

Impact of Online Reviews on Consumer Buying Behaviors

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Abstract:

In this era of digital technology online shopping has become a regular part of consumer's lives globally. Internet has gained status of as a dynamic commercial platform. Traditional buying by individual has changed now. Online consumer reviews on products and services play an increasingly growing role in customer's buying decision making process. Online buying can be divided into attitudes formation and adoption of online products/services. The current study reveals different aspects of reading online reviews and their impact on Karachi based buyer's buying decisions. Most important factors that influence online purchasing are trust, risk, demographics, gender, website, content and variety. Results also highlight the impact of negative reviews on buying decisions and study also found some interesting differences in male and female respondent's preferences. This survey conducted through online survey forms (Google forms) in which the method of Purposive Sampling was used. The sample size set by researchers was 100 which comprises of equal number of males and females.

Key words: *Online Reviews, Impact, Consumers, Buying Decisions, Credibility of Reviewer*

INTRODUCTION:

Social media provide an opportunity to listen to what other people think about different things and give the platform to comment and share our views to others. It is about connecting with an audience and building relationships. These relationships can be for personal reasons or for business deals. The tremendous change in social networking has expanded the potential impact of electronic word of mouth on the behavior of consumer's purchasing decision.

In this age of technology where everything is evolving so fast, people use online social media tools which are available in plenty of types such as blogs, social networking websites and online customer service websites which has transformed and still transforming the internet from a "mainstream medium to interactive medium", which allows every individual to participate socially (Pollock, 2012, Jun 9, para. 4).

An internet has become a platform which provides a customer electronic Word Of Mouth (E-WoM) and the main source to avail as much as information. By using E-WoM, consumer can easily make their personal suggestions to global communities around the world or an individual who uses information as an extra element, can support his or her purchasing decisions.

In buying decisions word of mouth and traditional media are still influential and they play significant role. Online reviews as well as how-to videos (available on YouTube) and different types of digital content are essential for brand marketers (Matter Communications, April 19, 2018).

The websites which allow masses to be interactive have made possible to easily access information about the purchasing related advice or the offers available in the market given by other purchasers in the form of product reviews. Online consumer reviews are solely made to provide opinions and summarize experiences.

According to PWC'S Total Retail Survey, 67 percent of 23000 shoppers surveyed in 25 countries said their shopping behavior is affected when they read or write comments on social media (Wenzil, September 21, 2016, para 12).

Suggestions based on personal experiences given through online reviews have now become one of the most valuable source of information which guides users while making buying decisions (Munz , 2012, May 14 p. 6).

Zan, Mo, Yan-Fei Li, and Peng Fan(june29,2015)define online reviews in there research paper

Online reviews are evaluation information about the different aspects of consumer products. With this information, consumers can infer the quality of goods according to the reviews and experience, to reduce personal time and the risks of purchase.

Consumers do extra and expended efforts for researching online reviews while taking purchasing decisions about durable goods (e.g. washing machines, computers)as compared to other daily immediate consumption items (Reporter, February 5,2018, para1-2). But free and easy access to this information provided by general masses has somehow weakened the worth of marketing power of companies (either product or services). Information provided by online peer's influences more than the information provided by companies.

According to Review Trackers research "Online reviews are considered at least 3 times more influential to woman than advertisements when making a purchase decisions (Wenzil, September 21,2016, para 3)."

Information seeking for any product or services may include motivation for learning how a product is to be used and which product is popular or which product/service is worth spending money. Consumers think that reviews available on sites provided by expert bloggers or consumers are more trustworthy than information provided by the marketer.

Especially, when a consumer is making a decision to buy any high priced product, they search for a review and follow those reviews more cautiously in order to minimize the uncertainty (Hemming & Walsh, 2003, p. 25). And it does not matter what the purchase is, whether its food, kitchenware, clothes etc. people read reviews before buying.

Perzynska (2017, 27 July, para.3) says a review is nothing more than a product/service focused content that should look into both the benefits and drawbacks of that particular products or services. Some full-time

writer/reviewers focus on testing and reviewing products. Then, they present to the third party.

Ideally, a review should come from the independent author. Such a reviewer sheds light on several products and services and gives a neutral, impartial perspective.

Buyers are heavily depended upon the reviews given by the real users which are often genuine. So, reviews are social proof and help in building trust.

Buyers pay attention to online reviews and in this regard they pay attention to the quantity of reviews as well as the average star ratings and timeliness of the reviews (Dobson, 2018).

There are two ways of giving a review of any product or service; one is quantitative and other is qualitative.

1. QUANTITATIVE:

The quantitative review is more precise and objective based on scale rating /star rating and numerical results. It is easier as a consumer can analyze the quality of product/service in just one look by seeing the rating. It is not time-consuming (Gilliam,2017, Feb 07, para. 2).

In the case of negative reviews, quantity does not matter because consumer seems hesitant to buy products which has negative ratings(Ahsan, 2017, p. 27).

People are interested in reading reviews for getting brand information as compared to write and post online comments and readers of negative reviews are less interested in purchasing products(Kim, et.al, September 30, 2015, para 9)

According to Spiegel Research Center's research (2018,p10) "Readers are skeptical of reviews that are too positive and, in many cases, a negative online review is seen as more credible."

What is the star rating?

Star rating system is quick and simple. By only one click to the review buyers can have the rating of a product or service. It offers the clear definition of a choice of a consumer.

2. QUALITATIVE:

Whereas, qualitative is more detailed and descriptive (e.g. open comments, suggestions, and complaints). Qualitative review enables people to find out more about product/service and give ideas that what actually they need (Gilliam, 2017, Feb 07, para8).

There are so many other elements which affect the review, the reviewer and the platform which the reviewer is using. A review with the detailed description of a product and service is not enough to generate traffic. Consumer/customer needs the things in the review which attract them.

What are those things or elements which are necessary for any review or a reviewer or a review page?

- When consumer search for online information means reviews to help in making a decision, they opt for a reviewer whom they trust totally. For this, they look for identity disclosure of a reviewer (Liu, n.d, p.9).
- Reviews written by consumers are taken as more believable and understandable than those published by companies because they provide information to the readers based on their actual experience (Maslowska, et.al, 2017, p.30).
- Everyone likes gifts and winning something. Contests and giveaways boost the traffic. It generates a lot of traffic when people participate in a contest (Soulo, 2018, March 4, para. 3).
- Followers can bring popularity to any reviewer. Higher the number of followers most of the times helps in getting sponsors. It can be a good thing as it gives a blogger (reviewer) and their blog more exposure and offers (Kim, 2014, June 10, para. 2). Sometimes people first see the number of followers before trusting a reviewer and their reviews.

- It is important for a reviewer to be interactive in a comment section, because people follow and listen to the recommendations of reviewers and they feel a bond of friendship with the reviewers, who are providing them with a lot of valuable information.
- Online shoppers and readers who visit the websites or other social networking pages, the product/service videos keep them on the website as it is easy for a customer to know every feature of that product or service. Shoppers become more willing to buy after watching videos and beautifully captured images (Muller,2015,Dec 3,para2). A product video is the best option to explain the functions. It is not surprising that 65 percent of customers can better imagine the product usage by watching a product video (Ibid, para. 10).
- The reviews containing pictures reflect the real quality of the products and reduce risk of buying for consumers(Mo, et.al, 2015, p.6).
- Simply, visitors to any website want to reach what they are looking for or what they need. All website/review pages need to design their page in a way that clearly advertises and shows the products/services available (Montie, 2013, Nov26, para. 3). Perhaps the most important part of any website/page is the navigation which typically includes a navigation bar or list of labels that makes the website look different from other sites. Good navigation makes a site easy to go through all the options (Hill, 2011,Sept 1, para. 2).
- Credibility of source is considered as an important element of persuasion. When a person perceives a source to have expertise on a topic, he must be looking for someone trustworthy (Maslowska, et.al, 2017, p.18).

Literature Review:

Reviewed literature highlights different aspects of online buying behavior of a consumer.

The research "**Impact of Online Product Reviews on Purchasing Decisions**" taken by Nina Isabel Holleschovsky and EftymiosConstantinides in The Netherlands (April 23, 2016), explored that how reviews play an important role among customers while making a purchase.

The data for the research was collected online through different platforms and offline libraries too. The study reveals that motives behind reading online are informational behavior, risk reduction, quality seeking and social belonging.

It also clarifies that text is better and have more impact than the overall rating in reviews. Research also explains the two major things of reviews in which one is how easy it is to navigate and another is social and reliability factor. The literature stated the buyers' reliance on reviews is only increase by the user-friendly design and trust-building measures.

The research "**Importance Of Online Product Reviews from a Consumer's Perspective**",(Lackermair,2013)highlights the importance of popular tools like product reviews and ratings which supports consumer in making decisions. Consumers compare the information available in a review and the information of a product given by other users.

Almana and Mirza (November 2013) worked on "**The Impact of Electronic Word of Mouth on Consumers' Purchasing Decision**".The study reveals an effect of online reviews on buyers and many shoppers are influenced by the E-WOM.

One importance of E-WOM is also that people put the end result of the product after using which helps the business and product makers to make the product better and to take necessary improvement measures according to the demand and requirements of their consumers. This study also shows that reviewers and website reputation matters a lot.

The paper published titled "**The Influence of Fashion Blogs on Consumers**" by Navarro explains that how fashion blogs use as a source of seeking knowledge of new trends and ideas.

The research was based on three themes. Firstly, the blogs as "hub" which revealed that fashion blogging is not remained to seek ideas and information but also to diffuse products on the marketplace. Secondly, they found out that fashion reviews/blogs are not based on an individual level, it is an idea which is perceived on a

collective level. Like people or consumer read several reviews before making a decision to adopt anything or purchase any product. Lastly, it suggested the idea of fashion blogs are now used as a social comparison which means people read reviews often to make themselves socially accepted. The fear of social failure has increased among people which leads them to read reviews and make themselves aware and updated.

AdliahNur. Hanifati(2015) conducted a survey titled "**The Impact of Food Blogger towards Consumer's Attitude and Behavior in Choosing Restaurants**". This study explains how food bloggers influence masses on making a decision where to eat and tell people which restaurant is worthy to spend their money. Different factors analyzed in the study under the theoretical framework of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).

The research "**The Customer Citizenship Behaviors of Food Blog Users**" done by Kaung-Hwa Chen, Kuo-Jung Hsieh, Feng-Hsiang Chang and Ni-Chia Chen in the year of September 2015. This study explains the idea of food blogs as well as psychological needs, customer satisfaction, customer-company identification and customer citizenship behaviors. Food blogging represents the one's interest in cooking, blog writing, and photography. These blogs provide general information which leads to the correct option to utilize their money in the right place.

This study suggests that when the users are satisfied by the information given in the review provided by a food blogger and if that mentioned information fulfills their demands, user's level of satisfaction for the review is also enhanced.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

Given below are the proposed research questions for the study:

RQ1: What are the different buying behaviors of people of karachi?

RQ2: Do product review ratings influence the decision to purchase?

RQ3: Do the characteristics of the reviewer like complete profile, interaction with followers, and number of followers impact the buying behavior of a consumer?

RQ4: Do the factors/elements (like website appearance, navigation, availability of products/services, giveaway offers) impact the reach of the page?

RQ5: How can negative reviews affect the decision of an individual?

METHODOLOGY

Audience and consumer surveys are common practice of researchers for getting low cost but in large number of data collection (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). As everyone is familiar with answering surveys, so the selection of survey as a data collection tool seems easy and straightforward (Priest, 2015).

For this study a survey was conducted through online survey forms (Google forms) in which the method of Purposive Sampling was used. The questionnaire comprised of total 14 questions with their sub parts. Questions were comprised of closed ended as well as Likert scale, and one open ended question.

The sample size set by researchers was 100 which comprises of equal male and female (50 males respondents and 50 female respondents). The pilot study was done by the researcher before conducting the survey. 10 forms were first filled by the respondents in order to test the questionnaire.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. USES AND GRATIFICATION THEORY (UGT):

Uses and gratification theory is one of many communication theories which helps to explain the relationship between human and mass media. The main idea is that people turn the media to accomplish their need (Kane, 2015, Sept 29, para.1).

The theory posits that audiences have certain types of needs and goals that drives them to approach media and non-media sources. The needs which are satisfied by the media are called media gratifications (Dominick, 2002, p. 46).

There are five main categories of needs that can be fulfilled by media:

Cognitive

Affective

Personal integrative

Social integrative

Tension-free(Kane, 2015, 29 Sept, para. 2-6)

In today's world, UGT has more relevance as individuals link up with the different technologies. When UGT research into mobile phone usage, it discovered that people get a number of gratifications from their phones including sociability, entertainment, and mobility(Uses and gratification theory, 2017, para. 12).

2. MEDIA DEPENDENCY THEORY:

It is the theory of mass communication which explains that an individual is more depended on media to fulfill his or her needs (Mancilla, 2014, 11 Nov, p. 1).

It is a systematic approach to learn the effects of mass media on an audience and the effect of interaction between mass media, social systems, and users. It was proposed in 1976 by the American researcher Sandra Ball and Melvin DeFleur.

Dependency theory can be defined as a relation in which the fulfillment of one's goals and needs depend on the source of another party. In this information based society, individual depend on the media to meet their needs which can range from a need for information on the specific topic to entertainment for relaxation to education.

There are three types of media dependencies, cognitive, affective and behavioral (Lin, 2018, pp.2-4).

An individual is more dependent on the media if a medium satisfies one's requirements. Moreover, when people socialize they recreate their behaviors, beliefs, practices and start thinking in a different way (Communication Theory, 2014, para. 3&4).

3.LIMITED EFFECT THEORY:

The limited effect assures that influence from media is limited or even little (Definition of limited theory, 2018, para. 1).

Paul Lazarsfeld suggests that media do not have that much affects how we think. Only a few people are manipulated by the impact of mass media messages. Media is weak in terms of shaping one’s opinion.

Media users are divided into three stages; gatekeepers, opinion leaders, and opinion followers

According to limited theory, the adult audience has their own shaped concepts and opinions that cannot be easily propagated by mass media.

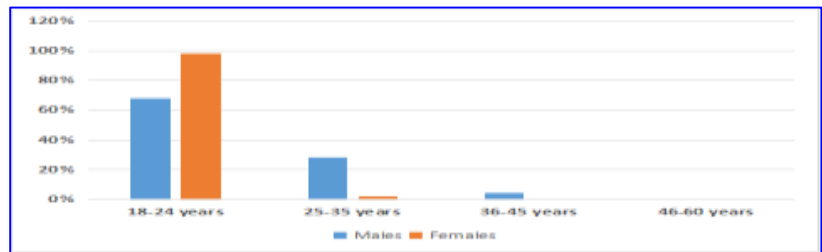
Only socially isolated people can be directly affected (Nindria, 2016, Oct 3, p. 1)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Following are the findings of study based on survey research.

Table 1: Age Groups of the respondents

		18-24 Years	25-35 Years	36-45 Years	46-60 Years
Males	Frequency	34	14	2	0
	Percentage	68	28	4	0
Females	Frequency	49	1	0	0
	Percentage	98	2	0	0

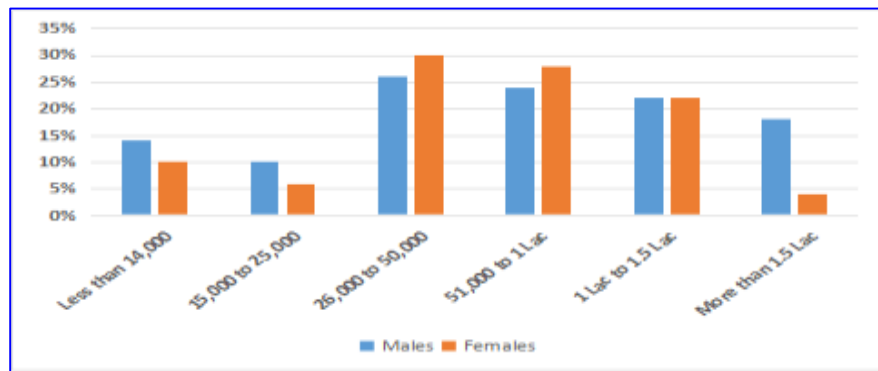


The sample size of this research study was 100 which comprises of 50 male respondents and 50 female respondents. The table shows that majority of respondents are 18 to 24 years old who often read online

reviews. There were 68 percent males and 98 percent of females who belonged to this age group. 28 and 2 percent of males and females respectively belong to age group between 25-35 years old. (See table 1).

Table 2: Household income of the respondents

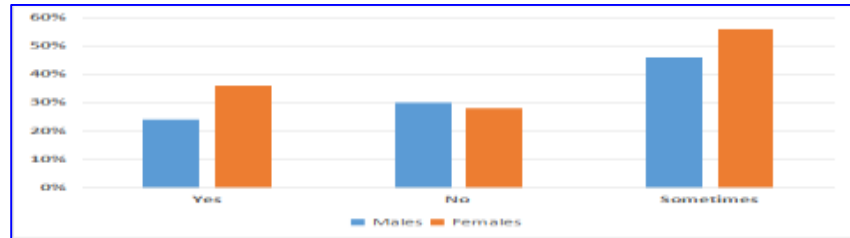
		Less than 14,000	15,000 to 25,000	26,000 to 50,000	51,000 to 1 Lac	1 Lac to 1.5 Lac	More than 1.5 Lac
Males	Frequency	7	5	13	12	11	9
	Percentage	14	10	26	24	22	18
Females	Frequency	5	3	15	14	11	2
	Percentage	10	6	30	28	22	4



Household income plays an important role when it comes to online shopping of any product. Every individual does shop according to his or her income. Here we can see the results of the participants, 14 percent of males and 10 percent of females are those whose household monthly income is less than 14,000(in rupees). 26 percent of males and 30 percent of females fall under 26,000 to 50,000 income. Males and females whose household income is 51,000 to 1 Lac are 24 percent and 28 percent respectively.

Table 3: Online shopping habit

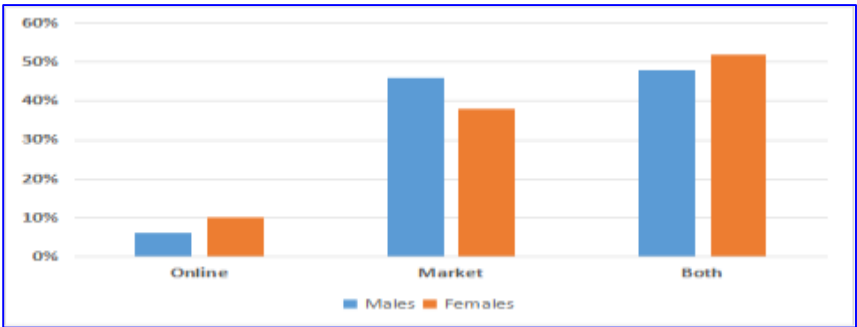
		Yes	No	Sometimes
Males	Frequency	12	15	23
	Percentage	24	30	46
Females	Frequency	18	14	28
	Percentage	30	23.333	46.666



According to findings there are 70 percent males and 76.666 percent females (by adding the percentages of “Yes” and “Sometimes”) who prefer to do online shopping. On the other hand, there are respondents who still do not prefer to do online shopping(30 percent males and 23.333 percent of the females).

Table 4: Mode of Shopping preferred

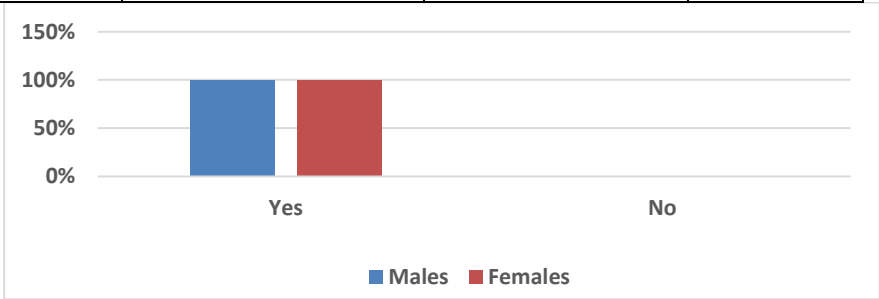
		Online	Market	Both
Males	Frequency	3	23	24
	Percentage	6	46	48
Females	Frequency	5	19	26
	Percentage	10	38	52



Online shopping availability is changing the shopping behaviors worldwide. For getting an idea about this newly emerged trend we have asked the respondents to express their preferred shopping method. It can be observed from the bar chart and the table (4) that 46 percent and 38 percent male and female participants respectively answer that they prefer shopping from market. Moreover 48 percent male and 52 percent female respondents use a combination of both online and market. Rest of the respondents which are in very less in number chose to do only online shopping.

Table 5: Online review readers

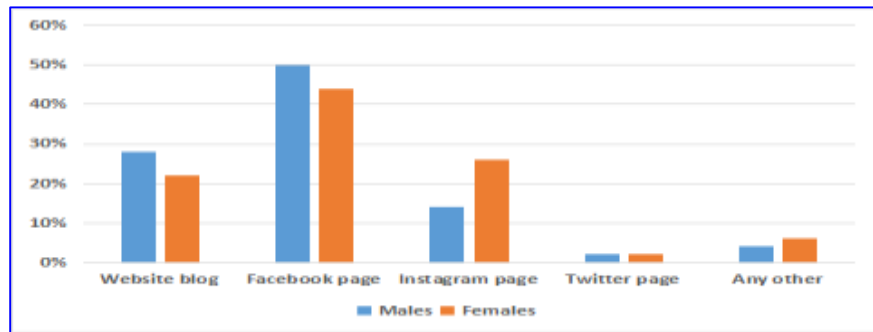
		Yes	No
Males	Frequency	50	0
	Percentage	100	0
Females	Frequency	50	0
	Percentage	100	0



Findings suggest that there are 100 percent males and females who read online reviews for their convenience.

Table 6: Online Platform Preferences:

		Website blog	Facebook page	Instagram	Twitter	Any other
Males	Frequency	14	25	7	1	2
	Percentage	28	50	14	2	4
Females	Frequency	11	22	13	1	3
	Percentage	22	44	26	2	6



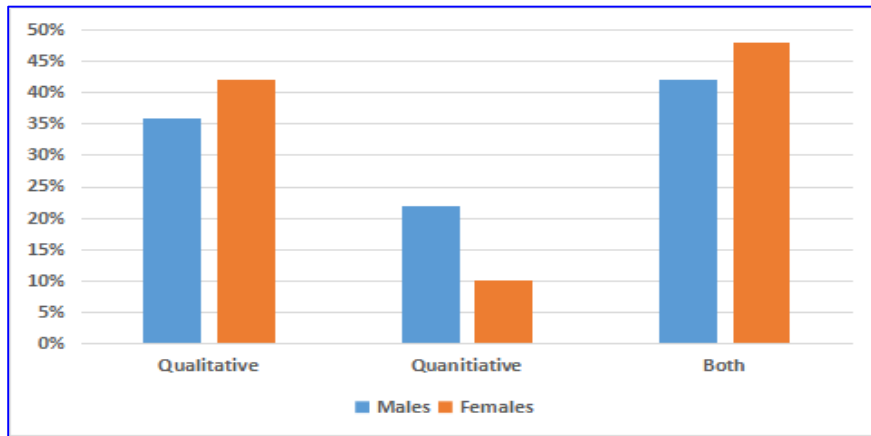
Social media has given us the variety of platforms to do the activities or socialize according to our needs and preferences. There are large number of social media platforms which are used by reviewers where they write and provide us the information about the products and services. Here the given above results demonstrate that from which platforms readers prefer to read their required content.

Researcher found 28 percent of males and 22 percent of females like to read reviews from the website blog. Almost half of the respondents answered Facebook as their platform comprises of 50 percent males and 44 percent females. Few participants chose Twitter and other pages to read reviews.

It is observed that after website and Facebook, people give preference to the Instagram for reading. 14 percent males and 26 percent of females use Instagram as their platform.

Table 7.a: Kind of reviews

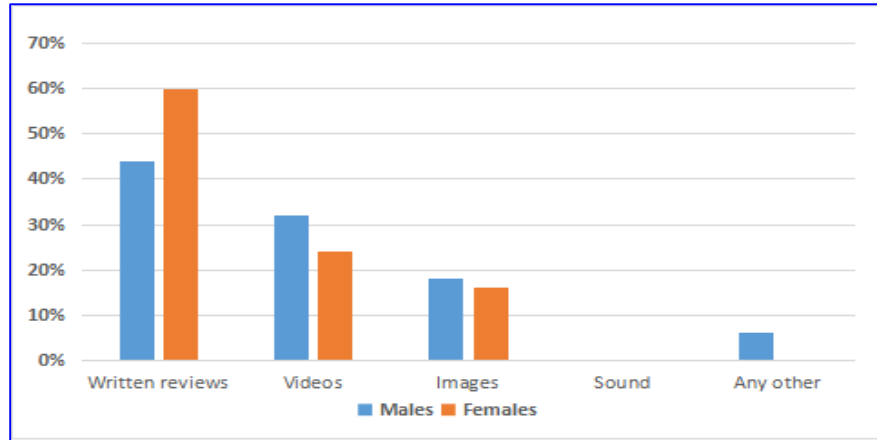
		Qualitative	Quantitative	Both
Males	Frequency	18	11	21
	Percentage	36	22	42
Females	Frequency	21	5	24
	Percentage	42	10	48



Online reviews are of two kinds, one is qualitative and another is quantitative. Here the responses determine that there are more people who rely on the qualitative reviews as compared to quantitative. 36 percent of males and 42 percent of females depend on qualitative whereas 22 percent and 10 percent of males and females respectively prefer quantitative reviews. Furthermore, 42 percent of males and 48 percent of females read both qualitative and quantitative online reviews.

Table 7.b: Qualitative

		Written reviews	Videos	Images	Sound	Any other
Males	Frequency	22	16	9	0	3
	Percentage	44	32	18	0	6
Females	Frequency	30	12	8	0	0
	Percentage	60	24	16	0	0

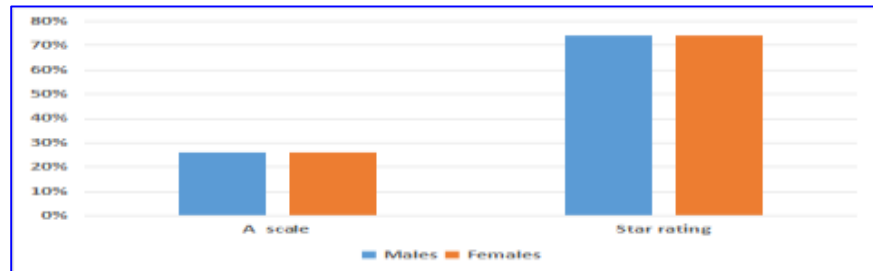


Qualitative reviews include written reviews, video, audio, images etc. Readers choose according to their choice of what way they like to read or watch for products and services.

44 percent and 60 percent of the males and females respectively chose written reviews as the written reviews explain more and almost every required detail of the product/service. Whereas, 32 percent of males and 24 percent of females preferred reviews available in video form. Videos and written reviews might help consumer knowing each and every detail feature and usage of the products. Rest chose to read reviews supported by images and other options.

Table 7.c: Quantitative

		A scale	Star rating
Males	Frequency	13	37
	Percentage	26	74
Females	Frequency	13	37
	Percentage	26	74

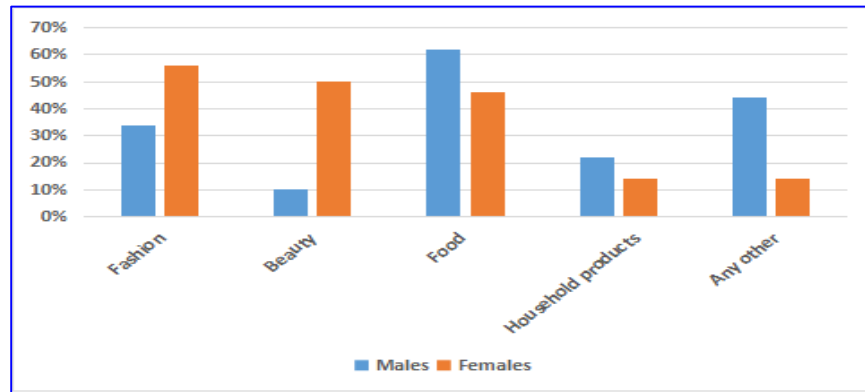


Quantitative reviews usually show the rating of the products and services using “stars” or “scale”. It is a more easy way to know the quality of product/service by just seeing the rating because it does not need to read long paragraphs of reviews or videos to watch.

Here, 26 percent of the male and female respondents prefer scale. Whereas 74 percent of the male and female participants prefer star rating reviews.

Table 8: Purpose of reading

		Fashion	Beauty	Food	Household products	Any other
Males	Frequency	17	5	31	11	22
	Percentage	19.76	5.81	36.04	12.79	25.58
Females	Frequency	28	25	23	7	7
	Percentage	62.22	27.77	25.55	7.77	15.55



There are so many purposes for which people go to the sites or pages to read the reviews according to the products or services they need to buy to get clear information by reading it. From the results, we have derived that people are more interested in reading the reviews related to fashion and food. Fashion comes under the product category and the food falls under the category of service like people order food or read reviews for the dine-in restaurants they want to visit.

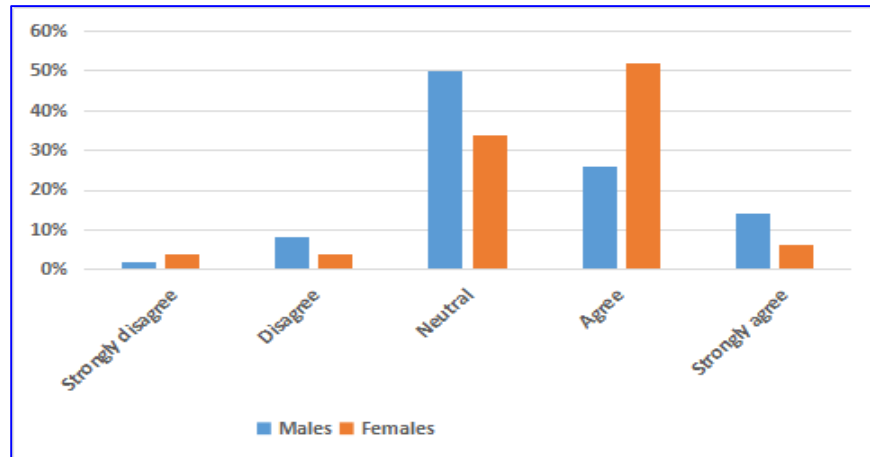
19.76 percent of the males and 62.22 percent of the females like to read reviews about the fashion whereas 5.81 percent of the males and 27.77 percent of the females prefer to read beauty reviews. Moreover, 36.04 percent of the males and 25.55 percent of the females prefer to read food reviews before making any decision to order the food and visiting the food place. 25.58 percent males and 15.55 females read reviews about other than household, fashion, beauty and food products. For the rest of the categories see (table 8) and bar graph.

LIKERT SCALE:

The survey taken for this study comprises of some questions which show their level of agreement with the following statements

Table 9.a: Do reviews reduce risk of buying?

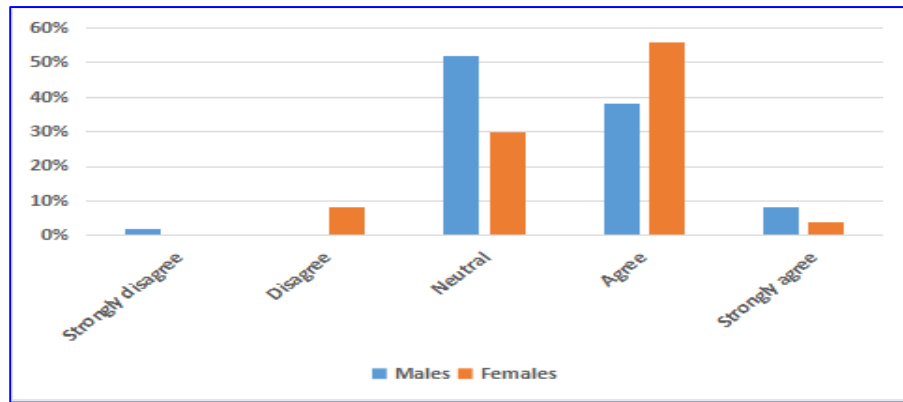
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Males	Frequency	1	4	25	13	7
	Percentage	2	8	50	26	14
Females	Frequency	2	2	17	26	3
	Percentage	4	4	34	52	6



Results suggest that 40 percent (by adding the percentages of agree and strongly agree) of the males and 58 (by adding the percentages of agree and strongly agree) percent of the females believe that by reading reviews before making any purchase or decision, reduce the risk of making an incorrect decision whereas 50 percent and 34 percent of males and females respectively feel neutral on this fact.

Table 9.b: Trusting a reviewer before making a purchase is necessary

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Males	Frequency	1	0	26	19	4
	Percentage	2	0	52	38	8
Females	Frequency	0	4	15	28	2
	Percentage	0	8	30	56	4

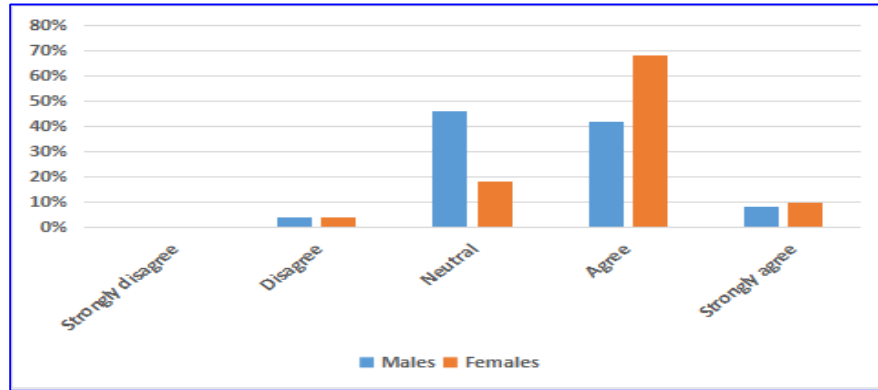


The result shows that how much it is necessary to rely or trust on a reviewer before reading from their page/site (see table 9.b). When readers read a review online they get information and this developed a trust in reviews and they make decisions accordingly but those having mistrust do not follow the information provided by the reviews while making a purchase.

In this regard 52 and 30 percent of the males and females respectively gave the answer “neutral”. But the 48 percent (by adding the percentages of agree and strongly agree) of the males and 60 percent (by adding the percentages of agree and strongly agree) of the females showed a level of agreement on this statement that trust on reviewer is necessary. No male disagree whereas 8 percent of the females disagree with this statement.

Table 9.c: Does a detailed profile/ disclosure of reviewer make the review more credible?

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Males	Frequency	0	2	23	21	4
	Percentage	0	4	46	42	8
Females	Frequency	0	2	9	34	5
	Percentage	0	4	18	68	10

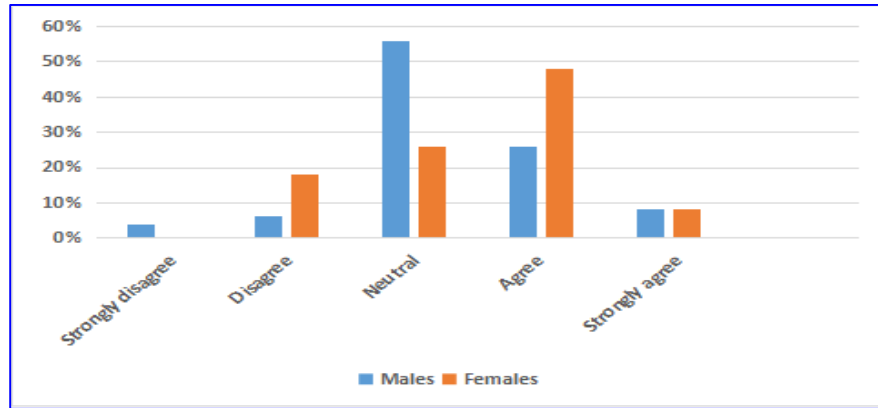


It is commonly known that when people follow some bloggers or influencers they feel a strong bond with them. They want to know more about the authors/reviewers, they follow. The reason behind it is that the followers wanted to know about their opinions and their likes and dislikes.

No participants strongly disagree whereas few disagree with this. 52 percent half of the males (by adding the percentages of agree and strongly agree) showed their agreement with this statement whereas 78 percent females (by adding the percentages of agree and strongly agree) agreed with this statement. Moreover, 46 percent of males answered neutral but the ratio of neutral females is comparatively less in number which is 18 percent.

Table 9.d: Does the number of followers of a reviewer matter?

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Males	Frequency	2	3	28	13	4
	Percentage	4	6	56	26	8
Females	Frequency	0	9	13	24	4
	Percentage	0	18	26	48	8

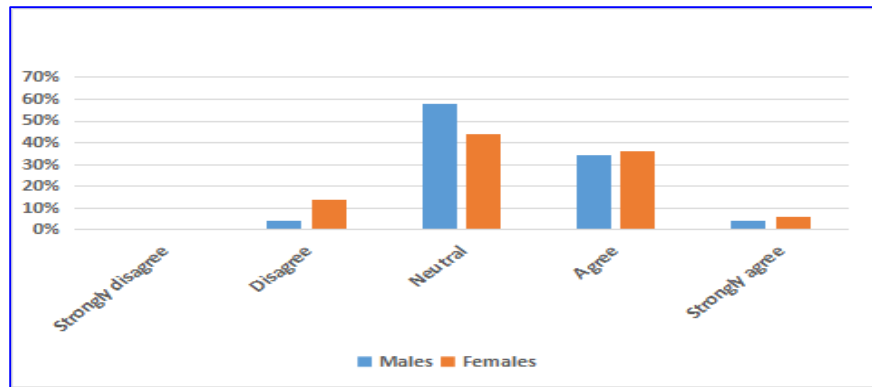


In the world full of competitors and social media bloggers, everyone is in the race to reach as much as following. Above results explain that whether people who read reviews online first see the number of followers of the reviewer or not.

26 percent of the males and 48 percent of the females agree that followers are important for any reviewer or review page whereas 6 percent of the males and 18 percent of the females disagree with this statement. On the other hand, 56 percent of the males and 26 percent of females believe neutrally. On the other hand, 6 percent males and 18 percent females disagree with this statement.

Table 9.e: The information given in the review about the product/service is sufficient

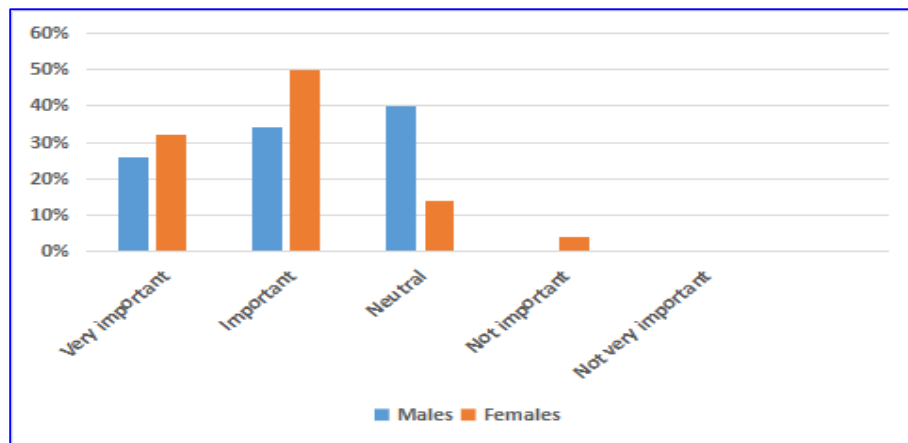
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Males	Frequency	0	2	29	17	2
	Percentage	0	4	58	34	4
Females	Frequency	0	7	22	18	3
	Percentage	0	14	44	36	6



This statement was asked in the survey to know that the information and details provided by the reviewers on their pages are enough for the consumer for making buying decisions. No respondents strongly disagree with this statement but few participants disagree and strongly agree. 34 percent of the males and 36 percent of the females agree that the information provided by the writers(reviewers) are sufficient to rely on for making purchase decisions whereas surprisingly, 58 percent of the males and 44 percent females answered neutrally.

Table 10.a: Website appearance

		Very important	Important	Neutral	Not important	Not very important
Males	Frequency	13	17	20	0	0
	Percentage	26	34	40	0	0
Females	Frequency	16	25	7	2	0
	Percentage	32	50	14	4	0



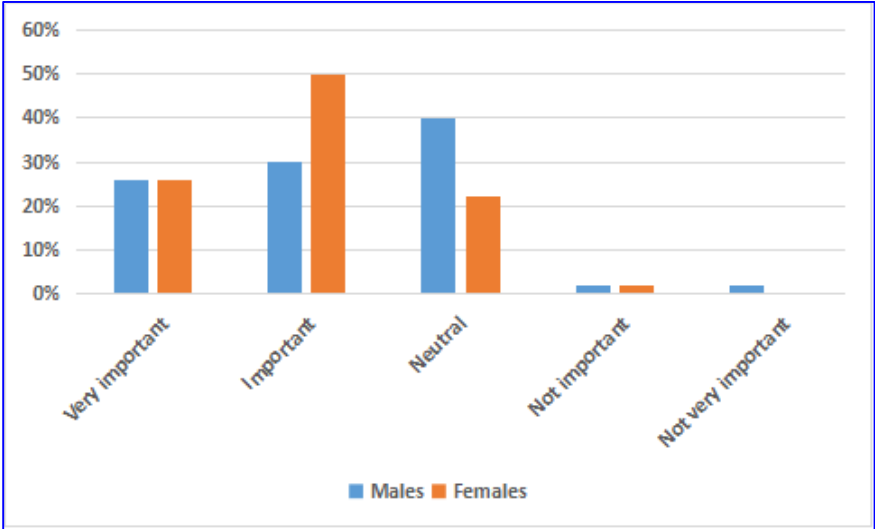
There are so many people who believe that how the website is shown is important to attract any buyer.

As discovered from results, 26 percent of the males and 32 percent of the females rate this statement very important when it comes to the appearance of any website. No respondent rate as “not very important” shows the significance of website appearance. 34 percent and 50 percent of the males and females tick on the “important” respectively.

40 percent of males and 14 percent of females think neutrally.

Table 10.b: Easy to navigate the page

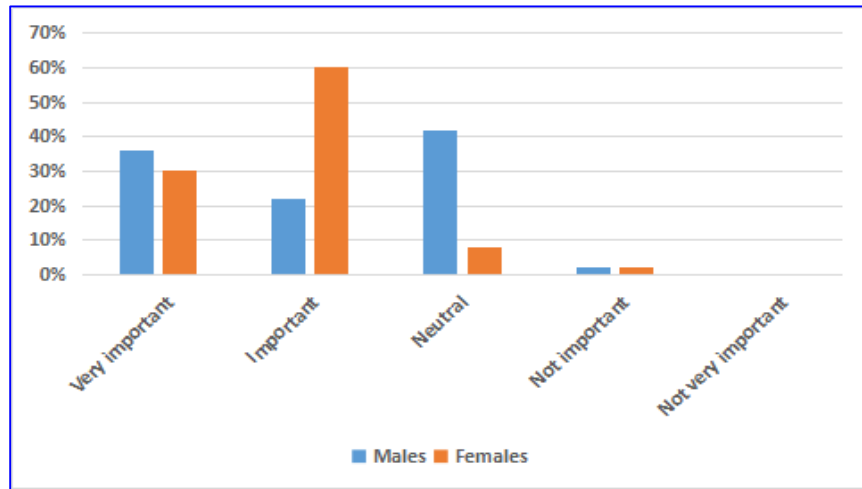
		Very important	Important	Neutral	Not important	Not very important
Males	Frequency	13	15	20	1	1
	Percentage	26	30	40	2	2
Females	Frequency	13	25	11	1	0
	Percentage	26	50	22	2	0



Navigation considered as important for any website visitors convenience. Results show the same that majority of people state this statement as “important” for any website. 30 percent of the males and 50 percent females agreed on that it is “important” for a page/website whereas 26 percent of the males and 26 percent of the females chose the option of “very important”. On the other hand, 40 percent of males and 22 percent of females showed a neutral response.

Table 10.c: Availability of variety of products and services

		Very important	Important	Neutral	Not important	Not very important
Males	Frequency	18	11	21	1	0
	Percentage	36	22	42	2	0
Females	Frequency	15	30	4	1	0
	Percentage	30	60	8	2	0

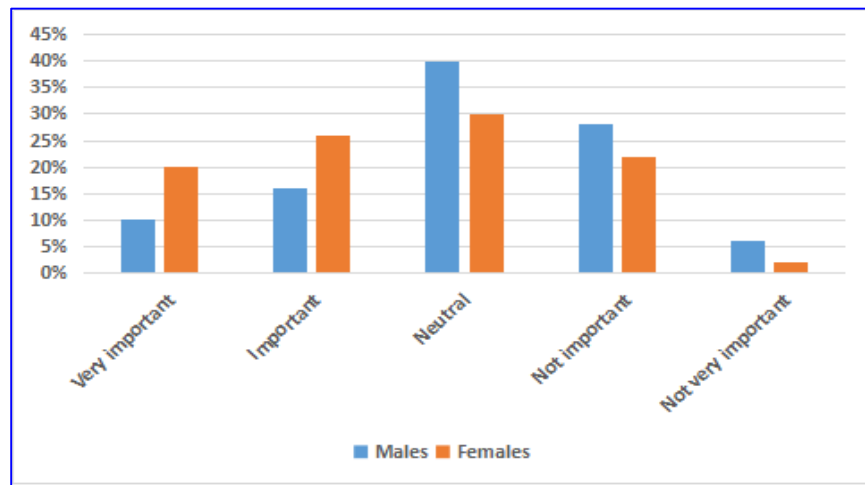


People will go and prefer to visit the website which provides information about as many as products. This helps a consumer to get content from a single site. People like to follow those pages which provide and cover as many as products. 58 percent (by adding the percentages of very important and important) of males agree with this statement while 90 percent (by adding the percentages of very important and important) females think it is important for any site.

Furthermore, 42 percent of males and only 8 percent of females gave a neutral responses. Whereas, not even a single respondent responds that availability of products and services is not very important.

Table 10.d: Giveaway offers

		Very important	Important	Neutral	Not important	Not very important
Males	Frequency	5	8	20	14	3
	Percentage	10	16	40	28	6
Females	Frequency	10	13	15	11	1
	Percentage	20	26	30	22	2



Many bloggers have started this new trend of giving gifts or prizes by participating in their game or contest. After a given time, bloggers announce the giveaway for their winner follower. This is appreciated by many of the followers and other new bloggers have also appreciated and continued this trend.

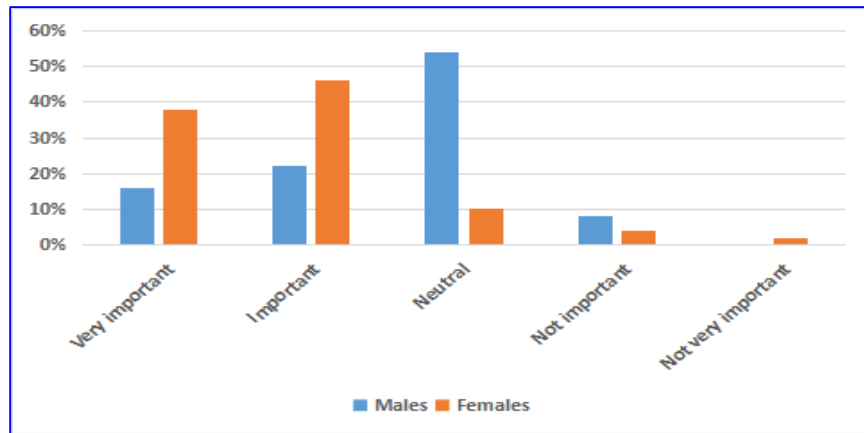
In this statement, researcher asked how much important or not important are these giveaways for the followers or readers.

Answer shows that 16 percent of the males and 26 percent of the females considered it as “important” as compared to where 34 percent (by adding the percentages of not important and not very important) males and

1/4 (by adding the percentages of not important and not very important) females feel that giveaways are not necessary. On the other hand, the majority chose neutral.

Table 10.e: How important for a reviewer to be interactive in comment section?

		Very important	Important	Neutral	Not important	Not very important
Males	Frequency	8	11	27	4	0
	Percentage	16	22	54	8	0
Females	Frequency	19	23	5	2	1
	Percentage	38	46	10	4	2



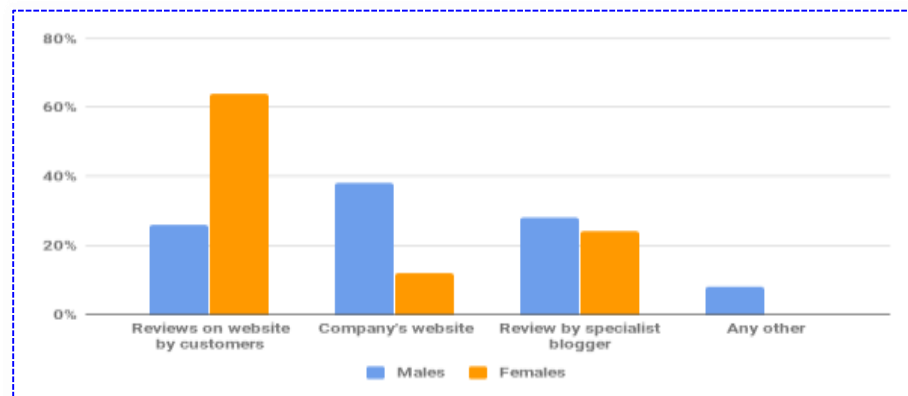
Interaction in the comment section between a reader and a writer makes a strong bond and create traffic on the page also.

38 percent (combined percentages of very important and important) of the male respondents and 84 percent (combined percentages of very important and important) of the female respondents think that it is

essential for a reviewer to be interactive with followers and reply to their queries.

Table 11: Authentic source for reading online

		Reviews on website by customers	Company's website	Review by specialist blogger	Any other
Males	Frequency	13	19	14	4
	Percentage	26	38	28	8
Females	Frequency	32	6	12	0
	Percentage	64	12	24	0



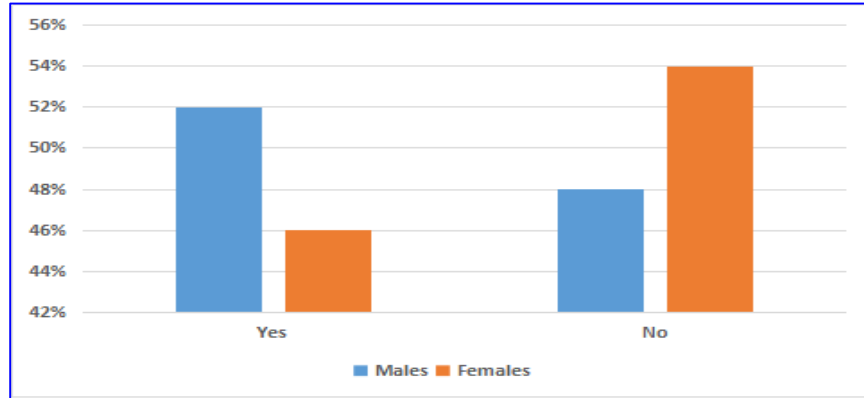
There are different people who believe and rely upon different sources according to the trust they have to build for any writer or page or because of their past experiences.

26 percent of the males 64 percent of the females prefer to read the reviews written by the customer itself. Whereas, 38 percent of the males and 12 percent of the females depend upon the reviews published on the website of the company of any product or service.

28 percent and 24 percent of the males and females like to trust in the reviews written by any specialist blogger respectively. Rest answer the “any other” as you can observe in the table and graph given above.

Table 12: Nature of experience

		Yes	No
Male	Frequency	26	24
	Percentage	52	48
Female	Frequency	23	27
	Percentage	46	54

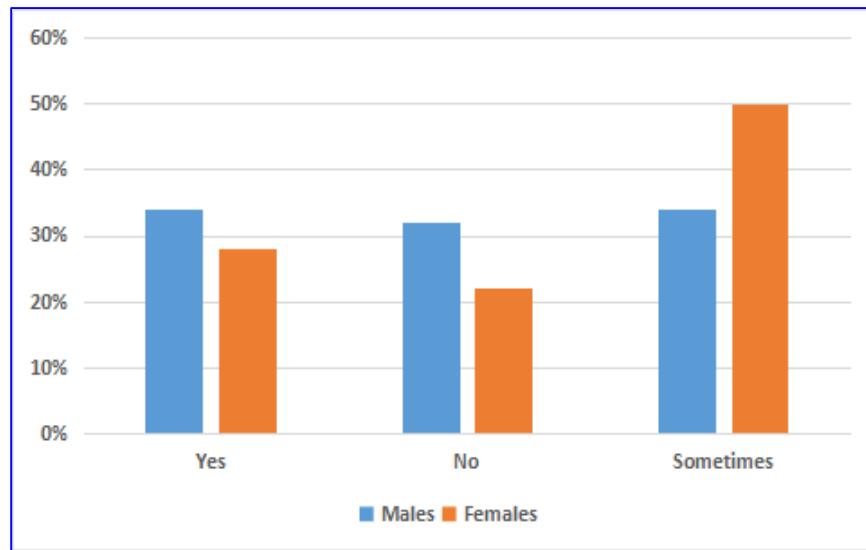


One of the question in survey comprised of that if it ever happens to any respondents that they read a positive review of any product or service and it turned out bad when they shop or try them.

Here a mixed result obtained from the responses. 52 percent of the males and 46 percent of the females had this experience whereas 48 percent of the male participants and 54 percent of the female participants never had this type of experience.

Table 13.a: Effect of negative reviews

		Yes	No	Sometimes
Males	Frequency	17	16	17
	Percentage	34	32	34
Females	Frequency	14	11	25
	Percentage	28	22	50

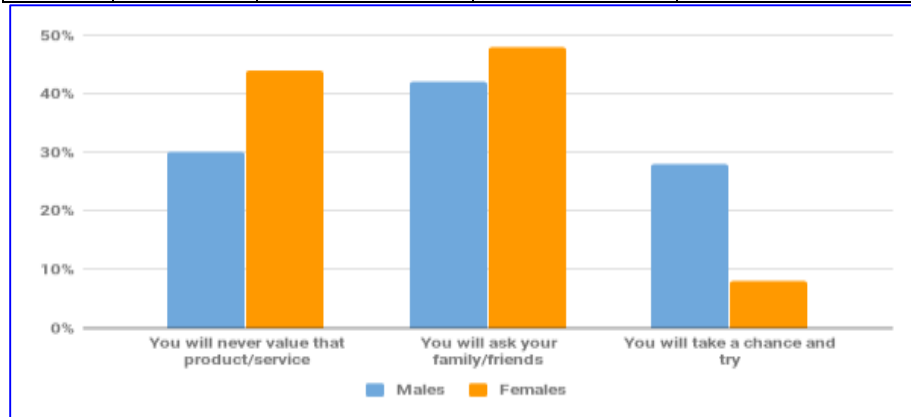


Sometimes it also happens that people write negative reviews if they had a small bad experience at any place or after buying any product, which not only effects the readers but also give valuable information to the customers that what are the flaws or weaknesses in any particular product or service. When it is asked that do the negative reviews affect

the reader’s buying decision. 34 percent of the males and 28 percent of females said Yes, and 32 percent of the males and 22 percent of the females answered No. Moreover, the majority said sometimes. 34 percent males and 50 percent females answered sometimes to this statement.

Table 13.b Effect of negative reviews

		You will never value that product/service	You will ask your family/friends	You will take a chance and try
Males	Frequency	15	21	14
	Percentage	30	42	28
Females	Frequency	22	24	4
	Percentage	44	48	8



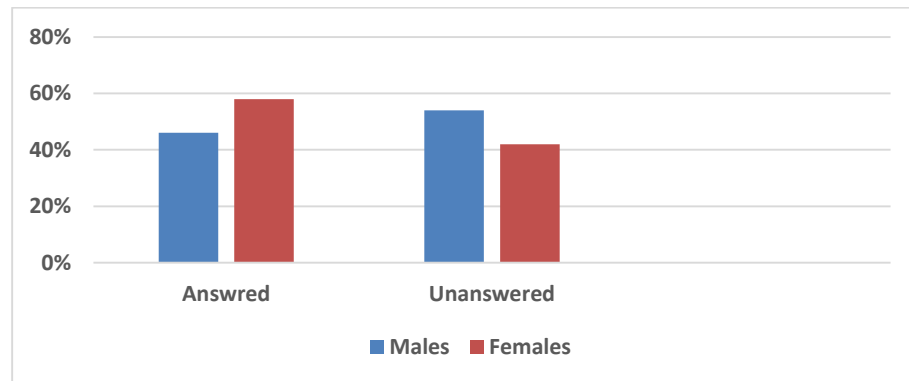
Given results suggest that what are the instant decisions when people read any negative review. 30 percent of the males and 44 percent of the females said that they will never value that product or service which clearly shows that these respondents are those who never buy these products after reading a negative review.

Majority of respondents answer that they will ask their friends or family before trusting a negative review in which 42 percent are males and 48 percent are females.

Interestingly 28 percent males and very few 8 percent of females answer that they will take a chance and try rather than believing on a single negative review.

Table 14: Page or Reviewer You the follow the most:

		Answered	Unanswered
Males	Frequency	23	27
	Percentage	46	54
Females	Frequency	29	21
	Percentage	58	42



The ending part of the survey form consists of the open-ended question in which participants were given to write the name of a page or reviewer they follow the most.

48 respondents out of 100 have left the question unanswered, the rest wrote the names of their favorite bloggers and pages.

Respondents named Rijja and Umm e Habiba answered that they usually read reviews from the comment section. Like if a positive review is written on a page about a product, so these participants also check comments that what other people or users say about that product. Some males and females also wrote they usually prefer “SWOT” (It is an open page where people come and write about their own experiences).

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research is to find out how citizens of Karachi react and perceive online reviews.

Firstly people of Karachi both male and female respondents have online shopping habits (see table 3) but they don't completely rely on online shopping. Female respondents preferred both (online and Market) shopping. (See table 4).

There is a no particular source on which buyers trust usually. Choice of platforms differ according to the preference of consumers, Facebook remained on the most common platform as results suggest that half of the males and 44 percent of females chose Facebook followed by A website blog(28 percent males and 22 percent females)(See table 6).

Online reviews are available both in qualitative and quantitative forms. Research Question 2 focuses on respondent's preferences about qualitative and quantitative reviews. Interestingly Female respondents preferred qualitative reviews as compared to quantitative ones (See Table 7a) and in different types of qualitative reviews female respondents used to reading written reviews (reported by 60 percent respondents). Although male respondents (44Percent)also preferred written qualitative reviews but their interest is less than female respondents. Moreover while reading quantitative reviews both male and female respondents liked star rating scale with the same proportion (See table 7c)

Male respondents liked to read reviews related to food but females have far more interested in reading fashion reviews (See table 8).

The focus of Research Question 3 is the credibility of reviewer. Generally reviewer's credibility increases the authenticity of review. But in this regard more than half of the male respondents are unsure (52 percent remain neutral)but female respondents are confident enough (56 percent agreed).

Moreover profile disclosure and the number of followers of the reviewer exert impact on the buying behavior of a consumer. 68 percent females as compared to 42 percent males believed that detailed profile/disclosure makes the reviewer credible. But number of followers did not impress the male followers as 56 percent reported neutral as compared to 48 percent females who agreed with it(See table 9d). This shows females are far more dependent on the media to take buying decision which proves the theory of media dependency((Mancilla, 2014, 11 Nov, p. 1).

Research Question 4 focuses on different factors /elements of product or services websites. Online review readers are not dependent and concern with the content shown on the page but they look for their convenience too. A reader is attracted by the website appearance, variety of reviews available on the page, and how much reviewers are giving different offers like giveaways to make audience engage with them. No male or female answered that it is not very important to make a website attractive. Moreover, 26 percent of males and 46 percent of females also give importance to the contest/giveaway offers. Availability of a variety of product and service reviews also create a traffic on a page. 36 percent males and 30 percent females rate as "important", explains that a variety of different reviews are important.

In answering the Research Question 5 we further examine the impact of reviews. The results have shown that when people read a single negative review of anything, it affects the readers. 34 percent of males and 28 percent of females said "Yes". And it also revealed from the findings that 30 percent of males and 44 percent of females are those who never value that particular product/service after reading a negative review. Being a developing country Pakistan is going through a striving period of technological advancement. So the decisions related to online shopping and developing trust on online reviews still need time to become their regular part of life.

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