

The Role Of Online Customer Testimonials In Brand Trust: Utilization Of The Expectancy-Disconfirmation Model

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Abstract

Customers have a tendency of need for confirmation when it comes to product quality and its features so that they are able to get maximum benefits for their money, there is an automatic cost and benefit analysis going on in the mind of the customers while selecting the product. Online testimonials are the most convenient source of fulfilling that need for confirmation which either make a customer trust a brand or vice versa. This study explores the role of online testimonials when it comes to brand trust, it strives to explore various aspects of the online testimonials which contribute in the pre-purchase phase perceptual development of the customer, furthermore Expectancy disconfirmation model was utilized as a theoretical foundation. Data was collected through semi-structured In-depth interviews which were taken from habitual online shoppers of Karachi. The data was analyzed through Nvivo to identify codes, from the codes, categories were extracted, and the categories were refined to extract final themes. The paper identifies certain the tendency of the role of online testimonials when it comes to brand trust along with some elements of online testimonials that customer deems important for decision making.

Keywords: Online testimonials, Customers, brand trust, decision making, online shoppers.

Introduction

According to (EcommerceDB,2022) By 2023, Pakistan would surpass New Zealand as the 47th-largest market for eCommerce, with estimated sales of US\$6,362.1 million; In Pakistan online shopping trend is growing day by day it would be increased of 4.9% as expected in 2023. (Shin et al.,2023) examined in a bid to settle divergent opinions regarding a hospitality business's testimonial review approach, and examined the influence of positive testimonial reviews on customers' decision-making: This relevant characteristic the influence of somewhat positive ratings versus exceptionally positive ones on patrons' impressions of the reviews and the restaurants. Online customer testimonials provide

a picture of the post purchase experience of a customer, these testimonials can be either in written or in visual capacity (Wang, 2021). The significance of perceived risk in consumers' attitudes and intentions to use online buying services is becoming more and more clear. Regarding the kinds of risks that affect consumers' intentions to make purchases, the research, however, reveals disagreement. In order to research the impact of sociodemographic traits and empirically determine the most salient sources of risks and uncertainties related to online shopping services (e.g., gender, age, and online shopping experience) (Alrawad et al.,2023) besides satisfaction, trust, brand performance, service quality, brand image, behavioral intention and many others factors could affect

marketing strategies of education industry too; Universities are progressively using branding as a marketing strategy to position themselves in the cutthroat higher education market to draw in and keep students (sultan.,2018). Testimonials provide assistances to companies, industries, business to check their performance and they helped pre – customers too A written or verbal declaration that provides first-hand evidence of the value of a good or service is known as a client testimonial. They are regularly applied in marketing materials such as advertisements, brochures, and landing pages for websites. Online customer testimonials from actual users of the product or service can be quite powerful. This type of proof can be much more powerful than a company simply making claims about its own products. For several reasons, customer reviews are important. These can improve your company's search engine ranking, build credibility with new clients, and show that other people have had excellent experiences doing business with you (Akoglu, & Özbek, 2021). (Hafez.,2021) clarified Customer reviews are remarks or recommendations made by clients regarding a business's products or services and posted online. Customer reviews, which can be positive or negative, are one of the primary ways that potential customers learn about a business before making a purchase. Customers post reviews for a variety of reasons, such as to express their opinion or satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a product or service, to share their experience with others, to provide feedback to the business, to assist others in making informed purchasing decisions, to influence the reputation of the business, and more. Via online evaluations, customers can share their thoughts and ideas regarding the products or services offered by a business. These reviews, whether positive or negative, may be helpful to other consumers who are contemplating purchasing the company's goods and services. Brand trust is a metric for gauging consumer confidence in a

particular brand. This trust is based on a number of factors, including the caliber of the product, the reputation of the company, and the consumer's previous encounters with the brand. A high level of brand trust could lead to greater customer loyalty and sales rating. (Wongsansukcharoen, 2022).

Problem Statement

Modern people seek everything without investing time or money, thus they evaluate products by its reviews before making any purchase decision. Encouraging online testimonials on websites help to increase the trust of potential customers and turn them into genuine visitors (Seunghun Shin et al., 2023) besides Negative reviews can be a warning to other customers to keep away of a specific good or service and Feedback on a brand influences its performance as well (Bigné et al.,2023). In fact, 70% of hospitality industry display consumer reviews on their websites, and 98% of them intend to resume using this approach (Bazaarvoice, 2019). Many investigations on the hospitality industry have been undertaken to determine how positive online recommendations affect consumers' purchasing decisions (Lopes et al., 2022; Roh and Yang, 2021). Consequently, Admiration of any brand could be influenced by participant's reviews or feedback (Seunghun Shin et al., 2023). A relatively recent notion in marketing, brand experience develops whenever people encounter with stimuli associated to brands; Brand experiences can promote consumer loyalty perceptions of reliability and quality, and trust. Customer loyalty and impressions of higher-quality services are two benefits of brand experience. Experiences can therefore be exploited by providers as a strategic edge to increase value for both consumers and vendors (Carrizo Moreira et al.,2017). Consumer behavior is generally based on experience. The more frequently a person uses a product, the more information becomes ingrained in their cognition and influences how highly they perceive it

(Akoglu.,2022). In e-commerce, trust serves as a tool for lowering consumers' perceived risk by reducing information complexity, it lowers the perceived risk of encountering an adverse relationship outcome (Althuwaini, S.2022) furthermore Hanaysha, J. R. (2022) recommended That could be quicker for businesses to communicate their targeted marketing messages and build positive perceptions of their brands in the minds of consumers once brand trust among consumers in the target market increases; Brand trust has a strong implication on buying decisions, and online reputation is essential for shaping customer behavior. (Schirmacher, H.,2023) noticed the gap of Consumers' opinions towards brands and products change when they find that their expectations may not be met, or disconfirmed subsequently that can influence their purchasing intentions. (Sultan et al.,2019) explored Customers' perceptions of a brand are their views and insights into brand attachment and brand criterion has also been used as a gauge for market share, frequency of purchases and penetration. According to Son, S. C., Bae, J., & Kim, K. H. (2023) Buyers from the Millennial and Z generations are eager to interact with brands promptly, but they also expect distinct products and services that meet their requirements and expectations. A luxury digital brand that is only confined to selling goods and offering services could not continue to satisfy its customers so somewhat brand has to work on their genuine feedback in form of testimonial; thus, during driving or have to make instant decision whereas looking for restaurant, purchase to nearby online reviews play dynamic role of introducing any precise brand or a product (Shin et al.,2023).

Purpose of the study

In this investigation, we would focus on how online customer testimonials enhance brand trust, particularly when they are able to influence

consumers' perceptions of a company's credibility either in a favorable or negative way.

Significance of the study

This research would conduct an extensive and in-depth analysis of online customer testimonials. As a matter of fact, brands operating in Karachi would be better able to comprehend the aspects of online testimonials that Karachi's potential customers are most interested in, enabling them to modify their product branding and digital marketing strategies.

Literature Review

Online shopping industry:

(Alrawad et al.,2023) had conducted research by Foremost countries selected a total of 558 participants (Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait). Multigroup analysis and structural equation modelling were used to assess the responses. Only three of the evaluated forms of risk and uncertainty, namely financial risk, information risk, and privacy risk, were found to significantly affect customers' purchasing decisions. The analysis demonstrated that prior experience had a significant moderating effect with regard to the moderating role of sociodemographic variables. Also, it was discovered that neither gender nor age had an impact on the link between customers' purchase intentions and perceived risks. These findings might make it easier for online merchants to comprehend shoppers' worries moreover (shin et al.,2023) had explored how positive testimonial reviews affected consumers' purchasing decisions. Between November 30 and December 5, 2021, 300 individuals were drawn from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) in exchange for a meagre financial reward and Findings showed that buyers valued information that helped them feel secure in their pre-choice when visiting a company' website during a local search, such as positive testimonial reviews. (Sulaiman Althuwaini.,2022) assessed how social

media marketing initiatives affect consumer brand trust and loyalty in the banking industry. Data were collected and processed using Smart-PLS based on an online poll of 252 people who follow Saudi Arabian providers of financial services on social media (3.0). The research revealed that social media marketing initiatives such as personalization, entertainment, and promotions had the greatest positive effects on trust and loyalty. (Sultan.,2019) established the study by 528 useful reactions from a student survey that was conducted online. Structural equation modelling was used to evaluate the conceptual model.389 women and 139 men had been found among the respondents and sample's age distribution was a 20-year range. 259 full-time students and 269 flexible, online, or distant students composed the respondents. brand image and experience-centric brand performance, as well as its causes and effects, are correlated. it was also shown that student happiness and trust mediate the relationship between perceived service quality, brand performance, brand image, and behavioral intention. However, neither gender nor style of study had any moderating effects on the model, indicating that it is unaffected by these factors. Ultimately, this model highlights the significance of experience-centric service quality characteristics and how they influence university branding tactics for long-term constructive goals.

Online customer testimonials:

(Hanaysha, 2022) gauged the role of four characteristics of social media marketing on consumer choice in the fast-food sector. Additionally, it sought to ascertain whether brand trust mediates their relationship. A quantitative online survey was used to collect the necessary information from patrons of various fast-food eateries in the United Arab Emirates. Following the achievement of the required results, the data was subjected to AMOS 21 structural equation modelling analysis. The value of brand trust in

predicting purchasing decision was supported by the results. Akoglu, H. E., & Özbek, O. (2022) proposed his studies used the brand resonance approach to examine how brand experience and brand loyalty are influenced by emotional (perceived quality) and rational (brand trust) elements; 385 sports enthusiasts between the ages of 18 and 65 made up the study's sample. Data was gathered through an online poll that was sent to sports fans via social media. In this work, a partial least squares structural equation modelling analysis was carried out using SmartPLS 3.0 software. (Hafez.,2021) examined how social media marketing (SMM) initiatives affected Bangladesh's banking industry's brand equity (BE). Moreover, brand loyalty and brand trust are looked at as a possible mediator between SMM activities and BE. A structured questionnaire was used to gather information from 289 banking clients in Bangladesh, and structural equation modelling was used to test the hypotheses (SEM); The outcomes confirmed that SMM activities have little direct impact on BE. In addition, brand love completely mediates the connection between SMM efforts and BE. Also, it was discovered that brand trust had a partly mediating effect on SMM activities and BE.

Online customer testimonials and brand trust

(Wongsansukcharoen, 2022) integrated the community relationship management (4Cs model), relationship marketing orientation (RMO), customer engagement (CE), and brand trust to assess brand loyalty (BL) in the Thai banking sector (BT). It examined the usage of four success elements by a Thai commercial bank to produce new client acquisition, business efficiency, long-term relationships, and BL to determine the factors affecting the BL of 1650 clients of a Thai commercial bank, quantitative data and structural equation modelling (SEM) were be used; finding indicates that via the conciliation of CE and BT, CoRM only indirectly

affects BL and RMO only indirectly affects BL due to CE and BT's mediation. (Zehir et al.,2011) proposed his work by the automobile sector was chosen. 258 randomly picked consumers make up the sampling frames. The study was carried out in Turkey and was based on the creation and administration of a self-administered survey and outcomes of the research are Brand loyalty is directly influenced by brand communication, brand loyalty is significantly affected by brand trust, and brand trust is positively affected by service quality these findings could help marketers to improve brand trust and other factors.

The expectancy-disconfirmation model:

The Expected -disconfirmation theory was developed by Oliver (1980); this theory investigates whether or not customers were satisfied with a product or service based on their expectations. According to EDT, a customer's overall happiness is determined by comparing their pre-purchase expectations with their perceived performance outcome (after purchase), Before engaging in any purchasing activity, customers may have a variety of expectations based on their own experiences, advertisements, and word of mouth, and they subsequently develop subjective evaluations based on their purchase experience. One of the most definitive theories in the domains of marketing and consumer behavior, EDT has been used extensively in areas including customer perception, satisfaction, and behavioral intention in the hospitality sector Yüksel, A., & Yüksel, F. (2008) and (Wang et al.,2023).

Figure 1 illustrates the first model of EDT

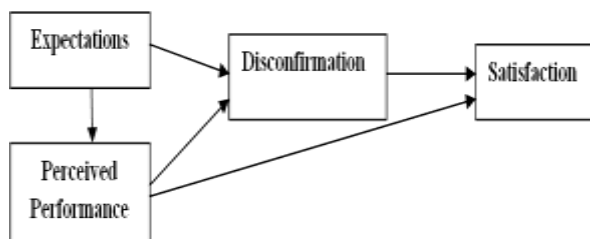


FIGURE 1: First EDT model

This model consists of four components: expectations, perceived performance, disconfirmation, and satisfaction as defined in following

Customers' expectations in means of how goods and services would perform are defined as expectations (Churchill Jr.,1982). EDT is able to describe several client behavior's during the purchasing process. Secondly, based on their prior usage of a certain product or service, clients have an initial expectation. It is more realistic to expect this type of customer to make repeat purchases from a particular company. Second, new clients who are making their first purchases from a certain company and have no prior knowledge of how well the products or services function. These clients' first expectations typically include comments they hear from other customers, advertisements perceived performance is a customer's experience with goods or services may exceed or fall short of their expectations (Spreng et al.,1996). Both of these customers—those with first-hand experience and those without—will use the goods or services they have acquired for a period before realizing the true value of what the company is offering. Media (Halstead et al.,1994) The difference between a customer's initial expectation and the performance that was actually seen is known as disconfirmation (Bhattacharjee et al.,2004). Disconfirmation is classified into three categories in the literature: positive disconfirmation, negative disconfirmation, and simple disconfirmation. only when a product or service's actual performance falls short of the client's expectations, a negative disconfirmation will take place, which makes the customer unhappy. If perceived performance of a certain product or service is able to surpass consumer contentment, this will result in positive disconfirmation and customer happiness. Lastly, when there is no difference between a customer's expectation and

the actual performance of a certain good or service, it signifies that perception and expectation are in relation (Santos et al.,2003) In prose, there is substantial debate over the definition of simple confirmation. While some scholars contend that simple confirmation leads to satisfaction (Hunt, H. K. (1991). others contend that neither a mood of contentment nor discontent results in simple satisfaction (Erevelles et al.,1992).

The expectancy-disconfirmation model, customer testimonials & brand trust:

Customer evaluations frequently reflect the comparison between expected outcomes and perceived outcomes that the expectancy-disconfirmation model illustrates, which is how the two are related. Good customer reviews typically show that a client's experience met or surpassed their expectations, resulting in client satisfaction. On the other hand, negative customer evaluations indicate that the encounter was disappointing and caused discontent. Businesses can use the expectancy-disconfirmation model as a framework to analyze customer evaluations and identify the factors that contribute to customer happiness or discontent. In this particular study, the consumer decides whether or not to purchase the product based on the reviews left by other consumers after forming expectations based on those reviews. After making a purchase, the buyer provides feedback detailing the fulfilment or non-fulfillment of expectations that were created as a result of feedback from other customers. The expectancy-disconfirmation theory is invoked in this situation because client contentment is first based on expectations created by evaluations from other satisfied customers, which ultimately affects brand trust.

Research Questions

o What is the role of online customer testimonials in brand trust?

o Do online customer testimonials effect brand credibility?

o Do online customer testimonials effect purchase decision of online shopping customers?

o What are the main aspects of an online review that make you buy or not buy the product of a brand?

Research Methodology

Research Method

For this research, a qualitative methodology is considered to be the most effective method. While attempting to fully understand the significance, experience, and perspective of the participants, qualitative research is appropriate. The information gathered is intended to learn more about a phenomenon rather than to generalize, quantify, or count anything. Qualitative information could also offer detailed insight than quantitative information. In this specific research, a qualitative study has provided a more in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences and viewpoints, encouraging the analysis of the marketing methods small internet business owners/managers utilize to stay competitive. Non-numerical qualitative data can more organically capture what participants want to convey (Greener, 2011). As compared to qualitative research, which seeks to identify variables and test hypotheses, quantitative research links the study's variables to generate a hypothesis or set of hypotheses before any data are gathered.

Research Design

In spite of the fact that a variety of research designs could be in alignment with the purpose of this investigation, an exploratory case study was subsequently selected. This study aims to investigate how online reviews affect consumer trust in brands. An exploratory case study is not used to determine cause and effect, but rather to

explore a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. The exclusive and imperative aspect of this type of study is determining the boundaries of the case, precisely what is being studied, and what is within the scope of the study. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), In case studies, gathering and analyzing data while looking for context and understanding is the main objective. With the goal of generating a completely descriptive end product, the study was carried out utilizing an inductive investigative technique. It's critical to comprehend alternative research methodologies and recognize when they wouldn't be appropriate for a certain study. For instance, this study would not be better represented by a phenomenology design because phenomenology focuses on evaluating the experiences of participants who have all had a particular and shared personal phenomenon or experience. Also, narrative inquiry would not be the most appropriate method for this study because it does not aim to continuously collaborate with participants over time in numerous sites or to evaluate the significance of a participant's experience.

Population and Sample

This proposed research would involve conducting remote interviews with Karachi internet shoppers who prefer to purchase online rather than going to actual brick and mortar businesses. With deliberate sampling, the participants will be attracted. For qualitative research, purposeful sampling would be suitable. 20 people would thus comprise the sample size for this investigation, or until data saturation is reached. It is not mandatory to use a certain quantity of participants or underlying theories when using a purposive sampling technique. In order to use this method, experts in the topic being examined must have been found who are willing to volunteer their knowledge and/or experiences. Participants will be chosen for the study based on the primary qualities that are crucial to resolving the research issue. The criteria for the participants are as follows: 1) They prefer online shopping, 2) they know what an online review is 3) they know the giant online shopping stores offered to the customers of Pakistan.

Characteristics of Interviews

<i>Interview</i>	<i>Gender</i> <i>M=Male</i> <i>F=Female</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Online</i> <i>Shopping</i> <i>Frequency</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Interview</i> <i>Method</i>
1	F	40	Weekly	Karachi, Pakistan	Online
2	M	25	Weekly	Karachi, Pakistan	Online
3	M	20	Monthly	Karachi, Pakistan	Online
4	F	20	Monthly	Karachi, Pakistan	In person
5	F	23	Quarterly	Karachi, Pakistan	In person
6	M	24	Weekly	Karachi, Pakistan	Online
7	M	25	Weekly	Karachi, Pakistan	Online
8	F	23	Weekly	Karachi, Pakistan	In person
9	F	18	Monthly	Karachi, Pakistan	In person
10	F	28	Monthly	Karachi, Pakistan	Online
11	F	18	Monthly	Karachi, Pakistan	Online
12	M	22	Weekly	Karachi, Pakistan	Online
13	M	22	Weekly	Karachi, Pakistan	Online
14	F	26	Weekly	Karachi, Pakistan	Online
15	F	36	Weekly	Karachi, Pakistan	Online
16	F	26	Monthly	Karachi, Pakistan	Online
17	F	29	Weekly	Karachi, Pakistan	Online
18	F	28	Weekly	Karachi, Pakistan	Online
19	M	30	Weekly	Karachi, Pakistan	Online
20	M	33	Monthly	Karachi, Pakistan	Online
21	F	19	Weekly	Karachi, Pakistan	Online

Interviews were conducted with a total of 21 respondents; 17 interviews were conducted online and the remaining were in person; 13 respondents were female and 8 respondents were male with an age bracket of 18 to 40 years, 13 were weekly online shoppers; 1 was quarterly, and 7 were monthly shoppers in Karachi.

Data Collection

A protocol for semi-structured interviews was used to gather the info. Online customer interviews via zoom, cell phone calls, or any other remote method were conducted. To obtain saturation, a total of 21 interviews were conducted. Of those, 20 were coded and included in the analyses, while the remaining interview was deleted since it did not follow the established protocols.

Data Analysis

For this exploratory case study, several data analysis techniques are used. To correctly evaluate the study's findings, it was required to have a firm grasp of the qualitative data analysis methods.

The techniques were used document analysis, descriptive coding, NVivo Transcription, and Nvivo 20 coding. The systematic evaluation and analysis of printed or electronic documents is known as document analysis. Finding keywords, patterns, and common themes during document analysis was the main objective in order to analyze the data and get new insights. Data is categorized and arranged in a process called coding in order to find themes and connections between them. To record the who, what, where, and when of the data, descriptive codes are used. The interview audio files were uploaded and transcribed using NVivo Transcription, a program that creates an editable transcript, in this process meaning is produced and helps to establish empirical knowledge. After that, the transcripts were imported into Nvivo 20 for data

coding and classification. These strategies supported an effective data analysis process by discovering emergent themes and patterns that can be employed as online marketing optimum practices.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations Assumptions

The study's assumptions embrace that all participants had successfully implemented ecommerce marketing plans, that participants were aware of their marketing plans and tactics, and that participants answered interview questions truthfully. These assumptions were used to eliminate researcher bias. Limitations of the study include the lack of observation during data collection due to remote audio-only interviews, which may impact understanding of participants' expressions. Additionally, researcher bias and limitations in generalizability and transferability of data may also be present. One assumption is that participants have implemented effective e-commerce marketing strategies and can provide accurate information about them. A limitation is that the data collection was conducted remotely and without observing facial expressions, which might affect the understanding of the participant's responses.

Results

The outcomes of the data analysis of the documents and interview transcripts were as follows. Figure 1 illustrates a word cloud created in Nvivo 20 using all of the participants' answers to all of the interview questions as well as the documents. The information highlighted the fact that internet reviews do matter when it comes to brand trust because this influence product quality, attributes, delivery times, and customer satisfaction levels. These factors were analyzed by a potential customer on the basis of the picture uploaded on the online review, the experience of the customer expressed in the review that could be positive or negative. Expectancy

disconfirmation model also comes into play here because a customer develops an expectation on the basis of the review, If the product meets expectations, the customer provides a positive review; if the product exceeds expectations, the customer provides a better review; and if the product does not live up to expectations, the

customer provides a negative review. The outcome of this review greatly influences whether a potential customer becomes a potential buyer or the vice versa.

Figure 2 Word Cloud for All Interview Questions

Fig 2



Themes and Sub-Themes

The research question that served as the study's main focus led to the emergence of the subsequent themes and sub-themes. The

following factors determine the part that online reviews play in building brand trust: 1) Reading online reviews 2) Elements of the review 3) buying decision formed due to reviews 4) number of positive and negative reviews.

<i>Themes and Sub themes</i>	
<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sub-themes</i>
Reading online reviews	Read Picture Every time / Always Yes
Element	Experience of customer Good Quality Same as ordered Picture
Buying Decision	Review dependent Price dependent Good reviews
Majority Negative reviews	Yes / Yeah Opinion Thinking Reverse

Theme 1: Reading online reviews

The importance of reading online reviews is manifest by the data analysis, it is the main theme by the analysis; it is determined that it has certain factors associated with it which are categorized as sub-themes, which are Read, Picture, Every Time & Product.

Read

This demonstrates that buyers actually choose to read internet testimonials over any other form of contact. This is due to the fact that it is a faster and more efficient way. Reading reviews is a good method to learn from people who have used a product, service, or experience how it was for them. Reviews can give insight on the perks and drawbacks of a specific product, enabling you to decide for yourself whether it is the correct choice for you. Reviewers' subjective judgements may not exactly reflect your personal experience, so it's crucial to keep that in mind. When selecting a choice, it is recommended that you analyze a variety of reviews from several sources because some reviews might be faked or biased.

Picture

Customers attention on the picture of the product uploaded by the previous customer and this either engages the customers' interests in the product or disengages the customer interest. Pictures of products show an image or representation of the product, typically from different angles and/or with different features highlighted. This can help potential customers better understand the appearance, size, features, and overall quality of the product before making a purchase.

Every time/Always

Habitual online shoppers are habitual of reading the review of a certain product of a brand which they have perceived for the first time and every time before ordering the product they read the online reviews before making a purchase. They

want to distinguish what others think about the product, its quality, and the overall experience of using it. With the rise of online shopping and e-commerce, customers have access to an extensive range of reviews from multiple sources, which helps them to make well-versed decisions. In fact, a lot of consumers today value online evaluations on alike with personal recommendations from friends and family. Due to this trend, it is now crucial for companies to establish a strong online presence, engage with clients on social media, and give them a forum to voice their opinions.

Yes

Majority of the participants initiated their response with an affirmation using the word 'Yes', which denotes that they do read the online reviews before making a purchase.

Theme 2: Elements

The primary sub-themes that have an impact on this topic are the customer's experience, good quality, and same as ordered. This theme is extremely essential since it highlights the key components that a customer sees in a review that will affect their purchasing behavior and decisions.

Experience of customer

Reviews of customer experiences can offer insightful information on the goods or services offered by a firm. It can help businesses adjust their offerings to better serve customers by revealing what customers like and dislike. Good evaluations frequently highlight a business's responsive customer service, premium goods, and quick delivery. Negative reviews often focus on poor customer service, low-quality products, and slow delivery. Reading reviews could also help potential customers make well-versed purchasing decisions. For example, if a company has numerous negative reviews about poor customer service, a potential customer may decide to take their business elsewhere. Overall,

reviews of customer experiences play a crucial role in shaping the reputation of a company and could impact its success in the long run.

Good Quality

Reviews are important in figuring out a product's quality. Customers rely on reviews to make wise choices since these offers insightful information about the features, functionality, and overall experience of the product. While negative reviews might draw attention to a product's flaws and possible issues, positive evaluations can improve a product's reputation and promote consumer trust. Reviews therefore play a significant role in determining a product's quality as well as having big impact on consumer purchase decisions.

Same as ordered

When something is mentioned as being "same as ordered," it signifies that it exactly matches what was requested or commanded. To ensure that the consumer has received exactly what they wanted, it is frequently utilized in customer service or retail settings. This indicates that the product was exactly as expected or described on the website when it was ordered online. It verifies that the item is in good shape and conforms to customer's expectations.

Pictures

Majority of the participants declared that they saw the pictures of the product attached by the reviewer before or after reading the written testimonial because the pictures show the actual product and it can identify the distinction between the product display pictures and the actual product delivered which helps the potential buyer to decide whether to make the purchase or to not proceed further with it.

Theme 3: Buying decision

The purchasing choice serves as an important component of a review because it establishes the

customers' purchasing intentions as a result of the online review. Review dependence, pricing dependence, and positive reviews are the sub-themes.

Review dependent

A dependent purchase occurs when the decision to buy is impacted by the availability of another good or service on the market. This kind of purchase is depending on the popularity and accessibility of the relevant good or service. For instance, a user might think about getting a laptop case, a cooling pad, or a laptop mouse when shopping for a new laptop. Consumers may not need a cooling pad if their laptop is light and portable, but they could need one if their laptop is large and powerful. A buyer of a new smartphone, for instance, would also think about purchasing a smartphone case, tempered glass screen protector, and wireless charging pad. Depending on the smartphone they select, consumers must decide whether to purchase these accessories.

Price dependent

A purchase that is primarily determined by the cost or price of a good or service is referred to as a price-dependent purchase. In other words, the most crucial aspect in determining whether a consumer would make a purchase or not is the item's price. Consumers that are price-sensitive and are more likely to check costs before making a purchase frequently engage in this type of purchasing behavior. In the markets for food, clothing, and household items, price dependence on purchases is prevalent.

Good reviews

In today's world people often base their purchasing decisions on the opinions of others since they have easy access to online reviews. The likelihood of a purchase can be considerably increased by positive reviews and high ratings, whilst negative reviews can have the reverse

impact. Consumers use customer reviews to help them decide on the goods and services they should purchase. Positivity-based reviews can build credibility and confidence in the eyes of potential customers, which can enhance sales and client loyalty.

Theme 4: Majority of the reviews

Reviews of a product can influence a buyer in many ways, depending on their overall message and the period of time they were written. Reviews can be recent or older, with either a majority of good or negative feedback. The underlying themes are yes, opinion, and thought.

Yes/Yeah

If a customer checks the box next to "yes" in a review, it means they have decided to buy the item. This indicates that they have assessed their wants and are confident the product will satisfy them. The customer is probably eager to complete the purchase and is prepared to do so. The customer is pledging to invest in the product and has a favorable view towards it, whether it is a physical good or a service. A good outcome is indicated by this "yes" reaction, which is an essential milestone in the sales process.

Opinion

A review is a customer's assessment of a good or service that they have utilized. Other consumers use it to make informed choices about whether to purchase the same product or utilize the same service. It can be positive, negative, or neutral. Reviews come in a variety of formats, including written reviews, star ratings, and video reviews, among others. They are typically discovered on review sites, social media networks, or e-commerce websites. Reviews are significant because they offer information about previous customers' experiences and can be used to assess the value and satisfaction of a good or service.

Thinking

Reviews convey consumers' opinions and experiences with a product. They offer important information on the quality and utility of a product and might be either favorable, negative, or neutral. Reviews inform prospective customers and provide the business feedback on what they are doing well and where they may make improvements. Comments are essential to a product's marketing and reputation since that frequently spread quickly through social media and word-of-mouth.

Reversed

The participants were given a particular scenario and asked their buying decision in this scenario. The scenario put in front of the participants was that what if the majority of the reviews are positive, a few and negative but the few negative ones are the latest ones and the positive ones are the later ones. After the participants declared their decision about the mentioned scenario, they were told to consider a reverse scenario and asked for their decision, this time the majority preferred the reversed scenario because the latest reviews mattered to the participants because it declared the current quality of the product and it also highlights the improvements in terms of product quality.

Data Analysis Data Points

Interview Questions

21 people took part in the remote interviews. The transcripts of the interviews were entered into NVivo 20 for analysis in order to look for trends and themes. The summary of participants' responses to each question are shown below, together with word clouds that NVivo 20 created for the most frequently used words.

IQ1: How often do you read online testimonials before buying the product of a brand you are purchasing from first time?

All 21 participants had been asked IQ1 during the interview, they all met the criteria of having at least one year of experience with an online business. After analysis, it was determined that

two of the participants have been buying online for over 12 years, three have been doing it for 8 years, and the remaining have been in doing it for 5 years or less.

Figure 3 Word Cloud for IQ1



IQ2: What elements do you see in an online testimonial before making the purchase decision?

During the interview, IQ2 was asked to all 21 individuals. Figure 3 shows a word cloud produced by Nvivo 20 using all of the answers to IQ2. Reviews of customer experiences can offer insightful information on the goods or services offered by a firm. They can help businesses adjust their offerings to better serve customers by revealing what customers like and dislike. Better comments frequently highlight a business's responsive customer service, premium goods, and quick delivery. Bad reviews frequently highlight the late shipping, inferior goods, and bad customer service. Forming informed purchasing choices is another benefit that comes from reading reviews for products. For instance,

if a business has received several complaints about bad customer service, a potential client may prefer to do business with another company. Reviews of client experiences are essential for measuring a company's reputation and that can ultimately affect its success. Reviews are important in figuring out a product's quality. Customers rely on reviews to make wise choices since they offer insightful information about the features, functionality, and overall experience of the product. While unfavorable reviews might bring awareness to a product's flaws and possible issues, positive evaluations can improve a product's reputation and promote consumer trust. Reviews therefore play a significant role in determining a product's quality and have a big impact on consumer purchase decisions.

Figure 4 Word Cloud for IQ2



IQ3: Do you trust a new brand if the reviews are good and make the purchase?

IQ3 was a question that was asked to each of the 21 interviewees. The purchase decision is a key component of a review since it establishes the consumers' purchasing intentions as a result of the online review, as seen in Figure 4's word

cloud created in Nvivo 20 using all of the responses to IQ3. Reviews, prices, and positive reviews are the sub-themes. A dependent purchase is one in which the choice to make a purchase is impacted by an already existing good or service. This sort of purchase is based on the accessibility and acceptance of the relevant good or service.

Figure 5 Word Cloud for IQ3



IQ4: What if the latest few reviews are negative and the rest are positive?

During the interview, IQ4 was asked to all 21 participants. The influence that reviews of a product have on a customer depends on the direction of the majority of the reviews and the

time during which the reviews were given, as shown in Figure 5 by a word cloud created in Nvivo 20 using all the responses to IQ4. Reviews can be recent or older, with either a majority of good or negative feedback. The underlying themes are yes, opinion, and thought.

Figure 6 Word Cloud for IQ4

recommend
 picture maybe pictures
 risk going confusing insight
 repo consider yeah details research
 read quality reversed definitely
 factor buy opinion beginning scam
 determined yes think common reviews
 recent gain attributes gave unable
 thank latest delightful mindset
 positive never taking
 shopping

Conclusion/Discussion

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on testimonial reviews in marketing literature. Despite the widespread use of endorsements or reviews across several industries alike educational organizations, healthcare, cosmetics and beauty products; drugs as well (Xie et al.,2017). In spite of the numerous studies that have focused on brand trust built after the consumption of the product, there is a gap about the brand trust or distrust which develops in the mind of the customer before buying. Online customer testimonials have proven to be a key factor in potential customers buying the product or vice versa, but before the buying process starts, there is a key element of establishment of a level of trust about the brand in the customer's mind. Among several shoppers in Pakistan, particularly in Karachi, online shopping has become a practical and preferred method of buying. Online shopping has a variety of characteristics that influence consumer decision-making and the growth of brand trust. There are many different dimensions of online elements, and when it comes to online purchasing, brand trust development has several components associated to the online element. It includes, but is not limited to, online product reviews by YouTube influencers, online product feature blogs, and

online customer written testimonials, generally known as customer reviews. Online reviews, which are the prime source available to potential customers, must be examined in terms of their impact in brand trust since it is crucial to understand how customers create enough trust or distrust to develop or not develop brand trust. Reviews from consumers may differ depending on how renowned the brands are (shin et al.,2023).

Recommendations for Future Research

Global research is required to better understand the customer testimonial phenomena. Customers of skin care products should be the focus of future research, which should be conducted as another exploratory case study because customer review systems can differ from region to region and depending on social class. The findings may provide different insights that are not limited to U.S. operations. Executing a quantitative, correlational study that assesses the profitability of an online business over a specific time period is another recommendation for future research. This would help to better understand the effectiveness and impact that result from implementing different marketing strategies and test the hypothesis that there is a positive correlation between them. The study should

concentrate on assessing the relationship between changes in profitability after implementing a new marketing approach.

Besides Future studies should also emphasize on the efficiency of more recent technologies used in the online marketplace, such as virtual makeup try-ons that should give consumers a true-to-life portrayal of the product. The technology might be expanded from makeup try-on to apparel and other things given how quickly e-commerce is developing to provide customers the full experience they would have in a brick-and-mortar store. In light of this, it would be intriguing to determine whether these developments would have an effect on business sales and marketing.

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