

The Impact of Online Consumer Reviews on Purchase Intentions: A Study of Cosmetic Product Buyers on E-Commerce Platforms in Nepal *

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Abstract

This study aims to assess the effects of online consumer reviews on the cosmetic purchasing behaviour in Nepal, based on 384 responses from individuals aged 15 to 60. Correlation analysis revealed positive associations (moderate, weak, or strong) with customer purchasing plans. Regression analysis helped determine the alignment of variables using P-values. The outcome revealed that review quality and quantity have a strong relationship with purchasing intentions, thus supporting the hypothesis. In contrast, source credibility and valence did not show a significant impact. Influencers, such as bloggers and celebrities, played a mediating role, affecting purchase decisions through their critiques. This underscores the importance of positive reviews, and the trust customers place in influencers. For marketing companies, it is crucial to carefully select brand influencers to effectively leverage potential customers' buying decisions.

Keywords: cosmetics products, influencer, online reviews, purchase intention, source credibility

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INTRODUCTION AND STUDY OBJECTIVES

Digitalisation has revolutionised consumer behaviour, with electronic word of mouth (eWOM) largely replacing traditional methods (Beneke et al., 2015). Influencers, who act as opinion leaders on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Snapchat, have an important part in creating buyers' insight and habits (Ouvrein et al., 2021; Saima & Khan,

2020). They offer a significant return on investment, generating \$6.50 for every marketing dollar spent, with Instagram being particularly effective (Freberg et al., 2011). Businesses benefit greatly from influencers, who are often hired to boost sales (Rana, 2018).

In contrast to influencers, online consumer reviews provide unbiased feedback from everyday users through various electronic media (Chen et al., 2011; Zhu

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& Zhang, 2010). These reviews are crucial for reassurance (Cui et al., 2014) and often viewed as trustworthy than manufacturer claims (Nieto et al., 2014), which influence purchasing intentions by offering insights and risks associated to products (Chakraborty, 2019; Robertson & Gatignon, 1986; Wu et al., 2021). Google is a major portal for such reviews, with many consumers relying on them to make informed decisions (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Howarth, 2023; Yin et al., 2021).

According to Howarth (2023), 93% of consumption decision taken by rely upon internet comment/revies, with varying levels of trust in third-party review sites. Nearly, a half of the US adults consider online comments and reviews before shopping (Yin et al., 2021). Kevin et at. (2020) found review quality had a significant impact on online reviews.

Previous research works focused on five aspects of online reviews and their impact on purchase intention, with mixed results. Sutanto and Aprianingsih (2016) suggest incorporating additional variables and targeting mature females with higher spending patterns, and other factors influencing consumer decisions through online reviews remain untested. A pilot survey indicated that consumers are attracted to new products tried by influencers, whose perceptions significantly affect purchase intentions by boosting trust and making it easier to find products and services.

There is a notable gap in research in Nepal on the relationship between online reviews and purchase intentions for cosmetics,

particularly with influencers as a mediating variable. No in-depth study has yet explored this topic. Sthapit et al. (2021) explored the influence of online reviews and brand publicity on social media platforms on customer value creation and purchase intentions in the context of hospitality sector in Nepal but did not extend their study to cosmetic products.

Belanche et al. (2021) and Zhang et al. (2020) noted the possible limitless relationship between influencers, online reviews, and youthful consumer buying behaviour, recommending further study. Therefore, this study aims to understand how buying decision get affected by online reviews for cosmetic products in Nepal by assessing consumer attitudes towards these reviews.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section includes both a literature review and hypotheses created based on the literature review.

Source Credibility on Purchase Intention

Consumer perception of data source trustworthiness, known as source credibility, is crucial for recognising brand worth (Cheung et al., 2008; López & Sicilia, 2014). Source credibility significantly affects purchase intention, with higher credibility leading to higher buying intentions and lower credibility resulting in lower buying intentions (Bataineh, 2015; Sutanto & Aprianingsih, 2016; Schepers, 2015). However, electronic word of mouth may be perceived as less trustworthy than traditional word of mouth, potentially harming purchasing decisions due to

difficulties in recognising the source's reliability and clarity (Park et al., 2007).

H₁: Source credibility of online consumer review has a significant effect on purchase intention towards cosmetics products.

Review Quality on Purchase Intention

Customer perceptions about quality vary because each review and logical justifications which significantly impacts purchasing decisions (Park et al., 2007). Easily interpretable information is more effective in influencing buying intentions than sentimental and individualised information (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984). Bataineh (2015) found that clear information helps consumers evaluate products, leading to higher buying intentions.

H₂: Review quality of online consumer review has a significant effect on purchase intention towards cosmetics products

Review Quantity on Purchase Intention

Customers are drawn to products with more comments, according to Lee and Youn (2009), since a wealth of reviews offers useful information for decision-making. According to Bataineh (2015), there is a positive correlation between the quantity of reviews and the intention to buy Schepers (2015), and consumers use the number of reviews to assess the popularity and quality of a product, which increases purchase rates and helps future buyers (Park et al., 2007).

H₃: Review quantity of online consumer review has a significant effect on

purchase intention towards cosmetics products

Review Valence on Purchase Intention

Lopez and Sicilia (2014) suggest that customers evaluate products by combining positive and negative comments. Cheung and Thadani (2012); Park and Lee (2009) concluded that valence is persuasive because customers base their buying choices on types of comment. A greater number of positive reviews compared to negative ones leads to increased brand purchases (Doh & Hwang, 2009; Lin & Xu, 2017). Good reviews lead to better product attitudes and expectations, whereas negative comments have the opposite effect (Floyd et al., 2014; Purnawirawan et al., 2015). Mishra (2021) found review valence and relevance had no influence on purchase intention.

H₄: Review valence of online consumer review has a significant effect on purchase intention towards cosmetics products.

Online Reviews on Purchase Intention

Online reviews delineate personal feelings about a product and are viewed from a normative viewpoint (Chen et al., 2011). Favourable detailed comments aids buyer comprehension while visual reviews attract young people to rise purchase intentions (Zhong et al., 2021). Positive feedback enhances the purchasing trust of Generation Y and Z, who value product usability and provide feedback after use (Wang et al., 2020).

Positive frequent reviews generally enhance a product's reputation Luan (2021), negative reviews if managed well, can turn into positive advertising (Pantano & Corvello,

2013). Over time, the awareness generated by negative reviews can result in a positive impact, especially for less popular brands (Luan et al., 2021)

Sutanto and Aprianingsih (2016) examined the effect of online consumer reviews on the buying purpose of premium cosmetics in Indonesia. Their multiple regression analysis revealed that review quality was the most influential factor. Similarly, Schepers (2015) found that independent variables positively impact consumer buying decisions. Valence had the highest influence, while volume had the lowest.

Influencer on Purchase Intention

Ouvrein et al. (2021) revealed that influencers meet target audience marketing demands by providing product suggestions. Brands use influencers to reach consumers as third-party endorsers, share product information and promote on platforms Freberg et al. (2011) and ensures accuracy (Amoateng & Poku, 2012). Additionally, influencers provide their fans with authentic product demonstrations (Tapinfluence, 2017).

Given this trend, companies actively seek endorsements on all social media platforms. Over 70% of online buyers believe influencers and reports that to encourage influencer about 50% firms have increased their spending (Digital Marketing Institute, 2021).

Mediating Role of Influencer

Young people often rely on celebrities and influencers Belanche et al. (2021) whilst their recommendation increase engagement on online purchase (Gazi, 1970). Influencer social identity significantly impacts young

people's purchasing behaviour. As a result, companies strategically choose influencers on various social networks according to their social status (Chopra et al., 2021).

Influencers provide valuable information about products Saima and Khan, (2020); people following influencer indirectly connects with brands, creating genuine shopping experiences (Castillo & Fernández, 2019). Higher product prices increase customer risk, and reviews alone are often insufficient to eliminate consumer uncertainty so, influencers come handy (Veirman et al., 2017).

Magano et al. (2022) found that when digital influencers connect with fans' experiences, they gain recognition, likeability, and credibility, which reduces customer risk and uncertainty during purchases. This reliability positively influences buying behaviour. In a market with many similar products, influencers play a crucial role in differentiating items. This aligns with recent studies showing the impact of celebrity endorsements (Satria et al., 2019), the role of brand familiarity in boosting social media engagement and purchase intention (McClure & Seock, 2020), and the influence of brand attitudes on purchase intention (Torres et al., 2019).

H₅: There is significant mediation of source credibility on relationship between influencer and purchase intension towards cosmetics products.

H₆: There is significant mediation of review quality on relationship between influencer and purchase intension towards cosmetics products.

H₇: There is significant mediation of review valence on relationship between influencer and purchase intension towards cosmetics products.

H₈: There is significant mediation of review quantity on relationship between influencer and purchase Intension towards cosmetics products.

Theoretical Framework

Consumer buying behaviour has been widely studied to understand the driving motives (Chen et al., 2010; Hussain & Ali, 2015). Theories like the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Reasoned Action Madden et al. (1992) explain how consumers act differently in various marketplaces. These theories link influencers and online reviews to customer purchase intentions, highlighting their impact on consumer behaviour.

Ajzen’s TPB (1991), identifies behavioural intentions as the strongest predictors of

actual behaviour, influenced by viewpoint, subjective rules, and Perceived Behaviour Control. PBC refers to the perceived state while doing the activity, expanding the Theory of Reasoned Action by incorporating PBC as a potential predictor of behavioural intention (Posthuma & Dworkin, 2000). TRA, on the other hand, focuses on how attitudes and subjective norms influence behavioural intentions, which in turn affect actual behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). According to TRA, consumer decisions are based on attitudes and normative views (Madden et al., 1992). A consumer’s attitude towards a product is shaped by various contextual factors. Normative social ideas also influence the intention to engage in a behaviour. For example, a consumer might have a positive attitude towards ordering a drink before dinner, but their decision will also be influenced by the perceived social appropriateness of the situation and their desire to comply to these norms (Hawkins et al., 2001).

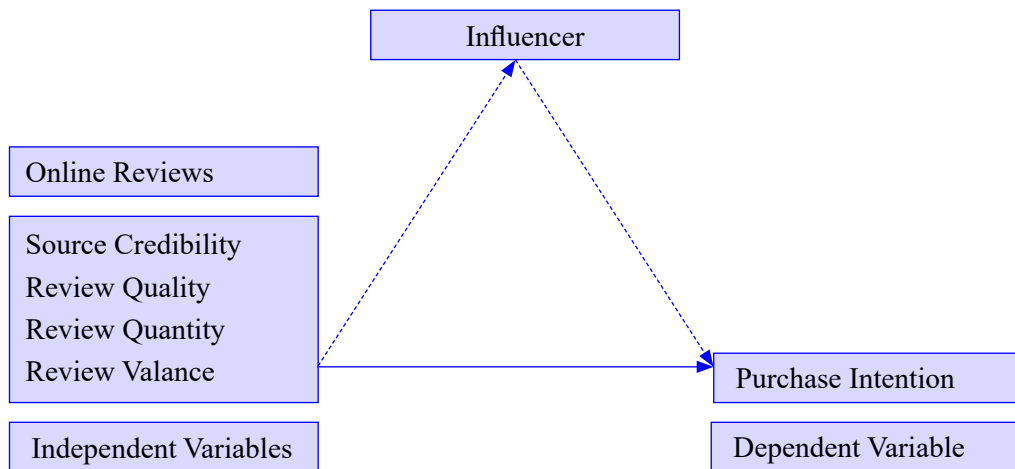


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Note. Sutanto & Aprianingsih (2016), Dwidienawati et al. (2020) and Mohammad (2022).

Table 1
Study Variable Measurement Sources

Constructs	Source of Measurement
Source Credibility	4 Items Were adopted from Sutanto & Aprianingsih (2016)
Review Quality	6 items adopted from Dwidienawati et al. (2020) and Sutanto & Aprianingsih (2016)
Review quantity	4 Items Were adopted from Sutanto & Aprianingsih (2016)
Review Valance	4 Items Were adopted from Sutanto & Aprianingsih (2016)
Purchase Intention	5 items adopted from Dwidienawati et al. (2020) and Sutanto & Aprianingsih (2016)
Influencer	4 Items were adopted from Mohammad (2022)

Note. Field survey, 2023

Table 2
Reliability Analysis

Variables	No. of Statements	Cronbach's Alpha
Source Credibility	4	0.792
Review Quality	6	0.788
Review Valance	4	0.725
Review Quantity	4	0.742
Influencer	4	0.730
Purchase Intension	5	0.765

Note. Field survey, 2023

RESEARCH METHOD

The research techniques employed for this study is outlined below.

Respondents and Procedure

This study used descriptive research design to comprehend the effect of influencer and online reviews on cosmetics purchase intention and probability sampling for practical considerations like time constraints and resource limitations. Convenience sampling method was used to gather responses from readily accessible participants via Google Forms- closed-ended questionnaire. A pilot test was performed with 20 participants to assess the

questionnaire's reliability, with exceeding Cronbach's alpha (0.7) for all variables, ensuring no changes were needed in questionnaire.

This study targeted individuals aged 15 to 60, as they are the primary users of cosmetics and capable of online ordering. Due to unknown population variability, Cochran's (1977) formula was used to determine a minimum sample size, assuming utmost variability ($p=0.5$) and a 95% confidence interval with $\pm 5\%$ precision, resulting in 384 sample size. Respondents were categorised by gender, marital status, profession, and geographic location to capture diverse engagement levels. This approach aimed to

Table 3
Demographic Profile of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	148	38.5
	Female	236	61.5
Age	15-30	223	58.1
	30-35	110	28.6
	45-55	51	13.3
Marital status	Married	180	46.9
	Unmarried	204	53.1
Profession	Student	91	23.7
	Housewife	45	11.7
	Entry-level	103	26.8
	Mid-level	86	22.4
	Senior Level	59	15.4

Note. Field survey, 2023

include a representative sample of cosmetics users across Nepal.

The questionnaire first part includes demographic information while second part included 27 close-ended questions: 23 for both variables adapted from [Dwidienawati et al. \(2020\)](#); Sutanto and Aprianingsih (2016), and 4 -questions on influencers from [Arief et al. \(2023\)](#).

Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha is used before analysis to check reliability among questions. According to [Guilford \(1965\)](#), higher Cronbach's alpha scores suggest more internal coherence.

Table 2 shows Cronbach's alpha is more than 0.70 reflecting are reliable and consistent to measure the respective variable.

Measurement Scale

The linkages have been shown by previous investigations, influenced the development

of conceptual framework (Figure 1). Since, measurement items have been re-validated for use in the Nepalese context, all items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating "strongly disagree" and 5 indicating "strongly agree"

Data Measurement Model

Analysis Tools: For analysis, SPSS with various tests like ANOVA and SOBEL TEST was used to examine the link and the effects among the variables.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

For this study the results part is broken down into three sections: descriptive analysis, correlation and regression testing and lastly mediating analysis.

Profile of the Respondent

Table 3 shows that 51.8 percent of respondents viewed premium cosmetic reviews almost thrice indicating awareness

Table 4
Purchasing Pattern of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Amount spend on premium cosmetics product in a month.	Less than Rs 1000	95	24.7
	Rs.1000 -Rs 5000	92	24
	Rs.5000- Rs.10000	77	20.1
	Rs.10000- Rs.15000	57	14.8
	Rs. 20000 above	63	16.4
Premium Cosmetics Product buying frequency	Once in a month	165	43
	Once in 3 months	109	28.4
	Once in 5 Months	66	17.2
	Once in more than 5 months	44	11.5
View of reviews before buying Premium cosmetics products.	1 to 3	199	51.8
	3 to 6	92	24
	Above 6	93	24.2
Platform use	Web site Ecommerce	96	25
	You Tube	82	21.4
	Social media	103	26.8
	Blog/forum	28	7.3
	Peers/Family	75	19.5

Note. Field survey, 2023

and interest in online reviews. Social media is highly preferred platform by 103 individuals, and TikTok is particularly dominant. 216 respondents checked reviews before every purchase to identify the best brand. Due to the higher cost of cosmetics, 134 respondents preferred recommendations from friends and family, followed by endorsements from celebrities and heavily advertised products.

Descriptive Statistics of the Variable

Table 5 shows 3.66 is the highest mean of review valence and the highest standard deviation is of source credibility. The lowest mean is 3.06 of review quantity and lowest standard deviation is 1.15 of review valence

KMO'S and Bartlett and Collinearity test

The KMOS value of 0.797, as shown in Table 7, is greater than 0.60, indicating that

the sample data are suitable for pursuing the factor analysis and sufficient to show the relationship between the factors.

Table 6 demonstrates VIF values greater than 1 indicates some correlation with other variables, but all the values are below 5 which is generally considered acceptable and indicate that multicollinearity is not a serious problem in this model. Review Quality (1.501) which is highest amongst all indicates a low correlation with other variables.

Correlation Analysis

Table 7 shows the correlation of source credibility with purchase intention is +0.294**, indicating a positive but moderate relationship; this means credibility increases, purchase intention tends to increase at the 0.01 level. Review Quality, Review Quantity is showing

Table 5.
Total Descriptive Statistics of Variables

	Mean	SD
Source Credibility (SC)	3.14	1.26
Review Quality (RQ)	3.14	1.20
Review Valance (RV)	3.66	1.15
Review Quantity (RQN)	3.06	1.22
Influencer (I)	3.16	1.20
Purchase Intension (PI)	3.19	1.20

Note. Field survey, 2023

Table 6
KMO'S and Bartlett test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure		0.797
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	537.90
	Df	15
	Sig.	0.000

Note. Field survey, 2023

positive and strong relation as compared to source credibility; suggest higher number of reviews is strongly associated with higher purchase intention. The correlation of review valence with purchase intention is +0.262**, indicating a positive but weaker relationship; more positive reviews are somewhat associated with higher purchase intention whilst statistically significant relationship.

Influencer has strong positive correlation (+0.548) with purchase intention, indicating that influencers like bloggers and celebrities significantly boost purchase intention, and this relationship is statistically significant.

Additionally, the table shows the correlations between the independent variables themselves: Source Credibility has mod-

erate positive correlations with Review Quality (+0.506**) and Review Valance (+0.370). Review Quality has moderate positive correlations with Review Qvantity (+0.388**) and Influencer (+0.355). Review Valance has weaker positive correlations with Review Quantity (+0.255) and Influencer (+0.214). Review Quantity has a moderate positive correlation with Influencer (+0.428).

Regression Analysis

According to Table 10, the dependent and independent variables have a strong positive association, as indicated by the R value of 0.614. The independent variables included in the regression model account for 37.7% of the variability in the dependent variable (purchase intention), as indicated by the R Square of 0.377. A larger R Square value indicates that the model fits the data better

Table 7
Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Model	VIF
Source Credibility	1.490
Review Quality	1.501
Review Valance	1.201
Review Quantity	1.369
Influencer	1.306

Note. Field survey, 2023

Table 8
Correlation Analysis

Correlations	Purchase Intention	Source Credibility	Review Quality	Review Valance	Review Quantity	Influencer
Purchase Intention	1					
Source Credibility	+0.294**	1				
Review Quality	+0.393**	+0.506**	1			
Review Valance	+0.262**	+0.370**	+0.298**	1		
Review Quantity	+0.427**	+0.344**	+0.388**	+0.255**	1	
Influencer	+0.548**	+0.300**	+0.355**	+0.214**	+0.428**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note. Field survey, 2023

Table 8 demonstrates the effectiveness and significance of the model employed. A notable linear association is in between the variables which is shown by a significance level of 0.000. Furthermore, F value 45.82 demonstrated model's effectiveness.

Sobel Test

Table 10 T-value indicates the strength of the mediation effect. Hence, Review quantity has the higher T-value which suggest a stronger mediation effect. Since, all variables have P value (0.000) lesser than (0.05) which indicates that the mediation effect is statistically significant.

Discussion

In the earlier findings from [Schepers \(2015\)](#) and [Sutanto & Aprianingsih \(2016\)](#), The author discovered factors such as source credibility, review quality, quantity, and review valance significantly and positively influence buying intention. However, this study rebukes the statement that source credibility shows any impact on purchase intension which demonstrate that buyers people don't count on reviews in digital platform due to changing trust level among consumers due to fake and biased content for popularity. The absence of strict regulations and standards for online reviews might be another issue in Nepal for

Table 9
Summary of Regression Analysis

Variable	Beta	t-statistics	p-value	VIF
Constant	3.268	3.363	0.001	-
Source Credibility (SC)	0.006	0.104	0.917	1.490
Review Quality (RQ)	0.134	3.143	0.002	1.501
Review Valance (RV)	0.106	1.897	0.059	1.201
Review Quantity (RQN)	0.202	3.630	0.000	1.369
Influencer (I)	0.480	8.608	0.000	1.306
R-square	0.377			
Adj. R-square	0.369			
F-Statistics	45.82			
	(0.000)			

Dependent variable: Purchase intention

Note. Field survey, 2023

Table 10
Sobel Test for Mediation

Sobel test	T value	Test statistics	P-value
Source Credibility	6.144	5.477	0.000
Review Quality	7.416	6.503	0.000
Review Valance	4.287	4.040	0.000
Review Quantity	9.258	7.349	0.000

Note. Field survey, 2023

consumer distrust. Words of mouth carry more weight than the general sentiment of online reviews so, review valence had no obvious impact on purchasing intention. on cosmetics because they could distinguish between useful and useless product. Consumers might rely more on trusted sources and influencers rather than the overall positivity or negativity of reviews in Nepal like [Mishra \(2021\)](#). Other studies also have same outcome regarding valence like [Cheung and Thadani \(2012\)](#); [Pantano and Corvello \(2013\)](#). In contrast, review quality and review quantity showed

a significant relationship with Purchase intention. This matches with the findings of [Schepers \(2015\)](#); [Sutanto and Aprianingsih \(2016\)](#) and [Kevin et al. \(2020\)](#).

Moreover, [Magano et al. \(2022\)](#) found that the relationship between perceived credibility and competence, reliability, similarity, and familiarity with purchasing habit is fully intervened by attitudes toward influencers. In contrast, [Rana \(2018\)](#) found that Celebrity endorsements on Facebook have minimal impact, and word-of-mouth is valued by consumers strongly.

The key finding of this study centres on uncovering the significantly strong mediating effect of influencer on online reviews parameters and purchase intention. The findings match with [Zhang et al. \(2020\)](#) and [Markethub \(2016\)](#) studies that any items advertised by influencer triggers individuals buying trait differently.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In Nepal, while online shopping is not new, the trend of buying cosmetics online has surged as both Male and Female both use and purchase the cosmetics products. It is crucial to understand what drives these purchases and how influencers shape the market. This study offers important idea into how various characteristics of online reviews affect purchase plan. It highlights which factors of online reviews or influencers enhance the purchasing behaviour of cosmetics consumers. The findings indicate that review quality and quantity significantly impact buying behaviour, while review valence and source credibility do not. This suggests that respondents may not find the credibility of the source as reliable indicators. Instead, they focus more on the detailed quality and quantity of reviews. Additionally, the study shows that influencers mediate the relationship between review factors and purchase intentions. Influencers play a dominant role in affecting consumers' buying decisions which answers second research question about the mediating role of influencers. The research aimed to assess how online reviews and influencers impact consumers' decisions to buy makeup products online.

Implications

By applying the theories like TRA and TRP, this study stated the fact that amount, attitude and quality of reviews, trustworthiness of the source, the influence of the reviewer strongly modify the buying behaviour of an individual. Businesses build their digital marketing blueprint on these basic standards. Digital Marketing will Perform well in Nepal when trust lies on local influencer and their marketing strategy. For instance, advertisement related to men cosmetic products are advertised by celebs which helped people to correlate and the ratio of male using cosmetic product grew initially. Similarly, provided example reveals that people intend to seek influencers' help to buy expensive products. Different arrangement includes enhancing smooth shopping experience through updated website/apps with credit cards and quality products, focusing on quality of products and positive large volume of reviews helps to increase trust among the e-commerce site and buyer. These techniques aid in decision-making, determining ideal ways to market a product, and mitigating risks in marketing plans. They help achieve success across various market environments by applying the 7Ps framework.

To market a product and promote websites effectively, a business needs to regularly update online shopping platforms for smooth transactions, choose reputable influencers to endorse the brand, and manage feedback by removing negative comments and improving systems

Regarding the influencers' positive role, one tends to ignore the negative impact seen on

Nepalese younger consumers who are more impressionable audience. Young fans often view influencers as role models, which can lead to impulsive buying decisions based on influencer endorsements. Future

studies should examine the long-term consequences of influencers on purchasing option and how Generations Y and Z's perceptions is affected by online reviews and endorsements.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declared having no conflict of interest in the research work.

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