

2024

FBM

Insights



eISSN 2716-599X



e-ISSN 2716-599X

VOLUME 9

FACULTY OF
BUSINESS AND
MANAGEMENT

UiTM *di hatiku*

FBM INSIGHTS

Faculty of Business and Management

Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah

e-ISSN 2716-599X

The editorial board would like to express their heartfelt appreciation for the contributions made by the authors, co-authors and all who were involved in the publication of this bulletin.

Published by : Faculty of Business and Management,
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah

Published date : 30 April 2024

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THE INFLUENCING FACTORS OF ONLINE REVIEWS ON PURCHASE DECISIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Online reviews have become a crucial factor in customer decision-making, a global change with the introduction of the digital era. Chen et al. (2022) emphasize how the rise in online product reviews and the revolutionary impact of e-commerce platforms have changed the traditional paradigm of customer decision-making. Currently, these evaluations have a significant impact on the digital environment, creating a dynamic environment where digital feedback systems are crucial.

This trend can be observed in Malaysia, a country that majorly engages in commerce activities. Hong et al. (2021) draws attention to recent figures that demonstrate how heavily Malaysian customers rely on online reviews. These figures reveal a significant dependence, as a major proportion of customers regard online evaluations as helpful when making selections about what to buy.

The convergence of local and global viewpoints highlights the growing importance of Internet evaluations in the consumers' decision-making processes. The cited study helps in understanding the pervasive influence of digital feedback mechanisms, both globally and in Malaysia's particular environment.

IMPACTS ON CONSUMERS

1. Consumer Trust and Credibility

Online reviews wield substantial influence on purchasing decisions, exerting a direct and positive impact by instilling confidence. Fahrozi et al. (2022) emphasized the role of online reviews in building consumer trust through various mechanisms. Wahyudi et al. (2019) extend this understanding, specifically noting the significant impact of online customer reviews and ratings on trust creation, particularly among the youth demographic aged 10–24 engaged in Shopee purchases.

Joung (2022) delves deeper, revealing the intricate interplay of core and peripheral cues in enhancing trust, perceived utility, and purchasing intentions within the e-commerce market. These studies underscore the multifaceted nature of online product reviews and their positive influence on consumer behavior.

Moreover, the impact extends beyond conventional products, as demonstrated by the findings that online reviews with high ratings and visual content significantly enhance trust perception. The synergy between positive reviews, trust-building mechanisms, and visual elements creates a robust framework shaping consumers' preferences and choices.

2. Purchase Intent and Decision-Making

Zhong et al. (2021) highlight the significant influence of online reviews on consumers' purchasing intent and decision-making processes. Their study establishes a robust correlation between customers' purchase intentions and three critical aspects of online fraudulent reviews: sentiment traits, review length, and online seller characteristics.

Delving deeper into the dynamics of online reviews, Coursaris et al. (2018) investigate how credible and high-quality internet reviews influence the utility of knowledge. Their findings demonstrate that customers' opinions and purchasing intentions are subsequently directed toward brands.

Considering these factors collectively, these studies illuminate the intricate ways internet reviews impact customer behavior. They emphasize the importance of various factors, including review attributes, trustworthiness, and quality, as pivotal elements that shape decisions to make a purchase.

3. Sales Performance

The influence of positive internet reviews on increased sales is a well-established phenomenon in contemporary commerce. Li et al. (2020) conducted a study revealing a nuanced aspect of this relationship by identifying a moderating effect based on the product category. Their findings suggest that the impact of online reviews on sales is not uniform across all product types. Instead, it is influenced by the specific category to which a product belongs.

Moreover, Wang et al. (2016) contribute valuable insights by emphasizing the strategic importance of incorporating online reviews into product descriptions. Their research underscores that online reviews, when seamlessly integrated into product information, can significantly enhance a product's reputation. This enhanced reputation, in turn, strengthens the overall influence of online reviews that drive product sales.

In essence, these studies collectively highlight that the positive correlation between internet reviews and increased sales is contingent on factors such as the nature of the product category. Additionally, the strategic inclusion of online reviews in product descriptions serves as a potent tool, amplifying their impact on consumer perceptions and, consequently, driving sales.

4. Brand Reputation and Good Customer relationships

Online reviews have significant effects on the marketing literature scene. Li et al. (2020) highlighted the critical function that these reviews serve, emphasizing the importance of authentic comments. Expressions of gratitude and apologies, as advocated by Li et al. (2020), are more than just pleasant gestures; they are strategic movements that greatly contribute to improving client relationships and thereby boosting the possibility of repeat business.

Going further, the impact of internet reviews extends beyond individual transactions, resonating powerfully in wider brand features. Bhakta (2019) insights illuminated the multidimensional nature of these reviews. They not only influence customer opinions but also actively engage the audience. As a result, these reviews play an influential role in promoting a positive brand image. Bhakta's emphasis on active interaction complements Li et al.'s call for genuine reactions. Together, these factors form a symbiotic relationship in which true involvement catalyzes good brand associations, ultimately defining the brand's overall perception and reputation in the eyes of consumers.

5. Competitive Advantage

Kauffmann et al. (2019) advocated for the strategic use of emotional analysis in online reviews as a strong tool for organizations seeking a long-term competitive advantage. This strategy comprises exploring the sentiment or emotional tone expressed in internet reviews and providing firms with valuable information about consumer opinions and preferences.

Businesses can use emotion analysis to assess the intensity of different product attributes stated in online reviews. Understanding how features are perceived positively or negatively helps firms tailor their strategy more effectively. Understanding positive views toward specific product attributes, for example, allows organizations to emphasize their strengths in marketing and product development.

Furthermore, the insights gathered from emotional research might help businesses influence consistent purchasing behavior. Understanding consumers' emotional responses to various product features enables marketers to develop targeted and relevant marketing tactics. Businesses that align their aims with the emotions expressed in online evaluations can improve brand impressions, increase customer happiness, and gain a competitive advantage that extends beyond individual transactions.

CONCLUSION

Online reviews have a big influence on how consumers make decisions throughout the world by affecting sales performance, buy intent, and trust. In e-commerce, factors such as quality, trustworthiness, and review qualities affect customer behavior. For improved revenue, brand recognition, and higher trust, businesses should keep a positive internet reputation. Further investigation is necessary to address potential biases and develop customer preferences.

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