

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR- 57023

Title: Online Review Credibility and Consumer Trust in E-Commerce: Insights from Tier-2 Cities of Madhya Pradesh.

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision.

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality	✓			
Techn. Quality		✓		
Clarity	✓			
Significance	✓			

Reviewer Name: Dr. Bishwajit Rout

Reviewer's Comment for Publication.

(To be published with the manuscript in the journal)

The reviewer is requested to provide a brief comment (3-4 lines) highlighting the significance, strengths, or key insights of the manuscript. This comment will be Displayed in the journal publication alongside with the reviewers name.

- Significance:** This research contributes to understanding trust formation mechanisms in emerging digital markets and extends review credibility literature into India's Tier-2 city context. By integrating credibility dimensions, digital literacy, and trust outcomes, the study offers context-sensitive evidence useful for scholars of consumer behavior, platform governance, and digital commerce expansion in developing economies.
- Strength:** The manuscript demonstrates strong contextual relevance, integrates established theoretical frameworks, and employs a structured empirical model using SEM. The inclusion of moderation analysis and city-level comparisons enriches interpretation. The practical orientation toward platform design, review systems, and consumer trust development increases the study's applicability and managerial usefulness.
- Key Insight:** The central insight is that consumers in Tier-2 cities do not passively accept online reviews; instead, they actively evaluate informativeness, expertise, and visual authenticity before extending trust to platforms. Digital literacy alters how credibility cues are processed, suggesting that trust-building strategies in emerging markets must accommodate heterogeneous consumer capabilities.

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The paper titled “*Online Review Credibility and Consumer Trust in E-Commerce: Insights from Tier-2 Cities of Madhya Pradesh.*” examines how online review credibility influences consumer trust in e-commerce among 412 shoppers in Madhya Pradesh’s Tier-2 cities (Indore, Bhopal, Gwalior, Jabalpur). Drawing on Source Credibility Theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model, it finds review informativeness ($\beta=0.48$) and reviewer expertise ($\beta=0.41$) as strongest predictors of credibility, which strongly drives trust ($\beta=0.67$). Visual authenticity is notably important, with digital literacy moderating effects. Robust SEM analysis supports actionable insights for platforms targeting emerging markets, though cross-sectional design and regional focus limit broader generalizability.

Suggestions for Improvement:

1. Strengthen justification for selecting Madhya Pradesh Tier-2 cities through empirical evidence and contextual indicators.
2. Integrate current scholarly literature instead of relying heavily on industry narratives and market projections.
3. Explain practical significance separately from theoretical contribution and define expected academic advancement.
4. Clarify whether trust is conceptualized as outcome or mediating construct consistently.
5. Critically compare contradictory findings and explain contextual differences across emerging market environments.
6. Strengthen conceptual integration among credibility dimensions, trust mechanisms, and purchase outcomes.
7. Explain why digital literacy moderates’ credibility effects using clearer behavioral mechanisms.
8. Report evidence supporting measurement equivalence across online and offline respondents.
9. Discuss practical significance alongside statistical significance for stronger managerial interpretation.
10. Differentiate theoretical interpretation from speculative managerial conclusions and improve evidence alignment.
11. Separate managerial recommendations from empirical conclusions to improve scientific neutrality.

The manuscript addresses an important and contemporary issue in digital consumer behavior and contributes useful insights regarding online review credibility and trust formation in India’s Tier-2

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markets. The theoretical framing and empirical structure are promising. However, concerns remain regarding literature synthesis, sampling rigor, interpretation boundaries, and analytical justification. Recommendation: minor Revision before publication, with emphasis on methodological strengthening and tighter theoretical integration. Addressing the identified weaknesses will make it suitable for publication in IJAR.

I recommend this paper for publication after minor revision.