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The influence of Online Customer Review on electronics Product Purchase: A Case Study of Smartphone Purchasing Behavior in the UK

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Main body	3
Methodology	3
Aim and Objectives.....	4
Literature review	4
Limitation.....	7
Ethical consideration.....	7
Timeframe	8
Conclusion	10
Reference list	11

Introduction

The emergence of social media platforms has changed the traditional buying behavior of customers. These types of platforms are used as public forums where people get the chance to share their experiences about the products and services of different companies. 56.2 million active special media users reside in the UK which helps in reaching the social media penetration rate up to 82.8%. Previous research has reflected that 93% of customers read online reviews before making any purchasing decision 75% of the customers tend to believe the organization more if they have positive reviews (Palalic *et al.* 2021). Therefore, assessing the importance of online reviews on the smartphone purchasing behavior of UK customers will help companies to consider the factors that affect the purchasing decision of customers and work on the areas so that the level of engagement can be improved with them.

Main body

Methodology

The research will utilize the secondary data collection process in the future research development process. Involvement in the secondary data collection process will give facilities to engage different articles, academic resources, institutional reports, and media analytics within the research development process (Anas and Ishaq, 2022). It will also facilitate the process of evaluating the engagement level of companies with customers and highlight the factors that impact the smartphone purchasing decision of UK-based customers. Unlike the primary data collection process, where the risk of data failure is high, the secondary data collection process minimizes the data failure risk and helps in completing the research within a limited amount of time.

The research will engage a qualitative data analysis process that can play a significant role in evaluating both numerical and non-numerical data and form a clear understanding of the role of online customer reviews on the purchasing decisions of UK-based customers. The result will be presented in a thematic form that helps in identifying the existing trends in the collected data and enables organizations to develop equivalent strategies based on the overall outcome of the research (Diop and Liu, 2020). The main reason for considering the qualitative data analysis process is that it has the ability to develop deep insight into the research phenomena and is also aligned with the secondary data collection process which will add benefit to the research development process.

The research will involve the inductive research approach for the future research development process. Involvement of the particular research approach will support the development of relevant aims and objectives in the research and integrate theories based on the nature of the research outcome. The inductive research approach does not emphasize the development of research hypotheses and avoids the integration of theories at the primary level of the research development process which will lower the complexity level. Lê and Schmid (2022) highlight that the inductive research approach prioritizes finding the connection between diverse variables of the research that ultimately ensures the application of relevant theories in the research development process.

Implementation of the positivism research philosophy will be appropriate for the future research development process as this particular philosophy only focuses on the collection of information and developing understanding based on the factual notes. This particular research philosophy is also able to lower the risk of biases in the data collection process. Therefore, the positivism research philosophy will be able to understand the relationship between purchasing decisions and online reviews.

Aim and objectives

The aim of the research is to assess the influence of online customer reviews on the smartphone purchasing decisions of UK-based customers.

Objectives

- To evaluate the importance of online reviews on the purchasing decisions of UK-based customers.
- To identify the factors that are involved with the online reviews and make them believable.
- To highlight the issues with online customer reviews.

Research question

- What is the benefit of online reviews?
- How can online reviews impact the purchasing behavior of customers?
- How can businesses promote positive online reviews and avoid getting negative reviews?

Literature review

Concept of online reviews

An online review is the point of view of individuals who have already used the product or service of a specific company and now share their experience on online platforms. These reviews can appear on the product page of the retail sites or people can also search for the reviews in different search engines. The reviews can consist of positive and negative attributes of the products or service and also shed light on whether the roots match with given description. Online reviews can be of different types and often they include a ranking system, giving stars, or any other graphics that can help in understanding the actual nature of the product. Using the ratings, the brand can generate an average rating for their products that can attract customers in the future (Peña-García *et al.* 2020). It has been seen that customers tend to spend 30% more money on organizations with excellent reviews while 86% of customers are reluctant to spend money on brand products that have negative online reviews. Hence, it is important for organizations to take affirmative steps that can generate a positive outlook about the products and increase the engagement level of customers with their service. Gaining positive reviews from customers would help in forming a brand reputation that strengthens the position of the business in the global market.

Importance of online reviews on the purchasing behavior of customers

Improve the brand reputation

Gaining positive reviews from the customers will help in forming positive perceptions about the brand and increase the acceptance rate among them. It helps in improving the rank in the website search which increases the flow of the customers to the brand. According to Vermeulen and Seegers (2009), SEO or search engine optimization consists of a set of techniques that give opportunities to professionals to use the technique so that their brand can appear at the top of the search engine results. Having high ratings will boost the popularity of brands and boost the website rank.

Increase the visibility of the brand

It has been seen that some search engines involve specific filters that allow customers to narrow down their search results by using specific parameters. The majority of customers tend to restrict their search to only high-rated products that have excellent reviews to save time (Zhu *et al.* 2020). Therefore, brands that have been able to manage high ratings will be able to generate more traffic and sales on their website and increase the visibility rate of the brand among customers.

Providing guidance to the customers

Online reviews are used by shoppers as guiding materials that help them to know about the actual efficacy of the products. The online reviews can give a specific understanding of the size, color, and other features of the products that give chances to customers to make informed decisions about purchasing (Fadillah and Kusumawati, 2021). Based on the assessment of the reviews, customers tend to buy products online that make an impact on the overall sales rate of organizations.

Common challenges of online reviews

One of the main issues associated with the online reviewing process is the quality and reliability of the data. It has been found by previous research that not all reviews are genuine in nature and inauthentic reviews can generate a negative impact on the overall brand's performance. There are fake, biased, and manipulated reviews that are mainly posted by competitors, bots, or incentives to degrade brand reputation among customers (Xu, 2020). On the other hand, incomplete or inconsistent reviews also create issues in forming strong relationships with customers.

The volume and variety of the online review data create complications in the decision-making process. The B2C business has to deal with voluminous data of product reviews and ratings across different digital platforms that can also consist of different languages. Hence, organizing and interpreting these data can be time-consuming and complex in nature (Pooja and Upadhyaya, 2024). The involvement of smart tools and techniques is necessary to sort the data and develop a clear image among the customers.

Handling negative and conflicting reviews is another challenge that needs to be managed by organizations to support the relationship with customers. The B2C business may face criticism and complaints from customers that can lower the overall ratings of the products. Feedback from dissatisfied customers can damage the reputation of the brands (Meng *et al.* 2021). On the other hand, gathering inconsistent feedback from different sources can also hamper the final purchasing decision-making process of customers.

Theoretical implication

The high level of competition in the global market has made it difficult for organizations to manage the continuous flow of customers to the business. It is becoming important to understand the psychology behind the purchasing behavior of customers that would give opportunities to brands to convince the customers to form relationships with them. Implementation of the

psychoanalytical model of consumer behavior can help organizations acknowledge the deep-rooted factors that drive the purchasing behavior of customers (Bortoluzzi *et al.* 2020). Based on the nature of hidden stimuli, organizations can modify their promotional approach and make adjustments in the product development process so that it can influence the overall decision-making system of customers. On the other hand, the application of the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell model can develop a clear understanding of different states from which customers go through and make final decisions about product purchases (Zhu *et al.* 2020). Customers go through different stages before making purchasing decisions and information processing is one of the critical steps where they collect relevant data about the previous practice of the business. Online reviews act as a vital source of data collection process that can generate a great impact on final purchasing decisions.

Literature gap

The previous research has been able to shed light on the role of online customer reviews on the purchasing behavior of customers and highlight the benefits and challenges associated with the online reviewing process. However, the researchers were not able to develop detailed solutions that can enable global companies to match the changing needs of customers and involve strategies based on the current satisfaction level of customers. Collecting data from different digital platforms is necessary to achieve a high level of customer satisfaction. This research will focus on the function of smartphone companies and focus on the processes that can be utilized by them to improve the number of positive online reviews and strengthen their connection with customers.

Limitation

One of the main limitations of the research is that it is not able to consider the involvement of the primary data collection process as it is a time-consuming process. Due to the time constraints challenge, the secondary data collection process has been used that may give access to current sources but disable the research to include direct opinion of participants. On the other hand, resource constraints, such as financial limitations also affect the process of data collection as the research is only able to include articles and journals that can be accessed without any subscription.

Ethical consideration

Considering the ethical development of the research is the primary responsibility of the researcher as it can directly impact the reliability of the research outcome. The research will focus on avoiding any type of plagiarism that can raise questions about the credibility of the study. On the other hand, it would also include a proper reference list and in-text citations to acknowledge the involvement of other research (Lê and Schmid, 2022). Avoiding the risk of any type of data manipulation to achieve the research aim and objective will help in improving the overall credibility of the research.

Timeframe

Task	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10	Week 11
Selecting the research topic											
Getting approval from the supervisor											

Forming aim and objective											
Developi ng literatur e review											
Selecting research methodo logy											
Collectin g relevant data and informat ion											
Interpre ting the collected data											

Forming the final research											
Proofrea ding the research											
Presenti ng the final research											

Conclusion

The research will aim to shed light on the relationship between online reviews and their impact on customer purchasing behavior as it has been believed that the positive correlation between online reviews and purchasing behavior can positively impact the overall organizational outcome. After identifying the gap in the previous research, the research focuses on avoiding the same pitfalls and predicts that research will be able to generate a clear understanding of the role of online reviews in increasing the sales rate of smartphones in the UK market.

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