THE IMPACT OF REVIEW AND RATING ON CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN ELECTRONIC MARKETPLACES

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Abstract: With the proliferation of e-commerce, online marketplaces have become a dominant platform for consumer purchases. However, the factors driving positive customer experiences in these digital environments remain underexplored. This quantitative study investigates how online reviews and ratings influence customer experience in e-marketplaces. A survey was administered to 389 consumers who had made purchases on e-marketplaces in the past six months. Grounded in literature on online consumer behavior, the survey measured relationships between review quantity, review consistency, reviewer expertise, product/service ratings, and customer experience. The results reveal significantly positive impacts of review quantity, consistency, expertise, and ratings on customer experience. As consumers increasingly rely on peer-generated content for purchase decisions, these findings highlight the need for e-marketplace operators to optimize review and rating systems. By empirically demonstrating how online reviews shape the customer experience, this research provides timely insights for platforms, marketers, and policymakers aiming to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty in digital marketplaces. The study contributes to advancing academic understanding of how user-generated content and marketplace design elements interact to drive positive consumer outcomes.

Key words: e-marketplaces, customer experience, reviews, ratings, consumer behavior

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Introduction

A review encapsulates a consumer's contextual depiction of their encounter with a product or service, encompassing details such as its attributes, advantages, and drawbacks (Zeng et al., 2020). Conversely, a rating encapsulates the consumer's sentiment and overall impression of the product or service by assigning a score within a predefined scale, such as the widely recognized star rating system or a "1 to 5" grading system, where higher scores indicate more favorable user-generated ratings. The emergence of Web 2.0 technologies has enabled consumers to express their perspectives, experiences, and assessments of products and services through online reviews and rating systems. These user-generated appraisals play a pivotal role in shaping the decision-making process of potential buyers, influencing their perceptions, trust, and ultimately, their purchasing behavior within electronic marketplaces (Tom, 2019). Online reviews and ratings, which serve as authentic reflections of consumers' actual experiences and viewpoints, serve as significant and reliable sources of information for consumers when making purchasing decisions (Khoa, 2021). It is evident that both the number of customers posting online reviews and those consulting them for purchase decisions are increasing over time. Nearly 88% of buyers consult online reviews before making purchases, indicating widespread trust in such evaluations. Furthermore, communication through online customer reviews and ratings has a profound impact on consumers' purchase behavior (Cheong et al., 2020).

Numerous e-commerce platforms now provide product ratings and reviews, particularly electronic marketplaces (e-marketplaces). The proliferation of e-marketplaces in recent years has transformed the landscape of consumer engagement by offering unparalleled convenience, extensive product choices, and seamless connections between buyers and sellers across geographical borders (Knezevic et al., 2020). At the core of the success and sustainability of these e-marketplaces lies the concept of customer experience, a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by various factors, with reviews and ratings from fellow consumers being primary among them. While the importance of reviews and ratings in shaping customer experiences is widely recognized, the mechanisms through which they exert their influence remain intricate and multifaceted (Kim & Bang, 2021). Understanding how these evaluative signals impact consumer behavior, satisfaction and loyalty within e-marketplaces is crucial for both scholars and practitioners.

Ratings and reviews wield considerable influence over the decisions of online shoppers. However, previous research has raised questions about their reliability, suggesting that their effectiveness for consumers may be questionable. Critics argue that online ratings and reviews merely reflect the preferences of certain consumers and are not necessarily representative of the entire user population. Zihao et al. (2022) posited that only extremely satisfied or dissatisfied customers are typically inclined to share their opinions through referrals or complaints. Li and Hitt (2008) identified potential bias in consumer reviews, particularly during the early stages of product introduction. Additionally, empirical evidence has indicated that prior ratings, whether positive or negative, can influence subsequent user ratings due to social pressure from other buyers (Aral & Walker, 2012). The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between online reviews, ratings, and customer experience in e-marketplaces. Specifically, we empirically examine how key dimensions of online reviews and ratings, including quantity, consistency, source expertise, and valence, influence customer satisfaction and loyalty intentions. By surveying consumers and analyzing real-world marketplace data, this research aims to advance academic understanding of how user-generated content impacts outcomes in digital marketplaces. The findings will offer practical implications for how e-commerce platforms can leverage peer-generated content to improve customer experience and engender trust. Overall, this study seeks to provide novel evidence on the interplay between reviews, ratings and consumer behavior in online marketplaces.

1. Literature review

Mehrabian and Russell (1974) proposed that consumer responses (approach or avoidance) are determined by interaction between stimulus (organizational or environmental) and organism (consumers – emotional state of pleasure, arousal and dominance). Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) brought experiential perspective and described consumption experience as a phenomenon directed towards the pursuit of fantasies, feelings and fun. They additionally remarked that consumer behavior emerged from a captivating and perpetually intricate interplay between individual organisms and their surroundings. Discussing the aspects of customer value is a dynamic subjective preference encounter. All encounters are essentially

'consumption experiences' and that these interactions constitute the bulk of our activities in both our waking and non-waking hours.

In the realm of online commerce, reviews and ratings constitute pivotal metrics shaping consumer perceptions and behavior. The amount of reviews, the sheer volume of feedback a product or service receives, serves as a barometer of its popularity and appeal (Majali et al., 2022). A larger amount of reviews often implies a larger sample size, potentially offering a more comprehensive perspective for prospective buyers. However, along with quantity, the consistency of reviews carries significant weight. Consistent patterns in feedback across multiple reviews lend credibility to the overall assessment of a product or service, fostering trust and confidence among consumers (Hazarika et al., 2021). Moreover, the expertise of reviewers plays a crucial role in the perceived reliability of their assessments. Reviews from individuals with demonstrated knowledge or experience in the relevant field are often valued more highly, as they provide nuanced insights and critical analysis. Lastly, the product or service rating, typically represented numerically or through a star-based system, offers a succinct summary of its overall quality and user satisfaction (Yang & Tian, 2022). Combined, these dimensions of review and rating form a multifaceted framework that guides consumer decision-making and shapes the marketplace landscape.

Prior research has shown that a higher quantity of reviews tends to increase consumer trust and confidence in the product or service being offered. For instance, studies by Cheong et al. (2020) have found that products with a larger number of reviews tend to sell better and have higher customer ratings. Al-Ja'afreh and Al-Adaileh (2020) suggest that consumers perceive products with more reviews as more reliable and trustworthy, which positively impacts their overall experience in the e-marketplace; hence, this research proposes hypothesis H1:

H1: The review quantity has a positive impact on the customer experience in the e-marketplace.

Previous studies have indicated that consistent patterns in reviews contribute to higher levels of consumer trust and satisfaction. For example, research by Majali et al. (2022) demonstrated that products receiving consistent feedback across multiple reviews are perceived more positively by consumers. This consistency fosters a sense of reliability and authenticity, leading to enhanced customer experience in the e-marketplace (Peng et al., 2024); hence, hypothesis H2 has been proposed:

H2: Review consistency positively impacts the customer experience in the e-marketplace.

Existing literature suggests that reviews from knowledgeable and experienced reviewers carry more weight and influence over consumer perceptions. Studies by Majali et al. (2022) have found that reviews from experts or individuals with relevant expertise are perceived as more credible and helpful by consumers. This indicates that reviewer expertise positively impacts customer experience in the e-marketplace by providing valuable insights and guidance (Naujoks & Benkenstein, 2020; Perez et al., 2022); hence, this study has proposed hypothesis H3:

H3: Reviewer expertise has a positive impact on the customer experience in the e-marketplace.

Research has consistently demonstrated that higher product or service ratings correlate with improved customer experience and satisfaction. For instance, studies by Yang and Tian (2022) reveal that products with higher ratings tend to attract more consumer interest and generate greater sales volume. Rahman et al. (2024) suggest that positive ratings contribute positively to customer experience in the e-marketplace, influencing purchasing decisions and perceptions of product quality. This study has proposed the last hypothesis:

H4: The product/service rating positively affects the customer experience in the e-marketplace

2. Research method

This study uses a survey-based research approach to examine the impact of review and rating dimensions on customer experience in an e-marketplace. The survey instrument is designed to collect quantitative data regarding participants' perceptions and behaviors related to online reviews and ratings. The survey is administered online, allowing for convenient and widespread data collection from a diverse pool of respondents. The participants in this study consist of online shoppers who have made purchases from e-marketplaces in the past six months. A purposive sampling technique is used to recruit participants, ensuring that individuals with different demographics, shopping habits and levels of online experience are represented in the sample. The survey interviewed 400 clients after 389 of the screening questions were deemed eligible for further research. Information on respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Sample Description

Characteristic		N	%
Gender	Male	165	42.4
	Female	224	57.6
Age	< 23	109	28.1
	23 – 35	134	34.4
	> 35	146	37.5
Occupation	Student	78	20.1
	Office Worker	111	28.5
	Businessman	103	26.5
	Housewife	97	24.9
Income per month	< 300 USD	110	28.3
	300 – 700 USD	158	40.6
	> 700 USD	121	31.1

The survey instrument will include validated scales and items to measure the key constructs of interest, including review quantity, review consistency, reviewer expertise, product/service rating, and customer experience. Likert-type scales will be used to assess participants' agreement with statements related to these constructs, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (3). Additionally, demographic questions will be included to capture relevant participant characteristics such as age, gender, income and frequency of online shopping. The review quantity - RQ (Kang & Kim, 2006; Zhang et al., 2014), and product/service rating – PSR (Filieri, 2015; Filieri & McLeay, 2013) are measured by 4 items; 3 items are used to measure review consistency - RC (Cheung et al., 2012; Luo et al., 2015) and review expertise - RE (Fang, 2014; Folse et al., 2013). The customer experience – CE, is customer's cognition which is measured by 3 items proposed by Tyrväinen et al. (2020).

Upon completion of data collection, the collected survey responses will be subjected to rigorous data processing and analysis by SPSS 25.0 software. Initially, the data will be cleaned to identify and correct any inconsistencies or missing values. Subsequently, descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, and frequencies, will be computed to summarize the distribution of responses and participant characteristics. In order to test the hypotheses proposed in the study, inferential statistical techniques, such as correlation analysis and regression analysis, will be employed to examine the relationships between review and rating dimensions and customer experience in the e-marketplace.

3. Result

First, the internal consistency reliability of the survey instrument is assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The results indicate high levels of reliability of the constructs under investigation. In Table 2, the Cronbach's alpha values, ranging from 0.780 to 0.888, exceed the threshold of 0.70 for all constructs, suggesting that the items in each construct reliably measure the intended dimensions (Hair et al., 2019). The corrected Item-Total Correlation values range from 0.577 to 0.824, indicating strong internal consistency among the survey items.

Table 2.
Cronbach's Alpha result

Item	Cronbach's Alpha	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted
RQ1		0.664	0.779
RQ2	0.828	0.682	0.770
RQ3		0.642	0.788
RQ4		0.630	0.794
PSR1		0.660	0.833
PSR2	0.856	0.735	0.801
PSR3		0.713	0.811
PSR4		0.689	0.821
RC1		0.702	0.793
RC2	0.845	0.635	0.868
RC3		0.824	0.697
RE1		0.769	0.851
RE2	0.888	0.782	0.840
RE3		0.797	0.829
CE1		0.577	0.758
CE2	0.78	0.671	0.642
CE3		0.639	0.691

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to explore the underlying factor structure of the survey instrument and identify any potential patterns or clusters among the measured constructs (both of independent and dependent variables). The EFA results revealed in Table 3, indicate that the survey items loaded on distinct factors were consistent with the theoretical framework. Factor loadings exceeding 0.5 were considered significant, demonstrating adequate convergent validity of the measurement model (Hair et al., 2019). Additionally, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy exceeded 0.5 and sig. = 0.000, indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis.

Table 3.
EFA result

Items	Independent Variable				Dependent Variable
PSR3	0.822				
PSR4	0.801				
PSR2	0.734				
PSR1	0.672				
RQ2		0.828			
RQ3		0.756			
RQ1		0.750			
RQ4		0.679			
RE2			0.856		
RE3			0.856		
RE1			0.854		
RC3				0.855	
RC1				0.840	
RC2				0.757	
CE2					0.864
CE3					0.843
CE1					0.804
KMO	0.875 (sig. = 0.000)				0.694 (sig. = 0.000)
Eigenvalues	6.164	1.705	1.390	1.083	2.103
Cumulative %	44.025	56.202	66.133	73.871	70.093

The regression results presented in Table 4 indicate significant relationships between the independent variables (review and rating dimensions) and the dependent variable (customer experience in the e-marketplace).

The coefficient for Review Quantity (RQ) was positive (B = 0.212) and statistically significant (t-value = 5.280, p < 0.001), with a beta coefficient of 0.209; hence, hypothesis H1 was accepted. Similarly, the coefficient for Review Consistency (RC) was positive (B = 0.183) and statistically significant (t-value = 5.416, p < 0.001), with a beta coefficient of 0.213; therefore, hypothesis H2 was accepted. The coefficient for Reviewer Expertise (RE) was positive (B = 0.248) and highly significant (t-value = 8.475, p < 0.001), with a beta coefficient of 0.320; consequently, hypothesis H3 was supported. Finally, the coefficient for Product/Service Rating (PSR) was positive (B = 0.231) and statistically significant (t-value = 6.408, p < 0.001), with a beta coefficient of 0.270. This implied that higher product/service ratings were associated with greater customer experience in the e-marketplace. Hence, the hypothesis related to Product/Service Rating (H4) was accepted.

Overall, the regression model explains a 61.3% of substantial proportion of the variance in customer experience (R^2 = 0.613). The Durbin-Watson statistic (1.792) indicates no significant autocorrelation in the residuals. Additionally, the F-statistic (F = 151.916, p < 0.001) confirms the overall significance of the regression model. Moreover, all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values arere below the threshold of 10, indicating that multicollinearity is not a significant concern in the regression model. This result suggests that the independent variables are not highly correlated with each other, allowing for accurate estimation of the regression coefficients and reliable interpretation of the results.

Table 4.
Regression result

	B	Beta	t-value	VIF	r(CE)	Hypothesis	Result
Constant	0.206		1.494				
RQ	0.212	0.209	5.280	1.550	0.584	H1	Accepted
RC	0.183	0.213	5.416	1.536	0.561	H2	Accepted
RE	0.248	0.320	8.475	1.417	0.613	H3	Accepted
PSR	0.231	0.270	6.408	1.759	0.648	H4	Accepted
R^2 = 0.613, Durbin-Watson = 1.792							
F = 151.916 (sig. = 0.000)							

4. Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the impact of review and rating dimensions on customer experience in e-marketplaces. Through regression analysis, this study tests four hypotheses regarding the relationships between review quantity, review consistency, reviewer expertise, product/service rating, and customer experience. The results reveal significant positive associations between all independent variables and customer experience, aligning with prior studies while contributing to a nuanced understanding of the existing literature.

Firstly, findings demonstrate that an increase in review quantity positively influences customer experience in e-marketplaces. Consumers tend to perceive products with a higher number of reviews as more reliable and trustworthy, leading to enhanced satisfaction and confidence in their purchasing decisions (Cheong et al., 2020). The proliferation of user-generated content in e-marketplaces has made review quantity a critical factor influencing consumer behavior, highlighting the importance of

platforms facilitating ample opportunities for customers to share their opinions (Al-Ja'afreh & Al-Adaileh, 2020).

Our results support the notion that review consistency contributes to improved customer experience, corroborating the findings of Peng et al. (2024). Consistent patterns in reviews foster a sense of reliability and authenticity among consumers, mitigating uncertainty and facilitating informed decision-making. Platforms that actively manage and monitor review consistency can enhance consumer trust and satisfaction, ultimately leading to positive outcomes for both buyers and sellers in the e-marketplace ecosystem (Majali et al., 2022).

The significant positive relationship between reviewer expertise and customer experience echoes the findings of Majali et al. (2022). Reviews from knowledgeable and experienced individuals are perceived as more credible and valuable by consumers, guiding their purchasing decisions with greater confidence (Naujoks & Benkenstein, 2020). E-marketplaces that prioritize the identification and promotion of expert reviewers can cultivate a culture of trust and expertise, enriching the overall user experience and fostering long-term engagement and loyalty (Perez et al., 2022).

This study has confirmed that higher product/service ratings are associated with enhanced customer experience in e-marketplaces. Positive ratings serve as powerful signals of product quality and user satisfaction, influencing consumer perceptions and purchase intentions (Rahman et al., 2024). However, it is important to note that the impact of ratings may vary depending on factors such as product category and user preferences (Yang & Tian, 2022). E-marketplaces must prioritize the authenticity and reliability of ratings to ensure they effectively serve as indicators of customer experience.

Conclusion

Research's findings align with and build upon the existing body of research on the role of review and rating dimensions in shaping the customer experience in e-marketplaces. By comparing the results of our regression model with prior studies, several key insights emerge:

Firstly, the consistent positive relationships observed across all review and rating dimensions underscore their collective importance in influencing the customer experience. While previous studies have examined these dimensions separately, our study provides a comprehensive assessment of

their combined impact, highlighting the multifaceted nature of consumer decision-making in e-marketplaces. Secondly, the robustness of our regression model, as indicated by significant coefficients and low VIF values, strengthens the validity and reliability of the findings. By using rigorous statistical analysis techniques, our study contributes to the methodological rigor of the literature, increasing confidence in the conclusions drawn. Furthermore, our findings offer practical implications for e-marketplace operators, marketers and policymakers. By understanding the various contributions of review quantity, review consistency, reviewer expertise and product/service rating to customer experience, stakeholders can devise targeted strategies to optimize user engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty.

Despite the contribution of our study, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The cross-sectional nature of the data limits our ability to infer causality, warranting further longitudinal research to examine temporal dynamics. Additionally, the study focuses primarily on quantitative analysis, necessitating future research to incorporate qualitative insights and explore the underlying motivations and perceptions driving consumer behavior in e-marketplaces. In conclusion, our study advances understanding of the impact of review and rating dimensions on customer experience in e-marketplaces, providing theoretical insights and practical implications for stakeholders. By building upon prior research and employing robust methodology, we contribute valuable knowledge to the evolving landscape of online commerce, paving the way for future research endeavors in this area.

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