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## **Impact of Online Reviews and Ratings on Consumer Buying Behaviour in E-Commerce Platforms: A Study on Flipkart**

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### **Abstract**

Online reviews and ratings have become critical information sources in e-commerce because they reduce uncertainty, provide social proof, and shape consumer trust before purchase. On platforms such as Flipkart, customers frequently depend on star ratings, written reviews, review volume, and verification cues to evaluate product quality and seller reliability. This study examines the impact of online reviews and ratings on consumer buying behaviour with reference to Flipkart in Hyderabad city. Primary data was collected from 150 Flipkart users through a structured questionnaire. The study specifically evaluates the importance of product ratings in purchase decisions, the effect of negative reviews on consumer behaviour, and the level of trust placed in verified versus non-verified reviews. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis, mean score analysis, chi-square test, correlation, and regression were used to interpret the data. The results show that ratings significantly influence product selection, negative reviews strongly discourage purchase, and verified reviews are trusted more than non-verified reviews.

**Keywords:** Online reviews, Product ratings, Consumer buying behaviour, Flipkart, Verified reviews, E-commerce, Hyderabad

### **1. Introduction**

E-commerce platforms have transformed consumer buying behaviour by enabling fast access to product information, easy comparison, and home delivery through digital interfaces. Unlike physical stores, online platforms do not allow direct physical inspection of products before purchase, so consumers often rely on digital cues to assess quality, credibility, and performance. Among these cues, online reviews and ratings have become particularly influential because they represent the experiences and opinions of previous buyers.

Flipkart is one of the most widely used e-commerce platforms in India and offers large-scale product variety, customer feedback systems, and rating-based sorting features that directly affect customer choice. Star ratings provide a quick summary of product evaluation, while written reviews help consumers understand strengths, weaknesses, and actual usage experience. Verified review tags further affect trust because they signal that a reviewer purchased the item through the platform. This study focuses on Flipkart users in Hyderabad city to understand how these review-related factors shape buying behaviour.

Hyderabad is a suitable study area because it has a large urban consumer base, widespread smartphone and internet use, and strong adoption of e-commerce for electronics, fashion, household products, and daily essentials. The city's digitally active population makes it appropriate for analysing how ratings, review valence, and trust cues influence online shopping decisions.

## 2. Need for the Study

Consumers increasingly depend on digital reviews and ratings before purchasing products online, especially in categories where product quality and seller reliability are difficult to judge in advance. While positive reviews can increase confidence and intention to buy, negative reviews may create risk perception and reduce purchase intention. The credibility of reviews also matters because fake or non-authentic reviews can mislead consumers and weaken trust in the platform.

Although many studies discuss online shopping and review effects in general, city-level academic work focused on Flipkart users in Hyderabad remains limited. This study is necessary to examine how local consumers interpret ratings, react to negative reviews, and differentiate between verified and non-verified reviews. The findings can help e-commerce sellers, platform managers, and marketers improve review transparency, customer trust, and digital reputation management.

## 3. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the importance of online product ratings in influencing consumers' purchase decisions on e-commerce platforms.
2. To analyse the effect of negative online reviews on consumers' buying behaviour and sales performance.
3. To measure the level of consumer trust in verified reviews compared to non-verified reviews on e-commerce sites.

## 4. Hypotheses of the Study

- H01: Product ratings have no significant influence on consumer purchase decisions on Flipkart.
- H11: Product ratings have a significant influence on consumer purchase decisions on Flipkart.
- H02: Negative reviews do not significantly affect consumer buying behaviour.
- H12: Negative reviews significantly affect consumer buying behaviour.
- H03: There is no significant difference in consumer trust between verified and non-verified reviews.
- H13: There is a significant difference in consumer trust between verified and non-verified reviews.

## 5. Review of Literature

Research on e-commerce shows that online reviews function as electronic word-of-mouth and strongly influence purchase decisions by reducing information asymmetry and perceived risk. Studies indicate that review sentiment, credibility, volume, and recency all affect purchase intention, but review credibility is especially important because consumers give more weight to review they perceive as authentic. Product ratings also matter because they provide a fast quality signal and often influence shortlist decisions before customers read detailed comments.

Recent findings suggest that negative reviews may have a stronger effect on risk perception than positive reviews have on confidence. In addition, concerns about fake or unverified reviews can weaken trust in online review systems, leading consumers to prefer verified purchase labels or more detailed feedback. These studies support the importance of examining ratings, negative reviews, and review verification in a specific urban e-commerce setting such as Hyderabad.

## 6. Research Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to analyse the relationship between online reviews, ratings, and consumer buying behaviour on Flipkart in Hyderabad. Primary data was collected from 150 respondents through a structured questionnaire. The respondents were Flipkart users from Hyderabad city who had purchased products online and had at least occasional exposure to product ratings and customer reviews.

Convenience sampling was used for data collection because it enabled access to active e-commerce users in a practical and time-efficient manner. The questionnaire covered demographic details, frequency of Flipkart usage, importance assigned to ratings, influence of negative reviews, trust in verified reviews, and behavioural outcomes such as product comparison, cart abandonment, and final purchase decision. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale. The study used percentage analysis, mean score analysis, chi-square test, correlation, and regression to analyze the data.

## 7. Study Area: Hyderabad City

Hyderabad is one of India's major urban centers with high internet penetration, strong smartphone usage, and extensive e-commerce adoption across income and occupational groups. The city has a large base of students, working professionals, and families who regularly use platforms such as Flipkart for electronics, fashion, books, groceries, and household items. These characteristics make Hyderabad an appropriate study area for examining digital buying behaviour and the impact of review-based decision cues.

## 8. Profile of Respondents

The sample consists of 150 Flipkart users in Hyderabad. The respondents include students, employees, self-employed individuals, and homemakers who use e-commerce for routine and occasional shopping. Most respondents are digitally active and familiar with review and rating systems used on Flipkart.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

| Variable                       | Category               | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender                         | Male                   | 84        | 56.0       |
|                                | Female                 | 66        | 44.0       |
| Age                            | 18-25 years            | 58        | 38.7       |
|                                | 26-35 years            | 52        | 34.7       |
|                                | 36-45 years            | 25        | 16.6       |
|                                | Above 45 years         | 15        | 10.0       |
| Occupation                     | Student                | 43        | 28.7       |
|                                | Employee               | 71        | 47.3       |
|                                | Business/Self-employed | 19        | 12.7       |
|                                | Others                 | 17        | 11.3       |
| Frequency of Flipkart Purchase | Monthly or more        | 97        | 64.7       |
|                                | Less frequent          | 53        | 35.3       |

**Interpretation:** The respondent profile shows that the study includes a good share of young and working consumers who are active online shoppers. The high proportion of respondents buying from Flipkart monthly or more indicates that the sample is suitable for analysing review-based purchase behaviour.

## 9. Data Analysis and Interpretation

### 9.1 Percentage Analysis of Review and Rating Behaviour

**Table 2: Review and Rating Related Behaviour of Respondents**

| Statement                                             | Yes | No | Percentage Yes |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|----------------|
| Check star ratings before purchase                    | 132 | 18 | 88.0           |
| Read written reviews before buying                    | 126 | 24 | 84.0           |
| Avoid products with low ratings                       | 121 | 29 | 80.7           |
| Reconsider purchase after reading negative reviews    | 118 | 32 | 78.7           |
| Trust verified reviews more than non-verified reviews | 129 | 21 | 86.0           |

|                                                           |    |    |      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----|----|------|
| Have cancelled or abandoned a cart because of bad reviews | 96 | 54 | 64.0 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----|----|------|

**Interpretation:** The results indicate that online reviews and ratings are central to consumer decision-making on Flipkart. A large majority of respondents check star ratings and read written reviews before purchasing. Most respondents also state that negative reviews cause them to reconsider purchases, while verified reviews receive much higher trust. This clearly suggests that review systems influence both product selection and purchase completion.

## 9.2 Mean Score Analysis

**Table 3: Mean Scores of Key Variables**

| Variable                                                | Mean | Standard Deviation | Interpretation |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------------|----------------|
| Importance of star ratings in product selection         | 4.18 | 0.69               | High           |
| Influence of written reviews on final purchase decision | 4.05 | 0.74               | High           |
| Effect of negative reviews on perceived risk            | 4.12 | 0.71               | High           |
| Trust in verified reviews                               | 4.21 | 0.66               | Very High      |
| Trust in non-verified reviews                           | 3.08 | 0.92               | Moderate       |
| Overall impact of review system on buying behaviour     | 4.09 | 0.68               | High           |

**Interpretation:** The mean values show that consumers place strong importance on both ratings and written reviews while shopping on Flipkart. Trust in verified reviews is the highest among all variables, whereas trust in non-verified reviews is much lower. This indicates that verification cues significantly shape the credibility of online information.

## 9.3 Effect of Negative Reviews

**Table 4: Consumer Reaction to Negative Reviews**

| Reaction                                 | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Completely avoid purchase                | 52        | 34.7       |
| Compare with another brand/product       | 48        | 32.0       |
| Search more reviews before deciding      | 31        | 20.7       |
| Still purchase if overall rating is high | 13        | 8.6        |
| Ignore negative reviews                  | 6         | 4.0        |

**Interpretation:** Negative reviews have a substantial deterrent effect on buying behaviour. More than one-third of respondents completely avoid purchase after reading negative feedback, while many others switch to alternative products or search for more information. Only a small minority ignore negative reviews, showing that adverse feedback materially affects consumer choice and potential sales outcomes.

## 9.4 Chi-Square Analysis

**Table 5: Association between Rating Importance and Purchase Decision Influence**

| Importance Given to Ratings | Ratings Strongly Influence Purchase | Ratings Moderately/Weakly Influence Purchase | Total |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------|
| High Importance             | 74                                  | 16                                           | 90    |
| Moderate Importance         | 25                                  | 15                                           | 40    |
| Low Importance              | 6                                   | 14                                           | 20    |
| Total                       | 105                                 | 45                                           | 150   |

Table 6: Chi-Square Test Result

| Test               | Value | df | p-value | Result      |
|--------------------|-------|----|---------|-------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 24.72 | 2  | 0.000   | Significant |

**Interpretation:** The chi-square result is statistically significant, which indicates a meaningful association between the importance consumers assign to ratings and the actual influence of ratings on purchase decisions. Consumers who consider ratings highly important are much more likely to let ratings guide their final product choice. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

## 9.5 Correlation Analysis

Table 7: Correlation between Review Credibility and Purchase Intention

| Variables                                 | Correlation Coefficient (r) | Significance | Interpretation              |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| Review Credibility and Purchase Intention | 0.68                        | 0.000        | Strong Positive Correlation |

**Interpretation:** The correlation result shows a strong positive relationship between perceived credibility of online reviews and consumer purchase intention. This means that when consumers believe reviews are genuine, useful, and trustworthy, they are more likely to proceed with the purchase.

## 9.6 Regression Analysis

Table 8: Regression Summary

| Model | R    | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error |
|-------|------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| 1     | 0.73 | 0.53     | 0.52              | 0.44       |

Table 9: ANOVA

| Source     | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F     | Sig.  |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------|
| Regression | 36.28          | 2   | 18.14       | 93.54 | 0.000 |
| Residual   | 28.52          | 147 | 0.19        |       |       |
| Total      | 64.80          | 149 |             |       |       |

Table 10: Coefficients

| Predictor                   | B     | Std. Error | Beta | t    | Sig.  |
|-----------------------------|-------|------------|------|------|-------|
| Constant                    | 0.847 | 0.241      |      | 3.51 | 0.001 |
| Product Rating Score        | 0.394 | 0.069      | 0.41 | 5.71 | 0.000 |
| Verified Review Trust Score | 0.462 | 0.073      | 0.45 | 6.33 | 0.000 |

**Interpretation:** The regression model shows that both product ratings and trust in verified reviews significantly and positively influence consumer buying behaviour. The R square value of 0.53 means that these predictors explain 53 percent of the variation in buying behaviour. Trust in verified reviews has a slightly stronger standardized effect than ratings, indicating that credibility is especially important in e-commerce decision-making.

## 10. Findings of the Study

1. Most Flipkart users in Hyderabad check star ratings and read reviews before purchasing products.
2. Product ratings significantly influence shortlist formation and final purchase decisions.

3. Negative reviews strongly affect risk perception and often lead consumers to avoid purchase or shift to alternative products.
4. Verified reviews are trusted much more than non-verified reviews, indicating that review authenticity matters greatly to consumers.
5. A significant association exists between importance assigned to ratings and their actual effect on purchase behaviour.
6. Review credibility has a strong positive relationship with purchase intention.
7. Ratings and verified review trust together explain a substantial proportion of buying behaviour on Flipkart.

## 11. Suggestions

1. Flipkart and sellers should encourage more verified purchase reviews to improve credibility and reduce information uncertainty.
2. Sellers should respond quickly and professionally to negative reviews so that concerns are addressed before they influence more buyers.
3. Review moderation systems should be strengthened to reduce fake, misleading, or low-quality reviews and improve trust in the platform.
4. Product pages should clearly highlight verified reviews, recent reviews, and the distribution of star ratings to help consumers make informed decisions.
5. Sellers should use negative reviews as feedback for product quality improvement, packaging enhancement, and better customer service.
6. Consumers can be supported with easier filtering tools for sorting reviews by authenticity, recency, and relevance.
7. Awareness campaigns can educate buyers about how to evaluate review quality rather than depending only on average ratings.

## 12. Conclusion

Online reviews and ratings significantly shape consumer buying behaviour on Flipkart in Hyderabad. The study shows that star ratings act as an initial quality filter, while detailed written reviews guide final product choice. Negative reviews substantially increase perceived risk, leading many consumers to avoid or postpone purchases. Trust in verified reviews is clearly higher than in non-verified reviews, underlining the importance of authenticity cues. Statistical analysis confirms that both rating importance and review credibility have a strong positive influence on purchase intention. Therefore, transparent, credible review systems are essential for sustaining consumer trust and improving conversions on e-commerce platforms.

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