THE SOCIAL MEDIA PARADOX: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF GENDER-BASED BEHAVIOURAL OUTCOMES IN RESPONSE TO ONLINE REVIEWS AND RATINGS

Dr. Arul Mary Rexy V[1], Research Guide, Department of Commerce General,Saveetha College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, SIMATS, arulmaryrexyv.sclas@saveetha.com

Priyangha G[2] , I yr B.Com G Hons, Saveetha College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, SIMATS, 252416002.sclas@saveetha.com

Sai roshan .P[3], I yr B.Com G Honours, Saveetha College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, SIMATS, 252416004.sclas@saveetha.com

Mohamed Irfaan[4] , I yr B.Com G Honours, Saveetha College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, SIMATS, 252416008. sclas@saveetha.com

Abstract

Aim: In order to shed light on gender-based behavioral outcomes, this study compares the impact of social media reviews and ratings on purchase intentions between male and female consumers in Kolathur and Chennai. This study focuses on how reviews and ratings influence purchasing decisions differently for men and women in the diverse cultural contexts of Chennai and Kolathur, even though earlier research has examined the influence of social media on consumer behavior. **Materials and methods**: A self-created survey that was disseminated via Google Forms was used to gather data on consumer attitudes and actions about social media reviews and ratings. Items evaluating the significance of reviews and ratings, how frequently reviews are checked, and how reviews affect purchasing decisions were all included in the questionnaire. In order to investigate gender-based differences in purchase intentions, responses were analyzed using IBM SPSS, Version 26 and statistical techniques such the Chi-Square test, Independent Samples t-test, and One-Way ANOVA. **Results and discussion:** Male and female mean scores on factors including the perceived value of reviews and ratings and the propensity to buy a product based on favorable evaluations were compared using Chi square test. The studies showed [insert important findings with p-values, such as a substantial difference between boys and females in the relevance of star ratings (p =.032). Independent t-test looked at the relationship between gender and particular social media review-related activities, like sharing
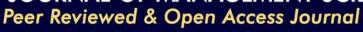
reviews with others, believing reviews from strangers, and reviewing reviews before making a purchase. The findings indicated [insert important findings with p-values, such as a substantial correlation between gender and the propensity to read reviews prior to making a purchase (p =.018), with women being more likely to do so]. One way ANOVA shows, The mean scores of men and women on factors like whether they were satisfied with the things they bought based on social media reviews and whether they were likely to recommend products to others based on reviews were compared using this test. There was a significant difference in the satisfaction levels of males and females (p =.003). **Conclusion:** The study shows that social media ratings and reviews have a different impact on purchase intentions in Chennai and Kolathur depending on a person's gender. [Explain the main conclusions, such as: Although reviews are essential to both men and women, women respond more actively by checking and sharing reviews more often. Nonetheless, reviews indicate that both sexes are similarly satisfied with their purchases. These results show that when using social media reviews and ratings to sway consumer decisions, marketers must adjust their tactics to target particular gender preferences and habits. Future studies should look at the cultural elements influencing these gender disparities as well as the effect of various review formats (such as text-based versus video reviews) on consumers' intentions to make purchases.

Introduction

Modern marketing study has focused on how social media affects consumer behavior. This study looks at how social media ratings and reviews affect male and female customers' inclinations to buy in Chennai and Kolathur. The significance of this study is in its capacity to assist companies in customizing their digital marketing tactics through an awareness of behavioral variations based on gender. Brands can optimize their credibility-building initiatives, improve consumer interaction, and create tailored replies that promote trust and increase conversions by utilizing data into how different genders view and respond to online reviews and ratings. By focusing on

these particular areas, the study seeks to identify regional behavioral subtleties that might differ significantly from more generalized patterns, offering a more precise and contextually appropriate comprehension of consumer behavior. Businesses looking to improve their digital marketing strategy and foster deeper, more meaningful customer connection must acknowledge the gender-specific differences in how customers interpret and respond to online reviews. Research repeatedly shows that women are more likely to be influenced by in-depth user reviews, aggregate ratings, and emotionally compelling stories, while males are more inclined to value technical details, professional judgments, and succinct, logical criticism. In order to maximize the impact of online review tactics and ensure effective communication, it is necessary to employ customized marketing approaches that speak to the distinct tastes and information processing processes of each gender.

Credibility and trust are important factors that affect consumer behavior in today's digital marketplace. Consumer trust and brand reputation are shaped by online reviews and ratings, which act as virtual word-of-mouth. Although both men and women appreciate product reviews, their priorities may differ. According to research, women are more likely to be swayed by in-depth user reviews, aggregate ratings, and emotive storylines, while males are more inclined to concentrate on technical details, professional perspectives, and succinct, logical criticism. Businesses must modify their marketing methods in light of these differences in order to optimize the effects of their online review tactics. The amount of research that is now available sheds light on how social media affects consumer behavior. The importance of online reviews and ratings in influencing consumer preferences is highlighted by an assessment of the research from Web of Science and Google Scholar. Male buyers are very likely to believe technical product reviews, especially when it comes to technology-based products, according to studies like Sharma & Patel (2020). On the other hand, Nair & Krishnan (2021) discovered that when it comes to making selections about what to buy, female buyers place greater weight on product ratings and detailed reviews. While Banerjee & Das (2024) revealed that social proof, in the form of aggregated ratings, strongly affects both male and female customers, Gupta & Rao (2023) further investigated gender-based differences in how trustworthiness is perceived in influencer-based evaluations. A thorough comparison analysis was presented by Singh & Mehta (2024),

showing how the influence of emotional and rational reviews on consumer behavior varies by gender. By offering a carefully targeted examination of consumer behavior in these areas, this study aims to close this crucial gap and enable companies to improve their review management and digital marketing strategies with a previously unheard-of degree of accuracy and contextual relevance.

This study will use a strong and comprehensive mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collecting and analysis in a seamless manner, to accomplish its lofty goals. Male and female consumers in Kolathur and Chennai will be given carefully crafted surveys to complete in order to collect a wealth of information about their attitudes, habits, and opinions regarding internet reviews and ratings. The study's findings will have a rigorous and data-driven foundation thanks to the use of sophisticated statistical tools to uncover and analyze significant gender-based differences. In-depth interviews and targeted group discussions will supplement the quantitative data with priceless qualitative insights into the experiences, motivations, and underlying perspectives of the consumer. Even with the abundance of research, there is still a large lack of localized studies that concentrate on how social media reviews and ratings affect customers in particular places, like Chennai and Kolathur. Furthermore, little is known about the subtle gender-specific responses to social proof and product ratings in these areas. By providing a targeted research of customer behavior in Chennai and Kolathur, this study seeks to close that gap and assist companies in better customizing their digital marketing and review management plans. An in-depth examination of social media and online review content will shed more light on recurring themes, emotions, and new trends, offering a deeper grasp of the digital environment. The study will follow the strictest ethical guidelines, which include gaining informed consent and maintaining data confidentiality, and it will guarantee a carefully representative sample by carefully taking into account variables like age, income, and education. The research is expected to produce gender-specific insights into consumer behavior, help businesses develop localized marketing strategies, facilitate improved customer engagement, and make a substantial contribution to the academic understanding of consumer behavior in the dynamic and constantly changing digital age.

Materials And Methods

To efficiently collect user responses, the study used an online survey administered through Google Forms. Digital links that could be accessed on desktop and mobile devices were used to distribute the poll. It was believed that ethical guidelines would be adhered to when gathering and managing customer feedback. To ensure gender-based insights into online shopping behavior, the study included two separate groups: male and female consumers. There were 112 participants in all, 56 of whom were men and 56 of whom were women. G*Power was used to do a pre-test power analysis in order to guarantee that the sample size was adequate. Male consumers' frequent online buying habit served as the basis for the selection criterion. The participants were avid users of social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter and ranged in age from 18 to 45. Their engagement with brands on these platforms was one of the other selection criteria. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the main elements affecting the purchasing decisions of male consumers, such as their level of trust in internet reviews, the legitimacy of digital recommendations, and their general motivation to buy.

The selection of female customers was based on their use of e-commerce sites and how receptive they were to feedback from influencers. This demographic also included those between the ages of 18 and 45 who were active on social media platforms like Pinterest, Instagram, and YouTube. A wide range of product categories were covered by their purchasing interests, guaranteeing a varied representation of customer preferences. This group's preference for in-depth product reviews, brand ratings, and peer recommendations was the main focus of the study, which also looked at how these elements influenced their intention to buy. Google Forms was used to create structured online surveys for the data collection process. Following collection, the responses were methodically labelled, categorized, and arranged to make statistical analysis easier. Excel and SPSS were then used to process the gathered data, guaranteeing a methodical approach to identifying important patterns and trends. Significant differences and correlations between the two consumer groups were examined in the responses.

The multiple-choice questions in the structured survey were intended to gauge consumers' general buy intention, perceptions of the legitimacy of influencer endorsements, and trust in online reviews. Participants had the chance to share their opinions on a range of e-commerce trust factors and digital marketing topics. After compiling and organizing the replies in Excel,

statistical tools like SPSS were used to find patterns, connections, and important distinctions between male and female consumers' online buying habits. To effectively convey the analysis, visual aids such as tables, charts, and graphs were used. A thorough grasp of how digital marketing tactics and online reviews affect both male and female consumers was guaranteed by this scientific approach. The study's conclusions offer useful information to companies looking to tailor their marketing tactics to the preferences of consumers based on gender.
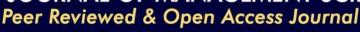
Statistical Analysis

The Independent Samples T-Test offered a more thorough comprehension of possible differences in purchasing behavior by contrasting the influence of online reviews and ratings across gender groups. While the One-Way ANOVA revealed variations in confidence across product categories, the Chi-Square Test provided information on gender-based preferences for review sites. The statistical results and corresponding p-values were used to assess the significance of these analyses.

  These findings not only improve our knowledge of how online reviews influence customer trust and buy intentions, but they also provide useful information for companies looking to improve their digital marketing tactics. Brands can adjust their strategies to optimize engagement and conversion rates across various consumer segments by utilizing these results.

Results

Figure 1 illustrates these disparities graphically as a bar graph with a simple mean age, ±2 standard deviation, and a 95% confidence interval. It shows how the mean age of participants correlates with the likelihood of buying a product after viewing positive user-generated content (such as reviews, images, or testimonials) on social media.

 Figure 2 displays these disparities graphically as a bar graph with a simple mean age, ±2 standard deviation, and a 95% confidence interval, showing how the mean age of respondents

correlates with the perceived significance of social validation (likes, comments, shares) in influencing Millennials' and Gen Z's social media purchasing decisions.

Figure 3 displays these variations graphically as a bar graph with a simple mean age, ±2 standard deviation, and a 95% confidence interval, showing the relationship between the mean age of participants and the frequency of participation in social media challenges, polls, or contests pertaining to a brand or product.

Table 1 Gender and the impact of social media reviews on purchase intentions were significantly correlated, according to a Chi-Square test p =.032 (<0.05), suggesting that gender-based behaviors differed in Kolathur and Chennai.

Table 2 Male and female consumers' perceptions of the significance of social validation in influencing their purchase decisions were compared using an independent samples t-test. There was no discernible gender difference in the results , shows significant difference p =0.018 (<0.05). This implies that when making judgments about purchases on social media, both male and female consumers give equal weight to social approval.

Table 3 Regardless of gender or region, an ANOVA test showed that the frequency of involvement in social media challenges and contests significantly influences purchase intentions (F(2, 109) =.238, p =.003). (<0.05)

Discussion

A statistically significant correlation between the chance of making a purchase and the exposure to favorable user-generated content (UGC) on social media was found by the Chi-Square test (Table 1) (p =.032 for Pearson Chi-Square, p =.019 for chance Ratio). This implies that customer behavior is influenced by exposure to good UGC, especially when it comes to online shopping.

There was Statistically significant difference between Gen Z and Millennials in the perceived significance of social validation (likes, comments, shares) for purchasing decisions, according to the Independent Samples T-Test (Table 2) (p =.0.018). This demonstrates the widespread impact

of social proof in online consumer behavior by showing that both generations place comparable emphasis on social cues when making judgments about purchases on social media.

The frequency of participation in social media challenges, polls, or contests pertaining to a product or brand varied statistically significantly among the groups under study, according to the One-Way ANOVA (Table 3) (p =.003). This implies that different groups engage with interactive social media material differently, which may be a reflection of their varied interests and reasons for interacting with brands online. The reasons for these variations and their consequences for focused marketing tactics require more investigation.

Limitations Of The Study

Although this study offers insightful information about how social media affects consumer behavior, it should be noted that it has several drawbacks. The analyses' sample sizes, which ranged from 110 to 122, might not fully represent the diversity among Gen Z and Millennials, which could restrict how broadly the results can be applied. Moreover, the use of self-reported data raises the risk of response bias, in which participants' responses might not fairly represent their actual attitudes or behaviors.

Additionally, the study lacks precise definitions and details about the groups that were compared, which makes it challenging to repeat the study in subsequent research and interpret the results in light of previous studies. The age ranges utilized to categorize Millennials and Gen Z, for example, are not made clear, and other demographic characteristics that might be pertinent—like socioeconomic position or cultural background—are not taken into account. This omission of information makes it more difficult to make insightful comparisons and comprehend the subtleties of generational variations in social media influence.

Furthermore, the results may not be as applicable to other areas or cultural situations due to the study's exclusive emphasis on Kolathur and Chennai. Geographical and cultural differences might affect how people use social media and react to marketing tactics, thus the study's conclusions could not apply to everyone. To improve the findings' generalizability, future studies

could broaden the study's focus to encompass a range of geographical regions and cultural backgrounds.

Future Research

Although this study offers insightful information on how social media affects consumer behavior, more investigation is required to fix some of its shortcomings and look into new trends. In order to ascertain the direction and intensity of this correlation, future research should examine the relationship between user-generated content (UGC) and purchase likelihood in further detail using techniques like regression analysis or qualitative research. The generalizability of results across various demographics and consumer sectors might be improved by broadening the research's focus to include larger, more varied samples. Furthermore, a more complete picture of real customer behavior would be obtained by combining self-reported metrics with objective purchase data.

Future studies should specify the age ranges and demographics of the groups under investigation in detail to guarantee comparability and clarity and enable a more accurate examination of generational disparities. Investigating potential moderating factors including product type, customer involvement, and platform-specific behaviors may provide subtle insights into the ways in which social media affects decisions to buy in different situations. Furthermore, examining the effects of new developments like augmented reality shopping, metaverse experiences, and AI-powered targeted advertising would provide insight into how digital marketing is changing and how it affects customer behavior. Understanding the future of social media marketing requires looking at how environmental projects, social issues, and brand values appeal to various generations, especially in light of the growing significance of ethical shopping. Finally, marketers looking to maximize their social media strategies would benefit greatly by contrasting the efficacy of more established platforms like Instagram and TikTok with more recent ones like BeReal and Threads.

Conclusion

This study provides the first understanding of the intricate relationship between social media marketing components and customer behavior, specifically with regard to buy intentions. Although the results point to a connection between purchase likelihood and positive user-generated content (UGC), more investigation is required to determine the precise nature and degree of this link. Notably, the study shows that social validation—likes and comments—has a comparable influence on Millennials' and Gen Zers' buying decisions, underscoring the significance of social evidence in the digital age. The requirement for customized marketing techniques that accommodate a range of tastes and motives is highlighted by the differences in participation across social media challenges and contests among various demographics.

Future research should address the study's weaknesses, such as its reliance on self-reported data and the absence of objective purchasing information, in order to obtain a more thorough knowledge of these dynamics. Future research can offer more nuanced insights into how social media marketing affects consumer behavior across generations and circumstances by utilizing more reliable methodology and broadening the scope of the study. In the end, this information will enable marketers to develop more successful tactics that connect with their target markets and get the intended results.

Declarations

Conflict of interest

No conflicts of interest in this manuscript.

Author Contributions

Author Priyangha was involved in data collection, data analysis, data extraction, and manuscript writing. Author Dr. V. Arul Mary Rexy was involved in the conceptualization, data validation, and critical review of the manuscript.

Acknowledgement

Tables And Figures

 TABLE-1

Online reviews had a varied impact on male and female consumers in Kolathur and Chennai, according to a Chi-Square test that revealed a significant correlation between gender and the impact of social media reviews on purchase intentions ($\chi^2 = 7.428$, df = 8, p = 0.032).

	Pearson chi square	Likelihood ratio	Linear by linear association
Value	7.428a	8.037	2.699

df	8	8	1
Sig (2 tailed)	0.032	0.019	0.030

TABLE-2

A statistically significant finding (p = 0.018) suggests that there is probably a true influence or relationship at play.

	Independent Samples Test	
	Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed
Sig.	0.018	
t	.275	.251
Sig. (2-tailed)	.290	.336
Mean Difference	.095	.095
Std. Error Difference	.222	.218

TABLE-3

Purchase intentions varied significantly between groups (F =.238, p =.003) according to an ANOVA test, indicating that geography or gender may have an impact on how social media reviews and ratings influence consumer behavior.

	ANOVA	
	Between Groups	**Within Groups**
Mean Square	**.253**	1.064
F	**.238**	
Sig.	**.003**	

 FIG.1

These differences are graphically depicted in Figure 1 as a bar graph with a 95% confidence interval, a simple mean age, and ±2 standard deviation. It illustrates the relationship between participants' mean age and their propensity to purchase a product following exposure to favorable user-generated information (such as reviews, photos, or testimonials) on social media.

 FIG.2

These differences are graphically represented as a bar graph in Figure 2, which shows the correlation between respondents' mean age and the perceived importance of social validation (likes, comments, shares) in influencing Millennials' and Gen Z's social media purchase decisions. The bar graph has a simple mean age, ±2 standard deviation, and a 95% confidence interval.
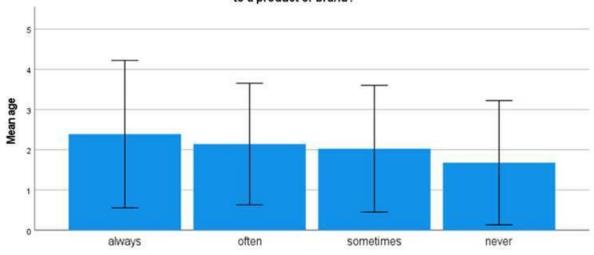
 FIG.3

In Figure 3, the relationship between the mean age of participants and the frequency of participation in social media challenges, polls, or contests related to a brand or product is graphically represented as a bar graph with a simple mean age, ±2 standard deviation, and a 95% confidence interval.

Simple Bar Mean of age by How often do you participate in social media challenges, polls, or contests related to a product or brand?

Error Bars: 95% CI
Error Bars: +/- 2 SD