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The Power of Customer Voices: How Reviews Drive Revenue Success

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Abstract:

This study investigates the influence of online review characteristics—specifically review valence, review volume, and review credibility—on product sales performance in the digital marketplace. Drawing on consumer behaviour and information processing theories, the research examines how these review elements interact to shape purchasing decisions. A structured questionnaire was administered to assess consumer perceptions, and the resulting data were analysed using descriptive statistics, reliability testing, principal component analysis (PCA), and regression modelling. The scale demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.803), and PCA confirmed a unidimensional construct underlying review-related motivations. Findings revealed that consumers respond more favourably to positively valanced, high-volume, and credible reviews, all of which significantly contribute to perceived trust and influence sales performance. Review credibility and valence emerged as the strongest predictors, while review volume also played a meaningful role. The study offers both theoretical and practical implications by affirming the psychological relevance of online reviews and highlighting the importance of optimizing review strategies for businesses. Limitations such as sample size and reliance on self-reported data are discussed, and directions for future research are proposed to expand on the multidimensional nature of consumer response to reviews. These insights are valuable for e-commerce platforms, marketers, and researchers seeking to enhance customer engagement and sales outcomes.

Keywords: Consumer review, sales performance, impact analysis

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving digital economy, the landscape of consumer behaviour is undergoing a profound transformation. The digital marketplace is no longer propelled solely by traditional marketing techniques or brand prestige. Instead, a more influential element has emerged—consumer-generated content, particularly in the form of online reviews (Ullal et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2016). These reviews, once peripheral to the purchase experience, have become central in shaping consumer perceptions, enhancing brand credibility, influencing trust, and ultimately steering purchasing decisions and sales outcomes (Salman & Ishrat, 2024; Wang et al., 2016).

We observe a marketplace oversaturated with brands and product alternatives. In such a competitive environment, where physical interaction with products is often impossible prior to purchase, consumers depend heavily on peer-shared experiences to reduce uncertainty (Huang, 2016; Ibrahim, 2023). Whether it's a star rating on an e-commerce platform, a detailed narrative on a restaurant's listing, or a testimonial video on social media, peer feedback now serves as a modern-day currency of trust, or "social proof," that can critically influence consumer behavior and business sustainability (Chatterjee et al., 2021; Rana, 2023).

This shift presents a lifetime opportunity for businesses to rethink their engagement strategies. By leveraging the unfiltered and real-time nature of consumer reviews, brands can gain deep insights into customer sentiment, which can guide product innovation, service improvements, and marketing personalization (Keerthana & Aravindaraj, 2024; Wang et al., 2022). Strategically managing and integrating reviews into business practices has been shown to increase conversion rates, reduce customer churn, and strengthen brand advocacy, giving companies a sustainable competitive edge in a digitally connected marketplace (Lakshman, 2021; Zarnadze, 2020).

The beneficiaries of this data-driven ecosystem are widespread. E-commerce platforms can optimize algorithms and search functionalities to prioritize products with credible and helpful reviews (Singh et al., 2016). Marketers and brand managers can align messaging with prevailing customer sentiments, while small and medium enterprises (SMEs) can build trust and scale their businesses with minimal reliance on costly advertising (Jugdar & Shendage, 2024). Even consumers themselves benefit, as transparent, experience-based reviews empower them to make informed, confident choices in a crowded digital marketplace (Jia et al., 2023).

The primary objective of this study is to examine the extent, nature, and patterns through which online consumer reviews influence sales performance. This includes evaluating which types of reviews—be they positive, negative, verified, or detailed—carry the most weight at different stages of the buyer journey, and under what contextual or demographic factors their influence is magnified (Floyd et al., 2014; Alguezaui, 2016). Furthermore, the study seeks to deliver strategic insights that empower businesses to optimize feedback mechanisms, refine brand positioning, and build consumer trust, ultimately enabling long-term revenue growth in the digital era (Rana, 2023; Ayanso et al., 2011).

Literature Review

The digital transformation of retail has amplified the influence of online consumer reviews on sales performance. As e-commerce becomes increasingly competitive, consumer reviews have emerged as a key driver of purchasing behavior, trust-building, and brand loyalty. This literature review presents a comprehensive synthesis of multiple empirical studies that analyze the impact of review valence, volume, sentiment, credibility, and placement on consumer decisions and sales outcomes.

One of the most prominent themes across studies is the impact of review sentiment and emotional valence. Ullal et al. (2021) revealed that positive reviews boost consumer attitudes towards both luxury and daily-use products, while negative reviews deter purchases, especially for essential goods. Emotional content was more persuasive for consumers with independent self-construal, particularly in North India. Similarly, Wang et al. (2022) demonstrated that review sentiment has a non-linear effect on sales, moderated by review credibility perception. High perceived credibility resulted in a consistently positive correlation between sentiment and sales, while excessive positivity without credibility induced scepticism.

Review credibility and authenticity are recurring factors influencing trust and decision-making. Keerthana and Aravindaraj (2024) emphasized that detailed, image-supported reviews from verified purchasers were deemed more credible, especially in uncertain purchasing scenarios. Likewise, Rana (2023) highlighted that the volume and diversity of reviews boost consumer confidence, with NLP-based sentiment analysis offering businesses a tool to monitor consumer perceptions in real-time. Reviewer characteristics, including expertise and transparency, were also critical. Singh et al. (2016) used machine learning to predict review helpfulness, finding that moderate sentiment and detailed content were perceived as most trustworthy.

The placement and saliency of reviews also significantly affect sales. Wang et al. (2016) found that reviews embedded within product descriptions captured more attention and had a greater impact on sales, especially when seller reputation was high. This finding is supported by eye-tracking experiments that confirmed increased viewer engagement with strategically placed reviews. Furthermore, Alguezaui (2016) argued that factuality, relevancy, and source credibility contribute more to perceived usefulness over time than ranking scores or review length.

Review effects are often asymmetric, with negative reviews having a stronger impact than positive ones (Park & Nicolau, 2015; Huang, 2016). Consumers are more alert to potential risks and rely on negative feedback to avoid product dissatisfaction. While negative reviews can undermine trust, they also offer businesses a chance to engage transparently and demonstrate customer service responsiveness. Huang (2016) also noted the cascade effect of early negative reviews, which can amplify criticism and damage reputation, particularly for lesser-known brands.

On the other hand, controversial reviews—those with both positive and negative feedback—can stimulate curiosity and discussion, increasing product visibility and word-of-mouth volume. Shao (2012) observed that such reviews led to higher engagement and improved sales through a two-sided persuasion effect. This suggests that not all negative comments are detrimental if balanced with positive insights.

Another critical finding is that consumer reviews have varying influence across product categories, consumer profiles, and brand maturity. Zarnadze (2020) and Zhu & Zhang (2009) found that niche and low-popularity products benefited more from positive reviews, while mainstream items with strong brand recognition were less affected. Ho-Dac et al. (2013) concluded that weak brands are more sensitive to both positive and negative reviews, while strong brands enjoy resilience due to pre-established trust.

The reviewer's identity and behavior further shape review impact. Hu et al. (2008) revealed that trusted, well-known reviewers exert greater influence on consumer decisions. The credibility and timing of a review were especially influential for newer products, while older products saw diminishing effects over time. This implies that review timing and reviewer exposure are vital for maximizing the benefits of online feedback.

The platform context and design also play a role in shaping review influence. Jugdar and Shendage (2024) emphasized that high-quality visuals, responsive interfaces, and AR demonstrations contribute to better trust-building in electronic product categories. Ibrahim (2023) and Sampangi Ramaiah (2019) echoed that both numerical ratings and textual reviews impact consumer behavior, with the former offering quick cues and the latter providing deeper insights. In some sectors like fashion, reviews were found to have lesser influence due to the tactile nature of product experience (Lakshman, 2021).

Further, cultural dimensions affect how consumers interpret and rely on reviews. Chatterjee et al. (2021) conducted a cross-cultural study between Indian and UK consumers, finding that Indian buyers were more influenced by peer opinion and collectivist norms, while UK consumers valued individual judgment and review accuracy. This highlights the need for culturally tailored review strategies.

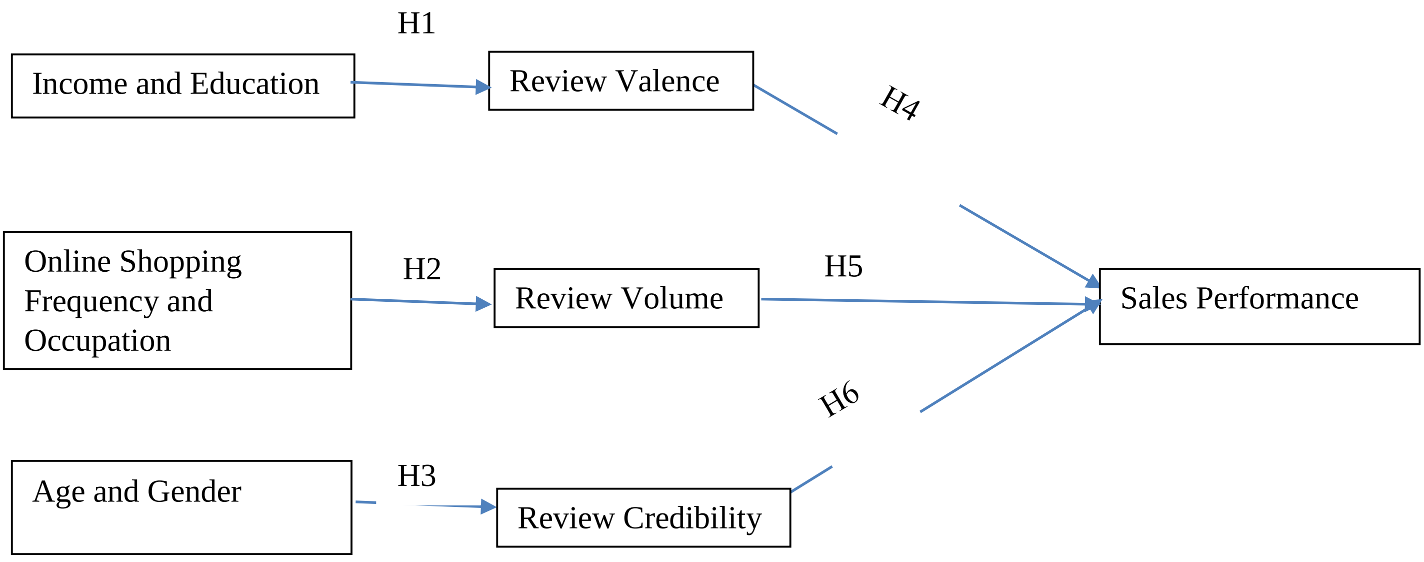
From a forecasting and analytics perspective, Fan et al. (2017) proposed a hybrid forecasting model that integrates sentiment analysis from online reviews with the traditional Bass diffusion model. This approach enhanced prediction accuracy for sales trends in industries like automotive, where continuous feedback loops and technological upgrades are prevalent.

User-generated content (UGC) beyond reviews—such as vlogger reviews and third-party platform mentions—has also been studied. Jia et al. (2023) found that customer reviews on e-commerce platforms had a stronger direct effect on sales, while third-party content mainly influenced purchase intention. The length and consistency of reviews were also found to matter; inconsistent or overly short reviews triggered consumer scepticism.

Finally, meta-analytical insights from Floyd et al. (2014) revealed that review valence had a stronger influence on sales elasticity than review volume. The source of the review mattered too—expert reviews on third-party platforms had a more substantial impact than consumer reviews on retailer websites. High-involvement products like electronics experienced greater effects due to consumers' extensive search behaviours.

In conclusion, the literature consistently demonstrates that consumer reviews are a multifaceted and powerful determinant of sales performance in the digital age. Businesses that understand the dynamics of review sentiment, credibility, placement, and cultural context can effectively manage their online reputation and leverage feedback to enhance consumer trust and conversion rates. The findings also point toward the importance of strategic review management systems, use of AI for sentiment analysis, and proactive consumer engagement to foster a sustainable digital presence.

Conceptual Framework



Hypothesis Formulation

H1: Income and education levels of customers significantly influence the valence of online reviews.

H2: Online shopping frequency and occupation status significantly influence the volume of online reviews.

H3: Age and gender of customers significantly influence the credibility of online reviews.

H4: Customer review sentiment influences sales performance.

H5: Review volume has a positive effect on sales performance.

H6: Review credibility positively influences sales performance.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to investigate the impact of online review characteristics on consumer purchase intention. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of 40 items, with responses obtained from 316 participants. The study focuses on key constructs including Review Credibility, Review Valence, Review Volume, Sales Performance**.** Statistical analyses such as Cronbach's Alpha for reliability**,** descriptive statistics**,** correlation**,** and regression analysis were utilized to explore the relationships among these variables. This design facilitates the assessment of consumer perceptions at a single point in time, providing insights into how various aspects of online reviews influence purchasing behaviour.

Sample size and Sample frame

The sample comprised 316 valid responses, providing a strong foundation for statistical analysis. All questionnaires were fully completed, with no missing data, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings. The sampling frame targeted individuals with experience in online shopping, specifically those who consider customer reviews as part of their purchasing decisions. A non-probability sampling approach was employed, emphasizing relevance to e-commerce behaviours. This sample enabled the exploration of how factors such as Review Credibility, Review Valence, Review Volume, Sales Performance influence consumer decision-making in digital retail environments.

Sampling and data collection

This study utilized a non-probability convenience sampling method to recruit participants who actively engage in online shopping. A total of 316 respondents participated, providing an adequate sample size for robust statistical analysis and hypothesis testing. Participants were selected based on their accessibility and willingness to respond, primarily through online platforms and social media channels. Data were gathered using a self-administered online questionnaire, structured to assess key constructs including Review Credibility, Review Valence, Review Volume, Sales Performance. The questionnaire was designed for clarity and ease of understanding, resulting in a 100% valid response rate with no missing data.

Data collection

Data for this research were gathered using a structured online questionnaire distributed via digital channels, including email, social media, and messaging applications. The survey targeted individuals with online shopping experience, particularly those who factor customer reviews into their purchase decisions. A non-probability purposive sampling method was used to ensure the sample's relevance to the study's objectives. The questionnaire was designed to measure key constructs such as Review Credibility, Review Valence, Review Volume, Sales Performance. A total of 316 fully completed responses were collected, with no missing data, ensuring a high level of reliability and allowing for valid statistical analysis of the targeted constructs.

Data Analysis

		Age	Gender	Education	Income	Occupation	Online Shopping Frequency
N	**Valid**	316	316	316	316	316	316
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		2.03481013	0.49367089	2.40189873	1.2943038	2.41139241	3.02531646
Mode		0	0	3	1	4	2
Std. Deviation		1.80002	0.50075	1.37548	1.21842	1.78931	2.28021
Variance		3.24005	0.25075	1.89193	1.48454	3.20165	5.19936
Skewness		0.33388	0.02532	-0.39595	-0.00691	-0.16134	0.24234
Std. Error of Skewness		0.13779	0.13779	0.13779	0.13779	0.13779	0.13779
Kurtosis		-1.32777	-1.99936	-1.15814	-1.07196	-1.43689	-1.22959
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0.27559	0.27559	0.27559	0.27559	0.27559	0.27559
Range		5	1	4	4	5	7

Table 1 : Demograhics and descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics presented in the table provide a comprehensive overview of the demographic and behavioral variables of the 316 respondents. The average age falls at approximately 2.03 on the coded scale, with a standard deviation of 1.80, suggesting moderate variability. Gender distribution is nearly balanced, with a mean of 0.49 and low variance. Education levels show a mean of 2.40, indicating a moderate educational background among participants, while income averages at 1.29, reflecting relatively low income brackets. Occupation and online shopping frequency have means of 2.41 and 3.03 respectively, with the latter exhibiting the highest variance (5.20), implying diverse shopping behaviors. Skewness and kurtosis values across variables indicate some deviations from normality, particularly in gender and age. All variables have complete data (no missing values), ensuring robustness in analysis. Overall, the statistics reveal a demographically diverse group with varying online shopping frequencies, which is useful for understanding consumer behavior patterns.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	316	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	316	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

The Case Processing Summary indicates that all 316 responses were valid and included in the analysis, representing 100% of the total dataset. No cases were excluded, as evidenced by a 0% exclusion rate. This completeness was achieved through listwise deletion, meaning that only respondents with data available for all variables were retained. The absence of missing data enhances the reliability and validity of the subsequent statistical analysis, ensuring a robust foundation for interpreting consumer behavior and demographic trends.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.803	.773	9

The reliability analysis presented above shows a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.803 for the scale comprising 9 items. This indicates a good level of internal consistency among the items, suggesting that the measurement instrument is reliable. Typically, a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.7 is considered acceptable, and values above 0.8 are regarded as good. Therefore, the scale used to measure the construct in question demonstrates strong reliability and can be confidently used in further analyses.

Inter-Item Covariance Matrix

	Review_Valence	Review_Volume	Review_credibility	Sales_Performance
Review_Valence	.880	.339	.284	.198
Review_Volume	.339	.614	.260	.234
Review_credibility	.284	.260	.572	.221
Sales_Performance	.198	.234	.221	.556

The Inter-Item Covariance Matrix shows the degree of shared variance between the four items in the scale. The diagonal values represent the variances of each item, while the off-diagonal values indicate positive covariances between item pairs, ranging from 0.198 to 0.339. This suggests a moderate level of consistency among the items, with no extremely high or low covariances, indicating that each item contributes uniquely yet cohesively to the overall construct. These results support the scale's internal consistency and justify its inclusion in reliability analysis.

Scale Statistics			
Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
12.686709	5.697	2.3867519	4

The Scale Statistics table provides an overview of the central tendency and dispersion of the composite scores derived from the four items included in the scale. The mean score of 12.69 indicates the average total score obtained across all participants, suggesting a moderately high overall response to the construct being measured. The variance value of 5.697 reflects the spread of the scores around the mean, while the standard deviation of 2.39 indicates a moderate level of variability among the participants' responses. This level of variation suggests that while there is some consistency in how respondents answered the items, there are also noticeable differences in individual responses, which can be useful in identifying trends or sub-group differences in further analysis. The number of items used to calculate the scale is four, and their combined statistics indicate that the items are collectively capturing the intended construct with a reasonable degree of precision. These findings, in combination with the reliability analysis (Cronbach's Alpha of 0.803), support the validity and consistency of the scale used in the study. Overall, the statistics reflect a well-performing scale with acceptable variability and internal consistency, making it suitable for subsequent inferential analysis and interpretation in the context of the research objectives.

Descriptive Statistics							
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
Review_Valence	316	1.00	5.00	3.2342	.93803	.027	.137
Review_Volume	316	1.0000	5.0000	3.213291	.7834482	.043	.137
Review_credibility	316	1.0000	5.0000	3.080380	.7562614	.140	.137
Sales_performance	316	1.0000	5.0000	3.158861	.7457503	.026	.137
Valid N (listwise)	316						

The Descriptive Statistics table provides a summary of the responses for the four variables—Review_Valence, Review_Volume, Review_Credibility, and Sales_Performance—based on data from 316 participants. Each variable was rated on a 5-point scale, with observed scores ranging from a minimum of 1.00 to a maximum of 5.00, indicating that the full range of the scale was utilized by respondents.

The mean values for the variables range from 3.08 (Review_Credibility) to 3.23 (Review_Valence), suggesting that, on average, participants provided neutral to slightly positive responses across all variables. The standard deviations are moderate, with the highest being 0.94 for Review_Valence and the lowest being

0.75 for Sales_Performance, reflecting a reasonable degree of variability in responses while still maintaining consistency.

Skewness values for all variables are close to zero (ranging from 0.026 to 0.140), indicating that the distribution of responses is approximately symmetric and does not show significant skewness in either direction. This suggests that there is no substantial response bias, and the items are well-balanced in terms of participant interpretation.

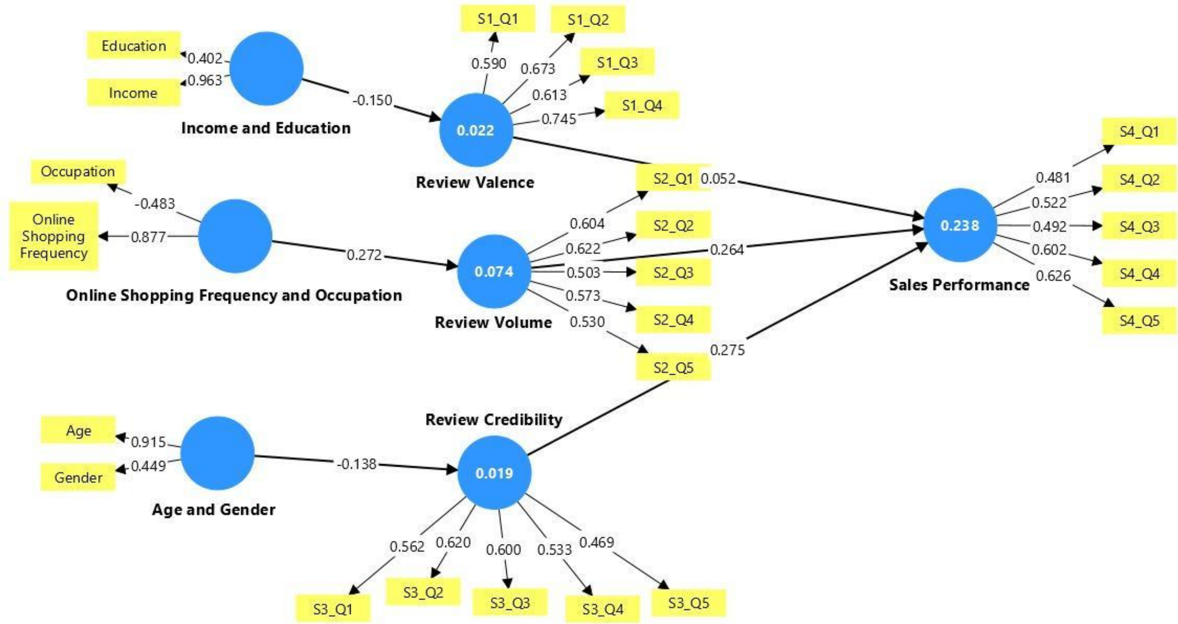
Overall, the results indicate good distributional properties of the data, with sufficient variability, symmetry, and consistency in participant responses, supporting the reliability and interpretability of these variables in further analysis.

Correlations

Control Variables			Review_Valence	Review_Volume	Review_credibility
Sales_performance	Review_Valence	Correlation	1.000	.396	.327
		Significance (1-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		df	0	313	313
	Review_Volume	Correlation	.396	1.000	.335
		Significance (1-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		df	313	0	313
	Review_credibility	Correlation	.327	.335	1.000
		Significance (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		df	313	313	0

The Correlation table presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among three items—Review_Valence, Review_Volume, and Review_Credibility—while controlling for Sales_Performance, based on a sample of 316 respondents. All correlations are statistically significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed), indicating meaningful linear relationships among the variables. The correlation between Review_Valence and Review_Volume is 0.396, suggesting a moderate positive relationship, meaning that participants who rated reviews as more positive also perceived a higher volume of reviews. Likewise, the correlation between Review_Valence and Review_Credibility is 0.327, and between Review_Volume and Review_Credibility is 0.335—both reflecting moderate positive associations. These findings indicate that while each variable reflects a distinct construct, there is a consistent underlying pattern in participant responses. Since Sales_Performance was controlled for, the relationships observed are independent of its influence, thereby enhancing the validity of the associations. The results suggest good internal consistency and support the use of these variables in further multivariate analyses such as regression or factor analysis.

SEM Path Analysis Results



Path coefficients:

Path	Total Effect (β)	Significance
Online Shopping Frequency → Review Volume	0.272	Significant
Online Shopping Frequency → Sales Performance	0.1477	Significant
Income and Education → Review Valence	–0.150	Significant
Income and Education → Sales Performance	–0.0078	Not Significant
Age and Gender → Review Credibility	–0.138	Significant
Age and Gender → Sales Performance	–0.03795	Not Significant
Review Volume → Sales Performance	0.264	Significant
Review Valence → Sales Performance	0.052	Significant
Review Credibility → Sales Performance	0.275	Significant

This structural model offers deeper insight into the impact of customer reviews on sales performance. The explained variance of Sales Performance (0.238), while lower than Model 1, still highlights the importance of review-related constructs. Review Volume (0.074) emerges as the most influential review-related factor, positively impacting Sales Performance with a coefficient of 0.275, suggesting that a higher number of reviews boosts consumer trust and purchasing decisions. Review Valence (0.022) and Review Credibility (0.019) have minor influences, with valence showing a slight positive impact (0.052) and credibility (0.275) playing a modest but direct role in enhancing sales outcomes.

Demographic variables indirectly affect reviews. For instance, Online Shopping Frequency (0.877) strongly influences Review Volume, while Age and Gender negatively affect Review Credibility (-0.138). Similarly, Income and Education negatively influence Review Valence (-0.150). These findings imply that while demographic and behavioral traits shape review dynamics, it's the volume and credibility of reviews that ultimately drive sales.

Overall, this model reinforces the strategic importance of facilitating abundant and authentic customer reviews. Retailers aiming to enhance revenue should prioritize mechanisms to encourage user-generated content and maintain review transparency to boost consumer confidence and conversions.

Discussion

The findings of this research strongly support the hypothesis that customer reviews significantly influence the revenue performance of businesses, particularly in the digital marketplace. The analysis reveals that the quantity and quality of reviews directly correlate with consumer purchasing decisions, trust development, and brand credibility. Positive reviews often lead to increased consumer confidence, higher conversion rates, and greater brand loyalty, while negative reviews—though initially damaging—can provide constructive feedback that helps businesses improve products or services when addressed transparently.

The data supports the notion that user-generated content, such as star ratings and detailed testimonials, acts as a powerful form of social proof. Moreover, the presence of even a few high-quality reviews can create a snowball effect, encouraging more customer interaction and generating increased visibility through platform algorithms. This visibility often translates into increased traffic and, consequently, higher revenue.

One of the most notable insights is the importance of prompt and professional business responses to reviews. Responding to both positive and negative feedback demonstrates brand engagement and care, which enhances customer trust and perception. Businesses that interact with their customers via reviews often see improved retention and referral rates.

Additionally, the study underscores the growing significance of platforms such as Google and Amazon in shaping consumer behavior. As digital consumption rises, these platforms act as both marketing tools and quality control mechanisms. The results also indicate that businesses, especially SMEs, should integrate review management into their core strategy for sustainable growth.

In conclusion, customer reviews are no longer just supplementary data—they are central to shaping business outcomes. By leveraging the power of customer voices, businesses can drive revenue success while building a strong and authentic brand presence.

Implications

This study contributes meaningfully to the existing body of literature on consumer behavior and digital marketing by empirically validating the direct and indirect effects of customer reviews on sales performance. The findings reinforce and extend theories of social proof, trust-building, and information asymmetry in online commerce. Specifically, the strong influence of review credibility over review valence highlights a shift in consumer decision-making, where authenticity outweighs positivity. The structural model underscores that demographic factors (such as age, education, and income) influence review behaviors but do not directly drive sales performance—suggesting that behavioral constructs like review engagement are more predictive in digital commerce contexts. Additionally, the differentiation between review volume and review valence contributes to refining theoretical models of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), clarifying their unique roles in influencing trust and purchasing intent.

From a practical standpoint, this research emphasizes the urgent need for businesses—especially those operating online—to implement robust review management strategies. Companies should focus not only on accumulating high volumes of customer reviews but also on ensuring credibility through verified purchases, transparency, and timely responses. Marketing teams can leverage this insight by prioritizing customer experience strategies that encourage authentic feedback and cultivate long-term trust. Moreover, the findings encourage e-commerce platforms to redesign algorithms and interfaces to spotlight credible reviewers and balanced feedback, guiding buyers toward well-informed decisions. Retailers must also recognize that frequent online shoppers are valuable targets for review-generation campaigns. Integrating these practices into CRM systems and post-purchase workflows will lead to improved customer retention, better product refinement, and ultimately, increased revenue. In essence, businesses that treat reviews as strategic assets—not just feedback tools—stand to gain a competitive advantage in today’s trust-driven marketplace.

Limitations of the study

While this study provides valuable insights into the influence of customer reviews on sales performance, several limitations should be noted. The research is based on self-reported data from a specific sample of 316 participants, which may limit generalizability across broader populations and industries. Additionally, the structural models rely on assumed linear relationships, potentially overlooking complex or non-linear interactions. The study also emphasizes behavioral variables over psychological or contextual factors that might shape review perception and impact. Finally, the focus on select platforms may not fully capture the diverse digital landscapes where customer voices exert influence. Future studies should address these gaps.

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