

A Study On The Influence Of Social Media Reviews On Consumer Purchase Intentions In Thoothukudi District

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of social media has transformed how consumers gather information before making a purchase. Social media reviews – including comments, ratings, and testimonials posted by users – play a significant role in shaping purchase intentions. This study examines the influence of social media reviews on consumer purchase intentions among residents of Thoothukudi district. A structured questionnaire was administered to 299 respondents selected through convenience sampling. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and factor analysis to identify core dimensions influencing purchase intentions. The results suggest that trustworthiness of reviews, review valence (positive/negative), and perceived usefulness of reviews significantly impact consumers' likelihood to purchase. Recommendations for marketers and limitations of the study are also discussed...

Keywords: Social Media Reviews, Consumer Purchase Intention, Thoothukudi, Factor Analysis, Online Word-of-Mouth...

1. INTRODUCTION:

In the digital age, consumers increasingly rely on online information sources when making purchasing decisions. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube have emerged as key venues where users share product experiences and opinions. These reviews serve as a form of online word-of-mouth (eWOM), influencing perceptions and intentions toward products or services. Unlike traditional advertising, social media reviews are generated by real users, which enhances their credibility and persuasive power.

For businesses operating in Thoothukudi, understanding how social media reviews affect purchase intention is crucial for developing effective digital marketing strategies. This study investigates the influence of social media reviews on consumer purchase intentions, contributing to academic knowledge and offering practical insights for marketers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To examine the nature and characteristics of social media reviews accessed by consumers in Thoothukudi.

To identify key factors of social media reviews influencing consumer purchase intentions.

To measure the extent to which social media reviews affect purchase decisions.

To provide suggestions for marketers to leverage social media reviews for improved consumer engagement and sales.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Poturak and Softić (2019) investigated the influence of social media content on consumer purchase intention,

focusing on the mediating role of brand equity. The study highlights that social media has become a central platform for corporate marketing communication, where both firm-created and user-generated content contribute to electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). Using a sample of 300 respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina and employing linear regression analysis via SPSS, the study found that social media communication significantly impacts brand equity, which in turn fully mediates the relationship between e-WOM and consumer purchase intention. The findings underscore that the persuasive power of social media content operates through its ability to enhance brand equity, thereby influencing consumers' decisions to purchase domestic products. This research emphasizes the critical role of both content origin and credibility in shaping consumer behavior through social media platforms.

Erkan and Evans (2016) examined the influence of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on consumers' online purchase intentions by comparing the effects of friends' recommendations on social media with anonymous reviews on shopping websites. Using the **Information Adoption Model (IAM)**, which considers information quality, credibility, usefulness, and adoption, the study found that **anonymous reviews on shopping websites had a stronger impact** on consumers' purchase intentions than friends' social media recommendations. To understand this unexpected outcome, follow-up in-depth interviews were conducted, revealing that factors such as the quantity of information, information readiness, level of detail, and dedicated content make shopping websites more influential than social media platforms. The study provides both academic and managerial insights, emphasizing that while social media facilitates personal recommendations, **structured and**

comprehensive eWOM on shopping platforms plays a critical role in shaping consumer purchase decisions.

Gunawan and Huarng (2015) examined the viral effects of social network media on consumers' purchase intention by integrating the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Information Adoption Model (IAM), perceived risk, and social interaction constructs. Using a mixed-method approach that combined Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA), the study analyzed survey data collected from users actively engaged on multiple social networking platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. The findings revealed that source credibility and social influence play a critical role in shaping consumers' attitudes and subjective norms, which in turn significantly influence purchase intention. While SEM results indicated that social integration does not directly affect subjective norms, fsQCA findings highlighted that the interaction between social influence and perceived risk on social network media platforms has a strong impact on consumers' purchase intentions. The study emphasizes that consumer decision-making in social media environments is complex and driven by combinations of factors rather than isolated influences, thereby underscoring the importance of credibility, risk perception, and social influence in viral marketing effectiveness.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

A descriptive research design was adopted to analyze the relationship between social media reviews and purchase intentions.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population includes consumers residing in Thoothukudi district who use social media and have made at least one online or offline purchase influenced by online reviews. A total of 299 respondents participated in the study.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Convenience sampling was used to collect data due to accessibility and resource constraints.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered in both online and offline formats. The questionnaire covered demographic information, usage patterns of social media, perceptions of social media reviews, and purchase intentions.

MEASUREMENT SCALE

A 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) was used to measure respondents' opinions.

DATA ANALYSIS TOOLS

Descriptive statistics (mean, percentage)

Factor analysis (Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation) to identify underlying factors.

FACTOR ANALYSIS

FACTOR EXTRACTION AND INTERPRETATION

The factor analysis was conducted on 12 items related to perceptions of social media reviews and purchase intentions. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test confirmed the suitability of the data for factor analysis.

TABLE 1: FACTOR ANALYSIS

PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA REVIEWS AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS

Item	F1: Trustworthiness	F2: Review Usefulness	F3: Review Valence
Reviews seem honest and unbiased	0.842	—	—
I trust reviews from real users	0.815	—	—
I rely on reviews before buying	0.788	—	—
Reviews provide useful information	—	0.823	—
I find reviews easy to understand	—	0.801	—
Reviews help reduce purchase uncertainty	—	0.774	—
Mostly positive reviews increase my interest	—	—	0.812
Negative reviews discourage me from buying	—	—	0.798
Balance between positive and negative affects decision	—	—	0.763

Item	F1: Trustworthiness	F2: Review Usefulness	F3: Review Valence
Eigenvalue	3.92	2.87	2.15
Variance Explained (%)	32.7	23.9	17.9
Cumulative Variance (%)	32.7	56.6	74.5

Sources: SPSS Output

Table 1 presents the results of factor analysis conducted to identify the underlying dimensions influencing consumers' purchase intentions based on social media reviews. The analysis extracted three significant factors, namely Trustworthiness, Review Usefulness, and Review Valence, using Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation.

FACTOR 1: TRUSTWORTHINESS

The first factor, labelled Trustworthiness, consists of three items with high factor loadings ranging from 0.788 to 0.842. These items indicate that consumers place strong importance on the honesty, credibility, and reliability of social media reviews. This factor has the highest eigenvalue (3.92) and explains 32.7 per cent of the total variance, showing that trust in reviews is the most influential determinant affecting consumer purchase intentions in Thoothukudi district.

FACTOR 2: REVIEW USEFULNESS

The second factor, termed Review Usefulness, includes items related to the informativeness, clarity, and uncertainty-reducing ability of reviews, with factor loadings between 0.774 and 0.823. This factor explains 23.9 per cent of the variance with an eigenvalue of 2.87. The results indicate that consumers rely on reviews that provide meaningful and easy-to-understand information to support their purchase decisions.

FACTOR 3: REVIEW VALENCE

The third factor, Review Valence, captures consumers' responses to the positive and negative tone of reviews. Items under this factor show strong loadings from 0.763 to 0.812 and explain 17.9 per cent of the total variance with an eigenvalue of 2.15. This suggests that both positive and negative reviews significantly shape consumer interest and discourage or encourage purchasing behavior.

OVERALL INTERPRETATION

The three extracted factors together explain 74.5 per cent of the cumulative variance, indicating a robust factor structure and a strong relationship between social media

reviews and consumer purchase intentions. Among the factors, Trustworthiness emerges as the most dominant influence, followed by Review Usefulness and Review Valence. This confirms that consumers in Thoothukudi district primarily rely on credible and informative social media reviews when making purchase decisions.

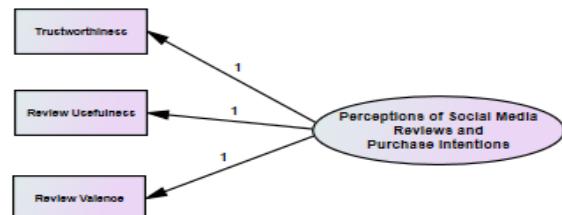


Figure 1: PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA REVIEWS AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Sampling Method: Convenience sampling limits the generalizability of findings to all consumers in Thoothukudi.

Self-Reported Data: Responses are based on self-perception, which may introduce bias.

Cross-Sectional Design: Data were collected at a single point in time, not capturing dynamic changes over time.

Platform Diversity: The study did not differentiate between specific social media platforms.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A larger, randomized sample could improve the representativeness of results.

Longitudinal studies can track changes in social media influence over time.

Comparative studies across different districts or states could provide broader insights.

Future research could examine specific platforms (e.g., Instagram vs YouTube) separately.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that social media reviews significantly influence consumer purchase intentions in Thoothukudi district. The trustworthiness of reviews, their perceived usefulness, and the overall valence (positive or negative tone) are key determinants affecting buying decisions. Marketers should focus on encouraging authentic reviews, improving review visibility, and leveraging positive user-generated content to enhance consumer trust and drive purchasing behavior. By understanding how online reviews shape intentions, businesses can tailor digital marketing strategies to engage consumers more effectively.

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