A Study on diverse perception on online purchase behavior of Indian consumers with reference to Product Reviews

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Abstract*: It is a digital age and customers buy products not only through traditional means but also online. Companies also use various digital marketing strategies to attract their customers. In this paper, we study the purchase behavior of Indian consumers when they use the online mode. We try to find out whether they watch product reviews, read product blogs, see product pictures and ratings while purchasing product online. A sample of 252 customers is selected using judgement sampling and it is found that majority of the customers watch product reviews, pictures and blogs and then decide whether they should buy the product or not. This behaviour is also observed with respect to demographic variables like age and gender. There are differences in opinion in selection of various product through various online platforms. This **diversity** of opinions is being studied through this paper.*
Keywords*: Indian consumers, online purchase behaviour, product reviews, blogs*

I.   Introduction:

The Internet has enabled businesses to connect with their customers through electronic marketplaces and subsequently sell their products and services. Customers use these e- marketplaces to collect relevant information about the products and services, make purchase decisions, and share their assessments as user-generated content (UGC) in the form of online consumer reviews. These online reviews are perceived to be more user-oriented than traditional marketing communication, as they describe the products precisely in terms of various usage scenarios and assess them from the diverse perspective of peer users (Filieri et al. 2018). Additionally, e-businesses are highly dependent on online reviews because they influence the future sale of products and services. The Spiegel Research Center at Northwestern University found that the likelihood of purchase for products with at least five reviews is 270% greater than those products with no available reviews. Current academic literature has also conclusively established the impact of online reviews on the subsequent sale of products in electronic markets (Ghose and Ipeirotis 2010; Erkan and Evans 2016; Babić Rosario et al. 2016; Ismagilova et al. 2019; Li et al. 2019a, 2019b, 2020; Ismagilova et al. 2020).

Often, consumers vote for an online review as *helpful* when they find it useful and trustworthy during the information search, thereby reducing the uncertainty associated with the final purchase decisions. Mudambi and Schuff (2010) define "a helpful diverse customer review as a peer-generated product evaluation that facilitates the consumer's purchase decision process.

Every company tries to reach its diverse target customers not only through traditional methods but also through digital techniques like social media. As a result, marketers use social media platforms into their communication strategies.

Although the concept of marketing using social media is not new, it is still believed to be in its early stages. Because of the rapid development in the use of social media and the changing communication environment, marketers, and consumers all over the world are becoming increasingly receptive to it, and as a result, a large number of customers have joined this digital platform. The new millennium has presented marketers with new hurdles in terms of understanding consumer consumption and diverse behaviour patterns. Since the advent of social media, consumers' decision-making processes have changed significantly, as purchasers now compare products and rely on reviews and suggestions from other customers that are commonly shared on social media sites before making a purchase decision (Khatib, 2016). The primary problem now facing modern firms is to

design their social media strategy in such a way that they impact a huge pool of diverse consumers, influencing their decision-making.

II. Literature Review:

Nidhi Kumari et al. (2016) in their study attempt to understand the needs of online consumers. Online shoppers have different reasons for buying from online retailers. These reasons were investigated, and the findings of data were analysed for better understanding ofonline shoppers and they were segmented on this basis for preference for what they were looking for when buying online.

Georgios Askalidis & Edward C. Malthouse (2016) study the effect of the volume of consumer reviews onthe purchase likelihood (conversion rate) of users browsinga product page. They propose using the exponential learning curve model to study how conversion rates change with the number of reviews.

Nidhan Priyadarshini (2018) explains that internet-based social media has introduced a new dimension for internet users, allowing them to explore the online platform for everything from social networking sites to online education especially after the recent pandemic. In this research, primary data is collected through Google Docs from male and female buyers and the data is analysed by using SPSS tools to compare different decision-making parameters influencing male and female customers purchasing behaviour online.

Biswas et al. (2020) explain that E-commerce platforms allow customers to post online reviews about their products, but many of these reviews remain non-voted by existing customers. Current literature on the *perceived helpfulness* of online reviews has overlooked the effect of these non-voted reviews. Additionally, current studies lack the cross-cultural perspective to help analyze the influence of cultural factors during an analysis of online reviews in an e-commerce platform. This study proposes anovel cross-cultural framework using online consumer reviews from a global e-commerce retailer to investigate these shortcomings.

Kaur Kulwinder et al. (2021) in their study aim to assess the effect of online reviews on online book sales performance in the Indian context. A sales rank was used as a proxy measure for sales. The total sample size was 2028 books from the 'bestseller' and 'recent' book categories on Amazon.in. Cross-sectional analysis and difference-in-difference analysis approaches were adopted for data analysis. The results revealed that online reviews shared by the Indian consumers impact books sales, as the consumers prefer to analyse the books on the basis of available online reviews before making their purchase decision. Overall, the results indicated that reviews had a positive impact on the sales in both book categories.

Mithun S. Ullal et al. (2021) explain that customers can choose to buy products online without certain sensory experiences, such as touching, smelling or tasting.Consequently, product reviews are extremely important to implement online marketing strategies. While reviews can influence customers' purchase decisions, how they affect the decisions of potential consumers in the case of a growing emerging economysuch as India has hitherto not been studied. Positive and negative reviews affect the way customers understand and interpret product information. This study provides multiple methods to identifythe relationship between reviews and customer decisions in the case of tier 1, tier 2 and tier 3 Indian cities.

III. Objectives

1. To understand whether people of different age groups and gender go for traditional shopping or online shopping
2. To find out whether people purchase online on the basis of product reviews or product blogs or ratings or pictures and whether this varies on the basis of gender and age group.

IV. Formulation of hypothesis:

1. H0: There is no significant relation between demographic variables (gender and age) and type of shopping preferred
H1: There is a significant relation between demographic variables and type of shopping preferred
2. H0: There is no significant difference in 'Reading blogs about products we plan to buy' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender
H1: There is a significant difference in 'Reading blogs about products we plan to buy' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender
3. H0: There is no significant difference in 'Watching product reviews on You tube' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender
H1: There is a significant difference in 'Watching product reviews on You tube' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender
4. H0: There is no significant difference in 'Buying a product coming across on Instagram only' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender
H1: There is a significant difference in 'Buying a product coming across on Instagram only' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender
5. H0: There is no significant difference in 'Reading product reviews to get more information about the product' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender

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H1: There is a significant difference in 'Reading product reviews to get more information about the product' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender

6. H0: There is no significant difference in 'How frequently you rely on customer rating on product' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender

H1: There is a significant difference in 'How frequently you rely on customer rating on product' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender

7. H0: There is no significant difference in 'How frequently your purchase decision is based on product picture customers shared' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender

H1: There is a significant difference in 'How frequently your purchase decision is based on product picture customers shared' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender

8. H0: There is no significant relation between demographic variables (gender and age) and 'Believing that product reviews are sponsored/paid'

H1: There is a significant relation between demographic variables and 'Believing that product reviews are sponsored/paid'

9. H0: There is no significant difference in 'Trying a product coming across through digital media and not by traditional way of advertising' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender

H1: There is a significant difference in 'Trying a product coming across through digital media and not by traditional way of advertising' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender

V.   Theoretical framework:

Based on the literature review, we have formulated the following theoretical framework:
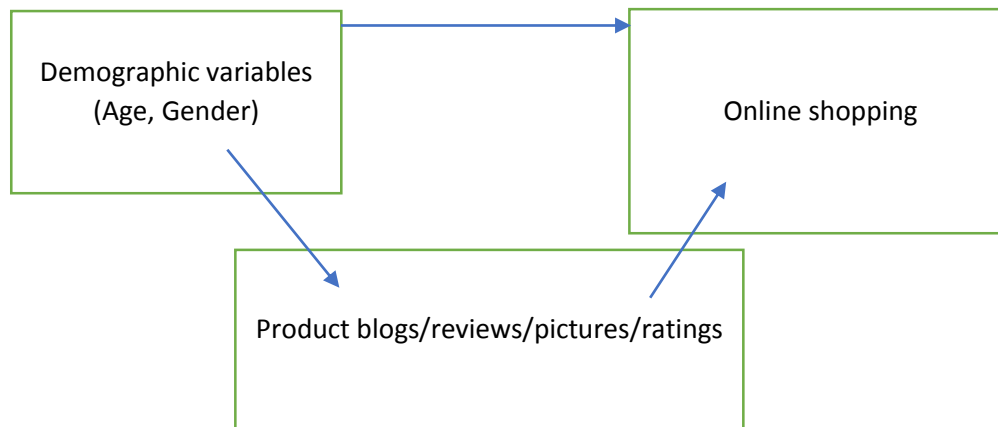
Here demographic variables (age and gender) are the independent variables, Product blogs/reviews/pictures/ratings is the mediating variable and online shopping is the dependent variable.

Methodology: First, secondary data is collected from various research papers on google search and EBSCO. Then, primary data is collected by using a structured questionnaire. The target segment is people of different age groups and gender taken from Mumbai and Navi Mumbai. A sample of 252 respondents is taken by using judgement sampling.

In this study, the respondents are asked whether they watch product reviews, read product blogs, see product pictures shared by other customers and see product ratings. Each of them is taken on a 4-point scale where 1 denotes Never, 2 denotes Rarely, 3 denotes Sometimes and 4 denotes Always.

Data collection: A structured questionnaire is used to collect the primary data. This questionnaire is mailed to the respondents. It has demographic variables i.e. gender and age and questions on product reviews, product blogs, product pictures and ratings as a 4-point Likert scale.

Data analysis:

(a) Reliability

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.713	7

Comment: Since the Cronbach alpha > 0.7, the questionnaire has high reliability.

(b) Descriptive Statistics

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	137	54.4	54.4	54.4
	Female	115	45.6	45.6	100.0
	Total	252	100.0	100.0	

Comment: The male and female respondents are more or less uniformly distributed in the sample.

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-25 years	177	70.2	70.2	70.2
	26-35 years	41	16.3	16.3	86.5
	36-45 years	21	8.3	8.3	94.8
	Above 45 years	13	5.2	5.2	100.0
	Total	252	100.0	100.0	

Comment: Majority of the respondents are in the age group of 18-25 years.

Which type of shopping do you prefer?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Traditional Shopping	122	48.4	48.4	48.4
	Online Shopping	130	51.6	51.6	100.0
	Total	252	100.0	100.0	

Comment: The respondents going for online shopping are marginally more than those going for traditional shopping.

Do you read blog about products you are planning to buy?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	25	9.9	9.9	9.9
	Rarely	33	13.1	13.1	23.0
	Sometimes	133	52.8	52.8	75.8
	Always	61	24.2	24.2	100.0
	Total	252	100.0	100.0	

Comment: More than 50% of the respondents say that they read blogs about products they are planning to buy.

Do you watch product reviews on You tube

Valid	Never	12	4.8	4.8	4.8
	Rarely	16	6.3	6.3	11.1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Sometimes	129	51.2	51.2	62.3
	Always	95	37.7	37.7	100.0
	Total	252	100.0	100.0	

Comment: More than 50% of the respondents say that they watch product reviews on You tube.

Do you ever try to buy a product which you come across on Instagram only?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	77	30.6	30.6	30.6
	Rarely	74	29.4	29.4	59.9
	Sometimes	97	38.5	38.5	98.4
	Always	4	1.6	1.6	100.0
	Total	252	100.0	100.0	

Comment: More than 50% of the respondents say that they do not try to buy a product which they come across on Instagram only.

Do you read product review to get more information about the product?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	5	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Rarely	3	1.2	1.2	3.2
	Sometimes	59	23.4	23.4	26.6
	Always	185	73.4	73.4	100.0
	Total	252	100.0	100.0	

Comment: Majority of the respondents read product reviews to get more information about the product.

How many times you rely on customer rating on product?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	6	2.4	2.4	2.4
	Rarely	11	4.4	4.4	6.7
	Sometimes	105	41.7	41.7	48.4
	Always	130	51.6	51.6	100.0
	Total	252	100.0	100.0	

Comment: Majority of the respondents say that they rely on customer rating on product very frequently.

How frequently is your purchase decision based on product picture customers shared?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	14	5.6	5.6	5.6
	Rarely	19	7.5	7.5	13.1
	Sometimes	131	52.0	52.0	65.1
	Always	88	34.9	34.9	100.0
	Total	252	100.0	100.0	

Comment: Majority of the respondents say that their purchase decision is based on product picture shared by the customers very frequently.

Do you believe that product reviews on You tube, websites and Instagram are sponsored/paid?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	184	73.0	73.0	73.0
	No	68	27.0	27.0	100.0
	Total	252	100.0	100.0	

Comment: Majority of the respondents feel that product reviews on You tube, websites and Instagram are sponsored/paid.

Do you try a product or brand which you come across through digital media and not by traditional way of advertising?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	23	9.1	9.1	9.1
	Rarely	20	7.9	7.9	17.1
	Sometimes	174	69.0	69.0	86.1
	Always	35	13.9	13.9	100.0
	Total	252	100.0	100.0	

Comment: Majority of the respondents say that they try a product or brand which they come across through digital media and not by traditional way of advertising.

(c) Testing of hypothesis

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Do you read blog about products you are planning to buy?	Equal variances assumed	5.239	.023	.716	250	.474	.079	.111	-.139	.297
	Equal variances not assumed			.708	227.392	.480	.079	.112	-.142	.300
Do you watch product reviews on YouTube	Equal variances assumed	2.061	.152	1.675	250	.095	.162	.096	-.028	.351
	Equal variances not assumed			1.642	215.754	.102	.162	.098	-.032	.355
Do you ever try to buy a	Equal variance	3.040	.082	-2.099	250	.037	-.227	.108	-.441	-.014

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
product which you come across on Instagram only?	s assumed									
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.093	239.663	.037	-.227	.109	-.442	-.013
Do you read product review to get more information about the product?	Equal variances assumed	2.596	.108	-.738	250	.461	-.056	.076	-.206	.094
	Equal variances not assumed			-.752	249.429	.453	-.056	.075	-.203	.091
How many times you rely on customer rating on product?	Equal variances assumed	6.667	.010	-2.818	250	.005	-.243	.086	-.412	-.073
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.901	243.530	.004	-.243	.084	-.407	-.078
How frequently your purchase decision based on product picture customers shared?	Equal variances assumed	2.201	.139	-2.641	250	.009	-.261	.099	-.455	-.066
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.644	243.552	.009	-.261	.099	-.455	-.066
Do you try a product or brand which you come across through digital media and not by traditional way of advertising?	Equal variances assumed	2.199	.139	-1.536	250	.126	-.146	.095	-.334	.041
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.547	247.937	.123	-.146	.095	-.333	.040

Comment: For the statements 'Do you ever try to buy a product which you come across on Instagram only?', 'How many times do you rely on customer rating on your product', 'How frequently your purchase decision is based on product picture customers shared', the significance value is < 0.05, hence we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant difference in perception of people about these statements with respect to gender.

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Do you read blog about products you are planning to buy?	Between Groups	4.386	3	1.462	1.932	.125
	Within Groups	187.694	248	.757		
	Total	192.079	251			
Do you watch product reviews on YouTube	Between Groups	10.255	3	3.418	6.200	.000
	Within Groups	136.741	248	.551		
	Total	146.996	251			
Do you ever try to buy a product which you come across on Instagram only?	Between Groups	7.829	3	2.610	3.614	.014
	Within Groups	179.060	248	.722		
	Total	186.889	251			
Do you read product review to get more information about the product?	Between Groups	3.776	3	1.259	3.595	.014
	Within Groups	86.827	248	.350		
	Total	90.603	251			
How many times you rely on customer rating on product?	Between Groups	3.177	3	1.059	2.256	.082
	Within Groups	116.391	248	.469		
	Total	119.567	251			
How frequently your purchase decision based on product picture customers shared?	Between Groups	10.204	3	3.401	5.773	.001
	Within Groups	146.125	248	.589		
	Total	156.329	251			
Do you try a product or brand which you come across through digital media and not by traditional way of advertising?	Between Groups	4.536	3	1.512	2.704	.046
	Within Groups	138.651	248	.559		
	Total	143.187	251			

Comment: For the statements 'Do you watch product reviews on You tube', 'Do you ever try to buy a product which you come across on Instagram only?, 'Do you read product review to get more information about the product', 'How frequently your purchase decision is based on product picture customers shared', 'Do you try a product or brand which you come across digital media and not by traditional way of advertising', the significance value is < 0.05. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant difference in the perception of people about these statements with respect to age.

Gender * Which type of shopping do you prefer? Crosstabulation

Count

		Which type of shopping do you prefer?		Total
		Traditional Shopping	Online Shopping	
Gender	Male	67	70	137
	Female	55	60	115
Total		122	130	252

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.029a	1	.864		
Continuity Correctionb	.002	1	.965		
Likelihood Ratio	.029	1	.864		
Fisher's Exact Test				.900	.482
Linear-by-Linear Association	.029	1	.865		
N of Valid Cases	252				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 55.67.
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table
Comment: Since the significance value is 0.864> 0.05, we conclude that there is no significant relation between gender and type of shopping preferred.

Age * Which type of shopping do you prefer? Crosstabulation

Count

		Which type of shopping do you prefer?		Total
		Traditional Shopping	Online Shopping	
Age	18-25 years	80	97	177
	26-35 years	18	23	41
	36-45 years	12	9	21
	Above 45 years	12	1	13
Total		122	130	252

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.737a	3	.008
Likelihood Ratio	13.393	3	.004
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.818	1	.005
N of Valid Cases	252		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.29.

Comment: Since the significance value is 0.008 < 0.05, we conclude that there is a significant relation between age and type of shopping preferred.

Gender * Do you believe that product reviews on You tube, websites and Instagram are sponsored/paid? Crosstabulation

Count

		Do you believe that product reviews on YouTube, websites and Instagram are sponsored/paid?		Total
		Yes	No	
Gender	Male	106	31	137
	Female	78	37	115
Total		184	68	252

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.892[a]	1	.089		
Continuity Correction[b]	2.427	1	.119		
Likelihood Ratio	2.884	1	.089		
Fisher's Exact Test				.117	.060
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.880	1	.090		
N of Valid Cases	252				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 31.03.
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Comment: Since the significance value is 0.089> 0.05, we conclude that there is no significant relation between gender and 'Believing that online product reviews are sponsored/paid'.

Age * Do you believe that product reviews on YouTube, websites and Instagram are sponsored/paid? Crosstabulation

Count

		Do you believe that product reviews on YouTube, websites and Instagram are sponsored/paid?		Total
		Yes	No	
Age	18-25 years	122	55	177
	26-35 years	36	5	41
	36-45 years	16	5	21
	Above 45 years	10	3	13
Total		184	68	252

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.262[a]	3	.100
Likelihood Ratio	7.010	3	.072
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.199	1	.138
N of Valid Cases	252		

a. 1 cells (12.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.51.

Comment: Since the significance value is 0.100> 0.05, we conclude that there is no significant relation between age and 'Believing that online product previews are sponsored/paid'.

9. Summary of testing of hypotheses

Sr. no.	Hypothesis	Test used	Significance value	Decision	Conclusion
1.	H1: There is a significant relation between demographic variables and type of shopping preferred	Chi-square test	0.864> 0.05 for Gender 0.008< 0.05 for age	Accepted for age	There is a significant relation between age and type of shopping preferred
2.	H2: There is a significant difference in 'Reading blogs about products we plan to buy' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender	Independent samples t test for Gender ANOVA for Age	0.474 > 0.05 for Gender 0.125> 0.05 for Age	Rejected	There is no significant difference in 'Reading blogs about products we plan to buy' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender
3.	H3: There is a significant difference in 'Watching product reviews on You tube' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender	Independent samples t test for Gender ANOVA for Age	0.095> 0.05 for Gender 0.000< 0.05 for Age	Accepted for age	There is a significant difference in 'Watching product reviews on You tube' with respect to age
4.	H4: There is a significant difference in 'Buying a product coming across on Instagram only' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender	Independent samples t test for Gender ANOVA for Age	0.037< 0.05 for Gender 0.014< 0.05 for Age	Accepted	There is a significant difference in 'Buying a product coming across on Instagram only' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender
5.	H5: There is a significant difference in 'Reading product reviews to get more information about the product' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender	Independent samples t test for Gender ANOVA for Age	0.461> 0.05 for Gender 0.014< 0.05 for Age	Accepted for Age	There is a significant difference in 'Reading product reviews to get more information about the product' with respect to age
6.	H6: There is a significant difference in 'How frequently you rely on customer rating on product' with respect to demographic	Independent samples t test for Gender ANOVA for Age	0.005< 0.05 for Gender 0.082>0.05 for age	Accepted for Gender	There is a significant difference in 'How frequently you rely on customer rating

	variables like age and gender				on product' with respect to gender
7.	H7: There is a significant difference in 'How frequently your purchase decision is based on product picture customers shared' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender	Independent samples t test for Gender ANOVA for Age	0.009< 0.05 for Gender 0.001< 0.05 for Age	Accepted	There is a significant difference in 'How frequently your purchase decision is based on product picture customers shared' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender
8.	H8: There is a significant relation between demographic variables and 'Believing that product reviews are sponsored/paid'	Chi-square test	0.089> 0.05 for Gender 0.100> 0.05 for Age	Rejected	There is no significant relation between demographic variables and 'Believing that product reviews are sponsored/paid'
9.	H9: There is a significant difference in 'Trying a product coming across through digital media and not by traditional way of advertising' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender	Independent samples t test for Gender ANOVA for Age	0.126>0.05 for Gender 0.046<0.05 for age	Accepted for age	There is a significant difference in 'Trying a product coming across through digital media and not by traditional way of advertising' with respect to age

VI. Results and findings

1. The respondents going for online shopping are marginally more than those going for traditional shopping.

2. More than 50% of the respondents say that they read blogs about products they are planning to buy.

3. More than 50% of the respondents say that they watch product reviews on You tube.

4. More than 50% of the respondents say that they do not try to buy a product which they come across on Instagram only.

5. Majority of the respondents read product reviews to get more information about the product.

6. Majority of the respondents say that they rely on customer rating on product very frequently.

7. Majority of the respondents say that their purchase decision is based on product picture shared by the customers very frequently.

8. Majority of the respondents feel that product reviews on You tube, websites and Instagram are sponsored/paid.

9. Majority of the respondents say that they try a product or brand which they come across through digital media and not by traditional way of advertising.

10. There is a significant relation between age and type of shopping preferred. Younger people prefer online shopping more than older people.

11. There is a significant difference in 'Watching product reviews on You tube' with respect to age. People in the age group of 18-25 years have given a higher importance to watching product reviews on You tube as compared to the other age groups.

12. There is a significant difference in 'Buying a product coming across on Instagram only' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender. Female respondents and people in the age group of 18-25 years have given a higher importance to 'buying a product coming across on Instagram only' as compared to male respondents and people of other age groups.

13. There is a significant difference in 'Reading product reviews to get more information about the product' with respect to age. People in the age group of 18-25 years have given a higher importance to reading product reviews to get more information about the product.

14. There is a significant difference in 'How frequently you rely on customer rating on product' with respect to gender. Female respondents have given a higher importance to this statement.

15. There is a significant difference in 'How frequently your purchase decision is based on product picture customers shared' with respect to demographic variables like age and gender. People in the age group of 36-45 years and female respondents have given a higher importance to this statement.

16. There is a significant difference in 'Trying a product coming across through digital media and not by traditional way of advertising' with respect to age. People in the age group of 18-25 years, 26-35 years and 36-45 years have given a higher importance to this statement.

VII. Discussion and validation of the model

Based on the literature review, we have formulated the following theoretical framework
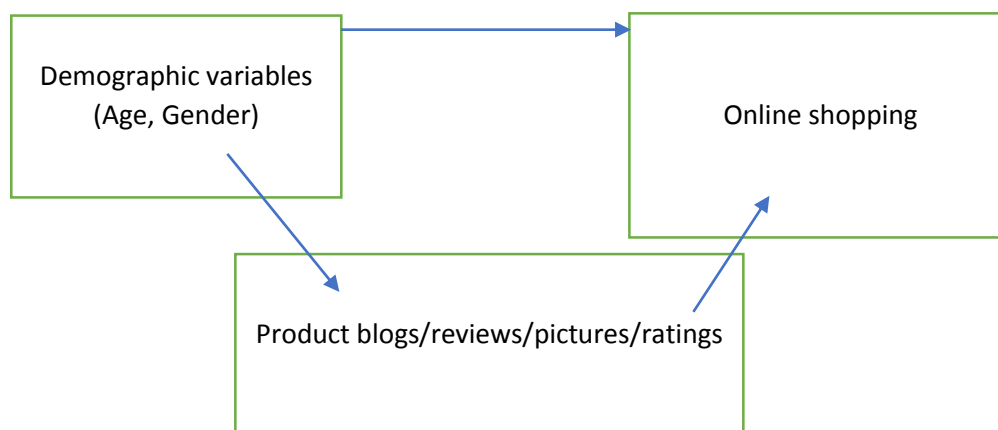
Here demographic variables (age and gender) are the independent variables, Product blogs/reviews/pictures/ratings is the mediating variable and online shopping is the dependent variable.

After testing the hypotheses, we have found that there is a significant relation between demographic variables and the mode of shopping preferred. Also, majority of the respondents read product blogs/reviews and see product pictures and ratings while going for online purchase. There is a significant difference in the perception of people of different age groups and gender with respect to reading product blogs/reviews/pictures/ratings.

Hence, our data validates our model.

Managerial implications

This paper explains the use of traditional media and online media by customers for shopping and whether they watch product reviews, read product blogs, see product pictures and ratings while purchasing product online. Majority of the customers watch product reviews, pictures and blogs and then decide whether they should buy the product or not. Hence, companies can use this study to understand diverse behaviour of customers for example what do customers look for when they buy a product online. They should make their products more visible on social media. They can highlight the features of their products on social media so that they get positive feedback from the customers. They should take feedback from the customers online and resolve all their issue at the earliest. This will in turn get more positive reviews from other people who visit the site. The website should be made more user friendly making it easy for the customers to access the products online. This diverse behaviour of customers can be used by companies to make their products more visible and attractive.

Limitations and scope for further research:

a. The sample size is limited to only 252 customers. A larger sample size can give more reliable results.

b. The sample covers respondents only from Mumbai and Navi Mumbai. The study can be extended to people from other states and cities.

c. This is a quantitative study to understand the diverse perception of customers regarding product reviews, blogs, pictures and ratings on social media with respect to demographic variables like gender and age group. Future studies can consider other demographic variables like occupation, education and income.

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