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**Impact of Customer Reviews on Online Purchase Decision; A Study on App
for E-commerce in Pakistan**

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ABSTRACT

The rising popularity of e-commerce in Pakistan has marked a significant shift in the way consumers make purchases, although it has also increased uncertainties pertaining to trust, risk, and reviews. The presence of product uncertainties, misrepresentation, and several instances of paid reviews has led to a situation where customer reviews have assumed a pivotal role in making purchasing decisions on the e-commerce websites. The study considers how customers interpret online customer reviews in Pakistan.

This study uses qualitative research methodology that relies on in-depth interviews with online consumers to identify experiences, sentiments, and trust-building mechanisms linked with online reviews. The project results indicate that customers are highly interested in such reviews that are rich in detail, neutral, and rich in images, as against-rating reviews. The negative reviews have a significant impact on potential customers, as they impede ordering by instilling a sense of risk, with highly positive reviews making customers suspicious, thereby threatening trust-building mechanisms. The study also emphasizes that customers are highly disgruntled with fake reviews, apart from a lack of transparency on part of the e-commerce platforms regarding reviews verification.

Future studies can use mixed or quantitative study to confirm such qualitative findings in greater scale and variety of the sample size of consumers in Pakistan. Future research involving the review credibility of various e-commerce systems and product types would be beneficial. Also, the research done in the future can focus on how an AI-based system of review verification and the transparency of the platform can enhance the trust of the consumer. The analysis of the demographic and cultural factors that affect the interpretation of reviews would be important as well.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

The fast development of digital technologies has greatly changed the traditional purchasing trends and redefined the way consumers make a buying decision. The growth of online markets makes customers more and more dependent on digital information as opposed to the first-hand experience of the product. Of the numerous online sources that can be used to inform a shopper, including product description, seller rating, and brand name, customer reviews have become one of the most influential factors that can influence an online buying decision. Such reviews are an essential source of information, which will enable the consumers to reduce uncertainties, and assess the performance of a product and build confidence on online retailers when they cannot physically view or test a product before they make a purchase.

Online reviews are basically a digital version of word of mouth, it builds a brand perception, creates a purchasing intention and it directs consumer behavior in the global markets. To new buyers, nervous or first time buyers, the reviews usually make the most reliable sign of authenticity, quality of the product and the reliability of the seller. Reviews that are done in an elaborate and believable manner can convince buyers to buy the product though negative or no reviews will result in discouragement. With the fast rising pace of e-commerce, the importance of customer reviews is becoming more integrated into the online shopping process. They are currently regarded as a fundamental part of the online decision-making process of the buyers and sellers.

Customer reviews are even more vital in the new e-commerce markets such as in Pakistan where the problem of trust, authenticity and reliability of products are still prevalent. Energizing products, slow delivery, fake products and inadequate after sales support have been observed by many consumers who took the wrong products as advertised and what they received, delayed shipment, and fakes. Consequently, Pakistani customers use online reviews to make big judgments on whether to make a purchase or not, whether the purchase is worthwhile or not, and whether the purchase is in line with their expectations. In this kind of environment, authentic and comprehensive reviews can have a powerful impact on buying behaviors.

This study examines the role of online customer reviews in shaping consumer purchase decisions in Pakistan. Using qualitative analysis, the research identifies review credibility, trust, and

perceived usefulness as key determinants of online buying behavior. The findings contribute to existing literature and offer practical insights for e-commerce platforms and marketers.

Moreover, Pakistani customers tend to turn to customer reviews as primary tools to decide on the quality of a product, as well as to consider the reliability of a seller and the store. They seek the signs of authentic purchases, first-hand descriptions, published images or video clips, and uniformity of feedback behavior. The reviews also enable the consumer to compare the products available on different platforms, get an idea of the problems, test the durability, and determine the value of the money. In most instances, consumers rely more on peer-created content than on marketing messages created by the brand.

This study has discussed comprehensively the perceptions of the Pakistani consumers with respect to their use of customer reviews and how their perceptions determine their final online buying behavior. The project aims to offer an insight into how these dynamics are changing in the context of the Pakistani e-commerce environment with the help of exploring cultural, technological, and behavioral elements that influence them and emphasize the increased role of digital word of mouth in the establishment of trust, consumer confidence, and online retail development.

1.2 Overview of E-commerce in Pakistan

In Pakistan, e-commerce has grown significantly within the past ten years, which is attributed to the growth of internet penetration, increasing smartphone penetration and advancement of digital payment systems. Online shopping platforms like Daraz, Yayvo, HomeShopping, and foodpanda shops have helped in molding the online shopping environment. Facebook Marketplace and Instagram stores are also social commerce platforms that significantly contribute to transactions every day.

This growth notwithstanding, problems remain. Some of the issues faced by Pakistani customers are inconsistent product quality, counterfeit or false reviews, late delivery, mistrust towards the sellers and lack of strong policies of product returns. Such issues win the authentic customer review even more than ever before. Consumers often rely on reviews to authenticate product assertion, price comparisons and brand trustworthiness. It is important to understand the way Pakistani consumers perceive these reviews to e-commerce business as well as future digital innovation.

1.3 Importance of Customer Reviews in Online Buying

There is a lot of uncertainty during online shopping but customer reviews will be a good source of information. They provide actual experience of other consumers, which allows the potential buyers to evaluate quality of the product, seller actions and delivery. Positive reviews would lead to trust and encourage purchases and negative review would inform buyers of the risks and may avoid financial loss or dissatisfaction.

In such markets such as Pakistan where online shopping is yet to be trusted, customer reviews are a key trust-building device. They are depended on by consumers because they counterbalance the absence of physical inspection of the products and they become virtual evidence of credibility of products. They offer peer validation to the individuals and they assist buyers to compare alternatives and perceive less risk. Therefore, reviewing of customers is not only a source of information but also a psychological counsel to decision-making.

1.4 Problem Statement

Although reviews are available at most e-commerce sites, very little is known on how Pakistani customers perceive these reviews, what factors take precedence and how the interpretations are a complete picture on consumer purchasing behaviors. Also, false reviews, biased feedback, and rating manipulation cause confusion and distrust among the consumers. Neither does Pakistan have a dedicated platform that brings together credible, checked and following customer reviews among the various e-commerce outlets. This projected is expected to examine the perception and experiences of Pakistani online customers as well as their decision making processes with respect to customer reviews and offer an application that can seal gaps identified.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study is intended to determine the effect of customer reviews on the online buying decision of Pakistani consumers. By using semi structured interviews, this study gets to know the value, experiences and interpretations that the people give to online reviews. The project also seeks to establish gaps existing in current e commerce review systems and apply such information to conceptualize a review based application that suit the digital market in Pakistan.

1.6 Project Objectives

- To investigate the meaning and judgment of online customer reviews in Pakistani consumers in the pre-purchase decision making process.
- To examine the customer review in influencing consumer trust and in diminishing perceived financial, product, and delivery risks in online shopping.
- To determine the impact of positive and negative customer reviews on online consumers in terms of purchase intention, decision confirmation, and purchase avoidance.
- To determine the consumer perceptions, warning signals and concerns regarding fake, paid or misleading online reviews in the e-commerce setting of Pakistan.
- To create consumer-led intelligence that will guide designing and development of a transparent review-based digital application to enhance review credibility and trustworthiness in online marketplaces.

1.7 Research Question(s) (Qualitative)

- What do Pakistani customers think and understand about customer reviews on e-commerce sites?
- How important are customer reviews in the development of trust and uncertainty avoidance in online shopping?
- What is the effect of the positive and negative reviews in influencing the purchase decisions of consumers?
- What are the problems associated with fake, misleading, or unhelpful reviews to the consumers?
- What can consumer experience understandings contribute to the creation of a review based application to the e commerce ecosystem of Pakistan?

1.8 Significance of the Study

This research is highly relevant to various stakeholders within the e-commerce ecosystem. For e-commerce businesses, the findings can provide valuable insights to enhance review systems, improve transparency, and build stronger trust with customers, fostering long-term customer loyalty. Consumers will benefit from a deeper understanding of how reviews impact purchasing decisions, enabling them to make more informed and safer choices when shopping online. Additionally, developers and innovators can leverage the findings to create specialized review-based applications that will increase credibility within the online marketplace, enhancing the overall consumer experience.

For researchers, this study fills a significant gap in the limited qualitative research on digital consumer behavior in Pakistan, particularly in the context of online reviews. Lastly, policymakers can use the research outcomes to help shape digital commerce guidelines and consumer protection policies, ensuring that the e-commerce sector develops in a way that is fair and beneficial for all stakeholders.

1.9 Scope of Study

The population under investigation is the Pakistani clientele with the online shopping experience and customer review exposure. It studies their perceptions, behavior and the pattern in their decision making.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

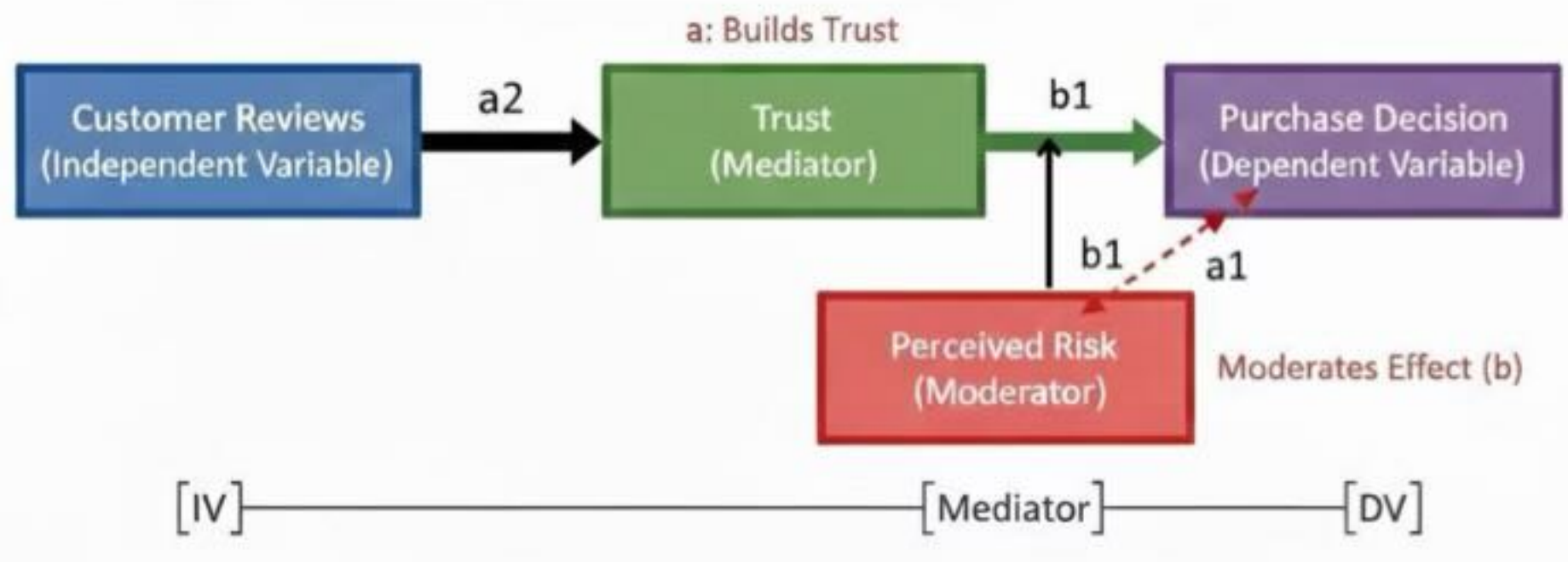
The chapter is a literature review of the principal theories and empirical studies which have been utilized to understand the significance of customer reviews in online purchasing decisions (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Filieri and McLeay, 2014). It combines both international and Pakistan-specific sources on online consumer behaviour and the creation of trust, perceived risk and credibility of reviews and social influence (Gefen et al., 2003; Rehman et al., 2019). The chapter also includes the theoretical frameworks that might be utilized to improve the interpretation of the findings of the current study, namely, in the context of the developing ecommerce environment in Pakistan (Khan and Rizwan, 2018). Using a critical literature review, this chapter has been used to identify the presence of conceptual and contextual gaps that justify the need to undertake a qualitative study of how Pakistani consumers perceive and respond to online customer reviews (Yin, 2016).

2.2 Digital Consumer Behavior in the Web World

Online consumer behavior is extremely diverse to the in-store buying behavior because consumers cannot touch and feel products and cannot compare them (Pavlou, 2003). The purchases are made based on mediated information like product description, reputation of the seller, ratings, and customer reviews (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). The conceptualization of the previous studies views online purchasing as a process of cognition, emotion, and social activities during which customers seek to minimize uncertainty by using external informational stimuli (Schiffman et al., 2014).

Qualitative studies emphasize that information is subjective to online buyers based on previous experience, expectations, and perceived credibility of platforms (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Filieri, 2016). Customers who are working in ambiguous markets are more dependent on peer-created content, especially those that are similar to traditional word-of-mouth messages (Dellarocas, 2003). The dependency increases when there is a possibility of fraud, a mismatch of the product, or a failure of the service, which is a common worry in new e-commerce markets like Pakistan (Iqbal et al., 2020).

2.3 Theoretical Framework



2.4 Nature and Characteristics of Reviews by customers

The reviewing of the customers serves as an informational signal that replaces the actual product experience (Mudambi and Schuff, 2010). According to the previous research, reviews are categorised as textual, numerical ratings, visual (images and videos) reviews, and verified purchase reviews (Fileri et al., 2018). It is always shown by research that elaborated, experience-based reviews have more impact on purchase intentions compared with non-elaborated, generic comments (Zhu and Zhang, 2010).

Narrative reviews in the story of personal use situations enable consumers to simulate the mental experience of owning the product, consequently raising the perceived diagnostic usefulness (Park et al., 2007). The visual reviews also contribute to the credibility of the product because it gives physical evidence of the quality of the product (Kim & Lennon, 2013). Visual and experiencebased reviews are especially important in the context of creating trust and purchase confidence in inconsistent quality markets like Pakistan (Ahmed et al., 2021).

2.5 Development of Trust in E-Commerce

One of the most important factors that define online buying is trust (Gefen et al., 2003). Trust is therefore formed mainly through indirect informational cues because of the lack of physical interaction (Pavlou and Fygenson, 2006). Current knowledge singles out three key bases of trust in online shopping, namely, trust in the platform, trust in the seller, and trust in peer consumers (McKnight et al., 2002).

The reviews made by customers serve as social evidence as they indicate that there is approval or disapproval (Cialdini, 2001). Many positive reviews by many users makes the perceived reliability higher and even a single valid negative feedback can have a huge impact on the trust (Ba and Pavlou, 2002). Research also shows that high-risk market consumers trust peer reviews more than they trust information provided by sellers (Filiari, 2016). In Pakistan with low-quality consumer protection and high use of counterfeit products, review authenticity tends to surpass platform reputation to build trust (Khan et al., 2020).

2.6 Perceived Risk and Consumer Psychology

Online purchasing decisions focus on the perceived risk which comprises of financial, product, delivery, and privacy risks (Featherman and Pavlou, 2003). There is a direct relationship between risk perception and information-seeking behavior, which makes customer reviews an imperative risk-reduction response (Mitchell, 1999).

According to the psychological studies, emotionally laden reviews have a greater influence as compared to pure facts (Baumeister et al., 2001). The negative reviews have disproportionate value because of the negativity bias which commonly results in hesitations or avoidance of purchases (Rozin and Royzman, 2001). On the other hand, mixed positive responses with a moderate expression of emotion produce better credibility and decreases anxiety (Sen and Lerman, 2007). Such effects are more so in the volatile e-commerce settings that do not have formal consumer guarantees, like Pakistan (Raza et al., 2018).

Review credibility is the idea that the consumers follow in regard to reliability and authenticity of reviews (Cheung et al., 2009). The factors that affect credibility are review detail, expertise of the reviewer, language authenticity, authenticated purchase status and consistency in the reviews (Filiari et al., 2018). The Pakistani consumers are becoming less and less convinced by excessive positive reviews, repetitive reviews, or unnatural feedback and depend more on the experiential content than on the number rating (Hussain et al., 2021).

2.7 Corrupted Reviews and Faked ratings

One of the biggest challenges in e-commerce across the world is fake reviews and paid ones (Luca & Zervas, 2016). Examples of signs of fraudulent reviews are too much positivity, sharp changes in the ratings, repetitive language structure, and dormant reviewers (Ott et al., 2013).

This leads to information misrepresentation, consumer mistrust, and platform mistrust (Mayzlin et al., 2014). The problem is also exacerbated by the poor regulatory standards in the developing economies (Kshetri, 2018). In Pakistan, there is a high level of suspiciousness of online marketplaces due to years of exposure to fraudulent reviews (Rasheed & Zafar, 2020).

2.8 Social Influence and Internet Decision-Making

The Social Influence Theory is the explanation of the role of the opinion and behavior of others in the formation of individual decisions (Kelman, 1958). Reviews online are used as an electronic word of mouth, where the consumers can be more confident via their shared experiences (HennigThurau et al., 2004).

The effect of review is higher when the reviewers are similar in terms of their characteristics, context of their use or their perceived expertise (Deutsch and Gerard, 1955). Social influence is also enhanced by cultural norms. Peer endorsement and interpersonal validation are crucial factors in buying decisions in the collectivist culture of the country, so online reviews can be discussed as the continuation of the existing word-of-mouth (Hofstede, 2011; Ali et al., 2019).

The situation in Pakistan regarding E-Commerce is as follows.

The structural issues present in the e-commerce industry of Pakistan are the lack of quality in products, insufficient return policy, inadequate accountability of the seller, and misleading advertising (State Bank of Pakistan, 2022). These problems raise the level of consumer mistrust and contribute to the high use of customer reviews as a main verification activity (Rehman et al., 2019).

Without high institutional trust, the reviews left by customers usually become the sole plausible indication of seller reliability and product authenticity (Khan and Rizwan, 2018). The emotional and cognitive reactions of Pakistani consumers towards reviews are thus very important in enhancing online shopping experiences and credibility in the platforms.

2.9 Critical Theoretical Assumptions

The Information Adoption Model (IAM) is a model that enables an organisation to determine the level of its information adoption and to evaluate the effectiveness of the information systems in fulfilling its objectives and goals.

2.9.1 Information Adoption Model (IAM)

This is a model that helps an organisation to ascertain the extent to which it adopts its information and also to determine the effectiveness of its information systems in achieving its objectives and goals.

The Information Adoption Model is a model that explains how individuals assess and internalize online information on the perceived quality and credibility (Sussman and Siegal, 2003). IAM postulates that, more detailed, relevant and trustful information is more likely to have an impact on attitudes and behavior intentions. Reviews by customers are consistent with this model as they act as external information indicators, which shape the consumer judgments in the internet context (Cheung et al., 2008).

2.9.2. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, the behavioral intention is a product of attitudes, subjective norms and subjective behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Customer reviews in ecommerce lead to a change in attitude towards the product, alter social norms via collective opinion and minimise uncertainty, thus increasing perceived control. TPB is a good way to understand the high influence of reviews on the purchase intentions in digital markets that are associated with high risks (Pavlou and Fygenson, 2006).

2.10 Project Gap

Although there is a great deal of research on online reviews worldwide, there are not many qualitative studies of the lived experience and emotional interpretation of Pakistani consumers (Yin, 2016). The literature that is available is mainly quantitative and does not focus on psychological responses and trust-building processes. Also, there is a lack of studies focusing on the point of intersection of consumer perception and technological solutions to review credibility. This study fills this gap by performing a qualitative investigation based on the conventional theory.

2.11 Summary of the Chapter

The chapter has updated literature on theoretical and empirical research of online consumer behavior, customer review, trust formation, perceived risk, review credibility, and social influence. These ideas were put into context in the e-commerce setting in Pakistan, with Information Adoption Model and Theory of Planned Behavior as the models that were discovered to guide the

purpose. The literature review also demonstrated that there are major gaps in the current research and qualified investigation is needed to determine the role of customer reviews in online buying behavior in Pakistan.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction:

This chapter describes the methodology chosen in the research. It presents the research paradigm, the research design, sampling procedure, data gathering procedure, interview design, and the thematic analysis method, which will be applied in the interpretation of the results. It also writes about measures to assure credibility, as well as ethical concerns and restrictions of the adopted methodology. This is aimed at presenting a clear and strict description of the process of conducting the study under a qualitative methodology.

3.2 Qualitative Exploratory: The research approach is qualitative:

Seeing that this research is supposed to be conducted to learn how the Pakistani consumers perceive and interpret customer reviews, a qualitative exploratory research method is the most suitable. Qualitative research enables the researcher to investigate personal thoughts, feelings, and attachments that individuals give to their online shopping experience. This method comes in handy when there is no need to quantify variables, but rather to gain insights into lived experiences and come up with profound insights through the stories of participants.

3.3 Paradigm Research: Interpretivist

The research adheres to the interpretivist paradigm that presupposes that the reality is subjective and created by people through their experiences. Interpretivism acknowledges that all people have dissimilar interpretations of reviews on customers depending on their backgrounds, expectations, and previous experiences with online shopping. This paradigm justifies the application of the interviews in unearthing these differences and comprehending the way consumers create meaning on the reviews.

3.4 Research Design: Phenomenological / Thematic Analysis:

A phenomenological design is used in order to understand the lived experience of participants on customer reviews. Phenomenology aims at getting the gist of human experiences, which makes it appropriate in studying how consumers feel about reviews, how they interpret and respond to them in order to make decisions to purchase online.

Thematic Analysis, a qualitative approach that is an adaptable way to analyze data, is applied in the study to determine patterns, themes, and meanings of the interview transcripts. This is the approach that is common in consumer behavior studies and suitable in capturing the complexity of the online decision making.

3.5 Population and Sampling Strategy

The study sample is the Pakistani consumers who have previously used the online shopping option in the form of different digital platforms. The platforms involve big e-commerce stores like Daraz and Yayvo, foreign sites like Amazon which Pakistani consumers can use, and social commerce sites like Facebook marketplace, Instagram business pages and other local online shopping platforms. The rationale behind selecting such a population is that this group of consumers is constantly exposed to customer reviews and uses them to make online purchases, a fact that renders it very relevant to the research objectives.

To address sampling bias, purposive sampling was applied with clearly defined inclusion criteria. Respondent anonymity was ensured to reduce response bias, and standardized measurement scales were used to enhance reliability and validity of the data. Purposive sampling technique was also used to identify and select those who could present rich and relevant information about the research phenomenon. Purposive sampling enables the researcher to select the participants based on certain criteria with the view of the research objectives. In order to be a part of the study, the participants had to have prior experience of online product purchases, customer review exposure before making purchase decisions and have the capacity to clearly express their thoughts and experiences. The strategy helped to ensure that the sampled participants had adequate knowledge and interest in online reviews to provide significant data to the study.

This qualitative research had a sample that was twelve participants (7 Males, 5 Females) aged 25 years. Qualitative research does not focus as much on specific representation but more insight and this extent is deemed sufficient to bring about data saturation, a stage beyond which no new theme or idea emerges with further data. The chosen amount of participants thus gave an opportunity to explore the perceptions of the participants in depth; data analysis could be manageable.

3.6 Data gathering: Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data in this study as they are the most effective way of providing consistency and flexibility. Semi-structured interviews would also enable the researcher to adhere to a set of guiding questions and at the same time allow the respondents to expand on their experiences and offer insights into the topic of the research that are not originally discussed. The approach proved to be especially appropriate in terms of investigating subjective experiences, feelings and trust perceptions surrounding online customer reviews.

The interviews were done face to face or on the online communication channel, depending on the convenience and accessibility of the participants. All the interviews took about 20-35 minutes. Audio recordings were done to be able to be accurate and complete with the informed consent of the participants. Interviews took place in English or Urdu depending on the preference of the participant so that they feel free, clear and natural in their answers.

The interview questionnaire comprised of open-ended questions that addressed online shopping behavior in the participants, interpretation, and evaluation of customer reviews, and how positive and negative customer reviews affected their purchasing decisions. Other aspects covered experiences of misleading or false reviews, their trust and risk perception of shopping online, and the recommendations of the participants on enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of online review systems.

3.7 Interview Guide Pilot Testing

The interview guide was piloted on one or two participants that had not been included in the final sample and who had passed the sampling criteria before the main interviews were done. The pilot test was aimed at testing the questionnaire of the interviews; it tested how clear and relevant the interview questions were, and the general dynamics of the interview process. The pilot testing was used to ensure that any ambiguous or leading questions were found out and also to determine whether the questions would bring out meaningful and appropriate information in accordance with the research objectives. The pilot interviews were carried out to get feedback on the interview guide which was refined and improved before the actual collection of the data was done.

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

The participants were recruited using personal connection and online communities based on e-commerce and social media communities. Before different interviews, the participants were told about the intention of the research, and their free consent was received. Permission was then sought by conducting and audio-recording interviews. The researcher also made brief notes during the interviews to focus on first impressions and body language where necessary.

All the audio recordings made after the data collection were transcribed verbatim so as to maintain accuracy and originality of the responses made by the participants. In order to increase the credibility, the respective transcripts of the participants were given out to be verified which is called member checking. This has enabled the respondents to verify the validity of their statements and have a chance to explain or revise their answers in case of need.

3.9 Technique of Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis being a six-step method of data analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to analyze the data. The initial stage was familiarization with the data through reading the interview transcripts over and over again. This was followed by first coding where significant pieces of data were recognized and coded. The third step involved clustering of similar codes to create possible themes.

The fourth step was to review and refine the identified themes in order to be able to have internal consistency and the clarity of the differences between the themes. The fifth step involved clear definition and naming of themes based on their basic meanings. Lastly, there was the reporting phase which entailed the writing of a thematic account of the findings with direct quotes of the respondents concerning the main findings. Coding could be automated manually using color-coding methods or assisted by computers (NVivo or Microsoft Excel) based on the choice of the researcher.

3.10 Ensuring Trustworthiness

In order to increase the credibility of the study, a number of qualitative rigor criteria were used such as the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Member checking and the use of direct quotations of the participants were used to ensure credibility as they reflected a genuine experience. The transferability issue was also tackled through a detailed description of the

experience of the participants and the conditions of the research that enables the reader to estimate the applicability of the results to the same environment.

The reliability of the research was ensured through the documentation of the research process, such as the interview procedures, methods of data collection, and the decision of the analysis. The confirmability involved ensuring that the researcher remained neutral and exclusively used participant data to make interpretations as opposed to the researcher basing his interpretations on assumptions or biases. All these increased the reliability and validity of the qualitative findings.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethics were followed in the research process with stringent strictness. Prior to the participation, participants received all information on the objectives and nature of the study. The study was purely voluntary and the participants were told their freedom to pull out of the study at will without any repercussion. The requirement of anonymity and confidentiality was met by eliminating any personal details in transcripts and reports. Any audio records and transcripts were safely archived and could only be accessed as an academic need.

3.12 Methodological Limitations

This study has some methodological limitations in spite of its strengths. The qualitative aspect of the study restricts the external generalization of the findings to the general population. The findings also rely on the honesty and the memory of the participants as well as their desire to share their experiences in an open manner. Furthermore, the sample size is relatively small and this is okay to conduct a qualitative inquiry but it might not be able to represent the diversity of online consumer experience in Pakistan.

Also, interpretation by the researcher in the data analysis process might lead to bias even when there is an attempt to remain unbiased. Lastly, the interview technique may not be the most reliable in reflecting all the elements of online consumer behavior because the participants can only respond to what they can recall and what their perceptions are. During the interpretation of findings, these limitations were taken into account and admitted.

3.13 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter identified the qualitative approach to identify the impact of customer reviews on online buying behavior in Pakistan. It outlined the interpretivist paradigm, phenomenological

design, purposive sampling, data collection method of interviews, and thematic analysis method. Ways of assuring trustworthiness, ethical issues, and methodological constraints were also addressed.

Chapter 4 Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The present chapter outlines and discusses the results derived out of the semi-structured interviews that were carried out with Pakistani consumers who are already having experience in the purchasing of products online. The main role of this chapter is to examine the impact of customer reviews on the online purchases decision-making process in the Pakistani environment, where the nature of e-commerce is changing. As the use of digital platforms to conduct shopping is rising, it is important to study consumer attitudes towards online reviews, especially in the market where trust and reliability are still a significant issue.

The quantitative results are supported by interpretive narratives that directly link statistical outcomes to the research questions. Trends identified in the data clearly demonstrate the influence of review credibility and trust on consumers' online purchase intentions.

The qualitative information was gathered using in-depth interviews, and the results reported in this chapter are based on the findings of the qualitative research. These interviews provided the participants with the flexibility to speak out, experiences, and emotions in connection to reading and depending on customer reviews when shopping online. The thematic analysis methodology was used in order to recognize patterns and meaning repetitions within data. In this process, a number of prevailing themes came into view that describe the role of customer reviews in developing trust, alleviating doubts, forming emotions and making ultimate purchase decisions.

In this chapter, the structure is designed in such a way that an overview of the participant profiles is created initially; the emergent themes are then discussed in details. All the themes have been backed by interpretations made directly based on the experience of the participants. The chapter ends with the analysis of findings, their comparison with literature, and the conclusion to reconcile the results with the purpose of the study in general.

4.2 Profile Summary of the participants

The interviews were conducted with 11 Pakistani online shoppers. The sample consisted of rather different demographics of age, gender, educational status, occupation, and shopping frequency on the Internet. This variety led to the achievement of a holistic perspective of how various consumer groups view and utilize customer reviews in online shopping.

Each of the participants was already familiar with online shopping and acknowledged using customer reviews at minimum once before making a purchase decision. The mentioned platforms were mainly Daraz, Amazon (when ordering internationally), Facebook Marketplace, Instagram-based stores, and other local online stores. A few respondents identified themselves as avid online customers with others shopping online only when they were needing to and as a result of particular items being out of stock at the brick-and-mortar outlets.

Generally, the other characteristics of the participants were:

- Frequent or infrequent use in online shopping.
- Knowledge of positive and negative reviews of customers.
- Have experienced a mismatch between advertised and delivered products.
- Knowledge of untrue, sponsored, or paid reviews.
- An overall fear of buying products of unknown vendors.

The participants spoke about the most satisfactory purchases, negative experiences of low quality of the product, late delivery, and falsely described ones. These diverse experiences complemented the information and gave a possibility of the appearance of insightful and subtle observations. The divergence in the backgrounds of the participants made sure that the results were a representation of a wide consumer view, and not the narrow demographic perspective.

4.3 Interpretive Themes on Interviews

Sucheng et al. (2015) identified five key themes through a deep thematic analysis of the interview transcripts. All these themes can be used to explain the role of customer reviews as a crucial factor in online purchase decision-making in Pakistan:

1. Customer Reviews as the Major Source of Product Justification.
2. Building Trust by means of elaborate descriptions, truthful, and graphical reviews.
3. The Powerful Persuasive Effect of Negative Reviews on Purchase Decision.
4. Psychological and Emotional Response to Reviews.
5. Issues with Fake, Paid and Low Quality Reviews in Pakistan.

All these themes represent common patterns in the answers of the participants and are elaborated below accompanied by the interpretations based on the narratives of the participants.

4.4 Theme 1: Customer Reviews as a Leading Source of Product Authentication

Among the most noticeable results of this research is that customer reviews are the main channel of product validation to Pakistani online consumers. Respondents also made it a point to note that even prior to studying product descriptions or technical specifications, they check reviews. Consumers are dependent on experience of the past buyers to determine the quality and authenticity of their products since they are not given a chance to physically assess the quality of products through online shopping.

The reviews as an alternate to seeing or touching a product were mentioned by numerous respondents. They stated that they read reviews as soon as they saw a product page and even did not pay attention to the images and descriptions provided by sellers. Experiences of real life users were seen as more credible as compared to marketing content.

Some of the major observations associated with this theme are:

- Product specifications are frequently read out after reviews.
- Consumers are searching actively over the consistency over several reviews.
- Actual customer pictures are used in proving product appearance.
- Confidence is still contributed by repetitive short reviews.

The participants stated that when several users note the same experiences, even the simple remarks like good quality, worth the money, or same as picture sound very persuasive. Having the same feedback repeated, gave the impression of reliability and less uncertainty. This shows that social evidence is a key element in influencing consumer trust within the online space.

4.5 Theme 2: Developing trust based on thorough, honest, and visual reviews

The theme of trust became a key point throughout all interviews as the participants stated that not every review could be trusted. The most noticeable relationship to trust was found with the reviews that looked detailed, sincere and illustrated. Participants also indicated that they will trust reviews that give concrete information more as opposed to general compliment.

The subjects noted that effective reviews had the following features:

- Use of graphics or videos of real-life.
- Referral to both the good and bad.
- Communication of experience in delivery and packaging.
- Critical reviews instead of flattering and sensational remarks.

Most interviewees said that the reviews that sound human or mirror the common language are more natural. Overly pimped or even excessively optimistic reviews were a cause of concern. Reviews that mentioned little negative issues but still suggested to buy the product were seen as more authentic.

Reviews that were based on visuals were especially persuasive. The pictures depicting real usage and packaging or wear and tear of the product assisted the participants to confirm the visuals of the product as depicted in the advertisement. Visual proof was regarded as one of the most effective tools of authenticity and reliability in the e-commerce environment of Pakistan, where the quality of products may largely differ.

4.6 Theme 3: The Powerful Impact of Bad Reviews to Purchase Decision

A second important observation was the skewed high role of negative reviews in the decision to buy. The respondents always suggested that negative feedback is more powerful than positive feedback. A negative word can deter a purchase especially when it was a detailed review that brought about serious considerations.

Complaints made in negative reviews were common and included:

- Poor product quality
- Incorrect sizing or color
- Misleading descriptions
- Late or failed deliveries
- Fraud or inactivity on the part of the seller.

The respondents explained that negative reviews were red flags that make them think of more risk. In cases where there were several negative reviews in the same problem, participants were more inclined to give up on the purchase. This tendency proves that risk avoidance is valued by the consumers more than future gains.

Such a result confirms the point that negative information is more processed as it poses a direct threat to consumer trust and financial stability. Pakistan e-commerce market, where refund and return procedures might not be the most reliable, the negative feedback has a very strong influence on consumer behavior.

4.7 Theme 4: Emotional and Psychological responses to Reviews

In addition to the rational analysis, the participants reported having strong feelings and emotions when they read customer reviews. Such emotional reactions tended to affect the decision-making process than numerical rating as well as star scores.

Ordinary emotional responses were:

- Relief and reassurance on reading positive reviews.

The fear and reluctance to deal with negative feedbacks.

- When reviews were mixed or contradictory: curiosity occurred.
- Distrust in cases where reviews were too good.

Part of the respondents said that they were emotionally attached to the reviewers who had the same preferences, body types, or expectations. Conversational style of reviews also created an impression of familiarity and relatability, and put the reader in a better position to trust the feedback.

The theme here is that the choices to be made on online shopping are not entirely rational but are strongly driven by the emotional stimuli hidden in the reviews. The emotional tone, narration, and personal experience are important factors that influence the purchase confidence.

4.8 Theme 5: Difficulties in the Pakistani fake, paid, and low-quality reviews

Almost everyone mentioned the issue of credibility of online reviews, fake and paid reviews as one of the biggest problems of the digital marketplace in Pakistan. The participants complained about the impossibility to identify authentic reviews and the fake ones.

They have been identified to include the following key challenges:

- Duplicated or copied reviews or reviews that are duplicated.
- Paid influencer advertising in the form of authentic commentary.

- Unrealistically positive remarks.
- Big amounts of reviews posted within a short period.
- Absence of buyer verification systems.

Respondents stated that they were deceived and confused by false ratings. This does not only diminish the trust towards the sellers but also the platforms. A number of the participants also highlighted the necessity of having a transparent, centralized review system that would ensure the authenticity of buyers and filter suspicious information.

This theme points to an essential vacuum in the Pakistani e-commerce ecosystem and suggests that in future e-commerce implementations, there should be better systems to regulate reviews and establish credibility.

4.9 Interpretation of Themes

The results are clear that online reviews make a conclusive determination in making online purchase decisions in Pakistan. The purpose of reviews is to minimize uncertainty, establish trust and offer social validation. The most credible type of reviews was found to be visual and detailed and fake reviews cost the consumer confidence a great deal.

The negative reviews were identified to be stronger influencing since they lead to perceived risk and portend to loss. The effect of reviews is also increased by emotional responses, which indicate that trust is not merely cognitive but can also be emotional.

4.10 Comparison with Literature

The results of this research are closely correlated with the other existing world sources that underline the significance of trust, perceived risks, and social evidence in e-commerce. The eagerness to address the issue of fake reviews and the emotional aspects of narrative-based feedback are also mentioned in previous studies.

Nevertheless, the given study adds Pakistan-specific value by highlighting the fact that the level of fake reviews, lack of trust to local sellers, and reliance on the visual evidence are high. It is against this background that local solutions to problems are necessary instead of global generic models.

4.11 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter showed the findings of the qualitative interviews in terms of thematic analysis. It was found out that there are five major themes that reveal how customer reviews affect the trust, emotional feelings, risk perception, and purchasing decisions by Pakistani consumers. The results also indicated that there were considerable issues concerning the credibility and transparency of the review.

Chapter 5 Results & Discussions

Introduction

This chapter explains the advantages of the project to determine the effect of customer reviews on buying decisions of online shopping in Pakistan. Based on the qualitative results identified in the previous chapter, in this section, the authors emphasize the contribution of the study to practical, academic, technological and regulatory importance to the fast-growing e-commerce environment in Pakistan. The research has found that customer reviews are not secondary information, but a key process by which trust, credibility and confidence is created in e-commerce settings.

The results reveal that there are some severe threats in the Pakistani digital commerce environment, especially regarding the authenticity of reviews, consumer confidence, and platform responsibility. Meanwhile, they also provide practical recommendations on how to use the review systems to be improved, made more transparent, and empower the consumers. Besides this, the study suggests the creation of a review-based digital app that is dedicated to the solution of the lack of trust in the process of E-commerce particularly in Pakistan.

This chapter illustrates the ways in which the study is useful to important stakeholders, such as ecommerce sites, customers, technology developers, academic researchers, and policymakers, through the synthesis of the experiences of the participants and their interpretation. All these advantages demonstrate the topicality and suitability of the study in enhancing the number of online enterprises and sustainable development of the digital economy in Pakistan.

5.2 Real-Life De-merits to E-Commerce Platforms in Pakistan

The study has a significant practical importance to e-commerce sites working in Pakistan with regards to offering a clearer insight into the consumer behavior, expectations, and issues connected to customer reviews. With the increase in competition among digital marketplaces, those that make sure that their systems match consumer trust requirements would have a higher chance of attaining success in the long term.

The improved insights into the meaning of reviews and their perceived credibility are one of the most important advantages that can be brought to the e-commerce platform due to the better comprehension of the consumer needs in Pakistan. The project also shows that consumers do not rate reviews in equal measures but they are dynamically evaluating credibility through review

depth, emotional tone, visual evidence, and authenticity. The participants made it clear that textual descriptions, balanced views, and real-life pictures or videos are always more powerful than brief, generic remarks or star ratings. This understanding helps platforms to redesign the review interfaces by focusing on valuable and realistic information, including emphasizing elaborate reviews, posting authenticated buyer images, and decreasing the prominence of low-effort or minimal reviews.

The other significant practical value the study brings is the solution of the common problem of counterfeit, paid, and manipulated reviews. The results show that consumer trust is highly harmed in case the lack of transparency and accountability in review systems. These insights can also be used by e-commerce platforms to increase the credibility of reviews by introducing more powerful verification systems, including verified purchase badges, review monitoring with the use of artificial intelligence, and more stringent moderation. Platforms can remove the unreliable content by recognizing red flags like sharp increases in ratings, copying and pasting, and posting large volumes of content in a short period of time, which will regain user trust.

Also, the transparency of the review can be improved, and the post-purchase disputes, complaints and the rate of returns may be reduced measurably. Having reviews that really mirror the actual experience of the buyer, would mean that the consumer expectations would be highly realistic and would not likely introduce dissatisfaction in the buyer because of false product descriptions or inflated ratings. This can lead to a decrease in the number of refund requests, cost of customer care, and buyer-seller conflict. It is not only efficient in its operation but also increases brand image and customer loyalty.

Another point of the study is that it is significant to enhance seller responsibility. Sellers who rigged ratings, deleted negative reviews, or did not reply to complaints were highly disliked by the participants. These findings can be used by e-commerce platforms to provide systems of seller performance evaluation based on real customer feedback. Platforms can promote ethical conduct among sellers by punishing fraudulent activities and reward openness and receptiveness. In the long run, this makes the market a more credible place with good sellers and consumers becoming more confident.

5.3 Consumer and Online Shopper Consumer Benefits

Consumers become among the main beneficiaries of this study since their experiences, difficulties, and perceptions are the basis of the research. The results provide meaningful insights that enable consumers to shop online with a lot of confidence and security.

The advantages in the consumers are one such thing. The research assists consumers to read the reviews with great caution because it identifies patterns to look out to when reviews are authentic or when they are manipulated. The participants claimed that they learnt to recognize fake reviews through repetitious wording, overly optimistic expressions, and various emotional moods. Depending more on comprehensive, visual, and even-handed reviews, consumers are in a better position to make well-informed purchasing decisions that are founded on actual user experience as opposed to the false advertisements.

The study is also useful in mitigating the perceived threats of online shopping, which is a big issue in Pakistan. The online purchasing was reported by many of the participants to be risky because they were afraid of receiving poor quality products, the wrong item ordered, delivery delays or loss of money. It was reported that genuine and authentic customer reviews were very critical to alleviate such risks as early warning, realistic expectations, and avoiding untrustworthy sellers. Bad reviews, especially, were seen as safety nets that help to avoid bad buying choices.

The consumers gain more trust in the process of online purchases as platforms integrate the recommendations of the research study and enhance the transparency of the reviews. The rise in confidence in the review systems will prompt the consumers to engage in more online shopping and have a broader selection of products and sellers. In the long run, this confidence leads to the creation of a favorable image of e-commerce as a safe and secure shopping medium, which is the key to the further development of the digital economy in Pakistan.

5.4 Academic Profits and Donations

Academically, the research is able to contribute positively to the current literature on e-commerce, consumer behavior, and digital trust, especially in the Pakistani market. Although a significant portion of the available literature on customer review focuses on quantitative research.

The study has placed more emphasis on the lived experiences of Pakistani online shoppers, and this is one of the most valuable scholarly contributions of this study. The research, through

semistructured interviews, gives insightful and narrative-based information that sheds light on the challenges, perceptions, and decision-making processes in real-world. Such a qualitative richness enables the researchers to gain a clearer insight into the processes of trust establishment, harm, or recovery within the online contexts of uncertainty and credibility problems.

The research presents a number of Pakistan-specific themes, which generate a solid basis of the subsequent scholarly research on the subject of consumer behavior and digital trust. The emotional influence of conflicting reviews of customers is one of the most outstanding themes. Much of the time, participants reported confusion, anxiety, and hesitation on reviews that had mixed opinions on a product. The situation of conflicting reviews in online shopping in the Pakistani e-commerce environment is that the consumers are already cautious about online shopping, and the uncertainty created by this leads to procrastination in decision making. This emotional reaction shows that consumers fail to rationally process reviews; they, rather, interact with the information in an emotional manner, trying to reduce the regret and financial loss. This sensitivity shows greater emotional instability other socio-economic factors in Pakistan, including limited disposable income and low consumer protection systems fueling the fear of making a bad purchase.

The increased sensitivity to negative feedback is another important theme that can be identified as a result of the study. Participants were pointlessly making the argument that negative reviews are weightier than positive ones especially when they are descriptive and experience-based. Even a good amount of negative reviews can negate a lot of positive ones, particularly when provided by the buyer about such aspects of the product as low quality or fraudulent advertisement. This delicacy is based on the fact that Pakistan has an unequal e-commerce infrastructure where returns and refunds of products and customer services are not reliable. Consequently, the consumers take negative reviews as safeguard signs instead of opinionated remarks. This observation offers viable grounds to further studies to investigate the negativity bias in the developing markets and to compare it with the consumer behavior in more developed digital markets.

Cynicism of excessively optimistic rating also became one of the distinctive features of Pakistani online shoppers. The participants were skeptical about the reviews that they seemed to be too enthusiastic, generic or repetitive and assumed that they were paid or fake. This suspicion indicates the increased awareness of consumers to unethical marketing practices on the Internet, such as influencer marketing in the form of honest feedback. Such practices have become so common that

they have led to frustration and a lack of faith in traditional systems of reviews. The further study can examine the effects of long-term exposure to fake reviews on the process of consumer skepticism development, the change in the levels of trust, and the impact of the latter on the longterm use of digital platforms.

Very much associated with this is the general dissatisfaction with counterfeit or paid review that the participants cited as one of the most pernicious aspects of e-commerce in Pakistan. Consumers complained of being deceived, cheated, and defrauded upon taking the reviews which were not an objective of the product quality. This irritation was often not limited to a specific seller but to the whole platform and diminished brand loyalty and repeated buying. Such results indicate more fundamental structural problems, such as the lack of regulation, responsibility of platform, and enforcement of ethics online. Future investigations can be informed by building on this theme by exploring regulatory effectiveness, models of platform governance and coping by consumers to review manipulation.

These emerging themes are collectively indicative of cultural, economic and technological specific to the e-commerce situation in Pakistan. The cultural norms of precaution in financial transactions, the economic limitation that compounds the aftermath of ill decision in purchasing, and technological disparity in review checks systems combine to create perceptions among consumers. These situational implications present good opportunities of conducting comparative studies in emerging and developed markets that will help the scholars to see how trust establishment varies depending on the maturity of the infrastructural position and regulatory capability.

Besides its contribution to empirical research, the study validates and builds on the existing theoretical frameworks, especially the Information Adoption Model (IAM) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The IAM assumes that people embrace information depending on their perceived usefulness and credibility. The research results of this present study support this model with the fact that Pakistani consumers are proactive in considering the credibility of reviews based on the cues of the detail, emotional balance, and visual evidence. Nevertheless, the research also expands upon IAM by demonstrating that emotional resonance and cultural setting have a strong impact on the perceived usefulness, and that information adoption is not entirely accountable by cognitive evaluation alone.

Equally, the Theory of Planned Behavior focuses on attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control as intention predictors. The research has indicated that customer reviews have a very strong impact on all the three elements in the Pakistani situation. The reviews influence the attitude to the product, form social standards using many reviews, and influence the perceived sense of control by lessening uncertainty and risk. The emotional reactions and trust-related issues contribute to the TPB with the context of nuance by showing that the consumer behavior of developing markets is highly contextualized in both social and infrastructural contexts. This theoretical enlargement enhances the academic topicality of the study and offers a design of further researches exploring the topic of trust-driven behavior in the context of other similar economies.

5.5 Technological Advantages: The New Review-Based Application

The proposal of a centralized, review-based, digital application that will specifically target the trust issues in the identified e-commerce environment in Pakistan deserves to be mentioned among the most innovative and practically important results of the study. Instead of focusing on fake reviews as a single-issue problem, the application frames the concept of trust as a systemic problem that needs a coordinated solution through technology. The proposed application will empower to rebuild the lost consumer trust and increase the quality of decision-making in digital marketplaces by consolidating customer feedback, increasing transparency, and authenticity.

One of the technological advantages of the suggested application is the development of the centralized point of view in terms of cross-platform reviews. Currently, the customer reviews are spread into various platforms which include Daraz, Instagram-based stores, Facebook Marketplace, and other international sites like Amazon. This fragmentation results in consumers using incomplete or platform-specific information, and it is hard to find patterns or determine the credibility of the seller. The application allows consumers to make more in-depth analyses as it gathers the reviews of various sources within one interface. The visibility of these cross-platforms minimizes the information asymmetry and eliminates the possibility of sellers to play with the reputation on the specific sites.

Verified buyer authentication is another core trust-building feature that is introduced by the application. The article clearly shows that credibility of the review fails miserably when the nonbuyers or paid reviewers are given the freedom to express their review. In solving this problem, the application would develop powerful purchase verification tools, such as order ID verification,

uploading of digital receipts, and SMS or email confirmation. This is maintained by these verification layers so that the number of true buyers leaving review is significantly low, and as such, the number of fake or manipulated feedbacks is greatly reduced. In the long run, this system will foster an environment of trustful review wherein authenticity is the order of the day and not the exception.

The other and other important technological benefits is that the application uses artificial intelligence and machine learning in identifying suspicious review activity. Using linguistic patterns, repetition, post frequency, rating spikes, and emotional discrepancies, the system is able to detect the reviews that do not match the normal user behavior. Content marked can be emphasized, deemphasized or eliminated, so that transparency can be maintained at scale. Such an automated system is especially significant in the fast-growing digital market of Pakistan, where a manual moderation process cannot effectively cope with the immense amount of the user-generated content.

Besides the authenticity verification, the application also provides the ability to perform advanced sentiment analysis and summarize reviews. These tools give succinct and valuable information considering that consumers tend to be overwhelmed by the massive amount of reviews. The application provides them with the overall product performance by displaying sentiment distributions, key words highlights and a structured pros and cons list so that the user can learn about the overall workings within a short period of time. As an example, customers can immediately recognize common problems with delayed delivery, the quality of the fabric, battery durability or even correct fit. Such functionality saves time, but cognitive overload is also reduced, leading to more confident decision-making.

Pictorial information is important in the formation of trust and the app is specifically made to emphasize on multimedia reviews. The participants kept repeating that real pictures and videos are one of the sure noting features of product authenticity. In line with this, the app would motivate the users to post raw photos and videos of real product usage. These visual reviews would be highly visible to the eye and this would reinforce the transparency and match the platform with the consumer behavior patterns as identified in the research. The lack of trust within the e-commerce environment in Pakistan is directly tackled in the application by focusing more on factualism rather than smooth marketing imagery.

5.6 The Policy and Regulations of Digital Commerce to Policymakers and Regulators

In addition to the implications it has on the consumers and businesses, the study can provide important insights to policy makers and the regulatory bodies in charge of regulating the digital commerce environment in Pakistan. The results point to institutional issues which are about consumer protection, transparency, and ethical behavior that should be addressed on an institutional level.

Among the strongest regulatory advantages of the research, one must mention the fact that it contributes to enhancing the consumer protection policies. The prevalence of fake reviews, false ratings, and unannounced paid promotion notes that there is a regulatory lapse in the Pakistani digital marketplace. The research can be incorporated by policymakers to come up with more transparent legal regulations that identify the acceptable review procedures and punish fraudulent actions and safeguards consumers by fraud. These regulations would not only increase trust, but also healthy competition between sellers.

The study also contributes to setting up transparency levels of e-commerce sites. Regulators can prompt or enforce the disclosure of paid materials, the utilization of checked purchase labels, and more lucidity in the methods platforms moderate and filtering reviews. Regulators can minimize information asymmetry by making platforms clarify their review policies publicly and hold them more accountable. These actions will make the digital ecosystem healthier with a lot of trust based on openness and not on manipulation.

In addition, the research offers an evidence base of policy making and digital literacy projects. The findings can be used to develop educational programs that can be implemented by the government agencies and consumer protection services to educate consumers on how to be skeptical of reviews and identify suspicious activities and how to avoid bad sellers. These programs are especially necessary in emerging markets, where novice online customers might not have the experience necessary to work around digital risks. Through encouraging involvement in an informed way, policymakers will be able to create a more robust and self-assured consumer base.

5.7 Practical Implications

This research has significant practical implications to the e-commerce companies, internet sellers and internet marketers in Pakistan. The findings suggest that customer reviews are vital in influencing the decision of purchase; thus, the companies ought to concentrate on the credibility and authenticity of reviews posted online. Verified-purchase labels, review moderation systems, and policies that are transparent on ratings are some of the mechanisms that have to be implemented by the e-commerce platforms in order to minimize fake or misleading reviews. With positive and credible customer reviews, marketers can strategically use the reviews to create brand trust, build a better online reputation, and increase conversion rates. In addition, customer satisfaction can be increased by responding to the customer feedback in a timely manner and implementing a customer complaint-handling system to ensure the loyalty in the long run.

5.8 Societal Implications

In terms of society, this study demonstrates the increasing role of trust and transparency in the Pakistan digital market that is on the rise. Since the Internet is becoming more popular as the source of reviews, the availability of high-quality and credible information can facilitate the process of making a decision and minimize post-purchase disappointment. The research also reiterates the fact that there is the necessity to enhance digital literacy among the consumers in order to evaluate online reviews seriously and ascertain biased or deceptive information. Trustful review systems should be promoted in the long run to foster responsible consumption patterns, enhance consumer confidence, and sustainable e-commerce development in Pakistan.

5.9 Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, the authors discussed in detail the benefits of the research study on customer reviews and online purchase decisions in Pakistan. The results show significant value to various parties by resolving serious issues of trust in the e-commerce environment. To businesses and platforms, the research provides an understanding of how to enhance the credibility of the reviews, improve the accountability of the sellers and minimized inefficiencies. The resultant gains that consumers enjoy are better decision-making processes, less perceived risk and greater confidence in the online shopping processes.

Academically, the research adds profound qualitative data and builds on the traditional theoretical concepts by adding the cultural, emotional, and infrastructural aspects. The chapter, in regard to technology, is an opportunity for a centralized, review-based application that can be used to restore trust through verification, transparency, and intelligent data analysis. Lastly, the research offers policymakers with practical evidence to empower consumer protection legislations, improve the quality of regulation, and advance digital literacy.

All of the above advantages highlight the immense role of the study in enhancing the digital commerce environment in Pakistan as well as provide a good foundation to subsequent research, innovation, and policymaking.

Chapter 6 Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the author describes the research constraints and gives a detailed conclusion based on the general research results. The aim of this chapter is to appreciate the limitations that might have affected the outcome and the clear presentation of how the review of the customer affects online purchase decision in the Pakistani e-commerce setup. Moreover, the chapter contemplates the academic, practical and technological impact of the study and provides future research and industry practice recommendations. In this way, it puts the research in its context and focuses on its significance to the changing digital marketplace in Pakistan.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

Despite the significant and valuable results of the study, multiple limitations cannot be ignored so that the results could be put in perspective. These limitations do not decrease the significance of the research, on the contrary, they determine the scope of the research and present the opportunities to develop the research in the future.

A small sample is one of the weaknesses of the study. Being a qualitative study, this was based on the in-depth interviews with a small number of participants, between eight to twelve. Though this sample size was adequate to attain the thematic saturation and derive rich information, a bigger sample may have reflected a broader spectrum of consumer experiences, demographic differences and diverse online shopping experiences. Also, the majority of the respondents were city dwellers and have regular access to the internet, which implies that the views of rural consumers or people who are less technologically competent were not represented.

The other weakness is associated with the non-generalizability of the findings. The research is qualitative and exploratory, so the findings cannot be statistically extended to the whole sample population of Pakistani online shoppers. The results portray personal experiences, interpretations and views other than objective behavioral patterns. Nevertheless, the focus on depth over breadth is in line with the aims of qualitative research and makes it possible to understand consumer behavior in a subtle way.

The study also placed a lot of emphasis on self-reported data collected in the form of interviews. The answers of the participants might have been affected by the limitation of memory, personal

bias, or have desired to be socially acceptable. Participants can also be wrong in recalling or interpreting their past review experiences. This means that the stated behaviors are not necessarily an accurate representation of actual buying behavior which is a typical drawback of interview-based research.

Also, it was not platform specific segmentation. Although the participants talked about their experiences on multiple platforms, including Daraz, Instagram stores, Facebook Marketplace, and Amazon, the study did not compare the differences in the credibility of the review, the moderation system, and the algorithms specific to each platform. Nor did it investigate seller-specific practices which can affect the reliability of the review. Future studies may be enhanced with a more narrowly limited analysis on specific platform or comparison of marketplace-based and social-commerce review systems.

The other weakness is that the existing fake review detection technologies have been limited with respect to assessment. In spite of the fact that fake and paid reviews were of great concern to the participants, the effectiveness of the existing platform-level artificial intelligence systems, as well as the evaluation of technical solutions to detect manipulated content, were not considered in the study. Consequently, the study is mostly behavioral and perceptual as opposed to being technical in nature, and speculative research is open to be conducted in the future to concentrate on the accuracy of the algorithm and the performance of the system.

Lastly, the research was done over a certain period, which limited its capability in determining the long-term trends in consumer behaviour. The nature of online shopping behavior, levels of trust and dynamics on the platform changes at a rapid rate because of technological advancements, regulatory changes and varying social influences. A longitudinal research design would be useful in gaining a closer understanding of the formation of consumer trust and dependency on reviews over a period of time where the role of e-commerce sector in Pakistan is still expanding.

6.3 Overall Conclusion

Nevertheless, our project can provide a detailed insight into the influence of customer reviews on online purchase decisions of consumers in Pakistan. The results are clear and show that customer reviews form a focal part of the online shopping process and affect trust, perceived risk, emotions, and ultimate buying behavior.

The respondents repeatedly stressed that the reviews of customers serve as one of the decisionmaking anchors. The reviews are a substitute to physical experience in the context where a physical check of products is impossible. The process of opinion seeking by consumers is based on the opinions of past buyers to justify product quality, gauge the reliability of the sellers and reduce uncertainty. It was found that both positive and negative reviews do play a significant role in influencing buyer confidence to conclude when a purchase is being made or not.

The most significant issues that affected the effectiveness of customer reviews were trust and credibility. The researchers concluded that the level of trust grows significantly when the reviews are elaborate, sincere and backed by visual aids, including real photos or videos. The reviews which showed both positive and negative aspects and talked about strong and weak points were viewed as more genuine. However, the trust dropped significantly when the participants were exposed to over-positive statements, redundant wording, or suspicious patterns of reviews, which supported the significance of being transparent in the review systems.

The results also indicated that the negative reviews have more weight as compared to the positive ones. A single favorable review being eloquently written could often drown out a multitude of positive reviews. Negative feedback increased the risk perception and often caused some reluctance, dumping the cart, or total denial of the product. This shows the psychological superiority of the negative information over the Internet when shopping, especially in markets whose consumer protection systems are not well developed.

One of the biggest issues that were observed during the research was the number of fake and paid reviews. Respondents were very angry at the concept of false ratings, copied remarks and unattainable statements. It was discovered that these practices not only brought down the reputation of individual sellers but also the reputation of whole platforms. Our project summarizes that the issue of fake reviews is the key to maintaining consumer trust and long-term development of the e-commerce environment in Pakistan.

The study also highlights the importance of having a centralized, transparent, and credible application of reviews, which will be specific to Pakistan digital market. An application that includes a validated buyer authentication, an artificial intelligence filtering of reviews, crossplatform reviews, and robust visual feedback systems can greatly help add trust and better

decision-making processes to consumers. The solution would fill gaps found in the review infrastructures that are in use.

6.4 Recommendations

Some effective suggestions are made on key stakeholders based on the insights created by the study. The e-commerce sites ought to implement more stringent review verification systems that can allow only the real purchasers to leave assessments. A stronger focus should be put on the detailed and visual reviews highlighting whereas the rating systems should become more transparent. This should also be implemented by imposing specific penalties on sellers caught tampering with reviews since accountability is a key ingredient in ensuring trust.

The consumers are influenced to be more awake during the process of interpretation of online reviews. To reduce the risk of purchasing and enhance the quality of decisions, it is possible to learn how to recognize fake or suspicious patterns, focus on the balanced and experience-based reviews, and cross feed the feedback across different platforms.

As a recommendation to developers and creators of applications, the study suggests that they come up with strong verification systems that are assisted by artificial intelligence to identify fake reviews and sentiment analysis. The usability and trust can also be improved by using user friendly dashboards that summarize reviews and provide cross platform comparisons.

It is highly suggested that further research by the researchers is needed to develop on this study by developing longitudinal studies, platform-specific review ecosystems, and mixed-methods to measure emotive and psychological responses more comprehensively. Exploring the mechanism of trust restoration and the long-term effects of review transparency also have an excellent opportunity to study in the future.

6.5 Recommendations to Future Research

The current study can be extended in future studies by using mixed-method designs, which involve the use of large-scale surveys and qualitative interviews to provide a high degree of generalization. Comparative analysis of Pakistan and other economies in the developing world may shed more light on the differences in culture and infrastructure in the review interpretation. Also, the use of artificial intelligence instruments to detect fake reviews and the in-depth investigation of influencer marketing and its effects on the credibility of reviews would also contribute to the literature. Also,

psychological research on emotional stimuli and cognitive biases during review consumption may provide further theoretical insights.

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2	04/12/25	HOD's office	Survey, interview questions	[Signature]
3	10/11/25	Dr Qazi's office	formatting, themes, limitations	[Signature]
4	15/11/25	Dr Qazi's office	methodology, changes in first 3 chapters	[Signature]

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Thesis/Project Title	Impact of customer reviews on online purchase.

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Chapter 1			
	Problem, Gap + Research Questions	integrated a competition analysis into the intro and better	10
	should be integrated + relevant gaps on each other.	integrated problems and	
Chapter 2			
	Lacks citation + overall integration	• Overall integration • citations added	15
	You should have used tools		
Chapter 3 to frame your study CBBE. for example BCG, Ansoff, PESTLE etc.			
	Methods need clarity, no coupling frame, how you handled biases.	Discussed protocols used to identify and mitigate researcher and participant bias.	22
Chapter 4			
	no narratives from data to support the arguments.	synthesized raw data into descriptive narrative to provide empirical support for each primary argument	27

competition analysis

Gap should be in intro

Chapter 5

	Include, practical	practical & societal	
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