



# Influence of Online Reviews on Consumer Purchase Decisions: Evidence from the Kathmandu Valley

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The main objective of conducting this research is to analyze the impact of online reviews on consumer purchase intention in Kathmandu Valley. Study is considered about how consumers change their purchase intention with the help of online reviews.

**Design/methodology/approach:** In this study, explanatory research is adopted to understand the relationship between each variable. The study employs the Stimulus-Organism-Response theory, and 403 data has been collected by the setup of the questionnaire and data was collected in KOBO Toolbox. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential analysis.

**Findings:** The study shows that social presence and perceived information quality both positively impact consumer satisfaction and trust. Trust significantly influences satisfaction and purchase intention. However, social presence and information quality do not directly affect purchase intention.

**Conclusion:** To improve online review credibility, policymakers should enforce regulations against fraudulent reviews, support IT advancements for better review management, and educate consumers about online review pitfalls. These measures will enhance the reliability of review platforms and aid consumer decision-making.

**Implication:** The study highlights the importance of trust and satisfaction in driving purchase intentions, emphasizing the need for businesses to manage online reviews professionally, and for policymakers to enforce regulations against fraudulent reviews

**JEL Classification:** L86, M31, C12, L84

## Introduction

The emergence of online reviews has revolutionized the consumer landscape, providing valuable insights based on third-party experiences with products and services (Mafe et al., 2018). In today's technologically driven environment, consumers are increasingly relying on information from various sources to assess the value, trustworthiness, and social satisfaction associated with products and services (Lin et al., 2019). Online reviews have emerged as a significant source of information for making informed purchase decisions, facilitated by the widespread use of the internet, mobile phones, and social media platforms (Alalwan, 2020; Kapoor & Vij, 2018). This shift underscores the importance of innovation in product and service development to remain competitive in the market (Zhang et al., 2021).

In developed countries, online reviews have become integral to consumer decision-making, with a staggering 92% of people reading online reviews before purchasing products and services (Lu et al., 2018). Originating in the late 1990s as a means of social interaction,



online reviews have evolved into a cornerstone of consumer information exchange, particularly as internet usage has skyrocketed (Resnick & Zeckhauser, 2002). Globally, online reviews have become instrumental in influencing consumer behavior, with a significant uptick observed post-COVID-19 as consumers increasingly rely on them to facilitate easy and informed purchases (Cheong et al., 2020; Rita et al., 2022).

In regional contexts like Nepal, where new innovations and technological advancements are reshaping business landscapes, online reviews play a critical role in fostering long-term consumer relationships and navigating evolving business environments (Buhalis et al., 2019; Ismagilova et al., 2020). With the proliferation of smartphones and increasing internet accessibility, online review platforms are witnessing exponential growth, particularly in sectors such as hospitality, where they analyze demand trends and cater to changing customer expectations (Mariani et al., 2019; Mehta et al., 2021). In Nepal specifically, online reviews are becoming indispensable tools for businesses across various sectors, including restaurants, hotels, and electronic goods, leveraging social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram (Singh et al., 2020; Neupane, 2020).

However, despite the growing importance of online reviews, challenges persist, particularly in regions like Nepal. Nepalese consumers may exhibit skepticism towards online reviews, questioning the credibility of ratings and their relevance to their own experiences (Mishra, 2021). Moreover, there is a dearth of research on online reviews' impact on consumer purchase intention in Nepal, hampering a comprehensive understanding of their efficacy. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, encompassing factors that influence consumer reliance on online reviews, exploring challenges hindering their utilization, and proposing managerial solutions to enhance their adoption (Ruiz-Mafe et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2020).

It is crucial to emphasize the importance of online reviews, as evidenced by recent research and findings. For example, Lu et al. (2018) demonstrate the widespread reliance on online reviews in developed countries, indicating a near-universal trend in consumer behavior. Cheong et al. (2020) further discuss the post-COVID-19 surge in online review usage, linking it to the growing dependence on e-commerce and online shopping platforms. Moreover, Ismagilova et al. (2020) explore how online reviews shape consumer behavior in emerging markets like Nepal, highlighting their potential influence on business strategies and consumer trust.

Despite the numerous benefits associated with online reviews, challenges persist, particularly in regions like Nepal. Mishra (2021) highlights the skepticism among Nepalese consumers regarding online reviews, pointing to concerns about their authenticity and relevance. This skepticism shows the need for further research, as noted by Apartment and Peth (2018), who identify a gap in comprehensive studies on the impact of online reviews on consumer behavior in Nepal. To address these challenges, scholars such as Ruiz-Mafe et al. (2020) highlight the need of multifaceted approach that considers various factors influencing consumer reliance on online reviews and proposes managerial strategies to enhance their adoption.

In conclusion, online reviews have become essential tools in the modern consumer landscape, shaping purchasing decisions and building consumer trust worldwide. However, their effectiveness and utilization differ across regions, underscoring the need for targeted research to fully understand their impact. In Nepal, where online review practices are still developing, there is a significant opportunity to explore their influence and address existing challenges. By doing so, businesses can better meet consumer needs, fostering trust and satisfaction, while policymakers can create an environment

conducive to the effective use of online reviews, ultimately benefiting both businesses and consumers.

## Literature Review

Various theories were reviewed for this study to understand consumer behavior and purchase intention. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) explores how central and peripheral cues in communication influence consumer decisions by shaping perceptions through message elaboration (Aghakhani et al., 2021). The S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) theory is a psychological framework that explains how external stimuli influence individual behavior. In this context, a "stimulus" (S) refers to any external factor that can provoke a reaction, such as an online review or advertisement. The "organism" (O) represents the internal processes of the individual, including emotions, thoughts, and perceptions that interpret the stimulus. Finally, the "response" (R) is the resulting behavior or action, such as making a purchase (Zhu et al., 2020). The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) explains how consumer behavior is driven by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, influencing purchase intentions (Ismagilova et al., 2020). This study ultimately applies the S-O-R theory, as it aligns with the step-by-step process of consumer decision-making, where online reviews (stimulus) lead to trust and satisfaction (organism), resulting in a purchase decision (response) (Bigne et al., 2020). SOR theory highlights that purchase intentions are directly influenced by the perceived quality of information. Specifically, positive and high-quality reviews serve as a powerful stimulus (S) that can directly impact the consumer's response (R), even bypassing the organism (O) factor in some cases. This means that when the stimulus is strong and favorable, it can lead to immediate purchase decisions. The relevance of the S-O-R theory lies in its ability to explain the direct link between external stimuli, such as online reviews, and consumer responses, making it highly applicable to studies on consumer behavior in the digital age (Zhu et al., 2020). Hence, this theory is considered the best fit for guiding the research and achieving valid results.

Based on the S-O-R theory, (Shah et al., 2021) investigated the customer's perceived value and satisfaction through electronic word-of-mouth fairness. The study has concluded that electronic word-of-mouth fairness describes the customer's perceived value followed by the source of credibility, quality information, and review valence. According to this research, the source of consumer response are three components that are a source of credibility, quality information, and review valence independent variable with the relationship perceived value and the purchase intention is the dependent variable with the control factors are age, gender, and income. The study concluded that the information quality helps to evaluate the judgment, the second one is the source of credibility which evaluates whether the information is trustworthy or not, and the review valence is created through rating. These all components make the customer organism with value and at last, the customer makes the decision. Similarly, Zhu et al. (2020) elaborated that the perceived information makes trust if the online reviews are adequacy, depth, reliable, understandability, relevance, and completeness. The study indicated the perceived information as the best standard of measuring customer satisfaction which estimates customer trust in the perception of the customer.

The conceptual framework illustrates how consumers reach a decision based on multiple factors, depicting consumer purchase intention as a response influenced by stimuli and organism. This study employs purchase intention as the dependent variable, with social presence and perceived information quality as independent variables, while trust and satisfaction serve as mediating factors in consumer decision-making. Additionally, emotional polarity is introduced as a

mediating variable, contributing to the complex interplay between stimuli, organism, and response in shaping consumer behavior.

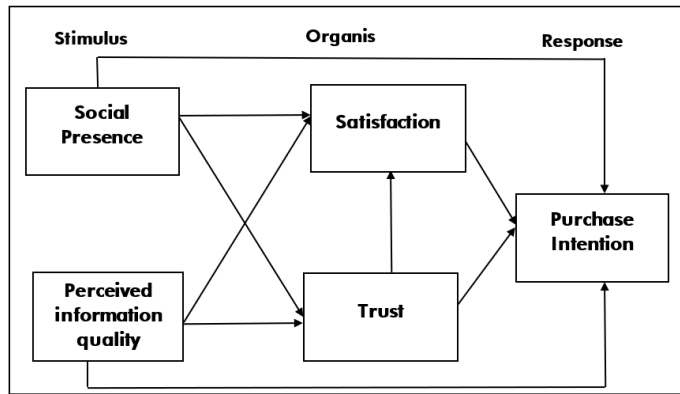


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Note. Modified and Adapted from (Wang et al., 2020)

## Social Presence and Satisfaction

Social presence is the learning experience that communicate the things in the socially with face-to face with social-emotional cues. Similarly, social presence is the feeling of belongingness with another to exchange the information (Weidlich et al., 2018). Social presence is a medium for users-experience to express themselves socially and emotionally through any means of communication technology that creates the sense of belonging, supports freedom of expression, and sustains cohesiveness which gives them ultimately satisfaction (Law et al., 2019). Basically, when the users used the online reviews, they feel like they are engaged in social community which has like face-to-face interaction which gives ultimately the sense of social presence producing the positive attitude and they get satisfied (Haines & Russell, 2021).

H1: Social presence significantly affects the satisfaction on online reviews.

## Social Presence and Trust

In the environment of uncertainty, when one factor can predict the behavior of any entity and make to willingness to achieve the things and they belief then it is called trust (Aljazzaf et al., 2010). Trust gives the company more customers because the consumer tends to be loyal. In the age of e-commerce online reviews plays the significant role because it exchanged the information and content to the viewers which gives the degree of social presence and make the positive thoughts and belief that makes customer trustworthy (Liu et al., 2019). Social presence in online reviews makes feel trustworthy because while consumer read the reviews they feel they are in the same place (Zhu, Li, Wang, et al., 2020) .

H2: Social presence significantly relates to trust of consumer on online reviews.

## Perceived Information Quality and Satisfaction

Studied trying to execute that information quality can affect the satisfaction of the consumer in online environment. When the customer listened and read the information provided by the third party that is based upon all the attributes on that time customer can change the attitude to be positive concern toward products that helps to promote the consumer satisfaction (Izmirlı et al., 2019). Mostly online shoppers influenced to be satisfied when they feel the information provided by the third party is accurate, sufficient, timely, and trustworthy that can fill the needs what consumers are looking to get actual products could sense the feelings of satisfied with the available information (Zhu, Li, Wang, et al., 2020).

H3: Perceived information quality significantly related to customer satisfaction on online reviews to purchase intention.

## Perceived Information Quality and Trust

Information quality is known as attributes that defines about the accuracy, timeliness, relevancy and helps to make good decision for anyone (Kluitmans, 2013). In the age of competition of business information quality playing the significant role to boost the business as we all customer. Similarly, High quality information has a convincing power when online reviews provide quality information to the consumer then it can change the perception of consumer with valuable information or with excessive evidence which helps to build belief towards the product and services that turns into the trust (Zhao et al., 2020b). Trust will be increased when the third party shows the behaviour that will matches with the needs of the consumer (Liu et al., 2019).

H4: Perceived information quality has significantly influenced the trust of consumer on online reviews.

## Trust and Satisfaction

Satisfaction is a post-purchase psychological state that expresses an assessment of the experience of using a good or service. Therefore, it is dependent upon the degree and direction of the difference between the performance as perceived and the benchmark for comparison. According to Li et al. ( 2017) online trust have the significant effect on consumer purchase intention because they find out the worthy information through the online reviews and they can identify the needs of their internal organism which ultimately produce the satisfaction through particular level (Ashraf et al., 2020) a trust that develops over time as a result of continuous usage interactions.

H5: Trust has significantly influenced the consumer satisfaction on online reviews.

## Trust and Purchase Intention

High quality information can fulfill the desire of the consumer which affects the purchase intention significantly. Similarly, when users have the interaction and the communication on online platform it made convenient and easier because it forms a confident and customer are willing to get e-WOM which is relates to trust by reducing the risk and uncertainty ultimately it effects the consumer purchase intention (Zhao et al., 2020). Some Potential customers can ask for reviews and feedback on the goods or services they plan to buy through social commerce, as well as hear the opinions and suggestions of other customers. Thus, it can be hypothesized that if users trust the

site's members, they could be more inclined to buy the goods or services these users have evaluated or highly recommended (Liu et al., 2019).

*H6: Trust has significantly influenced the purchase intention of consumers on online reviews.*

## Satisfaction and Purchase Intention

By researching the Airbnb website, found that satisfaction has a significant effect on the purchase intention (Chen et al., 2018). Satisfied customer have always positive desire toward the products and services as well as information with the completeness, accuracy, clarity, usefulness gives the actual benefit for the consumer that functions as subjective perception and that helps to creates the positive satisfied response in a purchase making decision (Chen & Chang, 2018).

*H7: Satisfaction and purchase intention significantly influence customer purchase intention on online reviews.*

## Social Presence and Purchase Intention

Social presence conveys through the online reviews a sense of sociability and human warmth where the clue information communicates with immerse and the other members into the environment that creates one connections of feelings with the community and affects the consumer purchase intention as they form a positive response to the external environment (Lu et al., 2016).

When people conduct the flow of communication through the online reviews it creates the awareness of the social presence which gives the

feeling of human one-to-one connections that affects the customer intention to make purchase decision on related product and services (Liu et al., 2019).

*H8: Social presence moderately relates to the consumer purchase intention on online reviews.*

## Perceived Information Quality and Purchase Intention

In the age of technology consumers are being more knowledgeable due to the available huge information related product and services in the business website that could be affects the purchase intention of the customer (Daowd et al. 2020). Zhou et al. (2017) stated that most of the customer made purchase decision by analyzing the information they found out from the business website and evaluates them based on information are timeliness or not, completeness, and relevancy which could motivates consumer to purchase the goods and services. Clear and relevant information helps customer to interpret and categories products and services with their necessity and made decision evaluating them (Ismagilova et al., 2020).

*H9: Perceived information quality significantly influences the consumer purchase intention on online reviews.*

## Variables Definition

Variables used in the analysis as well as the explanations which are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Observed Variables and its Description**

Construct	Variable Id	Definition	Explanation	References
Social Presence	SP_1	Actual talking	Feel of actual talking	(Wang et al., 2020)
	SP_2	Same room	Reviews makes feel like people have in same room	
	SP_3	Directly Speaking	Felt like person is directly speaking	
	SP_4	Personalness	Sense of personalness	
	SP_5	Human contact	Felt like human contact	
	SP_6	Sociability	Reviews gives the feeling of sociability	
Perceived Information Quality	PIQ_1	Enough information	Reviews provide enough information	(Wang et al., 2020)
	PIQ_2	Details	Reviews have detailed information	
	PIQ_3	Reliable and credible	Concern for reliable and credible	
	PIQ_4	Accurate and Relevant	Provides accurate and relevant information	
	PIQ_5	Easy	Easy to read	
	PIQ_6	Short	Presented short and clear form	
	PIQ_7	Selection	Exact information helps to select the products	
	PIQ_8	Evaluate	Specific facts help to make products evaluation	

Trust	T_1	Confident	Reviews provides confidents	(Wang et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2020a)
	CT_2	Believe	Reviews are believable	
	CT_3	Trustworthy	Reviews gives the feeling of the trustworthy perception	
	CT_4	Truthfulness	Reliable information	
	CT_5	Behaviour	Based on real behaviour experience sharing	
	CT_6	Safe	Reading reviews like feeling of safe	
Satisfaction	CS_1	Satisfied	Feel satisfied with the products and vendor based on online reviews	(Wang et al., 2020)
	CS_2	Good	Felt good based on the online reviews	
	CS_3	Happy	Felt happy based on the online reviews	
	CS_4	Expectation	Reviews meets customer expectation	
	CS_5	Regret	Does not feel regret with purchase decision	
	CS_6	Purchase decision	Gives happiness to make the purchase decision	
Purchase Intention	PI_1	Would	Would like purchase	(Wang et al., 2020; Ventre & Kolbe, 2020)
	PI_2	Probability	Probability of purchase	
	PI_3	Willingness	Willingness to Purchase	
	PI_4	Recommend	Will recommend to others	
	PI_5	Continuously	Want to use continuously	
	PI_6	Future	More expects to purchase in future	

## Methods

This research uses the explanatory research design to know any cause-effect relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Where explanatory research design seeks how one phenomenon can cause an impact to another and find out why the reason behind the issues (Frederico et al., 2020). This research establishes a framework for data collection and analysis to describe the customer purchase intention through the information perceived quality and the social presence with the trust and satisfaction towards the online reviews preference that is related or not.

## Study Area and Population

The study area encompasses Bagmati Pradesh, situated within Kathmandu Valley. Nepal, comprising 77 districts, includes three districts within Kathmandu Valley: Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur. Positioned at an average elevation of approximately 1350 meters above sea level, Kathmandu Valley assumes an elliptical shape, extending 25 kilometers along its east-west axis and boasting a maximum width of 19 kilometers.

For this study, Kathmandu Valley (comprising Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Lalitpur) was selected as the research area. Kathmandu, the nation's capital, houses numerous large businesses and carries a high population density, totaling 2,517,023 inhabitants as of the 2011 census. This dense population facilitates data collection, and Kathmandu's status as a hub for established businesses, characterized by high transaction volumes and significant purchasing power among its inhabitants, adds further relevance to the study. Additionally, most literate consumers in Nepal, who predominantly rely on online reviews, are situated in Kathmandu Valley, ensuring the acquisition of precise and valid data. Known as a burgeoning center

for online shopping businesses catering to diverse consumer profiles, Kathmandu Valley serves as an ideal setting to explore the emerging concept of online reviews, offering insights to enhance both company performance and consumer experiences while minimizing risks. Thus, Kathmandu Valley was chosen to provide insights into how online reviews can foster consumer trust and long-term satisfaction. The target population for this study consists of consumers who have previously made purchases through online platforms.

## Sample Technique and Sample Size Determination

The study was gather responses regarding online review practices and their impact on consumer purchase intention within the Kathmandu Valley. Given that the sample size is not predetermined, and potential respondents can be diverse, non-probability sampling was employed. Non-probability sampling involves selecting units based on individual judgment rather than random selection. Under this technique, individuals are chosen based on the researcher's knowledge and opinions regarding the population being studied. Under non-probability sampling, judgement sampling was used as it enables researchers to make informed decisions about who should be included in the sample, ensuring that the study's findings are relevant and applicable to the research questions being addressed. For determination of sample size, the method, developed by Cochran was used which involves using an equation to generate a representative sample for proportions in large populations. This equation, denoted as  $n$ , considers several factors including the standard tabulated value for a 5% level of significance ( $z$ ), the prevalence or proportion of an event ( $p$ ), and the allowable error ( $e$ ) that can be tolerated (Kaur, 2017). For instance, in the given equation, with a standard tabulated value ( $z$ ) of 1.96, a prevalence rate of 50% ( $p = 0.5$ ), and an allowable error of 5% ( $e = 0.05$ ), the sample size ( $n_0$ ) is calculated

to be approximately 384.16. To account for potential non-response error of 5%, the calculated sample size is adjusted accordingly. This adjustment involves multiplying the initial sample size by the non-response error percentage and adding the resulting value to the original sample size. In this case, the non-response error of 5% yields an additional 19.208 observations. Thus, the final sample size for the study is determined to be approximately 403.368. This calculated sample size ensures that the research obtains enough observations or replicates to yield statistically valid results.

### Research Instrument, Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire, which was administered through the Kobo Toolbox. The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential techniques. Microsoft Excel was employed for data entry and tabulation, facilitating descriptive analysis. For inferential analysis, SmartPLS 4.0 was used, with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) applied for detailed relationship analysis.

## Results and Analysis

### Socio Demographic Characteristics

A questionnaire survey was conducted among 403 respondents in each of the three districts: Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur. The socio-demographic information generally deals with the personal characteristics of respondents. Several factors such as age, sex, level of education, profession and monthly income were analyzed for the socio demographic characteristics.

Table 2: Social-Demographic Information

Title	Category	Number	Percentage(%)
Gender	Female	255	63.28
	Male	146	36.23
	Others	2	0.49
Age	Below 18	17	4.22
	18-30	360	89.33
	30-40	22	5.46
	40-50	4	0.99
Marital Status	Single	357	88.59
	Married	44	10.92
	Divorced	2	0.49
Family	Nuclear	232	57.32
	Joint	145	35.98
	Single parents	24	5.96
	Extended	2	0.5

Educational	Below SLC/SEE	2	0.50
	+2 Intermediate	60	14.89
	Bachelor	245	60.79
	Master's and above	96	23.82
District	Kathmandu	282	69.79
	Lalitpur	74	18.36
	Bhaktapur	47	11.66
Occupation	Students	246	61.04
	Employed	118	29.28
	Unemployed	15	3.72
	Business	12	2.98
	Self-employed	11	2.73
	Farmer	1	0.25
Monthly Income	Below 20000	265	65.76
	20000-40000	94	23.33
	40000-60000	25	6.2
	60000-80000	14	3.47
	80000-100000	5	1.24

Table 2 summarizes that socio-demographic information of the respondents. The majority of respondents in this study are female (63.28%), aged 18-30 (89.33%), and unmarried (63.03%). Most come from nuclear families (57.32%) and have a Bachelor's degree (60.79%). Geographically, the majority are from Kathmandu (69.80%). In terms of occupation, most are students (61.04%), and the majority have a monthly income below 20,000 (65.76%).

### Issue and Managerial Solution

This study explores the issues faced by consumers using online review platforms in the Kathmandu Valley. Survey responses revealed that a significant majority, 90.82% of Nepalese consumers, encountered challenges with their use of review platforms. The primary challenges cited include fake reviews (58.56%), unclear reviews (38.71%), spam and fraud (31.51%), paid reviews (28.04%), insufficient reviews (27.79%), fabricated reviews (26.05%), and various other issues (0.99%). These challenges contribute to a sense of dissatisfaction when expectations do not align with reality, particularly concerning the authenticity of reviews and payment and delivery problems. Respondents identified the origin of these challenges, attributing them primarily to companies (72.46%), consumers themselves (36.23%), government entities (11.66%), IT officers (8.44%), and other factors (0.99%), which included reviewers, erroneous products, negative evaluations, and potential rivals or adversaries.

Regarding the frequency of encountering such challenges, data collected indicated that 44.67% of respondents felt them frequently, with 17.12% experiencing them sometimes and 15.14% rarely. Additionally, 13.9% reported feeling such challenges very frequently within the Kathmandu valley. Despite these challenges, most respondents (89.58%) believe that they are manageable and can be minimized. When asked about strategies to mitigate these challenges, the highest percentage (44.67%) suggested increasing consumer awareness, followed by employing review management tools (39.7%), maintaining up-to-date reviews (28.78%), automating detection processes (27.54%), and implementing government

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regulations (21.34%). Responsibility for implementing solutions was primarily attributed to companies (76.67%), followed by consumers (32.75%), government bodies (17.12%), IT officers (14.89%), and others (0.5%). Finally, respondents were prompted to propose further steps to enhance the online review platform experience, aiming for improved consumer satisfaction and trust.

## Inferential Analysis

**Measurement Model Assessment:** For internal consistency reliability, the CA and CR were evaluated. Similarly, Factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), were evaluated for Convergent

Validity. As per Hair Jr et al. (2020), Loading values should be  $\geq 0.5$ , AVE values should be  $\geq 0.5$ , and CR and CA values should be  $\geq 0.7$ . All the AVEs were higher than 0.5 and all the CRs and CAs were higher than 0.7 (Table 3). This satisfies the threshold indicating the no problem of internal consistency reliability and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019).

**Table 3: Measurement Model**

Construct	Items	Factor loading	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Social Presence	SP_3	0.701	0.559	0.771	0.528
	SP_4	0.725			
	SP_6	0.755			
Perceived Information Quality	PIQ_2	0.768	0.723	0.827	0.545
	PIQ_3	0.77			
	PIQ_4	0.715			
	PIQ_7	0.696			
Trust	T_1	0.721	0.725	0.829	0.548
	T_2	0.719			
	T_4	0.752			
	T_6	0.767			
Satisfaction	S_1	0.704	0.781	0.853	0.544
	S_2	0.865			
	S_3	0.861			
	S_4	0.626			
	S_6	0.585			
Purchase intention	PI_1	0.768	0.769	0.844	0.522
	PI_2	0.802			
	PI_3	0.75			
	PI_4	0.582			
	PI_6	0.69			

**Discriminant Validity:** For discriminant validity HTMT ratios and FNL criterion were examined. The HTMT readings should be below 0.90, to determine discriminant validity (Voorhees et al., 2016). All the HTMT values for the construct fall below threshold 0.9, thus meeting the criteria for discriminant validity and indicating validity of the data. Moreover, to support the result of HTMT ratio, FNL criterion suggests that the square of AVE of a construct should be greater than the inter-construct correlation. This criterion was also fulfilled by the data indicating the discriminant validity of the data.

**Table 4: Fornell and Larcker**

	PIQ	PI	SP	S	T
PIQ	0.738				
PI	0.453	0.723			
SP	0.466	0.283	0.727		
S	0.497	0.622	0.393	0.737	
T	0.592	0.601	0.371	0.56	0.74

Note. Field Study

HTMT (Heterotrait and Monotrait Ratio)

Table 5: HTMT

	PIQ	PI	SP	S	T
PIQ					
PI	0.588				
SP	0.716	0.414			
S	0.641	0.804	0.584		
T	0.809	0.79	0.574	0.74	

Note. Field Study

Structural Model Assessment

PLS-SEM is a statistical technique used to analyze the relationships between latent variables and their indicators, as well as the relationships between the latent variables themselves (Hair et al., 2019). PLS-SEM is popular in various fields such as marketing, management, and social sciences because it allows researchers to test complex models and work with small sample sizes (Hair Jr. et al., 2019). Consequently, we reported the path coefficients, standard errors, t-values, and p-values for the structural model using a 10,000-sample resampling bootstrapping procedure, as recommended by Hair et al. (2019). Additionally, we considered the criticism by Han and Lee (2016) that p-values are a poor criterion for determining the significance of a hypothesis. They recommend using a combination of criteria, including p-values, confidence intervals, and effect sizes.

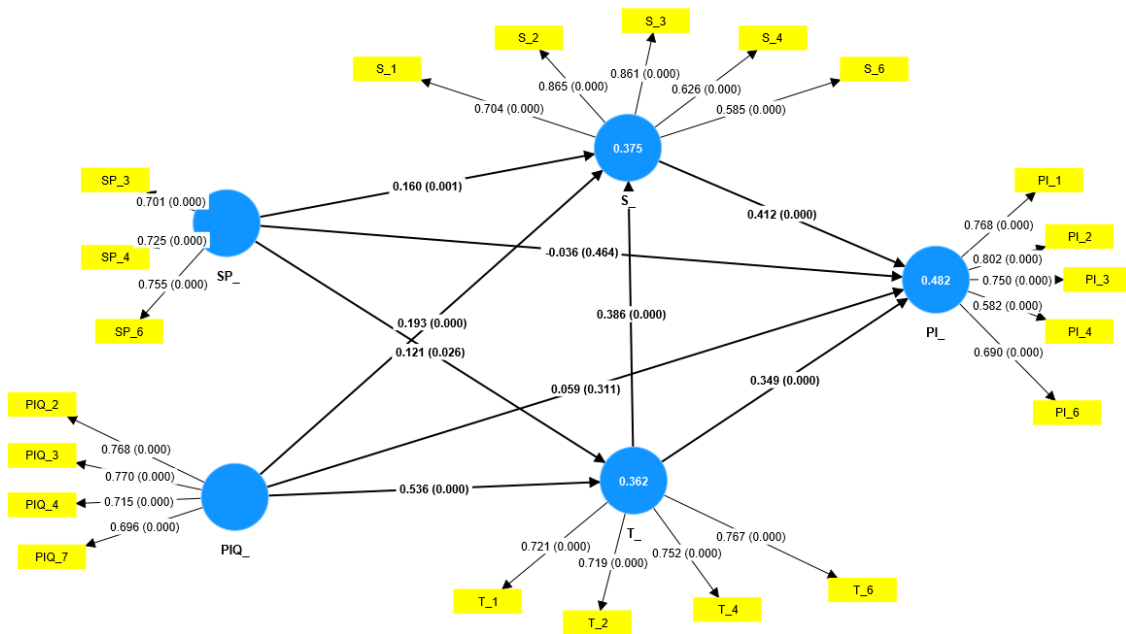


Figure 2: Structural Equation Modeling

Table 6: Path Estimates for Structural Model

Hypothesis		SD	T Value	P values	CI LL	CI UL	Decision
H1: Social Presence → Satisfaction	0.16	0.048	3.345	0.001	0.065	0.253	Supported
H2: Social Presence → Trust	0.121	0.054	2.231	0.026	0.018	0.231	Supported
H3: Perceived Information Quality → Satisfaction	0.193	0.055	3.525	0.000	0.087	0.303	Supported
H4: Perceived Information Quality → Trust	0.536	0.049	10.849	0.000	0.435	0.627	Supported
H5: Trust → Satisfaction	0.386	0.057	6.775	0.000	0.275	0.495	Supported
H6: Trust → Purchase Intention	0.349	0.056	6.211	0.000	0.237	0.457	Supported
H7: Satisfaction → Purchase Intention	0.412	0.049	8.365	0.000	0.315	0.509	Supported
H8: Social Presence → Purchase Intention	-0.036	0.049	0.732	0.464	0.132	0.061	Not Supported
H9: Perceived Information Quality → Purchase Intention	0.059	0.058	1.014	0.311	0.054	0.175	Not Supported

Note. Researcher Calculation



Table 6 results show that all hypotheses related to the relationships between social presences, perceived information quality, trust, satisfaction, and purchase intention, except for two, are supported. Specifically, social presence positively affects satisfaction (H1) and trust (H2), and perceived information quality positively impacts both satisfaction (H3) and trust (H4). Trust is found to positively influence satisfaction (H5) and purchase intention (H6), while satisfaction also positively affects purchase intention (H7). However, social presence (H8) and perceived information quality (H9) do not have a significant direct effect on purchase intention.

### Discussions

Online reviews are becoming the most influential factor for consumers deciding to shop from a website or e-commerce platform, aiding in making informed shopping decisions (Xiao et al., 2022). Xiao et al. (2022) analyzed online reviews as a platform that links consumer preferences and long-term business growth strategies. Their study identified potential developments in the online review sector of Nepal, applying the S-O-R model to analyze interactions between users and the quality of company reviews. The findings indicate the necessity of improving the online review system to benefit the IT industry. The study suggests that the quality of information provided by consumers is significantly influenced by IT control systems, impacting a company's brand. These insights could be instrumental in formulating new policies that balance the interests of both consumers and companies.

Hypothesis 1 is supported indicating that there is a significant positive relationship between social presence and satisfaction. In other words, as social presence increases, consumer satisfaction also tends to increase. The finding that social presence significantly enhances consumer satisfaction aligns with numerous studies in the past. For example, Richardson et al. (2017) found that increased social presence in online environments positively affects users' perceptions of service quality, which in turn improves satisfaction. Similarly, Nasir (2020) demonstrated that higher levels of social presence lead to greater consumer satisfaction by fostering better interaction and engagement. Similarly, H2 is also supported. This means that social presence significantly influences trust. A higher level of social presence is associated with increased trust among consumers. This finding aligns the study of Jiang et al. (2019) which demonstrated that social presence plays a crucial role in forming trust in computer-mediated communication by creating a more personable and engaging interaction.

The supported hypothesis 3 indicates that perceived information quality has a significant positive effect on consumer satisfaction, suggesting that better perceived information quality leads to higher satisfaction. This finding is consistent with a study by Weng and Chen (2015) which found that higher information quality positively influences customer satisfaction in online shopping environments, reinforcing the idea that quality information contributes to a better consumer experience. Similarly, a study by Zhang, Zhao, and Xu (2018) demonstrated that the perceived quality of information significantly impacts customer satisfaction in e-commerce settings, highlighting the importance of accurate and relevant information for enhancing consumer satisfaction. H4 is also supported: This indicates that perceived information quality has a significant positive impact on trust. When information quality is perceived as high, trust among consumers increases. The finding that perceived information quality significantly enhances consumer trust is consistent with an investigation by Lin et al. (2019). It highlighted that high-quality information leads to greater trust in online environments, supporting the notion that trust is fostered when consumers perceive the information they receive as accurate and relevant.

Supported H5 suggest that trust has a significant positive relationship with satisfaction. Higher trust leads to greater satisfaction among consumers. The finding that trust has a significant positive relationship with satisfaction aligns well with research by Attar et al. (2021) and Filieri et al. (2015) highlighting that trust is a crucial factor in building long-term relationships with consumers, leading to higher satisfaction. The finding that trust significantly influences purchase intention (H6) is consistent with several studies that highlight the critical role of trust in consumer behavior. For instance, Ventre and Kolbe (2020) found that trust is a strong predictor of purchase intention, as it reduces perceived risk and increases consumer confidence in making a purchase. Similarly, Bylok (2022) demonstrated that trust positively impacts purchase intention in e-commerce settings, suggesting that as trust increases, consumers are more likely to commit to a purchase.

Hypothesis 7, which indicates that satisfaction has a significant positive effect on purchase intention, is also well-supported. Cuong (2020) found that higher levels of customer satisfaction lead to increased purchase intentions and long-term customer loyalty. The finding that social presence does not significantly affect purchase intention (H8) suggests that increasing social presence alone does not substantially alter consumers' likelihood to make a purchase. This is consistent with some studies that have found the impact of social presence on purchase intentions to be limited. For instance, Hassanein and Head (2007) reported that while social presence enhances user satisfaction and engagement, it does not necessarily translate into increased purchase intentions. Similarly, the lack of support for Hypothesis 9, which posits that perceived information quality does not significantly impact purchase intention, aligns with findings in other research. For example, a study by Qalati et al. (2021), found that while perceived information quality affects user satisfaction and trust, its direct influence on purchase intention is not always significant. This suggests that other factors might mediate or moderate the relationship between information quality and purchase decisions.

### Conclusion and Implications

The study reveals several significant relationships: social presence positively influences both consumer satisfaction and trust, suggesting that increased social engagement enhances how satisfied consumers feel and how much they trust the review platform. Similarly, high perceived information quality contributes to greater satisfaction and trust, indicating that well-presented and relevant information improves user experiences and confidence. Furthermore, trust has a substantial impact on satisfaction and purchase intention, meaning that when consumers trust the review platform, they are more likely to be satisfied and intend to make a purchase. However, it is noteworthy that social presence and perceived information quality do not have a direct effect on purchase intention, implying that while these factors improve satisfaction and trust, they do not independently drive consumers to make a purchase decision.

To address these findings and enhance the credibility of online reviews, policymakers should focus on several key areas. Implementing regulations to ensure the authenticity of online reviews and establishing penalties for fraudulent activities can significantly improve the reliability of review platforms. Supporting advancements in IT control systems is also crucial, as these developments can enhance review management and better detect fake content, leading to more trustworthy online environments. Additionally, educating consumers about online reviews and their potential pitfalls is essential for helping them navigate review platforms effectively. By addressing these areas, both businesses and policymakers can collaborate to create a more reliable and effective online review environment, ultimately benefiting consumers and fostering better decision-making in the digital marketplace.

The findings of this study have significant implications for improving online review platforms and enhancing consumer trust and satisfaction. The study highlights the crucial role of social presence and perceived information quality in shaping consumer experiences. Specifically, increasing social presence and providing high-quality information can positively impact consumer satisfaction and trust. These elements are essential for creating a more engaging and reliable review environment. Nonetheless, social presence and perceived information quality only have a limited direct impact on buy intention, indicating that other factors can have a greater influence on purchasing decisions. Stricter restrictions must be put in place to assure the authenticity of reviews and set consequences for fraudulent acts in order to address the issues that have been found, such as phony reviews and imprecise information. Advancements in IT control systems should be supported to improve review management and detection of fake content. Moreover, educating consumers about the possible dangers of reading online evaluations can help them use review sites more skillfully. By concentrating on these areas, corporations and governments can work together to improve the legitimacy and efficacy of online reviews, which will eventually help consumers and businesses by encouraging better decision-making and a more reliable digital economy.

## Limitations and Future Research

Although this study offers insightful information about the workings of online review platforms, it has some shortcomings that should be investigated further in other studies. First off, the study's geographical focus on the Kathmandu Valley may limit the findings' applicability to other areas or nations with distinct socioeconomic and cultural circumstances. Increasing the study's scope to encompass different regions could yield a more thorough comprehension of online review practices worldwide. Second, the majority of the data included in the study came from surveys, which can have self-reporting biases. Longitudinal studies or experimental designs may be useful in future study to provide more precise and detailed information about how customers engage with online reviews. Furthermore, including qualitative techniques like focus groups and interviews could provide more in-depth understanding of the reasons for review behaviors as well as the perceived efficacy of review management techniques. The emphasis on certain categories like social presence and perceived information quality is another drawback. Lastly, even though this study offers solutions to some of the problems brought on by online reviews, it doesn't assess how well these solutions work in real-world situations. Future studies should look at the implementation of suggested remedies, such as raised consumer awareness or IT innovations, and how these affect the credibility of reviews and customer happiness. This could involve assessing the real-world effectiveness of regulatory measures and technological innovations in enhancing the reliability of online review platforms.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest related to this study.

## Authors' Contribution

**The article is based on the thesis conducted by Anita Sharma and Data Collection**

Anita Sharma

## Research Methodology and Research Supervision

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