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The Role of Social Media Reviews and Ratings in Shaping Consumer Purchase Intentions

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ABSTRACT: The rapid growth of social media has transformed the way consumers make purchase decisions, with online reviews and ratings playing a pivotal role in influencing consumer behavior. This research explores the impact of social media reviews and ratings on consumer purchase intentions, highlighting the psychological and social mechanisms behind their influence. As consumers increasingly turn to platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter for product recommendations, peer reviews and ratings are perceived as more trustworthy than traditional advertising. Positive reviews and high ratings often build credibility, boost consumer confidence, and trigger favorable purchase intentions, while negative feedback can prompt hesitation or lead to abandonment of purchase plans. The study examines how factors such as review volume, authenticity, and perceived credibility shape consumer attitudes toward products, and how social proof, herd behavior, and the desire for conformity further amplify the effects of online feedback. Additionally, the research investigates demographic variables—such as age, gender, and cultural background—that influence the degree to which reviews and ratings affect purchase intentions.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the current world with social media, reviews and ratings have a powerful way of influencing consumer buying behavior. Social media reviews, no matter whether they exist on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or any e-commerce online platform, have a great influence on consumer purchase intention. Today, consumers use online feedback from peers, online influencers and other online users more than ever to help them in their purchasing decision. Often with ratings, these reviews are the social proof like or dislike that will scare away or attract interest in a product or service. Reviews are the driving force for your credibility and trust, and consumers are far more likely to have their purchase through with positive ratings and reviews, while negative feedback can put consumers on the fence or abandon an intent to transact. In addition, the massiveness of reviews and ratings strengthens the impact, as it seems that many consumers think the more reviews and ratings a product has, the higher it is in terms of reliability and quality. Taking into account the psychological theories of the social influence and herd behavior, they very often make the decisions based on other person's opinions or experiences in case they have some uncertainty about the product's quality. Moreover, social media reviews enrich consumers' experiences with brands and other consumers in ways that surpass the scope of traditional marketing which only focuses on product evaluation. The multiplicity of roles that social media reviews and ratings play in generating purchase intentions is therefore based on features such as authenticity, perceived credibility and social proof. Knowing how these elements interact can be of great value to businesses who want to use social media in marketing and to consumers trying to figure out the endless choices available in today's online world. This research attempts to investigate this by looking into two aspects of social media reviews and ratings: 1) how social media reviews and ratings are able to influence consumer decisions, and 2) what actual factors determine their effectiveness to influence purchase intentions in consumers.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

This paper aims to investigate how social media reviews and ratings affect consumer purchase intention and those underlying factors that drive consumer behaviors in digital marketplace, aiming to fill a research gap in C2C online marketplace. Reviews and ratings from peers, influencers, and users become very important in determining how consumers view products and services, as social media has moved towards becoming an essential element of the decision making process. This research focus on the investigation of positive and negative reviews, rating system across various platform, and what influence to consumer's trust, satisfaction and its intention of buying process. Focusing on the psychological mechanisms underpinning this consumer behavior—the influences of social proof, herd behavior, and the perception of credibility within these reviews—the study attempts to understand how and why the different types of content, whether user generated reviews, influencer endorsements, or word of mouth feedback, influence consumer choice. The study also attempts to quantify the effects of review authenticity on consumer trust in an era where this property is challenged by fake reviews and review manipulation. In addition, this study will compare the effects of reviews and ratings across major social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and examine the platform specific dynamics and their impacts on purchase intention. Overall, this research hopes to shed light for business people regarding how to optimize their marketing strategies using social media and to the audience in

the wide world of online reviews. These findings will help to better inform how the relationship between social media feedback and consumer decision making continues to evolve in an increasingly digital world.

1.2 Scope of the Study

This study will have a scope to study the impact of social media reviews and ratings in determining the purchasing intentions of customers based on various industries such as e commerce, fashion, travel and technology. It is going to analyze how reviews and ratings on the popular social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter help in improving the user engagement and sharing of content according to their channel specific mechanism. This study will also examine how negative and positive reviews, respectively, impact consumer perceptions of particular products or services, and how those perceptions then impact buying decisions. The psychological aspects compelling consumers to trust and be satisfied will be studied in particular, focusing on social proof that parallels to the commentary sentiment, authenticity of reviews, as well as the credibility of influencers and user generated content. In addition, the study will look at demographic differences in response to reviews, for example, looking at the difference in response according to age, gender, or culture to determine if one group is more affected by online feedback than another. Additionally, the research will cover increasing reviews fake and review manipulation concern, as it seeks to understand how these problems influence the reviews perception by consumers and ultimately, the overall efficacy of social media reviews. The study uses surveys, content analysis as well as case studies to understand how social media reviews and ratings impact purchasing behavior.

1.3 Importance of Consumer Purchase Intentions

Consumer purchase intentions refer to the likelihood or probability that a consumer will engage in a specific buying behavior, such as purchasing a product or service, based on their preferences, needs, and the factors influencing their decision-making process. Understanding purchase intentions is crucial for businesses, as it provides valuable insight into future sales performance and helps in forecasting demand, guiding marketing strategies, and optimizing product offerings. The importance of consumer purchase intentions lies in their predictive nature, as they serve as an early indicator of whether a consumer is likely to move from the consideration stage to the actual purchase. These intentions are shaped by a variety of factors, including personal preferences, brand perception, product availability, price sensitivity, and external influences such as social media reviews, advertising, and word-of-mouth. In today's digital economy, the role of online reviews and ratings in shaping purchase intentions has become increasingly significant, with consumers relying on feedback from peers, influencers, and other users to inform their decisions. Positive reviews and ratings often create a sense of trust and reliability, leading to stronger purchase intentions, while negative feedback or poor ratings can diminish confidence and lead to hesitation or abandonment of the purchase process. Consumer purchase intentions are closely linked to the concept of consumer behavior, which studies how individuals make choices, evaluate alternatives, and ultimately commit to purchasing decisions. For businesses, understanding these intentions allows for more targeted and effective marketing campaigns, improved customer engagement, and better product development. By analyzing the factors that drive or hinder purchase intentions, companies can tailor their offerings to meet consumer needs and preferences, enhance customer satisfaction, and increase conversion rates. Therefore, consumer purchase intentions are not just a reflection of immediate interest but also a strategic tool for long-term business success and growth in a competitive marketplace.

1.4 Social Media Platforms and Consumer Behavior

Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, have become central to modern consumer behavior, significantly influencing how individuals discover, evaluate, and decide on products and services. These platforms offer unique spaces for interaction, enabling users to share their experiences, reviews, and opinions through comments, posts, and ratings. Each platform has its own review and rating system: Facebook allows users to leave star ratings and reviews on business pages, while Instagram offers a more visually-driven platform where influencers and users can provide informal recommendations through posts, stories, and videos. Twitter, with its fast-paced, text-focused format, often drives consumer behavior through tweets and hashtags that can go viral. These platform-specific systems create different types of consumer engagement—ranging from detailed reviews to quick endorsements or critiques—offering a comprehensive picture of a product's reputation. The influence of social media is further amplified by the rise of influencers and user-generated content, which can sway consumer purchase intentions. Influencers, with their established trust and large followings, often provide direct recommendations or product reviews, shaping perceptions and driving sales through affiliate links or sponsored posts. User-generated content, such as unboxing videos, customer testimonials, and experience-based reviews, also serves as a powerful form of social proof that reinforces consumer confidence in a product or service. Cross-platform influence plays a significant role, as consumers may encounter the same product on multiple platforms, reinforcing its desirability and credibility. For example, a product that is highly rated on Facebook may also be trending on Instagram, increasing its visibility and encouraging purchase intent across various channels. These interwoven interactions between platforms, reviews, ratings, and influencer endorsements create a dynamic, multifaceted environment that profoundly shapes consumer behavior in the digital marketplace.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Chen, Y., et al (2011). The way online consumer reviews have evolved from being an entirely static experience to a much more dynamic and interactive experience is down to marketing in a social media channel. Vendors now have their platforms where consumers can instantly share their opinions, experiences and feedback, and reviews become a critical aspect of the reputation of a brand. These reviews can be quickly amplified on the social media, where positive or negative experiences can quickly spread via likes, shares and comments among the audience in general. One way marketers tend to get customers to leave reviews (something that no doubt benefits you, their business) is by offering incentives or by directly engaging with their customers through conversations or comments to help foster that community, that trust.

Pookulangara, S., et al (2011). Cultural factors significantly influence how consumers engage with social networks, shaping their online behaviors and purchase intentions. In different cultures, values, traditions, and social norms affect how individuals perceive and interact with digital content, including advertisements and influencer endorsements. For example, in collectivist cultures, consumers are more likely to trust and follow influencers who align with community values and social approval. In contrast, individualistic cultures may focus more on personal preferences and self-expression when engaging with content. These cultural influences also impact purchasing decisions, as consumers from certain cultural backgrounds might be more receptive to product recommendations from peers or influencers they identify with. Cultural factors can determine the types of products or services that resonate with different audiences, affecting their likelihood of making online purchases. Marketers who understand these cultural nuances can tailor their social media strategies, making them more effective in driving engagement and increasing online purchase intentions across diverse consumer segments.

Pauliene, R., et al (2019). Purchase intention in Generations Y (Millennials) and Z is strongly influenced by social media recommendations. Both generations are highly active on social media, where you also look for recommendations from influencers, your peers, and brands. Due to the level of authenticity and social proof required when making purchase decisions, social media recommendation often is a trusted source of information for Gen Y. Likewise, if reviews, testimonials, and influencer endorsements marry the values and lifestyle of their audience, they are more likely to act. Social media reared Gen Z, and (to put it mildly) they expect influencer reliability and personal connection. Influencers who are posting content that matches and their own interests, and who are being genuine and are relating actual experiences tend to trust those influencers more.

Lăzăroiu, G., et al (2020). Social commerce platforms are influenced by various key factors affecting the consumer's decision making including online trust, perceived risk and purchase intentions. Trust is indispensable, since when people feel safe and believe a platform or seller will deliver, they are more likely to purchase. Building trust on an e – commerce site is a slow process, and involves positive reviews, secure payment options and clear product information, among other things. However, perceived risk can discourage consumers because they fear, for example, harm to product quality, privacy breach, and financial loss. Social commerce platforms tend to have user generated content to reduce this risk, e.g. reviews and ratings which can reassure a potential buyer. However, if the consumers believe that the platform is credible and safe, they will more likely convert into the actual purchase. Having recommendations by influencers or people you know could potentially feel super community and create a sense of urgency which in turn increases purchase intentions. All of these factors make consumers behave as they do on social commerce platforms.

McClure, C., et al (2020). The involvement level of consumers significantly affects how a brand's social media pages influence their purchase intentions. High involvement consumers, who are deeply engaged with a brand, often visit its social media pages to stay updated on product launches, promotions, and content that aligns with their interests. For these consumers, the brand's social media presence serves as a key touch point for building trust and strengthening emotional connections, which in turn increases the likelihood of purchase. On the other hand, low involvement consumers may not invest as much time on a brand's social media, but still rely on it for quick information or special deals. The quality of content, interaction, and engagement on the brand's social media pages can significantly impact consumer perceptions and purchase decisions. Brands that consistently offer valuable, engaging content tailored to their audience's needs are more likely to influence consumer behavior, driving increased purchase intentions across various levels of involvement.

Thomas, M. J., et al (2019). The credibility of online reviews is influenced by several key determinants, including the reviewer's expertise, the level of detail in the review, and the presence of both positive and negative feedback. Reviews from users who are perceived as knowledgeable or experienced with the product or service tend to be considered more trustworthy. Detailed reviews that provide specific information about the product's features, performance, and real-life application are also seen as more credible, as they help consumers make informed decisions. Reviews that contain a

balance of both positive and negative feedback are viewed as more authentic, as they suggest impartiality. The credibility of online reviews directly impacts consumers' purchase intentions, as trustworthy reviews reduce perceived risk and increase confidence in the product. When consumers feel that a review is credible, they are more likely to rely on it when making purchase decisions, ultimately driving higher conversion rates for businesses.

Wang, X., Yu, C., et al (2012). Social media peer communication plays a significant role in shaping consumers' purchase intentions through a consumer socialization framework. Consumers, particularly younger generations, are influenced by interactions and discussions with their peers on social media platforms. These interactions often involve product recommendations, reviews, and shared experiences that help inform purchasing decisions. Peer communication creates a sense of social proof, where individuals trust the opinions and experiences of their friends or acquaintances more than traditional advertisements. As peers engage in conversations about products, showcasing personal use and satisfaction, they act as informal influencers, guiding others' purchase intentions. This socialization process leads to a more communal decision-making approach, where purchasing behaviors are influenced by group norms and shared values. The impact of peer communication is amplified when consumers feel a strong sense of belonging to a community or group, making them more likely to purchase products that are popular or recommended within that social circle.

Yang, J., et al (2016). The product reviews amalgamate into a significant impact on online shoppers' risk perception and purchase intention that depends upon their balance and volume. If reviews are balanced, with both positive and negative comments, consumers more strongly perceive those reviews as authentic and credible and see them as decreasing perceived risk. Also, having a balanced set of reviews, you can compare the pros to the cons and make well informed decisions. Conversely, many too much positive reviews can raise skepticism and thereby an increase of perceived risk by questioning the veracity of the posted reviews. It also matters how much reviews are there, more reviews make consumers think the product has been thoroughly tested and evaluated by others. This also leads to improves purchase intention as shoppers are more likely to view the product being trustworthy with a substantial volume of reviews. For these organizations, a review with high balance and volume is essential to induce confidence in purchases to overcome purchase hesitation.

III. IMPACT OF REVIEWS ON CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTIONS

Both positive and negative reviews alike have an equally important effect on consumer purchase intentions, typically impacting them far beyond the simple examination of a product's features. Positive reviews help to build trust, credibility and confidence in the product which help to meet the partner's purchase intentions. In the event consumers come across good feedback in terms of other people talking about product benefits or how satisfied the customer is, it calls for what one already popularized and makes the perceived risk decline. On the other side, negative reviews may scare away possible buyers by highlighting product flaws or unsatisfactory experiences, sparking negative thought and hesitation. But then the effect of negative reviews can rely on the sort of product and the buyer's resistance to danger as some buyers can neglect a few 'no' comments within the event that the majority of the commentaries are 'yes'. In addition, ratings play the vital role in terms of consumer trust where star ratings or numerical score is a quick and easily interpreted factor that consumers uses to determine the general sentiment about the product. Generally, high ratings indicate a good quality and good experience, while low ratings may set off alarms, especially when the reviews keep pointing out the same things. In addition, authenticity of reviews matters when determining consumer purchase intention. Authentic looking, detailed, and unbiased reviews have a stronger chance of leaving a positive impression on the consumers while overly promotional or crafted reviews tend to create skepticism among consumers and lessen the impact.

3.1 Influence of Consumer Expertise on Trustworthiness of Reviews

Trust in reviews hinges on consumer expertise, where differing levels of expertise or experience within one category of product may cause one person to interpret one review differently than another. In the absence of understanding or if you are a novice consumer about a product, user reviews would act as a crucial source of information, and you would be likely to depend upon the overall sentiment reflected in the reviews – whether it's a star rating or general tone of the feedback. They tend to place more trust and sway more in reviews if the reviews lines with their expectations, or if they're from sources that they decide are similar to them, or that they perceive as credible. On the other hand, relatively more knowledgeable or experienced consumers tend to have a more refined understanding of product specifications, quality indicators, and standards of the industry, so they tend to be more selective when evaluating reviews. They could look for review details—were the reviews genuine? Is the feedback consistent? Do all the reviews line up against other sources? And because expert consumers know that they know what they're talking about, they're not easily swayed by generalized, usually too positive, reviews and want to read nuanced, factual and specific info in line with their level of understanding. The disconcerting divergence in review interpretation results in an environment in which the perceived

review trustworthiness is contingent on the consumer expertise. Expert consumers also may know about issues such as fake reviews, review manipulation, and biases of certain review platforms, and so may not trust too good to be true or too bad to be true reviews.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study involved a quantitative approach using an online survey to examine how social media reviews and their characteristics influence consumer purchase intentions. The survey was distributed to 500 participants, selected through a stratified random sampling method to ensure diversity across age, gender, and income groups. Participants were asked to evaluate a series of hypothetical product reviews, which varied in characteristics such as review length, emotional tone, helpfulness, detail, and recency. Review characteristics were operationalized using Likert-type scales for helpfulness and emotional tone, a binary scale for the presence of detailed information, and numeric measures for review length and recency. After reading the reviews, participants were asked to rate their purchase intention on a 1-5 Likert scale. Data collected from the survey was analyzed using Pearson's correlation analysis to examine the relationships between review characteristics and purchase intentions. Regression analysis was also performed to assess the predictive power of these characteristics. Statistical software, such as SPSS, was used to ensure robust analysis and reliable results. The study aimed to provide insights into how various elements of social media reviews shape consumer behavior, ultimately offering recommendations for brands on optimizing their online review strategies.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Impact of Social Media Reviews and Ratings on Consumer Purchase Intentions

Variable	Measure	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation with Purchase Intentions	Significance (p-value)
Review Sentiment (Positive)	Sentiment analysis score	4.3	0.65	0.78	0.001
Review Sentiment (Negative)	Sentiment analysis score	2.1	0.72	-0.62	0.02
Review Volume (Number of Reviews)	Total reviews	3.9	0.75	0.70	0.01
Average Rating Score (1-5)	Rating score	4.4	0.55	0.82	0.001
Trustworthiness of Reviews	Likert scale (1-5)	4.5	0.60	0.85	0.001
Purchase Intention	Likert scale (1-5)	4.2	0.63	—	—
Review Source (Platform Type)	Social media platform	—	—	0.65	0.03

Table 1 presents the results of the study examining the impact of social media reviews and ratings on consumer purchase intentions. The table shows that positive review sentiment ($r = 0.78$) has a strong positive correlation with purchase intentions, indicating that favorable reviews significantly enhance the likelihood of a consumer making a purchase. In contrast, negative review sentiment is negatively correlated ($r = -0.62$), suggesting that poor reviews detract from consumer purchase intentions. The number of reviews also has a positive effect ($r = 0.70$), implying that a higher volume of reviews can increase consumer confidence and the likelihood of purchasing. Similarly, the average rating score ($r = 0.82$) is strongly correlated with purchase intentions, highlighting the importance of a high rating in driving consumer decisions. Furthermore, the trustworthiness of reviews emerges as a critical factor ($r = 0.85$), emphasizing that consumers are more likely to be influenced by reviews they perceive as credible. Finally, the platform type moderates the effect of reviews, with certain social media platforms having a greater influence on purchase intent than others. These findings underscore the importance of both the quality and credibility of online reviews in shaping consumer behavior.

Table 2: Influence of Review Characteristics on Consumer Purchase Intentions

Review Characteristic	Measure	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation with Purchase Intentions	Significance (p-value)
Review Length	Number of words	120	35	0.65	0.01
Helpfulness of Review	Likert scale (1-5)	4.2	0.60	0.74	0.001
Emotional Tone of Review	Sentiment analysis (score)	0.75	0.20	0.68	0.02
Presence of Detailed Information	Binary (Yes/No)	—	—	0.80	0.001
Review Date (Recency)	Days since posted	30	12	0.55	0.03
Purchase Intention	Likert scale (1-5)	4.1	0.65	—	—

After discussing the differing review characteristics and consumer reactions detailed in Table 1, Table 2 examines how certain review characteristics affect consumer purchase intention. Purchase intentions are moderately positively correlated with review length ($r = 0.65$) indicating that longer reviews, presumably with more detail, leads to more purchases. The review's main indicator, the degree to which the review was judged helpful by the reader (on a Likert scale), resulted in a very significant positive correlation ($r = 0.74$), implying that the more helpful a review is judged to be, the greater its impact on purchase decisions. Additionally, the emotional tone of the review also matters, positively emotional tone correlates moderately ($r = 0.68$) with purchase intentions. Positive emotions in review is more likely to be purchased by consumers. Correlation with purchase intentions is strongest to the presence of detailed information in reviews ($r = 0.80$), which indicates that reviews with complete and informative content are very convincing. Finally, the relationship on Recency ($r = 0.55$; $p < .01$) is moderately and positively related to the purchase intentions, indicating that more current reviews are more trusted and thus have the higher influence in consumer behavior.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study concludes with explanation of their role and the role of their characteristics in shaping consumer purchase intentions. Strong positive correlations were found between purchase intentions and positivity of review sentiment, helpfulness, and the emotional tone of a review, stressing the significance of consumer – friendly, emotionally engaging, and useful content. One kind of review proved more influential overall than any other: ones with more detail in them. ($r = 0.80$, espousing that consumers are more likely to purchase products where they have access to thorough and informative reviews.) Our results show that duration positively affected purchase intentions although to a lesser extent, indicating that longer review are associated with greater review credibility. Further, it was found that the recency of the review affected the consumer's decision, with more recent reviews ($r = 0.55$) more so trusted and influential. Results underscore the importance for brands to put as much focus into generating high volume of reviews as on reviewing them as detailed, emotionally engaging and current. This research contributes to our understanding of which review characteristics matter most to consumers as well as actionable suggestions for brands who want to improve and monetize their online reputation, and convert purchasers.

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