

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-59074

Title: Pre-Purchase Behaviour of Consumers in Digital Ecosystem – A Study among Youth.

Recommendation:

Accept as it is

Accept after minor revision.....

Accept after major revision

Do not accept (*Reasons below*)

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

Reviewer Name: Dr. Indrila Deb

Detailed Reviewer's Report

Justification of Recommendation:

The manuscript addresses a relevant and contemporary issue in digital consumer behaviour and examines five potentially important determinants—online reviews, social media influence, website quality, price comparison, and consumer trust—among 200 respondents. The topic is suitable for the journal, and the paper has a clear basic structure covering the introduction, literature review, research gap, objectives, hypotheses, methodology, empirical analysis, implications, limitations, and references.

However, the manuscript requires substantial revisions before it can be considered for publication. The principal concerns relate to the specification and reporting of the methodology, the definition and measurement of the study constructs, incomplete reporting of hypothesis testing, interpretation of statistical results, and potential multicollinearity among the independent variables. In particular, the reported correlations among predictors are very high (for example, website quality with price comparison, $r = 0.854$; price comparison with consumer trust, $r = 0.820$), yet the authors report no VIF/tolerance diagnostics. Further, the regression model is reported with R^2 only, without adjusted R^2 , overall model significance, or diagnostic information. The statement that $R^2 = 0.771$ means the factors “influence 77.1%” of behaviour should also be revised to the more appropriate interpretation that the model explains 77.1% of the observed variance, subject to model assumptions.

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The gender t-test also reports a significant Levene's test, indicating unequal variances, but the reported Student's t-test should therefore be reconsidered and the appropriate unequal-variance (Welch) result should be reported. The manuscript should also provide the analyses supporting H1 and H2, because the conclusion refers to age and platform preference although the corresponding statistical outputs are not presented in the manuscript section reviewed. Overall, the paper has potential, but the empirical and reporting issues are sufficiently substantive to warrant major revision.

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With Respect to Originality:

The manuscript examines an important and contemporary topic by bringing together online reviews, social media influence, website quality, price comparison, and consumer trust in a single framework for understanding pre-purchase behaviour among youth. Integrating multiple digital ecosystem variables adds practical relevance. However, the manuscript should strengthen its originality claim by identifying more precisely what is novel compared with the cited literature, rather than mainly stating that previous studies considered individual factors. The research gap should be supported by a clearer comparison of prior studies, contexts, variables, and methods.

With Respect to Technical Quality:

1. Research design and sampling: The study is described as descriptive, but the objectives and regression analysis are explanatory in nature. The authors should clarify the research design and justify the use of convenience sampling. The paper should clearly define "youth", specify the age range, explain the geographical coverage, and report the respondent profile and sampling procedure in sufficient detail.
2. Measurement of constructs: The manuscript states that questionnaire items were measured on a five-point Likert scale, but it does not adequately report the number of items, item sources/adaptations, construct operationalisation, reliability, or validity. Cronbach's alpha (and, where appropriate, composite reliability/validity evidence) should be reported for the multi-item constructs.
3. Hypothesis testing: H1 concerns demographic factors and H2 concerns preference for digital platforms, but the manuscript does not present the full statistical evidence for these hypotheses. The conclusion states that age is significant and that e-commerce websites are the preferred platform, but the corresponding tables/tests are not included in the reported analysis. All hypotheses should be matched explicitly with their statistical tests, results, decision, and interpretation.
4. Gender analysis: The reported Levene's test is significant ($p < .05$), indicating unequal variances. Therefore, the authors should report the unequal-variance/Welch t-test rather than relying on the equal-variance Student's t statistic, or clearly justify the chosen test. The mean difference should also include an effect size and, preferably, a confidence interval.

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5. Correlation and multicollinearity: The independent variables are highly correlated. For example, website quality and price comparison have $r = 0.854$, while price comparison and consumer trust have $r = 0.820$. Before interpreting the multiple regression coefficients, the authors should report VIF and tolerance values and discuss potential multicollinearity. If necessary, the authors should reconsider the model specification.

6. Regression reporting: The regression section reports $R = 0.878$ and $R^2 = 0.771$, together with coefficient estimates and p-values. The paper should additionally report adjusted R^2 , the overall F-statistic and its significance, degrees of freedom, confidence intervals, and relevant regression diagnostics. The authors should also explain the basis for selecting the predictors.

7. Interpretation of R^2 : $R^2 = 0.771$ should not be described as the independent variables “influencing 77.1%” of pre-purchasing behaviour. It indicates that the specified regression model explains 77.1% of the variance in the dependent variable in the sample. Use causal language such as “influence” cautiously because the study is cross-sectional and based on convenience sampling.

8. Relative importance of predictors: The claim that consumer trust is the “strongest” predictor should be supported using standardised regression coefficients (β), not only unstandardized estimates, especially when comparing predictors. The paper should also distinguish clearly between bivariate correlation and unique contribution in the multiple regression model.

9. Statistical consistency: The correlation matrix shows strong bivariate relationships for all five predictors with pre-purchasing behaviour, but only online reviews and consumer trust are statistically significant in the regression model. This difference is plausible and may reflect shared variance among predictors, but it should be discussed explicitly rather than presented as a contradiction-free result.

10. References and citations: The reference list and in-text citations should be carefully cross-checked for one-to-one consistency, completeness, bibliographic accuracy, and formatting. Several works cited in the literature discussion do not appear in the supplied reference list, while some references appear without a clearly corresponding discussion. The authors should also verify the bibliographic details of all references before publication.

Clarity of Presentation:

The manuscript follows a generally logical structure, and the subject is presented in accessible language. The tables are useful, and the main findings are easy to identify. Nevertheless, the paper requires careful language editing for grammar, spacing, punctuation, terminology, and consistency. Examples include “pre-purchasing” versus “pre-purchase”, inconsistent use of hypothesis notation, missing spaces after punctuation, and typographical errors such as “Pirce Comparison”. Table numbering should also be consistent; the current manuscript does not explain the use of “Table 4.4” and “Table 4.14.” The presentation would improve with complete demographic tables and clear links between each table and its corresponding objective and hypothesis.

REVIEWER'S REPORT**Significance / Contribution:**

The study has practical significance for e-commerce firms, digital marketers, and platform providers because it identifies consumer trust and online reviews as important correlates of pre-purchase behaviour. The topic is also relevant to the broader literature on digital consumer decision-making. However, the contribution would be stronger if the authors clearly distinguished statistical association from causal influence and explained what the findings add to existing Indian and international evidence. The policy and managerial implications should be tied more directly to the statistically significant results, while non-significant predictors should not be presented as equally influential.

Major Revisions Required Before Publication:

- Clarify the definition of youth, population, sampling frame, geographical coverage, and respondent profile.
- Provide the complete questionnaire/construct measurement information and establish the reliability and validity of the scales.
- Present the missing statistical analyses for H1 and H2 and explicitly map every hypothesis to its test and decision.
- Reanalyse the gender comparison using the appropriate unequal-variance procedure given the significant Levene's test.
- Report VIF/tolerance and address the substantial correlations among the independent variables.
- Provide complete regression output, including adjusted R^2 , overall model significance, standardised coefficients, confidence intervals, and relevant diagnostics.
- Correct the interpretation of R^2 and moderate causal terminology because the design is cross-sectional and non-probability based.
- Strengthen the research gap and originality argument through a more analytical synthesis of prior studies.
- Correct and standardise table numbering, headings, grammar, punctuation, terminology, and reference formatting.
- Cross-check every in-text citation against the reference list and verify the bibliographic details of all sources.

Final Recommendation:**Major Revision**

The manuscript addresses a relevant research problem and has the potential to make a useful contribution. However, the current version requires substantive methodological clarification, additional statistical reporting/diagnostics, improved hypothesis-wise analysis, and careful revision of the interpretation and presentation of results. I recommend reconsideration after the authors satisfactorily address the above concerns.