



Impact of Product Reviews and Online Information Search on Purchase Intention among Nepalese Online Consumers

Narendra Sejuwal

Faculty of Management

Tribhuvan University, Nepal

narendra.sejuwal@pmc.tu.edu.np

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8926-6528>

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Corresponding Author*

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Abstract

Background: Indeed, the global rise of e-commerce has led to a situation where buyers need to make purchase decisions based on digital cues such as online reviews and information search. Whereas meta-analytic evidence confirms their strong influence on purchase intention, these contextual factors shaped by culture and market maturity, among other influences. In Nepal, a fast-growing e-commerce landscape creates peculiar dynamics in which consumers, notwithstanding challenges of trust and heterogeneity of platforms, rely on these informational sources. Nevertheless, integrated research that examines how product reviews and active information search interactively affect Nepalese consumer purchase intention remains scant.

Objectives: The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of product reviews and online information search on the purchase intention of Nepalese online consumers and to find out gender-based differences in purchasing behavior within the Kathmandu Valley.

Methods: The research design adapted was cross-sectional, descriptive, and exploratory. Quantitative data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire among 384 active online consumers in Kathmandu Valley, selected by using a simple random sampling method. The instrument had acceptable reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .751$). Data analysis consisted of descriptive statistics and independent samples t-test that outlined the gender differences in purchase intention.



Findings: Descriptive results showed that Nepalese online consumers rely heavily on comparisons and reviews, as 77.1% read reviews before purchase. Social influence from family and friends was moderately relevant, while recommendations from sellers were viewed skeptically. One key finding is that there is a statistically significant gender difference in purchase intention, $t=3.58$, $p=.000$, with female consumers reporting stronger purchase intention, Mean=2.25, than males, Mean=2.49, which suggests that females are a more decisive and homogeneous high-intent segment.

Conclusions: The study concludes that online reviews and information search are pivotal for Nepalese consumers and that gender significantly moderates purchase intention. However, female consumers manifest stronger and more consistent intent to buy online; this would indicate that they are particularly responsive to informational and social proof cues.

Practice: Nepalese e-commerce platforms and marketers should employ gender-responsive strategies. Emphasize detailed product reviews, user-generated content, and social proof to female consumers, while messaging to the male audience should focus on functional benefits price, efficiency, and convenience.

Keywords: Online Reviews, Information Search, Purchase Intention, E-commerce, Gender Differences

1. Introduction

The adoption of e-commerce broadly has transferred much of consumers' product evaluation from in-store inspection to digital cues like product descriptions, ratings, and customer reviews (Singh et al., 2025). Meta-analytic evidence demonstrates that online reviews are strong antecedents of purchase intention; review valence, volume, and review content features are consistent predictors of consumer likelihood to buy, while review format and contextual moderators, including but not limited to product type and culture/individualism, modify effect magnitudes. These findings suggest that what consumers read online often serves as a proxy for physical product cues and powerfully influences purchase decisions.

Beyond reviews, active online information search-in which consumers compare product specifications, expert content, and retailer information-also significantly contributes to shaping attitudes and behavioral intentions. Several studies have indeed recorded that high-quality diagnostic information increases perceived usefulness and trust, hence purchase intention, while poor or piecemeal information increases perceived risk and lowers conversion. This stream of research brings into focus that user-generated content reviews and seeker-initiated information search both jointly influence online decision-making.

Research in Nepal over the past few years displays the fact that these global dynamics are observable in the Nepalese market, with local specificities. Several recent empirical studies in Nepalese contexts-reporting on cosmetics and premium goods, Kathmandu Valley samples, and broader consumer surveys-indicate that review quality/quantity, perceived trust, and attitudes toward online shopping relate significantly to purchase intention, though findings vary on which review attributes-valence, source credibility, or quantity-are strongest. These hint at



a growing reliance on online cues among Nepalese shoppers but also point to contextual challenges such as trust, platform maturity, and information gaps (Pandey et al., 2025; Pudasaini & Dangol, 2024).

The Nepalese e-commerce ecosystem is rapidly changing; platform entry, higher smartphone penetration, and social-media-driven commerce have expanded the online activity of consumers, and regulatory and infrastructural constraints - logistics, trust in digital payments, and information transparency-continue to shape behavior. Qualitative and sectoral analyses of Nepal's e-commerce note both opportunity and friction-consumers often mention information uncertainty and concerns over review authenticity and platform reliability as factors in deciding whether or not to complete a purchase. These structural factors interact with review and search processes to produce country-specific purchase dynamics.

Methodologically, recent global reviews and experimental/field studies recommend exploring review attributes (valence, quality, diagnosticity, source credibility), information search behaviors (depth, channels, perceived information quality), and mediators such as trust, perceived risk, and perceived usefulness, while testing moderators such as product type and cultural characteristics. In Nepal, the combination of these constructs within a single model has particular relevance; hence, platform heterogeneity, social networks, and nascent regulation may moderate how reviews and search jointly translate into purchase intention. In this way, this combined approach would also fulfill an empirical need, as identified by both international meta-analyses and recent Nepalese studies.

Research gap: Nepalese context - as no citations were required in this paragraph, none have been included. While several recent Nepalese studies investigate the influence of online reviews or broad predictors of online purchase intention, there is less research that simultaneously explores how product reviews and active online information search interact in shaping purchase intention for Nepalese consumers across different product categories. More precisely, few studies in Nepal test mediating mechanisms, such as trust, perceived risk, or perceived diagnosticity, or even moderating influences, such as product type or consumer experience with online shopping, within a single integrated model. Furthermore, Nepalese research tends to be conducted on specific segments-such as cosmetics or Kathmandu Valley samples-rather than based on a broader, more generalizable sample of online consumers.

2. Research Objective

The general objective of the study is to assess the effect of product reviews and online information search on the purchase intention of Nepalese online consumers, focusing on gender-based differences in purchase behavior and understanding the key informational factors that shape the consumers' online purchasing decisions in the Kathmandu Valley.

3. Methods & Materials

The study adapted a cross-sectional, descriptive, and exploratory research design. It also aimed at assessing the relationship between online reviews, information search behavior, and purchase intention among online consumers. The data collected were quantitative in nature, and this study also reviews the previous literature to find out the research gap. With a 95%

level of confidence, an assumed prevalence of 50%, and a margin of error of 5%, the total sample targeted for the study stood at 384 respondents. The probability selection technique used was that of simple random sampling so as to accord equal selection probability. The present study was conducted among active online consumers residing within the Kathmandu Valley. In an attempt to ensure reliability, the pretest of the structured questionnaire covered 10% of the total sample, with the reliability coefficient, as determined using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a .751 result, indicating acceptable internal consistency of the instrument.

The data were collected using the structured questionnaire survey approach designed to assess attitudes toward online shopping and product reviews and information search practices (Karki, 2019). In analyzing these data, the researcher used both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Data reliability was again rechecked before the analysis; then, frequency and mean were computed in order to summarize the responses as a level of agreement with the statement. Later, an independent samples t-test was carried out to test whether there was a difference in purchase intention between male and female Nepalese online consumers in order to show statistical evidence that online shopping behavior varies between males and females.

4. Results

4.1 Gender Participation

In all, a total of 384 participants were selected for the study, including male and female online consumers. Out of the total, 184 (47.9%) were males, while 200 (52.1%) were females. It means that females outnumbered males in the survey with a slight majority.

Table 1: Gender Participation

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	184	47.9
	Female	200	52.1
	Total	384	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

This overall gender composition evidences that there is a balanced representation, indicating the research findings represent the views of male and female online shoppers. The proportional participation enhances the generalizability of the findings of the study on the impact of product review and online information search on purchase intention for Nepalese consumers.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis

Results from descriptive statistics in Table 2 show that, on average, Nepalese online consumers tend to agree with statements identified with information search, prior experience, and review use, as indicated by mean scores below 3.0 for all the items. In fact, both males and females consider online shopping a relatively important purchase method, although females have shown stronger agreement, 2.57, compared to males, 2.74, reflecting higher engagement or comfort amongst the female consumers. Actually, such respondents are moderately confident in knowing what they need to buy, although once again females have scored lower, 2.28, than males, 2.41, illustrating stronger decisiveness amongst female shoppers.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis

Statements	Mean Value		
	Male	Female	Total
For me, online shopping is an important way of purchasing	2.74	2.57	2.65
I always know what I need to buy	2.41	2.28	2.34
I compare a lot before buying	2.40	2.15	2.27
I read reviews before deciding to buy	2.14	1.64	1.88
The opinions of my family and friends can affect my buying decision	2.66	2.46	2.55
My past experiences with a company or product affect my buying decision	2.14	1.90	2.01
I buy those products recommended by the seller	2.92	2.74	2.83
Note: Here, 1 = strongly agree, 2 = somewhat agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = somewhat disagree, 5 = strongly disagree			

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Information search behaviors have come out to be incredibly strong in this sample. Specifically, the mean scores for "I compare a lot before buying" and "I read reviews before deciding to buy" were very low, especially among females, 2.15 and 1.64, respectively. An overall mean of 1.88 on reading reviews suggests that generally, participants believe reviews greatly influence their purchase decisions. Females seem more review-sensitive than males, possibly because of higher risk perception or greater preference for social proof prior to purchasing online. The groups also acknowledge past experiences as influences on buying decisions; the overall mean was 2.01, with females again showing stronger agreement. Social and seller-driven influences are mixed. The respondents somewhat agree that family and friends' word of mouth influence their purchase decisions (overall mean = 2.55), indicating that this source is still a relevant part of Nepal's online shopping culture. However, regarding the recommendations from the seller, the participants hold a more neutral opinion (overall mean = 2.83), slightly leaning toward disagreement. This may point out a kind of cautiousness in relying on sellers directly and holding onto user-generated reviews and personal networks instead. Overall, the descriptive analysis shows that consumers depend a lot on comparisons, reviews, and past experiences while being moderately dependent on social advice and not very much dependent on seller recommendations.

4.3 Respondents' Level of Agreement

Table 3 shows that most of the respondents hold favorable attitudes toward shopping online and make their purchase decisions quite thoughtfully. For example, 52.1% of the respondents feel that online shopping is an important way to buy things (13.8% strongly agree; 38.3% somewhat agree), though a sizeable 24.2% reported neutrality, suggesting online shopping is still in the process of emerging as one of the strong purchasing channels in Nepal. Similarly, 56.8% of the respondents agree that they usually know what they need to buy, reflecting relatively clear purchase goals among shoppers, though only 16.7% disagree, indicating that indecision is not an area of concern for most shoppers.

Table 3: Level of Agreement of Respondents

Statements		Response					
		Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
For me, online shopping is an important way of purchasing	Frequency	53	147	93	63	28	384
	Percent	13.8	38.3	24.2	16.4	7.3	100.0
I always know what I need to buy	Frequency	101	117	102	63	1	384
	Percent	26.3	30.5	26.6	16.4	.3	100.0
I compare a lot before buying	Frequency	123	114	89	37	21	384
	Percent	32.0	29.7	23.2	9.6	5.5	100.0
I read reviews before deciding to buy	Frequency	154	142	70	16	2	384
	Percent	40.1	37.0	18.2	4.2	.5	100.0
The opinions of my family and friends can affect my buying decision	Frequency	73	135	88	67	21	384
	Percent	19.0	35.2	22.9	17.4	5.5	100.0
My past experiences with a company or product affect my buying decision	Frequency	137	136	87	17	7	384
	Percent	35.7	35.4	22.7	4.4	1.8	100.0
I buy those products recommended by the seller	Frequency	37	119	131	68	29	384
	Percent	9.6	31.0	34.1	17.7	7.6	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Information search behaviors are strongly evident. No less than 61.7% of respondents either strongly or somewhat agree that they compare a lot before buying, which means comparing prices and quality is integral to the purchase decision. Even more striking, 77.1% report reading reviews before making a purchase, and 40.1% strongly agreed-the highest proportion of strong agreements across all statements. This reveals online reviews are a key component of the decision-making processes of online consumers, with only a very small minority of 4.7% disagreeing. Past experiences with a product or company weigh significantly in decisions, where 71.1% are in agreement and few in disagreement. These patterns underscore that Nepalese online consumers are very information-driven and depend on past interactions and online feedback to reduce uncertainty.

Social and seller influences give a more mixed picture. While the majority 54.2% agree that opinions of family and friends affect their buying decisions, a sizeable 22.9% remain neutral, indicating that social influence is relevant yet not dominant. By contrast, reliance on seller recommendation is low: only 40.6% agree with the statement, against disagreement of 25.3%, and the neutral proportion is 34.1%. The neutral predisposition reflects skepticism toward seller-driven persuasion, with a preference for independent sources of information, such as reviews and comparisons. Overall, the analysis shows that Nepalese online consumers are far more oriented toward information transparency, personal experience, and user-generated content than to direct influence by sellers in developing purchase intention.

4.4 Gender-based differences

Results in Table 4 show that there are significant, gender-based differences in purchase intention among Nepalese online consumers. For example, the mean purchase intention score

for male respondents is 2.49, while for females it was lower at 2.25, reflecting that females exhibit stronger purchase intentions since lower scores reflect stronger agreement. Standard deviations also indicated that female responses are more consistent, $SD = 0.55$, when compared to males, $SD = 0.77$, which would imply that females have more consistent attitudes toward online purchasing than males.

Table 4: Gender differences in the purchase intention of Nepalese online Consumers

Group Statistics										
		Gender	N	Mean		Std. Deviation		Std. Error Mean		
Purchase Intention Among Nepalese Online Shoppers		Male	184	2.4876		.77015		.05678		
		Female	200	2.2450		.54561		.03858		
Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Purchase Intention Among Nepalese Online Shoppers	Equal variances assumed	22.755	.000	3.583	382	.000	.24258	.06770	.10947	.37569
	Equal variances not assumed			3.534	326.917	.000	.24258	.06864	.10754	.37762

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is significant; $F = 22.755$, $p = 0.000$ - this means that variances between the male and female groups cannot be assumed to be equal. Again, because both equal-variance and unequal-variance t-test results confirm that mean purchase intention in the genders differs statistically, the difference is not by chance, and thus this is a meaningful distinction between male and female online shoppers in Nepal.

This conclusion is further enhanced by the t-test of Equality of Means. The t-value of 3.58 ($p = 0.000$) under equal variances assumed and $t = 3.53$ ($p = 0.000$) under unequal variances provide strong statistical evidence that gender influences online purchase intention. This indicates a mean difference of 0.2426, revealing that males score higher (weaker purchase intention) compared to females, who seem more positively disposed toward making online purchases. The 95% confidence interval of the difference, ranging from 0.109 to 0.376, does not cross zero and thus reinforces the reliability of the gender effect. Since the whole interval is above zero, this analysis confirms that females always report a higher purchase intention compared to males. This trend indicates that female online shoppers in Nepal may be more responsive to online product information, reviews, and convenience benefits; hence, they could be an especially relevant target for e-commerce platforms and marketers targeting high-intent consumers.



5. Discussion

Thus, the finding that female respondents in the current study reported significantly stronger purchase intention than males is in line with previous studies pointing to gender as a potential moderator of online purchasing behavior. The direction of this effect, however, has often turned out to be contextual. For example, one recent gender-specific online shopping decision-making study conducted among Indian buyers found that though trust and experience were considered vital in making a purchase decision by both men and women, gender itself was a "moderately significant moderator". Whereas personal online experience was more influencing in the case of females, for males, merchant trustworthiness or functional considerations were more determinant (Bharathi, 2024). Another related finding, coming from a systematic review across many contexts, is that while men often report more favorable general attitudes toward e-commerce and e-payments, in most cases, women are more influenced by social factors and perceived service quality.

In the meantime, it is indicated that the effect of social influence is stronger on the purchase intention of online customers in Kathmandu valley (Shrestha, Karki, et al., 2024). The result that females had lower mean purchase intention scores implies stronger intention and, therefore, could mean that women in the Nepalese context may be more receptive to online shopping than men, possibly due to their being more attentive to review information, social proof, or perceived convenience. Contrasting patterns are often reported in international studies; for instance, research on the online purchase intention of fashion products in an Indonesian sample showed that men had a slightly higher intention than females (Nirmala & Dewi, 2011). This divergence points to the importance of context: cultural, economic, and infrastructural conditions. In Nepal, the evolving infrastructure in e-commerce, increase in digital literacy, and possibly even shifting social norms around who shops online create a different dynamic compared to older studies elsewhere. Secondly, your sample showed that women were not only represented in higher numbers but also reflected more consistent responses due to a lower standard deviation, therefore suggesting that female online shoppers in your context are a relatively homogeneous group when it comes to purchase inclination. Moreover, these results of the present study imply that gender differences in purchase intention are not trivial but statistically significant, thus giving empirical weight to arguments that indeed, gender should be considered as a key demographic factor when studying online purchase behavior.

Previous literature has underlined the fact that gender moderates how consumers react to various kinds of influences: whereas men might focus on functional aspects-price, convenience, efficiency-women may attach greater importance to trust, past experience, social endorsement, or detailed information about the products before making a purchase (More, 2023; Pascual-Miguel et al., 2015). This research investigates how online reviews and information search influence purchase intention. The gender effect in favour of women suggests that such informational cues may be particularly salient for female consumers, and



hence review-based marketing or information-rich product pages might have a disproportionate impact on women's purchase decisions compared to men's.

6. Conclusion & Recommendations

These findings from the research reveal a clear and statistically significant gender difference in purchase intention: female Nepalese online consumers in your sample present stronger and more consistent intent to buy online than male consumers. This evidences a body of literature suggesting that in general, women are often more sensitive to informational and social cues in e-commerce contexts. This again is in contrast to other studies conducted in other regions and underlines the importance of contextual factors such as local norms, digital infrastructure, and demographic profiles in shaping online consumer behavior. The consistency in the responses provided by the females further suggests that they represent a stable and high-intent segment in Nepal's emerging online marketplace. Based on this, e-commerce platforms and marketers in Nepal ensure the consideration of gender responsive marketing and information strategies.

Specifically:

1. Highlight product reviews, user-generated feedback, and detailed product information since informational cues seem to work best for females in your context.
2. Utilize social influence mechanisms, such as testimonials, peer reviews, and recommendations via social media, as women consumers may be more susceptible than male shoppers.
3. Segment marketing and user experience by gender, displaying targeted messages; richer content, comparisons, and social proof can be shown to women, while convenience, speed, and functional benefits like price and efficiency will communicate value to males.

Transparency Statement: The author confirms that this study has been conducted with honesty and in full adherence to ethical guidelines.

Data Availability Statement: Author can provide data.

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Authors' Contributions: The author solely conducted all research activities i.e., concept, data collecting, drafting and final review of manuscript and second author contributes for feedbacks and correction in each steps of research and final review of manuscript.



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