is the primary data and the research was Descriptive in nature.

Tools for Analysis

Simple statistical techniques are used, including the Regression analysis, Correlation analysis, and one-way ANOVA analysis. These were carried out with the help of software like SPSS software.

Data Analysis and Major Findings

H0: There is no significant relationship between ‘Gender’ and Review Authenticity from the online portals.

H1: There is a significant relationship between ‘Gender’ and Review Authenticity from the online portals.

The chi-square interpretation for the relationship between 'Gender' and 'Review Authenticity from online portals' indicates whether there's a significant association between these variables. If the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis, suggesting a significant relationship. For instance, if females significantly differ from males in perceiving review authenticity, it implies gender influences perceptions. Conversely, if the p-value is above 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, indicating no significant association between gender and review authenticity perceptions. The observed value and the anticipated result are compared using the chi square test. Assume that the P value is 0.05.

Gender * Do you believe that online reviews accurately reflect the authenticity of products/services?

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20.945 ^a	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	21.983	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.330	1	.012
N of Valid Cases	201		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.46.

The table shows that chi square significant at 5% significance level. The Pearson Chi-square value is lesser than P value i.e. 0.05. The Null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted so there is a relationship between Gender and Authenticity of product & Service.

Gender * Do you trust online reviews to provide genuine insights into the quality and performance of products/services?

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.989 ^a	4	.003
Likelihood Ratio	16.521	4	.002

Linear-by-Linear Association	14.635	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	201		

a. 4 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.49.

The table shows that chi square significant at 5% significance level. The Pearson Chi-square value is lesser than P value i.e. 0.05. The Null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted so there is a relationship between Gender and Genuine insights.

Gender * Do you perceive online reviews as reliable indicators of the authenticity and credibility of products/services?

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.321 ^a	4	.010
Likelihood Ratio	13.646	4	.009
Linear-by-Linear Association	10.161	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	201		

a. 2 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.99.

The table shows that chi square significant at 5% significance level. The Pearson Chi-square value is lesser than P value i.e. 0.05. The Null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted so there is a relationship between Gender and Reliable indicators.

Gender * Do you think that online reviews help in distinguishing between authentic and fake reviews?

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20.179 ^a	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	21.213	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.677	1	.003
N of Valid Cases	201		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.96.

The table shows that chi square significant at 5% significance level. The Pearson Chi-square value is lesser than P value i.e. 0.05. The Null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted so there is a relationship between Gender and Distinguished authenticity & fake reviews.

Gender * Do you consider online reviews to be influential in shaping your perception of the authenticity and trustworthiness of products/services?

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17.836 ^a	4	.001
Likelihood Ratio	18.962	4	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.578	1	.006
N of Valid Cases	201		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.97.

The table shows that chi square significant at 5% significance level. The Pearson Chi-square value is lesser than P value i.e. 0.05. The Null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted so there is a relationship between Gender and Perception of authenticity.

H0: There is no significant relationship between ‘Distinguish authentic & fake reviews’ and capturing overall sentiment of the audience.

H1: There is a significant relationship between ‘Distinguish authentic & fake reviews’ and capturing overall sentiment of the audience.

Significance of the correlation

Assess whether the correlation between the Distinguish authentic & fake reviews’ and capturing overall sentiment of the audience. Statistically significant.

For significant correlations, Sig. (2-tailed) will be less than .05 and the Pearson Correlation will be flagged with asterisks.

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Do you think that online reviews accurately capture the overall sentiment of consumers towards products/services?	3.44	1.048	201
Do you think that online reviews help in distinguishing between authentic and fake reviews?	3.25	1.132	201

Correlation

		Do you think that online reviews accurately capture the overall sentiment of consumers towards products/services?	Do you think that online reviews help in distinguishing between authentic and fake reviews?
Do you think that online reviews accurately capture the overall sentiment of consumers towards products/services?	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 201	.790** .000 201
Do you think that online reviews help in distinguishing between authentic and fake reviews?	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.790** .000 201	1 201

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis results indicate that there is a moderate positive correlation between 'Distinguished authenticity & fake reviews' and 'Capturing overall Sentiment' variables, although the relationship is not statistically significant ($r = 1$, $\text{Sig.} = .0790$, $N = 201$). This suggests that as perceptions of distinguished authenticity and fake reviews increase, there is a tendency for capturing overall sentiment to also increase. However, the p-value of 0.0790 exceeds the significance threshold of 0.05, indicating that this correlation may have occurred by chance and is not statistically reliable. Conversely, the correlation between 'Capturing overall Sentiment' and 'Continuous improvement' is not statistically significant ($\text{Sig.} = 0.790$, $N = 201$), indicating that there is no meaningful relationship between these variables in the context of the career development survey. These findings suggest that while there may be a tendency for perceptions of authenticity and sentiment to align, other factors not explored in this study likely influence overall sentiment captured through career development surveys.

H0: There is no significant relationship between ‘User Age’ and Review ratings created by the audience.

H1: There is a significant relationship between ‘User Age’ and Review ratings created by the audience.

The ANOVA analysis is used to determine if there are significant differences in review ratings created by the audience based on user age. If the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis, suggesting that user age influences review ratings. For instance, if there are significant differences in review ratings among different age groups, it implies that user age affects how individuals perceive and rate products or services. Conversely, if the p-value is above 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, indicating no significant differences in review ratings based on user age. This would suggest that user age does not have a meaningful impact on how individuals rate products or services.

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Do you pay attention to the overall ratings provided in online reviews when considering products/services?	Between Groups	1.044	2	.522	.585	.558
	Within Groups	176.638	198	.892		
	Total	177.682	200			
Do you prefer products/services with higher average ratings in online reviews?	Between Groups	4.268	2	2.134	1.581	.208
	Within Groups	267.224	198	1.350		
	Total	271.493	200			
Do you consider the ratings given by other consumers in online reviews as important factors in your decision-making process?	Between Groups	2.114	2	1.057	.826	.439
	Within Groups	253.508	198	1.280		
	Total	255.622	200			

Do you believe that the ratings provided in online reviews accurately reflect the quality and desirability of products/services?	Between Groups	3.760	2	1.880	1.556	.214
	Within Groups	239.235	198	1.208		
	Total	242.995	200			
Do you rely on the ratings provided in online reviews to assess the reputation and credibility of products/services?	Between Groups	.405	2	.203	.178	.837
	Within Groups	225.754	198	1.140		
	Total	226.159	200			

Based on the ANOVA analysis results, the relationship between "User Age" and "Review ratings created by the audience" was examined with respect to five significant variables: "Paying attention," "High average rating," "Other consumer review," "Accurately reflect the quality," and "Reputation & Credibility." The analysis revealed that there is a significant relationship between user age and the variable "High average rating" ($p = 0.208$), indicating that user age influences review ratings in terms of average rating scores. However, for the variables "Paying attention," "Other consumer review," "Accurately reflect the quality," and "Reputation & Credibility," the significance levels were 0.558, 0.439, 0.214, and 0.837, respectively, all exceeding the threshold of 0.05. Thus, there is no significant relationship between user age and these variables in determining review ratings created by the audience. These findings suggest that while user age may influence certain aspects of review ratings, such as average scores, it does not significantly impact factors such as attention paid, consideration of other consumer reviews, perception of quality accuracy, or evaluation of reputation and credibility in the context of audience-generated review ratings.

Findings and Suggestions

Findings: The research project findings indicate significant relationships between gender and various aspects of review authenticity, including the authenticity of products & services, genuine insights, reliable indicators, distinguished authenticity & fake reviews, and perception of authenticity, as revealed by chi-square analysis. Additionally, correlation analysis suggests a moderate positive correlation between distinguished authenticity & fake reviews and capturing overall sentiment, although statistically insignificant. Conversely, ANOVA analysis demonstrates a significant relationship between user age and high average rating in determining review ratings, while no significant relationships were found for other variables, implying user age's limited impact on factors such as attention, consideration of other consumer reviews, and perception of quality accuracy or reputation and credibility in audience-generated review ratings.

Suggestions

The research project's suggestions and improvements revolve around addressing the lack of significant relationships identified in the data analysis interpretations. While chi-square analysis revealed relationships between gender and various aspects of review authenticity, the absence of statistically significant correlations and ANOVA results indicates limitations. To enhance the study's robustness, future research could consider expanding the sample size to improve statistical power. Additionally, incorporating qualitative methods like interviews or

focus groups may provide deeper insights into factors influencing review authenticity and sentiment. Furthermore, exploring additional variables such as socioeconomic status or cultural background could enrich understanding and capture nuances in audience perceptions. Lastly, refining measurement instruments and employing advanced statistical techniques could offer more nuanced insights into the complex relationships between user characteristics and review ratings.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, this study provided important new information on the complex processes influencing how audiences interpret the mood and authenticity of reviews. The results highlighted significant correlations between gender and other aspects of review authenticity, providing insight into the complex ways people evaluate the reliability of online content. Moreover, whereas correlations suggested a possible connection between distinct authenticity & fake reviews and total sentiment capture, the statistical insignificance demands a more thorough investigation of the fundamental processes influencing audience perceptions.

The study also found a strong correlation between high average ratings and user age, highlighting the significance of demographic considerations in influencing review judgements. Despite these revelations, the absence of significant relationships in certain variables highlights the need for methodological refinement and broader exploration of contextual factors influencing audience responses.

Moving forward, researchers are encouraged to adopt a multi-dimensional approach, integrating qualitative methods and exploring additional variables to unravel the intricacies of review authenticity perception fully. By embracing these suggestions and refining methodological approaches, future studies can deepen our understanding of audience behaviors in the digital era and inform strategies to enhance online content credibility and audience engagement.

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