

**Louvain School of Management
and Vytautas Magnus University**

The influence of online consumer reviews on consumer buying behavior for household appliances category

CONFIDENTIAL

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FOREWORD

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Louvain School of Management and Vytautas Magnus University. I will always be appreciative of the chance you gave me.

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Sincerely Yours,
Ugnė Mingilaitė

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Ugnė Mingilaitė. INTERNETINIŲ VARTOTOJŲ ATSLIEPIMŲ ĮTAKA BUITINĖS TECHNIKOS KATEGORIJOJE VARTOTOJŲ PIRKIMO ELGSENAI: Marketingo ir tarptautinės komercijos baigiamasis darbas / Darbo vadovas Doc., Dr. Miglė Šontaitė-Petkevičienė / Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, Ekonomikos ir vadybos fakultetas, Magistrantūros studijos. – Kaunas, 2023. – 107 p.

SANTRAUKA

Elektroninės prekybos plėtra pakeitė žmonių apsipirkimo būdą perkant produktus ir paslaugas, o didėjantis vartotojų atsiliepimų internete prieinamumas tapo galinga priemone, darančia įtaką vartotojų pirkimo elgsenai. Todėl vis labiau reikia suprasti internetinių vartotojų atsiliepimų poveikį vartotojų sprendimų priėmimui ir kurti strategijas, kaip juos panaudoti siekiant daryti įtaką pirkimo įpročiams.

Tyrimo problema: kaip panaudoti vartotojų atsiliepimus internete, siekiant paveikti vartotojų pirkimo elgseną.

Tyrimo objektas yra internetinių vartotojų atsiliepimų įtaka vartotojų pirkimo elgsenai.

Tyrimo tikslas – remiantis teorine analize ir empirinio tyrimo rezultatais, pateikti rekomendacijas dėl internetinių vartotojų atsiliepimų įtakos vartotojų pirkimo elgsenai buitinės technikos kategorijoje.

Siekiant šio darbo tikslo, buvo iškelti šie **uždaviniai**: teoriškai išanalizuoti internetinių vartotojų atsiliepimų įtaką vartotojų pirkimo elgsenai, remiantis parengta metodika, atlikti empirinį tyrimą, siekiant ištirti internetinių vartotojų atsiliepimų įtaką vartotojų pirkimo elgsenai bei pateikti praktines rekomendacijas dėl internetinių vartotojų atsiliepimų įtakos vartotojų pirkimo elgsenai panaudojimo.

Tyrimo metodologija. Atlikta teorinės literatūros analizė, apklausa, ekspertinis interviu, aprašomosios statistikos analizė, koreliacinė analizė, sprendimų projektavimo metodas.

Rezultatai. Klientų atsiliepimai internete tapo galinga rinkodaros priemone, darančia įtaką vartotojų pirkimo sprendimams, prekės ženklo žinomumui ir santykiams su klientais. E-komercijos įmonės gali gauti didelės naudos dėl gero internetinių atsiliepimų valdymo ir panaudojimo.

Išvados. Sukurtas internetinių klientų atsiliepimų keitimo modelis e. prekybos įmonėms suteikia sistemą, leidžiančią sėkmingai išnaudoti klientų atsiliepimų galią ir padidinti konversijas, svetainės lankomumą, pagerinti klientų įsitraukimą ir gauti naudingos informacijos pagrįstiems sprendimams priimti.

Šis darbas yra projektinis magistro baigiamasis darbas.

Raktažodžiai: atsiliepimai, buitinė technika, įtaka, pirkimo elgsena, vartotojai

Ugnė Mingilaitė. THE INFLUENCE OF ONLINE CONSUMER REVIEWS ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR FOR HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES CATEGORY: Final Master Thesis in Title of Marketing and International Commerce/ Supervisor Assoc.Prof., Dr. Miglė Šontaitė-Petkevičienė / Vytautas Magnus University, Faculty of Economics and Management, Graduate studies. – Kaunas, 2023 – 107 p.

SUMMARY

The rise of e-commerce has transformed the way people shop for products and services, and the increasing availability of online consumer reviews has become a powerful tool for influencing consumer buying behavior. As a result, there is a growing need to understand the impact of online consumer reviews on consumer decision-making and to develop strategies to leverage them to influence purchasing patterns.

Research **problem** addressed in this paper is - how to leverage online consumer reviews aiming to influence consumer buying behavior.

The object of the paper is the influence of online consumer reviews on consumer buying behavior.

The aim of the paper – based on the theoretical analysis and empirical research results to provide recommendations for online consumer reviews leveraging influencing consumer buying behavior for household appliances category.

In order to achieve the aim of the paper, the following **objectives** were set: to analyze theoretically the influence of online consumer reviews on consumer buying behavior, based on the prepared methodology to conduct empirical research to investigate the influence of online consumer reviews on consumer buying behavior, and to provide practical recommendations for online consumer reviews leveraging influencing consumer buying behavior.

Research methods. Theoretical literature analysis, survey, expertise interview, descriptive statistics analysis, correlation analysis, solution design approach.

Results: online customer reviews have developed into a powerful marketing tool, affecting consumer purchasing decisions, closing the knowledge gap, and influencing brand awareness and client relationships. Additionally, e-commerce enterprises may benefit from greater conversions, increased site traffic, improved consumer interaction and loyalty, and priceless information for decision-making and market anticipation thanks to good online review management and use.

Conclusions: the created model for leveraging online customer reviews provides e-commerce companies with a tactical framework to successfully harness the power of customer

feedback, resulting in greater conversions, increased site traffic, improved customer engagement, and useful information for informed decision-making.

This paper is practical solutions oriented final master thesis.

Key words: buying behaviour, consumers, household appliances, influence, reviews

INTRODUCTION

Relevance and topicality. Shopping has become more convenient and comfortable thanks to technological advancements. You no longer have to visit brick-and-mortar businesses if you don't have the time. Everything you want and need may be found on the internet.

Nowadays, an increasing number of e-commerce sites provide product reviews or ratings. Consumer evaluations found online are frequently the first source of information when it comes to a new product or service. People rely on product reviews and ratings to help them make purchasing decisions. Some strategies can be quite beneficial for e-commerce enterprises that rely significantly on rating systems to create their market reputation. According to a BrightLocal (2021) research, online customer evaluations may provide unbiased information about a product or service, which is deemed equally important as a personal recommendation by nine out of ten consumers. As a result, online reviews are a powerful instrument for establishing trust and reputation in the digital marketplace. That shows us that customers are increasingly turning to internet consumer reviews for product information before making a purchase choice (Saleh, 2022).

Electronic word-of-mouth is described as any good or negative comment made by potential, existing, or past consumers about a product or company that is made available to a large number of people and institutions over the Internet (Liu and Shrum, 2017). It is an unpaid type of communication, and can be found on both independent review sites and corporate websites (Trenz and Berger, 2013). Depending on what you offer, the value of a review and how often buyers rely on it varies. The influence of internet customer reviews on consumer behavior has recently piqued interest of scholars (Elwalda, Lü and Ali, 2016). As a result, there is a need for a reassessment of these consequences - the online consumer reviews (OCR) primary aspects and how they influence customers' buying intent. It is also important to analyze and look at the concerns of OCRs' credibility, roles, antecedents, usefulness, metrics, and outcomes. So what impact do internet reviews have on purchasing patterns?

Godes and Mayzlin (2004), as well as Dellarocas (2003) were among the first to contribute scientifically to the changes that word of mouth undergoes in an online situation (cit. from Trenz and Berger, 2013). The literature on online customer reviews in marketing and information systems has since concentrated on the link between these reviews and sales (Trenz and Berger, 2013). Later studies examined whether internet consumer reviews were biased or manipulated, as well as review usefulness (Mudambi and Schuff, 2010). Aside from that, data from internet consumer reviews is reviewed in tourist and medical publications. Despite the enormous number of papers and challenges addressed utilizing customer review data, this research stream does not have a structured analysis.

Household appliances are necessary objects in any house, and acquiring these devices represents a major financial commitment for customers. Online customer evaluations have become an important source of information for consumers evaluating and comparing various household appliances before making a purchasing choice (Saleh, 2022). With the advent of e-commerce platforms and the increased availability of online reviews, customers now have access to more information than ever before, allowing them to make more educated purchasing decisions (BrightLocal, 2021). The household appliances sector, in particular, is very significant because these goods are frequently pricey and demand careful evaluation before purchasing. Consumers must be convinced that they are making the proper purchase, and internet reviews may give vital insights into the performance, quality, and durability of various home appliances. As a result, it is critical to understand how online user evaluations impact consumer purchasing behavior, particularly in the home appliances area. This research intends to contribute to the current literature and give insights that can assist both customers and e-commerce enterprises in this area by examining this issue.

Research **problem** addressed in this paper is - how to leverage online consumer reviews aiming to influence consumer buying behavior.

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2. Based on the prepared methodology to conduct empirical research to investigate the influence of online consumer reviews on consumer buying behavior.
3. To provide practical recommendations for online consumer reviews leveraging influencing consumer buying behavior.

The paper is **structured** in 3 main parts.

The first part, the literature review, focuses on the theoretical analysis of the impact of online reviews on consumers' buying behavior. It delves into the notion of online reviews and their impact on consumer decision-making, as well as the characteristics of online consumer reviews and their impact on consumer awareness and purchasing behavior. It also discusses what consumer buying

behavior is and what variables influence it, as well as the impact of the OCR on consumer buying behavior.

In the second part, the application value of the research to the chosen field, emphasizing its relevance and potential contributions is explained, as well as the research methods used to collect and analyze the data, which included a questionnaire survey and expert interviews, data collection, descriptive statistics analysis and correlation analysis. Similar research studies are also discussed and presented. Last, the empirical research results are presented, including the analysis and outcomes of the expert interviews and survey responses.

The third part provides the problematic aspects of online consumer reviews that influence consumer behavior, recommendations based on those problematic aspects, and presents a model for e-commerce businesses to use online consumer reviews to influence consumer purchasing behavior. Finally, the potential benefits of the developed model are presented.

Research methods. Theoretical literature analysis, survey, expertise interview, descriptive statistics analysis, correlation analysis, solution design approach.

Information sources. Scientific papers by Lithuanian and foreign researchers, secondary sources and primary data collected during interviews and surveys.

I. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF ONLINE CONSUMER REVIEWS ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR

This section investigates the influence of online customer reviews (OCR) on consumer purchasing behavior. First, OCR is defined and its advantages are discussed. Following that, OCR qualities are investigated that customers evaluate while assessing items and services. The discussion then shifts to the complexities of consumer purchasing behavior and the factors that impact it, including the function of OCR. Finally, using current research and commercial examples, the particular ways in which OCR impact consumer purchasing behavior is examined. Overall, this part gives a thorough introduction of OCR and their influence on consumer decision-making.

1.1 Definition and benefits of online consumer reviews

Online reviews first appeared in 1999 and they were mostly limited to individual seller websites like eBay. Online reviews are peer-generated product assessments posted on corporate or third-party websites (Trenz and Berger, 2013). D'Acunto, Tuan and Dalli (2020) describes it as product or service review written by a customer who has used the service or purchased the goods (D'Acunto, Tuan and Dalli, 2020). Kamble, Doan, Nguyen, Zeng and Zihui (2020) believes, that online reviews are reviews made on a variety of platforms by people who have used or experienced a 'roduct or service (Kamble, Doan, Nguyen, Zeng and Zihui, 2020). Others believe, that online consumer reviews are consumer reviews made online by people who have used the product or service and can tell you if it lives up to its claims (Bae and Lee, 2011). Ergüt (2021, pg. 481) says, that "it is a product or service review that represents the thoughts and experiences of a consumer who has purchased the product or service". It can be described as "remarks made about a product or service by online visitors or consumers" (Haije, 2014, pg. 2) too. Basically, the concept of online customer reviews is very easy and could be referred to a consumer's opinion and/or experience of a product, service or business. Reviews can be available on specialty websites as well as the websites of numerous shops, retail platforms, booking agencies, and trusted trader systems (schemes that assist customers in choosing a trader) (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019).

OCR can be qualitative or quantitative in nature. In a nutshell, **quantitative** feedback is a method of revealing data **numerically**. While this is only half of the picture, it may offer us with a wealth of information on the quantitative parts of our websites and mobile apps. These insights are frequently obtained via the use of measurements such as Customer Effort Score (CES), Customer Satisfaction (Csat), and Net Promoter Score (NPS). Quantitative feedback, for example, provides a

better indicator of whether customers appreciate particular aspects of website. In that instance, companies may conduct more study into the causes behind the poor results and then take action (Haije, 2017). **Qualitative** reviews often include a **written description** of the goods, as well as an appraisal, critique, and/or praise for the acquired item (Diekmann, 2015)

In the rapidly changing digital age, customers increasingly rely on the views of others regarding a product or service rather than corporate advertising material (Lee, Trimi and Yang, 2018). According to surveys, more than half of shoppers read internet reviews and customers trust suggestions from other buyers more than traditional means of advertising (Mintel, 2015). Consumers use online reviews to make decisions like buying various things, deciding whether or not the quality of the product is decent and etc. (Maslowska *et al.*, 2016). They've grown into a powerful marketing force that can be found on a variety of websites (Cui, Lui and Guo, 2012). Consumer information is perceived to be more compelling and trustworthy, and this is especially true in the internet world (Maslowska *et al.*, 2016). The information offered on the website must be trusted by consumers, even though online review platforms serve as a platform for bridging the information gap between customers and retailers. This is because consumers are unable to visually assess product quality prior to ordering and receiving it, and they are unable to try the product out (Yallop, 2022).

Word-of-mouth marketing is one of the oldest and most powerful types of marketing, and its clout is growing as traditional marketing grows more expensive and ineffective. Formerly, word of mouth was restricted to person-to-person contact. Nowadays, the internet's viral nature allows talks to travel swiftly throughout the world and affect millions of people. This fact, along with a growing skepticism toward traditional advertising, has made internet ratings and reviews one of the most significant variables affecting consumer purchase decisions (Vertical Rail, 2013).

Customer reviews give a variety of benefits to businesses, including:

- 1) Each online review is a kind of free promotion for your organization. One of the most underappreciated benefits of online reviews is that they allow brand's online exposure to extend beyond companies website and social media platforms. Consumers may discover about the company on reputable third-party websites (Sickler, 2022).
- 2) Reviews provide exposure to a large audience that would otherwise be highly expensive through traditional marketing methods. Unlike many marketing mediums, this increased reach costs nothing other than the time you spend connecting with consumers (Sickler, 2022).
- 3) Reviews affect search engine results by allowing businesses to rank higher the more frequently any firm is discussed online. Reviews, particularly on Google, may be extremely beneficial to SEO and SEM. Google search results include online reviews, which serve to

enhance your listing's visibility. According to a Moz (2022) research, internet reviews account for 15.44% of Google ranking variables. That is, the more evaluations you have, the more frequently your name will show, assisting in the improvement of your search engine results (Willmott, 2021).

- 4) Reviews boost brand confidence among your consumers and future customers (Jo-Anne, *n.d*). Potential clients are more inclined to trust your brand if they know that other people have had favorable experiences with it. Reviews boost brand trust and the possibility that customers would buy from you (Sickler, 2022).
- 5) These evaluations provide a fantastic chance to remedy a customer's issue while also improving corporate procedures (Employment, Small Business and Training, 2023).
- 6) You may utilize well-managed unfavorable reviews to strengthen customer relationships and strengthen your brand and professionalism (Employment, Small Business and Training, 2023).
- 7) Responding to both good and negative reviews shows clients that you care about what they have to say. They might also demonstrate to clients that you are dedicated to enhancing your products and services. According to Willmott (2021), Harvard Business Review research has found, that there is a direct association between firms reacting to reviews and higher ratings. The research looked at the TripAdvisor reviews of thousands of hotels. Hotels that reacted to both good and negative feedback received 12% more reviews, resulting in higher ratings. The study discovered that as hotels began to respond, the rate of brief bad evaluations dropped dramatically (Willmott, 2021).
- 8) Reviews provide valuable information about where your consumers spend their time online (Employment, Small Business and Training, 2023).

Overall, in the digital era, online customer evaluations have become an important element of the decision-making process for customers. These evaluations give consumers with qualitative and quantitative input on items and services, which impacts their purchase decisions. Online reviews may also help businesses in a variety of ways, such as more visibility, higher search engine results, and enhanced brand trust. As a result, businesses should prioritize monitoring and reacting to online reviews to ensure that their consumers have a pleasant experience and that their brand reputation remains favorable.

1.2 Online consumer reviews attributes

Given the relevance of OCR, a variety of research have been conducted to see how OCR metrics connect to sales and buy intent. Previous research has mostly had a focus on three aspects of online consumer reviews which were valence, volume and dispersion (Zablocki, Schlegelmilch and Houston, 2019).

To begin, valence of internet reviews relates to whether they are favorable or negative, and it aids in reducing market information asymmetry (Kordrostami, 2016). Second, the number of OCRs available to customers is known as the volume of reviews (Diekmann, 2015). Finally, dispersion refers to how far the message is disseminated inside and across communities (Elwalda *et al.*, 2016). The premise behind evaluating dispersion is that when human communications are dispersed widely, the product's awareness effect is increased (Park and Nicolau, 2015).

Volume. The number of reviews equals the number of OCRs available to customers (Diekmann, 2015). Past empirical research have demonstrated that the volume of online reviews may enhance consumer awareness, it can also be utilized as a cue to boost the credibility of online reviews since a bigger number of online reviews increases the dependability and accuracy of online review material (Kordrostami, 2016). Higher review volume correlates with increased product awareness and, as a result, increased sales (Archak *et al.*, 2011). Clients have a greater tendency to acquire things with a higher number of online evaluations as the perceived accuracy of a huge number of people's opinions develops (Loiselle, 2023). Furthermore, with a large number of internet reviews, buyers may become better knowledgeable about a product, which impacts product sales (Salganik and Watts, 2008). Volume has a informative influence on consciousness, according to Liu (2006). However, other studies have found that loudness has little influence on awareness or buying intent. According to Chintagunta *et al.* (2010), online review valence, not volume, is the key determinant of performance. Based on these findings, Zablocki *et al.* (2019) show that volume does not influence consumer choice directly, but rather acts as a moderator of online review valence.

The majority of OCRs serve as informants, increasing customer awareness (Liu, 2006). The more reviews there are, the more likely purchasers will be educated, with the outcome of increased purchases (Liu, 2006).

According to one author, the number of reviews may also reflect the product's popularity because it's logical to suppose that the number of positive reviews correlates to the number of individuals who have purchased the items (Elwalda *et al.*, 2016). It was discovered that as the number of positive OCRs grows, so does the apparent popularity of a product (Park and Lee, 2007). When

Dhahak and Huseynov (2020) investigated the influence of OCRs on products, they observed that the amount of online user evaluations seemed to have a beneficial effect on less popular commodities.

Valence. The valence of a product review is how positively or negatively someone views it. It might be entirely good, entirely negative, or a mix of the two (Schreck and Chin, 2019). Review valence has been investigated as a proxy for product quality in the literature, particularly for experience and credential quality. It contributes to the reduction of knowledge asymmetry in the marketplace and it is important for analyzing the influence of online reviews because, according to signaling theory, good online evaluations lead to increased perceived quality, which improves customers' attitudes toward items. This is known as the "persuasive impact" of internet reviews (Kordrostami, 2016).

Cui, Lui and Guo (2012) defined valence as the average assessment of consumers' view of a product. The evaluative direction of an online review on purchase experiences is referred to as the valence of the review. That is, the star ratings indicate attitude extreme, which is the divergence from an attitude scale's midpoint. It's typically one of three things: positive, negative, or neutral (Park *et al.*, 2015). The number of stars awarded to a product by consumers might indicate the polarity of OCRs (Ren and Nickerson, 2021). Valence is seen to have a favorable impact on brand sentiments and buying behavior. Many businesses try to delete unfavorable reviews because they believe they will deter potential clients. Ren *et al.* (2021) demonstrate that 1-star reviews on Amazon.com can have a negative influence on sales rank, and they establish that although high number of best ratings may term a trend of more sales, low ratings do not. In 55 of the 70 categories studied by Fedewa, Holder, Teichner, and Wiseman (2021), the link between star ratings and product sales was favorable, because 95 percent of products sold had 3.5 or more stars across all categories. SKUs with three or four-star ratings sold three times more than those with one-star ratings (Fedewa *et al.*, 2021). According to one study, intermediate ratings (about three stars) were deemed less useful than extreme evaluations (one star/five stars). This means that people value one-sided evaluations more than balanced assessments that include both positive and negative characteristics (Park *et al.*, 2008). Wang, Maslowska and Malthouse (2015) show that bad reviews are linked to lower spending levels among readers. Finally, Ambler and Bui (2011) discovered, that valence has no impact on purchasing decisions. Despite this, the majority of research show valence effects.

Overall, all evaluations, whether favorable or bad, promote customer awareness. Despite the fact that bad evaluations may have a detrimental impact on customer attitudes toward a product, increasing product knowledge compensates for this impact and has a net neutral effect when choosing a product (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009).

Dispersion. Dispersion is another important feature of OCRs. Dispersion refers to the distribution of online customer ratings and reviews among different consumer categories, as well as how rapidly word of mouth spreads inside and between groups (Mucavele, 2020). According to Elwalda *et al.* (2016) several research have looked into the effect of dispersion on sales, nevertheless, the conclusions are unclear because there may not be enough studies on OCR dispersion. The same author also found a study, which reveals that rating variation has a beneficial impact somewhat on rise of local beer sales (Elwalda *et al.*, 2016). Ye *et al.* (2009), on another hand, found that a hotel's rating variance has a detrimental impact on online sales. Sun (2012) eliminates any inconsistent results by demonstrating empirically that dispersion's influence is dependent on valence. When the average product rating is low, high variation shows that at least some customers still enjoy the product, resulting in increased profits (Elwalda *et al.*, 2016).

So, online consumer reviews are critical for modern-day buyers making educated purchasing selections. Three key elements of OCR have been recognized as crucial for assessing the effect of OCR on customer choice: valence, volume, and dispersion. Valence refers to whether reviews are positive or negative, and it aids in reducing market information asymmetry. The quantity of evaluations available to customers raises consumer awareness while also increasing the trustworthiness and quality of online review content. Dispersion relates to how far a communication travels inside and beyond communities, and it influences the product's awareness effect. Although volume does not directly impact customer decision, it does function as a moderator of the valence of online reviews. Good online evaluations have such a convincing influence that they contribute to greater perceived quality, which enhances buyers' attitudes about things, ultimately leading to increased sales.

1.3 Consumer buying behavior and factors influencing it

Consumer buying behavior is the study of the ways in which individuals, groups, and organizations acquire and dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences in order to meet their needs and wants (Dudovskiy, 2013). Their happiness is a critical area for increasing the company's commercial performance. That's why any marketing process is driven by the behavior of the buyer (Sydorenko, 2022). The company's plan and strategy for attracting customers must be modified based on their requirements, preferences, and purchasing habits. Customer satisfaction is a business phrase that describes how well a company's products and services meet or exceed consumer expectations (Rajan, Sammansu and Suresh, 2021). It can also be described as the decision-making and physical action that people participate in when analyzing, purchasing, utilizing, or disposing of

products and services or „, how individuals make decisions to spend their available resources (time, money, effort) on consumption-related items that includes what they buy, why they buy, when they buy it, where they buy it, how often they buy it, how often they use it, how they evaluate it after the purchase and the impact of such evaluations on future purchases, and how they dispose of it.“ (Singh, Dhayal and Shamim, 2014, p. 17).

Consumer purchasing behavior is a complicated, dynamic topic that cannot be readily and widely characterized. As a result, different academics have defined the idea of consumer behavior in various ways (see Table 1).

Table 1

Definitions of consumer behavior by various scholars

Authors	Definition of consumer behaviour	Findings
Kotler and Keller (2016)	“Consumer behavior refers to the process of selecting, purchasing, using, and disposing of goods, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires.” (pg. 153)	Satisfy needs, desires
Ashwini (2022)	“Consumer behavior is the study of how people make decisions about what they buy, want, need, or act in regards to a product, service, or company.” (pg. 4)	Buying decisions
Belch and Belch (2018, cit. from Rajak, 2023)	“Consumer behavior is the study of individuals, groups, or organizations and the processes they use to select, secure, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society.” (pg. 6)	Satisfy needs, impacts.
Hoyer, MacInnis and Pieters (2020)	“Consumer behavior is the study of how individuals and organizations make decisions to use or consume offerings, including products, services, experiences, and ideas.” (pg. 6)	Consumption decisions
Yassin (2021)	“Consumer behavior is a field of study that investigates the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires.” (pg. 1)	Satisfy needs, desires
Szmigin, et al. (2022)	“Consumer behavior is the study of how individuals and organizations search for, evaluate, purchase, use, and dispose of goods, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy their needs and wants, and the factors that influence these processes.” (pg. 2)	Satisfy needs, wants

Source: composed by author based on Kotler and Keller (2016); Ashwini (2022); Belch and Belch (2018, cit. from Rajak, 2023); Hoyer, MacInnis and Pieters (2020); Yassin (2021); Szmigin (2022).

Understanding why and how people buy things, their loyalty to a single brand, is the most difficult task facing companies attempting to enhance their business model and attract new customers (Sydorenko, 2022). Buyer purchasing behavior is decided by how included a customer is within the buy of a item, as well as how hazardous it could be (Sydorenko, 2021). The greater the price, the bigger the risk, and the more involved the buyer is in purchasing decisions (Nguyen and Gizaw, 2014). According to Munthiu (2009) four types of consumer purchasing behavior may be identified based on four determinants (see Figure 1).

	High involvement	Low involvement
Significant differences between brand	Complex buying behaviour	Variety-seeking buying behaviour
Few differences between brand	Dissonance-reducing buying behaviour	Habitual buying behaviour

Figure 1. **Four types of consumer behavior**
Source: composed by the author, based on Munthiu (2009).

Complex buying behaviour is in scenarios marked by considerable customer engagement in a transaction and large perceived distinctions across brands, consumer buying behavior (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008). It happens when a consumer has a lot to learn about a product category. When clients buy a costly, once in a while acquired merchandise, they lock in in this sort of behavior (Saini, Saravanan, Kutty and Agrawal, 2022). They are altogether included within the obtaining prepare as well as customer research prior to making a high-value purchase (Saini *et al.*, 2022). When a buyer has to acquire an expensive goods, he or she exhibits complex purchasing behavior. Buyer engagement is quite strong in this sort of transaction since the risk is significant due to the large amount involved. As a result, buyer does extensive study, goes through learning process and scrutinizes material (Goswami *et al.*, 2022).

Consumer buying behavior under conditions characterized by significant participation but little perceived distinctions across brands is defined as **dissonance-reducing buying behavior** (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008). Buyers are likewise highly involved in this case, but they have less options due to the rarity of the goods and the scarcity of alternatives (Goswami *et al.*, 2022). Even if there is no difference between the items available from different brands, buyers may opt to conduct

comprehensive research (FPS Editor, 2021). Buyer involvement disharmony when an item does not meet their desires, but buyer's regret happens when the buyer laments their choice to purchase an item, this is known as dissonance (Masterclass, 2022). Carpeting, for example, is a costly and self-expressive product, thus buyers are faced with a high-involvement option. Because perceived brand differences aren't significant, customers may search around to see what's available, but they'll buy soon. Their reaction might be triggered by ease of purchasing or a favorable price. After purchasing a product, the consumer may suffer post-purchase dissonance (after-sale pain) if they see specific flaws in the item or if they hear information that is favorable to companies that they did not acquire (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008).

Customer purchase behavior in situations characterized by limited consumer engagement and few substantial perceived brand distinctions is what **habitual buying behavior** is defined as (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008). Consumers are often uninterested in the bulk of low-cost, commonly purchased items. Take sugar, for example - few people are passionate about this product category, they simply go to the shop and purchase sugar, regardless of the brand. If individuals buy the same brand over and over again, it is due to habit rather than strong brand loyalty (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2006). Goswami *et al.* (2022) states, that when a customer purchases things on a regular basis, they exhibit habitual purchasing behavior. People avoid significant participation and select the finest from among those accessible. They go for convenience because the things here are low in value.

Customer buying behavior in conditions characterized by limited consumer engagement but considerable perceived brand variations is what **variety-seeking buying behavior** is defined as (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008). In this situation, the buyer switches brands frequently solely for variety's sake rather than because of unhappiness. Goswami *et al.* (2022) say that variety seeking behavior is shown in low-cost product purchases where a vast variety is offered with little variation. In this case, the consumer does a brief comparison of the various items and selects the most cost-effective option. Loyalty to a specific brand does not exist, as consumers' preferences change depending on the offerings provided.

Several factors influence customer behavior, and Anderson (1965) offered one of the earliest models of consumer behavior. Figure 2 depicts a model that understands the relevance of information in the customer decision-making process. It also highlights the relevance of consumer attitudes, albeit attitudes in connection to repeat purchase behavior are not considered (Panwar, Anand, Ali, and Singal, 2019).

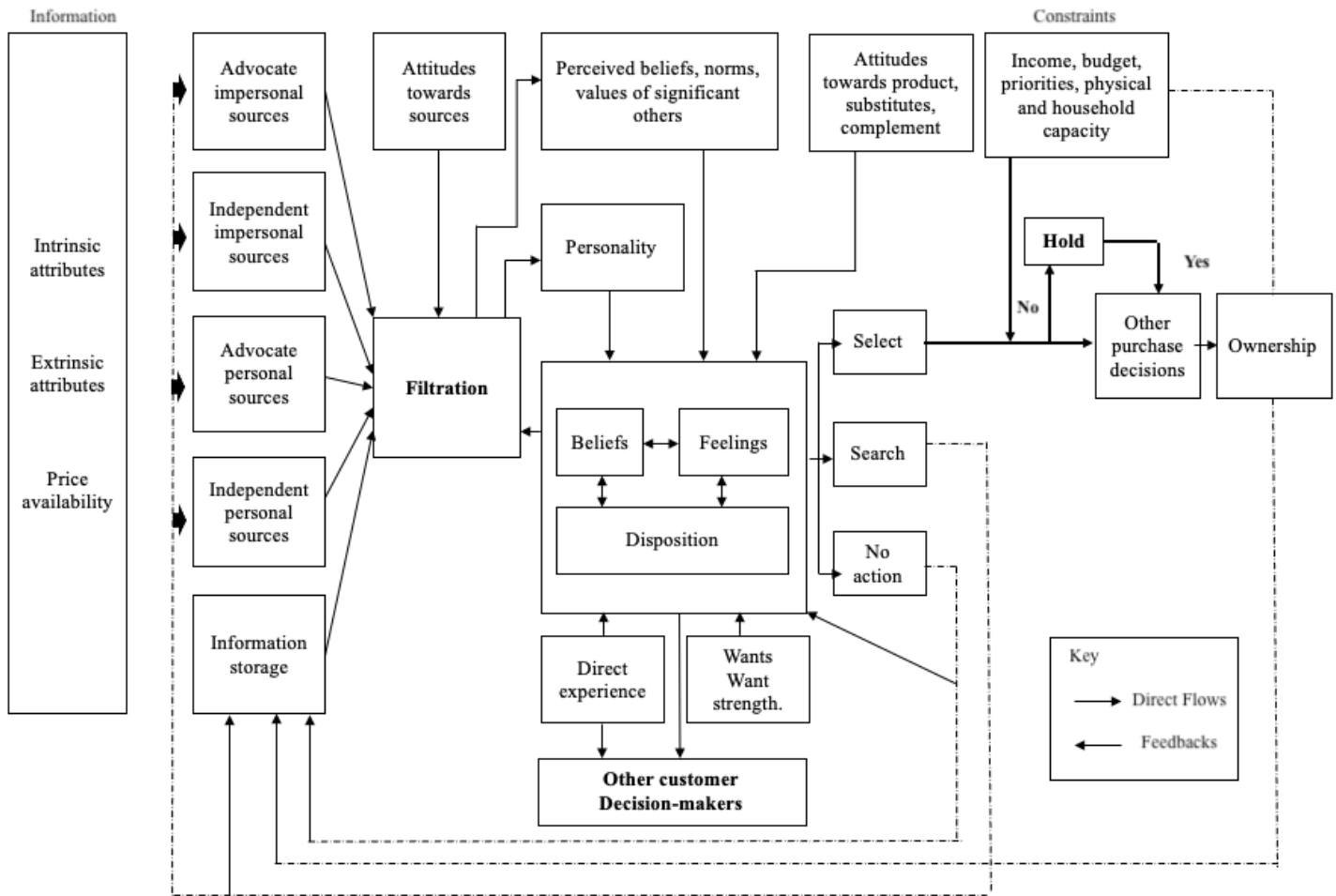


Figure 2. **Anderson model of decision**

Source: composed by the author, based on Panwar *et al.* (2019).

Nicosia and Mayer (1976) established the Nicosia model, which focuses on the purchasing decision for a new product. We can see the model in Figure 3.

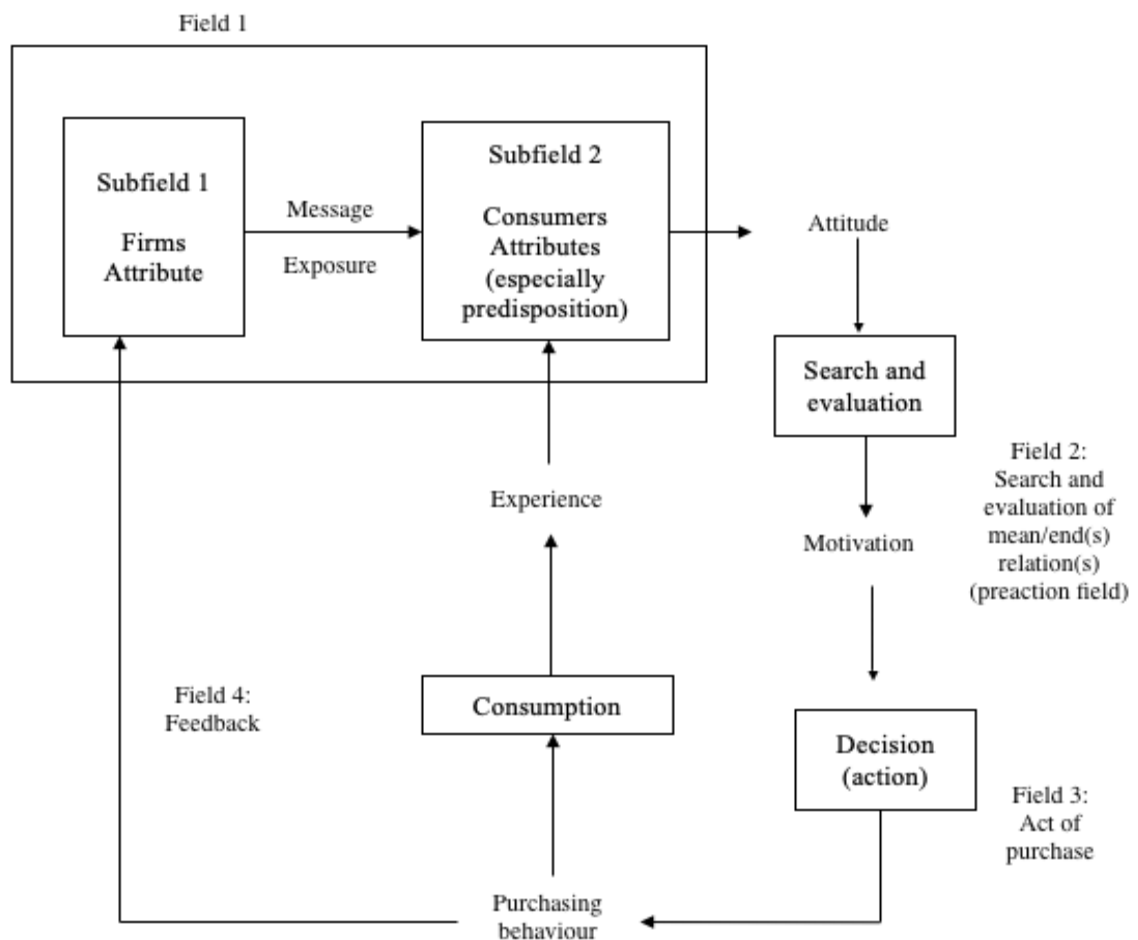


Figure 3. Nicosia model of decision process

Source: composed by the author, based on Panwar *et al.* (2019).

This approach focuses on the company's relationship with its potential customers. The company interacts with its customers through marketing communications (advertising), and the customers respond to these signals by purchasing. According to the paradigm, the company and the customer are linked, the firm tries to influence the consumer, and the consumer impacts the firm by his decision (Panwar *et al.*, 2019). The approach focuses on the firm's attempts to interact with the consumer as well as the consumer's proclivity to act in a specific way. Field 1 refers to these two aspects. The second step includes the customer in an evaluation process of search results that is impacted by attitudes. Field 2 is the name given to this stage. Field 3 refers to the actual purchase procedure, whereas Field 4 refers to the post-purchase feedback process (Panwar *et al.*, 2019).

If we had to put it in easier way, consumer decision making process usually involves 5 major steps (Goswami *et al.*, 2022). The model's very first stage is need/problem recognition, which occurs when customers understand they require something. When a customer develops a need or want, he or she begins an information search to learn about the many alternatives that can be purchased to

meet the need or desire. It is the second step of what is known as information search (Stankevich, 2017). The third step is known as alternative evaluation: after gathering information, the customer examines the items based on their qualities and advantages and places them on a priority list of their ability to meet needs. Price, guarantee, services given, goodwill of the firm making it, financing facility provided, extra advantages, and many other factors are considered (Goswami *et al.*, 2022). Fourth stage is actually making the purchase, and finally fifth stage (called post-purchase), where consumers evaluate and review the product.

Both internal and external influences impact consumer behavior. Internal elements include his financial situation and psychological concerns, while exterior factors include social and cultural influences (Goswami *et al.*, 2022). Elements of consumer behavior are classified in Figure 4.

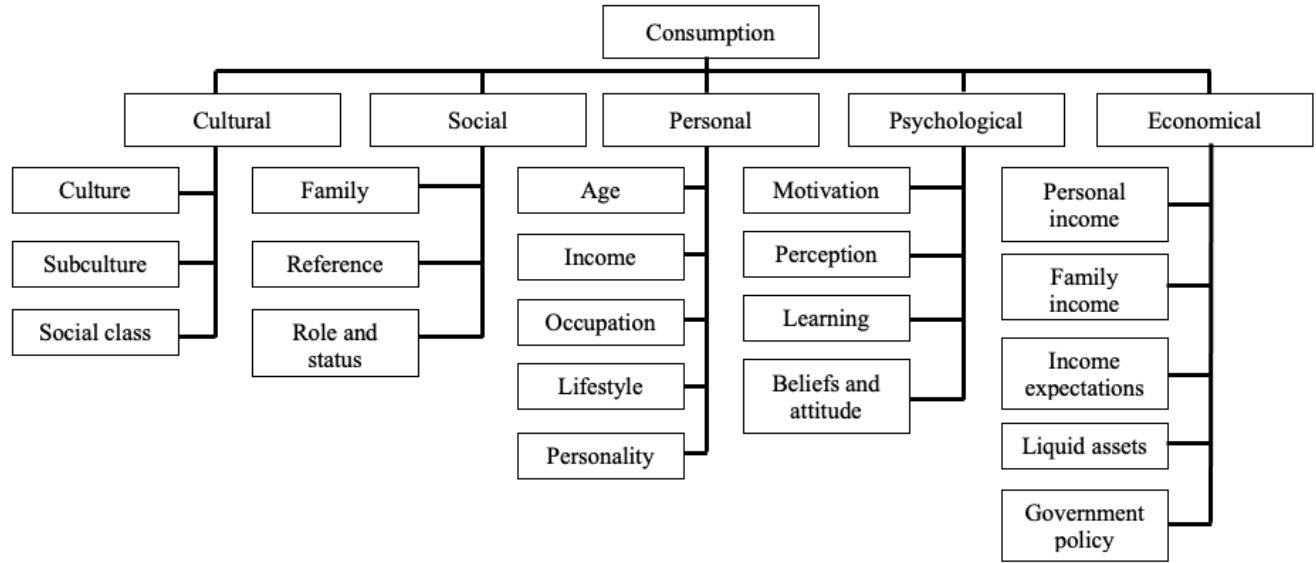


Figure 4. **Factors influencing consumer buying behavior**

Source: composed by the author, based on Ramya and Ali (2016).

1. Internal or Psychological factors. An assortment of inside or mental factors affect client acquiring behavior. Motivation and perception are the two most critical.

a) Motivation. Stanton (n.a.) states that a motive may be defined as a drive or an urge for which can individual seeks satisfaction. It becomes a buying motive when the individual seeks satisfaction through the purchase of something. A inspiration is an impulse that drives a individual to form a buy in arrange to fulfill two sorts of wants: center and auxiliary wants (Shivangi, 2020). As a result, motivation is the driving factor behind goal-oriented behavior. Motivation is a driving force that propels a person to behave in order to meet his requirements. As a result, it becomes one of the internal influences on customer behavior (Stávková, Stejskal and Toufarová, 2008). When a need is

stimulated to a certain degree of intensity, it becomes a motivator. A motivation is a compelling need that motivates someone to do action.

b) Perception. Aside from the core five senses, there are other sensations of orientation, balance, and a clear understanding (Ramya *et al.*, 2016). Every sense ceaselessly transmits data to the brain, and in the event that all of it were taken within, the framework would be extremely overburden. As a result, the brain picks from the environment surrounding the individual and filters out unwanted noise. The information that enters the brain does not present a comprehensive picture of the environment. When a person develops a worldview, she then pieces together the remaining knowledge to create a map of what is going on in the outer world (Ramya and Ali, 2016). With creativity, imagination and experience, any of those gaps will be filled. The following elements will have an impact on this mapping:

- Subjectivity. This is the individual's current worldview, and it is unique to that individual.
- Categorization. This involves information pigeonholing, as well as the prejudging of events and items. This can be accomplished by a technique called as chunking, in which the individual divides information into little groups of similar elements.
- Selectivity. This is the extent to which the brain selects from its surroundings. Selectivity is also a matter of personal preference: some persons are far more selective than others.
- Expectation. Individuals are more likely to perceive later information in a certain manner as a result of this factor.
- Past experience (Ramya and Ali, 2016).

2. **Social factors.** Humans are social species. As a result, people around us have a significant impact on our behavior patterns, likes, and dislikes. We constantly seek approval from others around us and rarely engage in activities that are not socially acceptable (Kacen and Lee, 2002). Social factors impact behavior, such as:

a) Relatives (family) – family members can have a significant impact on purchasing decisions (Saini *et al.*, 2022). The family's shopping habits are influenced by the individuals' interests, likes, dislikes, and lifestyles.

b) Reference groups –it is a group of individuals who, directly or indirectly, have a significant impact on a person's views, values, and behavior. There are a variety of alternative groupings for reference groups, which are not meant to be exhaustive (Crossman, 2019).

c) Roles and status – a person belongs to a variety of groups, including family, clubs or organizations (Ramya and Ali, 2016). In each group, a person's position can be characterized in terms of role and status (Farkas, 2022). The actions that a person is required to execute make up a role. Each position has a different status. People pick things that reflect their social rank and role.

3. Cultural factors. Human behavior, according to Kotler and Armstrong (2008), is mostly the consequence of a learning process. As a result, children learn a set of values, perceptions, preferences, and behavior patterns as a result of socialization within the home and other major institutions (Little, 2016). We get a set of values from this, which to a considerable part govern and drive behavior patterns. Achievement, success, efficiency, development, material comfort, practicality, individualism, freedom, humanitarianism, youthfulness, and practicality are among the values listed by Academic Assistance for Business Students in UK (2016). Subcultures such as nationality groups, religion groups, racial groupings, and geographical places all affect this vast collection of values. Cultural factors consist of culture, sub culture and social class (Little, 2016).

Culture is the most important factor in determining a person's desires and actions (Cloonack, 2022). Through his or her family and other important institutions, a developing youngster develops a set of values, perceived preferences, and behaviors. Culture has a significant impact on purchasing patterns and decision-making patterns (Craig and Douglas, 2006). To increase sales of their products or services, marketers must investigate cultural influences and develop marketing strategies for each type of culture independently. Culture, on the other hand, is not permanent and evolves through time, with such changes eventually incorporated into society. A group's culture is a collection of views and values that are held by the majority of its members (Kacen and Lee, 2002).

Culture is normally associated with big groups, yet a culture might theoretically be shared by a small number of individuals. It is passed down from one generation to the next, and is hence subjective and arbitrary. Culture may change through time, however such changes are usually delayed since culture is strongly embedded in people's behavior. Each culture is divided into smaller subcultures that give individuals with more specialized identification and socialization (Stávková, Stejskal and Toufarová, 2008).

Marketers must build goods and marketing activities adapted to the demands of several subcultures, which make up key market segments. The socioeconomic class to which a person belongs influences their purchasing habits. In a society, social class could be a for the most part changeless and organized separate among individuals who share comparative values, interface, and behaviors (Little, 2014). Social class is decided by a assortment of components, counting cash, business, instruction, ownership, control, properties, possession, life styles, utilization, and so on (Academic Assistance for Business Students in UK, 2016).

In our culture, there are three different social classes. There are three classes: upper, medium, and lower (Kacen and Lee, 2002). The purchasing habits of these three socioeconomic strata differ. To retain their social standing, upper-class buyers seek for high-end items. Lower-class consumers

buy on impulse, whereas middle-class shoppers shop purposely and accumulate data to compare distinctive providers within the same line (Academic Assistance for Business Students in UK, 2016).

4. Economic factors. Economic variables have a significant impact on consumer behavior (Saini *et al.*, 2022). The economic aspects are those that relate to the market's level of sales and the consumer's financial situation, i.e. how much an individual spends on goods and services that contribute to the company's overall sales. (Megha, 2016). Consumer behavior is influenced by personal income, family income, income expectations, consumer credit, liquid assets, savings (Megha, 2016).

5. Personal factors. One of the most important personal characteristics determining consumer behavior is a person's age. At different phases of their lives, people purchase various items. Their tastes, preferences, and other characteristics vary as they progress through life. A person's occupation or career can also have an impact on his purchasing decisions (Madhavan and Kaliyaperumal, 2015). The type of the work has a significant impact on life styles and purchasing considerations and decisions. People's income levels are another aspect that might impact their spending patterns. Earnings are a significant source of purchasing power. As a result, people's purchasing habits vary depending on their financial level.

This chapter material generally examined consumer behavior and the many sorts of consumer purchasing behavior. It emphasizes how aspects including as participation, risk, price, and perceived distinctions between brands impact customer purchasing behavior. Complex buying activity, dissonance-reducing buying behavior, repetitive buying behavior, and variety-seeking buying behavior are the four types of consumer purchasing behavior recognized. Numerous models of consumer behavior, such as Anderson's model and Nicosia and Mayer's model, have been suggested, which focus on the purchase decision process for new items and the interaction between the firm and the client. It also goes through the various aspects that impact consumer behavior, including internal or psychological issues, social factors, and cultural influences. Internal elements such as motivation and perception influence a person's conduct in order to meet their requirements. Family, reference groups, roles, and status are all social elements that have an affect on us. Cultural elements are the most important and pervasive influences on a person's goals and actions. Socialization in the family and significant institutions teaches culture, and beliefs, preferences, and behavioral patterns are passed down from generation to generation. Nationality, religion, color, and geography all have an influence on people's values and views.

1.4 OCR influence on consumer buying behavior

Previous research on OCR volume yielded conflicting results. Elwalda and Lu (2016) did a reaserch and found, that the impact of electronic word of mouth on sales of digital microproducts. They found that the amount of suggestions and messages is highly related to sales (Elwalda and Lu, 2016). Customer-generated item evaluations of scent and magnificence items have a coordinate impact on deals, the same comes about were found within the book industry, where there's a positive relationship between the number of online surveys and book deals on amazon.com (Elwalda *et al.*, 2016). In the computer game business, the amount of online game reviews has also been proved to have a favorable impact (Zhu and Zhang, 2010). Furthermore, according to Olbrich and Holsing's (2011) research of clickstream data, the higher the rating, the higher the likelihood of purchase (Elwalda *et al.*, 2016).

However, degree for such impacts was discovered to vary based on a number of parameters, including the product life cycle, amount of engagement, and product kind. Early-stage products are typically not well-known, which might shorten their life cycle (Elwalda *et al.*, 2016). As a result, the large number of online consumer reviews might be an excellent instrument for increasing client awareness (Filiberti, Raguseo and Vitari, 2021). This is in line with Liu's (2006) observation that a film's first week receives the most reviews of any stage. Furthermore, according to Park *et al.* (2007), the volume of online reviews has a greater impact on low-engagement consumers, but the quality of the reviews had a greater impact on high-engagement customers. In addition, the type of product has a big impact on how the number of OCRs affects the results (Elwalda *et al.*, 2016). Consumers shopping for experiential items are more likely to read product reviews than those looking for search results (Maslowska, Segijn, Vakeel and Viswanathan, 2020).

There have been mixed reports on the impact of the amount of internet reviews on sales (Maslowska *et al.*, 2017). The amount of evaluations has small affect on deals development within the create brew advertise (Clemons *et al.*, 2006). According to Elwalda *et al.* (2016) it is discovered that the relationship between total weekly box office and total weekly volume of reviews is likely to function as a proxy for product sales. Furthermore, Bae and Kim (2013) find that, with the exception of the initial weeks, box office sales are unaffected by the number of reviews. Davis and Khazanchi (2008) found the same results, which they interpret to suggest that product sales variance cannot be characterized just by volume.

Despite the inconsistent results, the number of OCRs may still be inferred to be a useful awareness technique and a measure of product desirability. Increasing the number of evaluations on a product increases the likelihood of providing more information about it, hence attracting more

buyers. Despite the fact that the number of reviews grows, the impact of this information will diminish over time (Elwalda *et al.*, 2016).

Finally, volume isn't just a factor that influences sales, but it is also a factor that drives them. Researchers have shown that both delighted and unsatisfied consumers have a motivation to spread word of mouth, the former for self-improvement and the latter for retribution (Wangenheim *et al.*, 2004). As a consequence, a rise in the number of sales may be accompanied by an increase in the number of individuals discussing the product (Elwalda *et al.*, 2016). According to certain research, a disproportionate amount of favorable internet reviews may lead customers to reject positive evaluations as untrustworthy resulting in lower sales (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006). According to this logic, Bosman *et al.*, (2013) show that valence has a considerable impact on review credibility, with each additional star reducing credibility by 2.39 percent on average. This shows that a low-rated review is seen as more reliable. Consumers are wary of too glowing ratings, according to O'Reilly and Marx (2011). Consumers who only read 5-star evaluations, in other words, are skeptical (Dholakiya, 2014). Mudambi and Schuff (2010) found that moderate ratings are better than extreme evaluations for experiential items, supporting the theory that highly favorable reviews might have a detrimental impact.

There are a number of reasons why moderate evaluations are valued more while extremely enthusiastic ratings are viewed as untrustworthy. First, when customers assess a product on a five-point scale, a mean rating of three may show that there is variety among reviewers, implying that both positive and negative product qualities are mentioned, which increases trustworthiness and decreases reporting bias (Maslowska *et al.*, 2017). Two-sided messaging have been demonstrated to improve source trustworthiness and brand rating in previous studies. For example, Maslowska *et al.* (2017) described that one-sided vs two-sided communications raise the advertiser's derogation, also adding that two-sided advertising can improve persuasion by demonstrating that it is trustworthy. Customers that are either exceedingly delighted or extremely dissatisfied frequently leave reviews, which may reduce their practicality (Gürhan-Canli, 2003). Furthermore, positive reviews are more prominent (Maslowska *et al.*, 2017). Because of customers' faulty assumptions about the sources of good information, highly favorable evaluations may be perceived as untrustworthy (Chen and Lurie, 2013). Consumers may, for example, submit good reviews to demonstrate skill or for expressing himself purposes (Chen, 2014). Customers are aware that businesses can manipulate or erase reviews, incentivize favorable ones with cash incentives in order to get high ratings (Li and Hitt, 2008). As a result, having a few really nice (i.e. 5-star) ratings isn't an issue as long as there are some middling reviews to balance things out (Maslowska *et al.*, 2017).

More specifically, the valence of OCRs typically recommends a certain judgment about a product, which might be positive, negative, or neutral, as previously noted. Customers do not attach equal weight to positive and negative internet evaluations, according to previous studies (Craciun *et al.*, 2010). Positive OCRs frequently emphasize a product's quality and reputation, whilst negative OCRs indicate a lack of faith in that product (Elwalda *et al.*, 2012).

Since negative data is seen to be more expository than positive data, clients tend to see negative assessments as more compelling than positive ones (Elwalda *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, customers are more aware of retailers attempts to encourage good electronic word-of-mouth, the lack of unfavorable reviews may cause buyers to suspect the reviewer's motives (Schindler and Bickart, 2005). Even while positive reviews were viewed as more helpful, negative evaluations might be useful by giving buyers with matching information (Zhang, Li and Chen, 2012). According to Doh and Hwang (2009) study of how customers perceive eWOM, a few unfavorable evaluations can boost the legitimacy of the OCRs, resulting in a good attitude about the website and improved performance. Additionally, it was shown that combining good and negative evaluations might give the appearance that the reviews are more favorable than they are (Elwalda *et al.*, 2012). One major result of research – if all of the evaluations are good, the credibility of the reviews as well as the websites may be harmed.

Negative evaluations quickly propagate among potential consumers and have a significant influence on client buying intent (Lee, Park and Han, 2008). In the area of eWOM, several earlier research have validated the negativity bias, or the propensity to value or pay more attention to negative information than good information (Elwalda *et al.*, 2016). Cui *et al.* (2012) support this notion by demonstrating that favorable reviews have a smaller influence on book sales than bad ones. Similarly, Elwalda *et al.*, (2016) show that negative OCRs influence purchasing more than positive OCRs. Furthermore, information that is negative has been demonstrated to harm stock market returns both in the short and long term, whilst favorable assessments have no impact on results (Tirunillai and Tellis, 2012). In line with these findings, Standifird (2001) claims that negative reviews have a significant impact on eBay bid prices. Extremely unfavorable evaluations may be less useful and may hinder sales by contradicting customers' initial judgments (Mudambi and Schuff, 2010).

A wave of study in numerous fields has recognized the issue that too much of a good thing can have harmful repercussions, for example it has been shown that having a large number of Facebook connections with friends has a negative impact on how others perceive a user's attractiveness and extraversion, compared to having a moderate number of connections (Maslowska *et al.*, 2017). According to Vlachos *et al.* (2011), customers' faith in brands might be eroded if they have had too

many positive interactions with the brand in the past. In a similar line, excessive positive emotion has been demonstrated to reduce proactive activity (Lam *et al.*, 2014).

In Elwalda *et al.* (2016) research, it states that there are more favorably biased ratings than negative evaluations, and also notes that the majority of reviews throughout the market are favorable, which is consistent with earlier findings.

Sen (2008) said that the absence of evidence for the negative impact in various research was due to the fact that a consumer's familiarity with the product, product participation, or gender might minimize the impact of the influence.

It was found that there is a strong link between the popularity of a program and the dispersion of online talk about it, that variance in ratings has a positive significant impact on craft beer sales growth, and that volatility in a hotel has a negative impact on sales (Elwalda *et al.*, 2016). Sun (2012) prevents this kind of inconsistent results by demonstrating empirically that dispersion's influence is dependent on valence.

This chapter addressed the influence of OCR on the sales of various items. Previous study has indicated that OCR has a positive link with sales, although the magnitude of the impact varies based on a variety of criteria such as product life cycle, level of involvement, and product type. A big number of OCR can help early-stage items achieve client awareness. Low-engagement consumers are more influenced by the volume of reviews, but high-engagement customers are more influenced by the quality of the reviews. The impact of OCR on sales also varies by product category, with experiential items being more likely to be impacted by product reviews. Furthermore, buyers may see very good reviews as untrustworthy, and intermediate evaluations are appreciated more than extreme ratings. Finally, this section emphasizes that OCR not only influences but actually drives sales, as both pleased and dissatisfied customers are compelled to promote positive word of mouth.

Overall, first part of the paper covered the history and significance of online reviews in today's business world, emphasizing their role in customer decision-making and the potential influence they may have on organizations. The part also dived into the qualities of internet reviews, such as their validity, relevancy, and timeliness. Furthermore, it investigated the different aspects that might impact the legitimacy of online reviews, such as the amount and variety of reviews, rating distribution, and reviewer profile. The section finished by underlining the need of businesses efficiently monitoring and managing online reviews in order to improve their online reputation and achieve a competitive edge.

II. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON THE INFLUENCE OF ONLINE CONSUMER REVIEWS ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR FOR HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES

The goal of this part is to examine the impact of online customer reviews on consumer purchase intentions for home appliances after evaluating the definition, advantages, and qualities of online consumer reviews and learning about consumer buying behavior and variables influencing it. The author intends to give rigorous confirmation of the effect of online customer evaluations on purchase behavior by undertaking a quantitative and qualitative research study. It will also look into the aspects that determine the reliability and usefulness of internet reviews. First, application value to the field of research is being summarized. Second, methodology of the study and hypotheses are proposed based on the factors discovered during the literature review. Then we will discuss the similar research results. Finally, interview and survey results are analyzed.

2.1 Application value to the chosen field of research

This **research object** is the influence of online consumer reviews on consumer buying behavior in household appliances category, which means that the author of this diploma paper will try to find out how online reviews left by customers on e-commerce site affects consumers decisions to buy household appliances like refrigerators, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, and other similar goods, and how important such feature it is for an online retail store. For example, Ermitazas. It is a Lithuanian-based online retailer that sells a variety of commodities, such as household appliances, electronics, furniture, and home appliances. They are one of the TOP20 e-commerce sites in Lithuania with over 10 retail shops across country, yet an interesting part is that in between all the other most popular e-commerce sites, they are the only ones, whom does not have an online reviews feature. Since the household appliance industry is highly competitive (Yahoo!Finance, 2023), online reviews are usually the first thing consumers rely on before making a purchase. Companies may create more effective marketing tactics, enhance their goods and services, and eventually boost sales and income by comprehending the impact of online customer evaluations on consumer purchasing behavior in this industry. So the lack of such feature not only can deinfluence consumers trust in the eshop, but also such online retail stores can not get valuable insights into the products they are selling.

Customers cannot touch or feel the goods online, therefore they must rely on consumer reviews. Firms must capitalize on their expertise of online reviews since online customers use online reviews as a source of product information when making purchasing decisions (Fernandes *et al.*, 2022). As customers rely more on online information to make purchasing decisions, marketers must

get a thorough grasp of the concepts and phenomena associated with online reviews (De Mayer, 2021). In his research Lin (2022) stated, that is essential to have reviews on your own ecommerce website; else, it would be tough to persuade people to buy from you. According to Cheema and Papatla (2010, as cited in De Maeyer, 2012), internet information is more significant for utilitarian items (in this case household appliances) than hedonic products (books, music, and movies). Charlton (2012) highlighted, that user reviews are proven sales generators, and the majority of buyers will want to check them before making a purchase. Also, reviews aren't only for online purchases, and many people will either do their research online before going to the shop, or use their phones to locate reviews of the things they're interested in, which is really important for shops, who have retail and e-shops for their business (Charlton, 2012). Freddie (2018) did a research on the top three categories that draw the most review reading shoppers. His findings were that electronics, household appliances, and automobiles - are long-term durables in which buyers consider the shopping process as an investment rather than a purchase. As a result, it is critical that they perform extensive research throughout the discover and influence stages before making a final purchase choice. This is where internet reviews may help by offering valuable first-hand accounts of product usage from people who have previously purchased the goods (Freddie, 2018). Askalidis and Malthouse (2016) conducted a study on the influence of the amount of consumer reviews on the purchase likelihood (conversion rate) of consumers browsing a product page, and discovered that the conversion rate of a product may grow by 142% on average as it collects reviews. Within categories, the value of reviews is highest for electronics (up 317%), followed by home appliances (up 182%), and clothes (up 138%) (Askalidis and Malthouse, 2016).

Overall, knowing how valuable online consumer reviews are for an e-shop businesses, it is essential to not only understand how different types of online reviews (overall rating of the product, the number of reviews for the product, the use of the specific details etc.) effect consumer buying behaviour, but also how important for them this feature actually is, and can such lack of feature could deinfluence the trust of an ecommerce.

2.2 Methodology of the empirical research

Research problem – how a company could leverage its online consumer reviews which would help to make an impact on the consumer buying behaviour on household appliances category?

Research aim – to conduct empirical research on online consumer reviews influence on consumer buying behavior in household appliances category.

Objectives of the reseach:

1. To prepare the research methodology.
2. To investigate the relationship between online consumer reviews and purchasing behavior for household appliances, using expert interview method.
3. To investigate the relationship between online consumer reviews and purchasing behavior for household appliances, using survey method.
4. To present the empirical study's results as well as provide suitable suggestions based on the quantitative and qualitative findings.

In the theoretical part, the definition and benefits of online consumer reviews, their attributes and their impact on consumer purchasing behaviour was analysed. Based on the information analysed, the hypotheses for the empirical research are derived:

H1: More costly household equipment are less likely to be purchased online.

H2: Online consumer reviews have a significant impact on purchasing decisions for household appliances.

H3: The use of specific details has a greater influence on trust than the average rating of the product.

H4: The absence of a review feature on an e-commerce site will have a detrimental influence on trust and purchase behavior.

H5: Individuals rely on and consider online customer evaluations when making purchases, yet they are hesitant to write their own.

The empirical research was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Qualitative research involved an **expert interview** to examine the association between online user reviews and consumer purchasing behavior in the home appliances category, and quantitative research was carried by an **online questionnaire survey** for people, who have bought any household appliance in the past year.

The **expert interviews** looked into the relevance of online consumer reviews in the household appliances category. The specialists were selected in accordance with trustworthy and distinctly defined theoretical definitions in order to compile the most pertinent and believable information. There are two basic categories of experts, according to Weinstein (1993, cited from Kukoraitytė, 2019): those whose competence is a result of what they know (epistemic knowledge), or what they do (performative expertise). Performative competence is the ability to carry out a skill well in accordance with the norms and virtues of a practice, whereas epistemic expertise is the capability to produce good reasons for a variety of propositions in a domain (Kukoraitytė, 2019). Although the

second kind of experts offers their viewpoint based on performance, or, in other words, practice, the first type of experts may offer their opinions based on knowledge (Kukoraitytė, 2019). The respondents were given a variety of questions concerning the importance of online customer evaluations in the household appliances sector (the interview questionnaire is presented in Annex 2). The questions focused on the impact of online reviews in influencing customer behavior, the aspects people consider when analyzing online reviews, and the problems organizations encounter when using online consumer reviews. The respondents were also asked about forthcoming trends and technology that might undermine the influence of online reviews on consumer behavior, as well as how the function of online reviews has evolved in recent years. This technique was selected for the following reasons:

1. Expertise interviews can provide valuable insights.
2. Specialists can offer a unique viewpoint and expertise of the subject.

The expert interviews were semi-structured, with three professionals (head of household appliances category in Senukai.lt Simona Kondratavičienė, head of IT product in Senukai.lt Raminta Krūminytė Biekšienė, and head of commerce in Ermitazas.lt Lukas Kandravičius) in the industry given 11 questions concerning the impact of internet reviews in affecting customer behavior for home appliances (full interview questionnaires can be found in Annex 3, 4 and 5). The open-ended questions allowed the interviewer to go into a variety of subjects relating to online reviews, such as the variables that customers consider when assessing them, the reliability and authenticity of reviews, and the obstacles organizations have in effectively exploiting them. The interviews were held online in Microsoft Teams from April 11th to April 25th and lasted up to 30 minutes on average. The rationale for the expertise interview questionnaire is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Rationale for the expertise interview questionnaire

Group (elements to be investigated)	What do we want to find out?	Question No.
Part I The Importance and Influence of Online Consumer Reviews	Finding out how important online consumer reviews are for influencing consumer buying behavior in the household appliances category, how they compare to other sources of information, and what factors consumers consider when evaluating them.	1-3
Part II Business Strategies and Challenges in Leveraging	Finding out effective strategies for businesses to leverage online consumer reviews to influence consumer behavior, challenges they face, and emerging trends or technologies that	3-9

Table 2 (Continuation)

Online Consumer Reviews	could disrupt the influence of online consumer reviews.	
Part III The Evolution of Online Reviews	Investigating how the role of online reviews has changed over time, how it will evolve in the future for household appliances, and how businesses can maintain credibility and authenticity of online consumer reviews.	9-11

In **online questionnaire survey**, respondents were asked to fill out a questionnaire analyzing the impact of online customer evaluations on consumer purchasing behavior by picking the most relevant response choice during the survey (the survey questionnaire is presented in Annex 6). For the following reasons, this survey approach was chosen:

1. It is the quickest and most appropriate method of gathering the essential data.
2. Using online surveys is a rapid and efficient technique to obtain the necessary quantity of data in a short length of time.
3. Questionnaires are confidential and anonymous, so respondents are completely free to answer questions and express their personal opinions or experiences.

Questionnaire structure. The survey covered 313 participants, who had bought home appliances online at least once in the last year, and was held from March 2nd until April 13th. The participants were chosen from a population of 2.8 million (Lithuanian population), with a desired level of confidence of 95% and a margin of error of 5.5%. This sample size can provide a reasonable level of precision in estimating the relationship between online consumer reviews and consumer buying behavior in the household appliances category. The online questionnaire consisted of 18 questions, including 8 closed-ended questions, 1 multiple-choice question, 1 table-format question, and 8 Likert scale questions. Survey responses were analyzed using Jamovi, a software chosen for its simplicity and ease of use while providing all the necessary functions for data analysis.

For the closed questions, respondents were presented with possible answer options from which they could choose the answer that best suited them. The Likert scale format of the question was such that the respondent had to rate each statement from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) and so on. For multiple-choice question, respondents were presented with possible answer options, from which they could choose answers that best suited them, or add an option themselves. And finally, the question in table form asked the respondent to rank the factors in order of importance, with 1 being the most important and 7 the least important. The rationale for the survey questionnaire is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Rationale for the online survey questionnaire

Group (elements to be investigated)	What do we want to find out?	Question No.
Part I The Most Common Household Appliances Bought Online And Their Prices	Finding out which household appliances are the most commonly purchased and what is the usual cost of it.	1-2
Part II Consumers' Online Review Reading and Purchase Decision-Making Habits	Find out whether people read online reviews and whether they influence their purchasing decisions	2-4
Part III Accuracy of Reviews and Impact on Consumer Decision-Making	Find out how the accuracy of feedback is assessed, which feedback is most influential and appears to be the most useful in the decision-making process, and whether it can be used to change one's mind about buying	4-10
Part IV Customer Willingness to Leave Reviews and the Importance of Review Features in Online Shopping	Determine whether customers are willing to leave reviews after shopping, how important it is for them to have such a feature in the online shop, and how their purchase decisions change if they don't find it in the online shop.	10-15
Part V Demographic Profile of Participants in the Questionnaire	Study the profiles of those who completed the questionnaire: their gender, age and income	15-18

The collected data will be analyzed to provide empirical findings and recommendations based on the research objectives and hypotheses.

2.3 Discussion of similar research results

While there has been a substantial amount of study on the effect of online user evaluations on consumer behavior in general when it comes to internet purchasing, there has been a comparative paucity of attention on the home appliances market in particular. When compared to other product categories, household appliances are a separate product category with distinct characteristics that may impact customer behavior in diverse ways. While prior study has looked at the influence of online

reviews on customer behavior in a variety of product categories, further research on the impact of online reviews on home appliances is needed.

Table 4

Previous studies on consumer reviews on consumer buying behavior

Authors	Research aim	Methodology	Findings
Wu, Guo and Wei (2017)	To research the influence of online customer reviews on consumer purchase intention for home appliances, as well as the function of engagement in this connection as a moderator.	The study took a quantitative approach, with data gathered from a survey of 301 people who had purchased home equipment online. To evaluate the data and test their assumptions, the authors employed structural equation modeling.	Positive internet reviews, according to the study, have a considerable influence on customers' buy intentions for home appliances. Consumers who are more invested in the product category get a bigger influence.
Yeoh, Tan and Hew (2019)	To investigate the influence of internet reviews on Malaysian consumers' purchasing intentions for home appliances.	The authors employed a quantitative research technique to collect data from 380 Malaysian customers who had purchased home goods online using an online survey. They used multiple regression analysis to analyze the data.	Online reviews have a considerable favorable influence on consumer purchase intentions for home appliances in Malaysia, and this effect is amplified when consumers believe the evaluations are reliable.
Devi and Rani (2020)	To explore the role of internet reviews on home appliance purchasing decisions in India.	The authors gathered information from 400 people who had recently purchased household appliances online. They analyzed the data using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis.	Online reviews influence customer purchasing decisions for home appliances in India. Positive reviews raise buying intent, whereas bad reviews lower it.
Wang and Sun (2020)	To investigate, how customer purchasing decisions for home appliances are impacted by internet reviews in the setting setting of uncertain products.	The data was analyzed using structural equation modeling after the authors polled 400 people who had purchased home appliances online.	Purchase intentions for home appliances were significantly influenced by internet reviews, in particular when there was product ambiguity. ones that were favorable had a greater impact than ones that were unfavorable, and the impact was bigger for more expensive items.

Table 4 (Continuation)

Ha and John (2019)	To research the effects of internet reviews on social media on customer buying decisions for home appliances.	Regression analysis was utilized to evaluate the authors' assumptions after they collected data from 383 individuals who had purchased a home item online.	Social media sharing of online evaluations had a considerable influence on customer purchase intentions for home appliances. Reviews that expressed delight and enthusiasm had a greater impact.
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Source: composed by author based on Wu, Guo and Wei (2017); Yeoh, Tan and Hew (2019); Devi and Rani (2020); Wang and Sun (2020) Ha and John (2019).

The five studies examined shed insight on the influence of internet reviews and customer participation on home appliance purchase intentions in various nations. Favorable internet reviews have a large favorable influence on consumers' purchase intentions, and the effect is amplified when the evaluations are seen to be legitimate. Furthermore, interest in the product category moderates the association between online reviews and purchase intentions. These findings emphasize the necessity of online reputation management for home appliance firms, as well as the potential benefits of incorporating online reviews into their marketing efforts.

While the studies examined give useful insights into the impact of internet evaluations on customer purchase intentions for home appliances, much more research is needed to completely understand this connection. Furthermore, it would be good to explore merchants' viewpoints and experiences with online reviews, as they play a critical role in influencing the online review ecosystem. A better knowledge of how online reviews impact consumer behavior might help organizations establish successful online reputation management and marketing strategies.

2.4 Empirical research results

2.4.1 Expert interview results

Expert interviews were chosen as one of the approaches because they may assist to understand how online consumer reviews affect customers' purchasing decisions in the area of home appliances and how e-commerce sites could use these reviews. Three specialists were interviewed, and initial communication with each was established via LinkedIn. We had experts such as the Head of IT Product, the Head of the Category of Household Appliances, and the Head of Commerce. All of these experts work in one of the top Lithuania e-commerce sites, and have a wide background of experience

in this field, specifically with household appliances. Each interview lasted for around 30 minutes. The questionnaire used for the interview was made prior to the interview and is included in the annexes (see Annex 3, Annex 4 and Annex 5).

Each interview began with interviewer greeting the participant, shortly describing herself and presenting the topic of the interview. The discussion's management strategy and the rationale behind employing a computer and audio recording were explained.

The interview consisted of 11 questions, where the first one was *“In your opinion, how important are online consumer reviews in influencing consumer buying behavior in the household appliances category?”* As a result, it was discovered that all experts essentially understand the importance in a similar way. They described the reviews as **very important** and that this importance **consistently increasing**. It was highlighted, that these consumer reviews seen as more credible, detailed and correspond to reality, and also helps to supplement product information that sometimes e-shops lack.

The following question was *“How do online consumer reviews compare to other sources of information, such as advertising, in influencing consumer behavior?”*. The experts gave different answers to this question. One of the experts said, that *“often this is information from actual practice or experience, and often **negative qualities are mentioned that would never be in an advertisement.**”* Other told, that *“traditional commercial channels such as TV or radio, can attract already loyal customers or attract new customers with one time offers, however reviews, are **better while creating long term partnership, while showing not only the good side of the products**”*. Head of the household appliances category said, that *“Marketing channels are dedicated to spread awareness about the product, ongoing promotions and to generate customers flow to the shops whereas **customer reviews calls customer to action to buy or not to buy**”*. So it is safe to say, that online consumer reviews are more biased and more “called for action“. They show not only the good side of the product, which is unusual in the commercials.

Interviewer continued the interview with the question *“What factors do consumers typically consider when evaluating online consumer reviews for household appliances?”*. The responses were quite similar, with one stating that *“Its **quantity and the relationship between good and bad reviews, also argumentation.** Customers like to check whether the reviews are not written by the seller”* and the other expert told, that *“**the overall rating of the product** is probably what consumers typically consider the most, but I think that the specific use of details should be the priority”*. Also, *“**stars rating** or so called the **overall rating**, comments and products pictures. Especially real life **product pictures or videos help to create touch and feel feeling** for the online customer”*. It is safe to say that from the experts point of view there is not one, but a few main factors: quantity, overall ratings and

the relationship between good and the bad reviews. The pictures or videos also play a big role with creating a “touch” feeling for the products.

Another question was “How do you see the importance of online reviews evolving in the current marketplace?”. One participant mentioned, that “The importance increases as the number of people shopping online increases. People are looking **not only for price**, but also for **a trustworthy seller and quality**, and it is the reviews that say the most about quality.” „The **importance is continuing to evolve** for the people buying, and for sellers. **People are looking for unbiased valuations** about the products, while looking from the sellers perspective – the **reviews help consumers to choose where to buy from**. More reviews are increasing the conversion rate which increases the chances of them shopping in your shop“. Also, the point that „more and **more big manufacturets and online players put attention to customer ratings and reviews due to its importance in sales**. It helps to control good and not high quality assortment“. So the increase of importance is undeniable, as the reviews help not only the consumers, but the sellers too.

Interview was continued with a question “How do you see the role of online consumer reviews evolving in the future for the household appliances category?”. Experts were on the same page about the question “**It will only grow**. With time **video testimonials, unboxing, videos of use in practice will become more and more important**.” „In nearest future more and more internet shops will put **more attention to increase rating reviews** as it is not only sales dribance tool but also helps to increase products and online shop credibility. **Also it will become a good marketing tool and different marketing communication channel: comment, leave review and get discount,gift and etc**.” The head of commerce tended more towards the importance of atuhency of online consumer reviews in the future: „**the importance is definitely evolving, but such as the importance of authenticity** of these reviews, and we are not only talking about for companies, but for consumers too. <...> **trustworthy and loyal based relationships will be more efficient and important**”. So the role of these reviews for household appliances category will only grow, and it will be used as a great marketing tool as well. The authencity of the reviews will remain as the primary focus, bus so as the video testimonials, unboxing or videos of use in practice.

The other question that was asked sounded like this: “Based on your experience, what are some effective strategies for businesses to leverage online consumer reviews to influence consumer behavior in the household appliances category?” We got some valuable insights from experts, such as: “focus on **building a community** of shoppers, with **easy and simple communication** between customers in e-shops” or “**putting feedback first in advertising**, with strategies and incentives to gather and deliver quality feedback to customers”. Others said that “best strategy is to have best possible basics which are required for e-shop, which means **every customer can leave the review**,

make his comment, add photo and leave his feedback” and to “*communicate with all customers which had negative experience and solve their problems*”. It was also highlighted to send “*reminding emails about possibility to evaluate products. Giving gifts, discount coupons for the reviews and ratings.*” So its all focused on consumers – creating a community with easy communication, putting their feedback first with also encouraging consumers to do so with vouchers and coupons.

The following question was about credibility and authenticity of the reviews and sounded like this “*How do you see the credibility and authenticity of online consumer reviews being maintained in the future?*”. Answers were really similar, and all highlighted the same points: **identifying** those consumers who write reviews, **setting limitations** so that only those who bought in the marketplace could leave a review, and **only registered and identified** customers **participate in the community.**, A point of transparently **publishing the rules** on how feedback is collected was mentioned. Also, an idea of one expert was that “*customers should have ratings which shows how experienced they are and this rating is the best way to understand if it's reliable or no, because most efficient and influencing reviews are made from loyal customers who can compare the quality and improvement of the company and most of their assortment*”. Furthermore, “*institutional laws require identification of customer review to be published <...> For the credibility internet shops will have to monitor manually or automatically the reviews if it matches the product theme and has no offensive or irrelative message*”.

Next question was “*What are some challenges that businesses face in effectively leveraging online consumer reviews?*”. Again, experts were on the same page and collectively shared mostly similar ideas: “*the quality of reviews, its completeness, quantity and the amount of negative feedback, because sellers tend to avoid negative feedback*“, „*solving negative situations and comments, getting positive feedback with also avoiding fake comments. I see having efficient rating system is also quite a challenge*“. One more really important observation was made, that „*having comments to most of the assortment, not only the top ones*“. It was highlighted, that „*some good selling items may get bad reviews due to late delivery factors and etc which may become possible disadvantage and decrease in sales even though the product is good. Also to reach a scale of reviews companies will have to invest in marketing channels to get the reviews and keep customers engaged in sharing the reviews*“. So the biggest challenge is to keep the good amount of complete, informative reviews on most of the goods, solve the negative situations and keep consumers engaged to actually continue to share these reviews.

Next question was about the potential disruption on the influence of online consumer reviews and it was formulated as „*In your opinion, what are some emerging trends or technologies that could potentially disrupt the influence of online consumer reviews on consumer buying behavior?*“.

Answers varied and consisted of such answers as „**web site security, data protection vulnerabilities against hacking and data leaks**. Also, **stringent regulations** that complicate the customer journey before a review is submitted“ and „AI, data mining for analytical webs, scraping information from competitors side“. „Complex of legal regulations on businesses how the reviews should be left, **customer data protection** - companies will need to think of **ways how not to violate gdpr and laws**“. So it is safe to say that the web site security, client data protection and complex of legal regulations on businesses how the reviews should be left is some of the trends, that could potentially disrupt the influence on online consumer reviews.

Other question was „how have you seen the role of online reviews change over the past few years, and what do you think is driving these changes?“. One expert said, that „it **changed radically, from irrelevant, possibly falsified info** from the sellers, to **reliable, transparent, up-to-date information** about the product. This has been influenced by new regulation, **customer demand for quality** and the **seller's reputation**, as price is slowly becoming a secondary consideration and new demands are being made by customers“. Other highlighted, that „It **became much more influential** because **customers are linked with better quality and brand history**, not only the better price point. The reviews tell the story and these topics are escalated much more than before. To be reliable brand, you have to ensure perfect feedback and reviews from customer point of view“. The last expert shared, that „the need to increase number of reviews have **tremendously increased** and we see it from the interest of biggest manufacturers. **It helps to create credibility, the need to have** because others have. There are still many unhappy customers when purchasing products, so reviews help to increase credibility, soothes the buying decision, helps easier to choose from few products as well as complements manufacturers products descriptions“. So these reviews changed from falsified and irrelevant, to transparent, up to date information which helps consumers to take decision and complements manufacturers descriptions.

Finally, the last question was „what benefits do you see for the e-shop with the introduction of the online feedback function? Do you yourself follow these reviews and what actions do you take (range expansion or discontinuation, restocking of popular products, etc.)? Experts told, that „you can **discover successful and unsuccessful products**, understand what's missing in the descriptions, **where the mistakes have been made**, and what's really important to the buyer, because this is where the seller often goes wrong“ and that „of course such **info is tracked** and not **only the assortment is shaped by it**, but also **the IT functionalities can be improved** by providing info about the products, e.g. when the sound or the real-life pictures are important for the customers, not just the catalogue image“. Head of the household category in Senukai.lt shared, that „currently they are in testing stage, but they **will analyze products based on reviews: bad reviews product will be taken out of**

assortment, good reviews product will be resupplied. Also, such rating reviews number helps companies to get marketing budget from suppliers so it will become another channel for the commerce department to increase profit from manufacturers.“ So there are many benefits with introduction of such feature in the e-shop, and they are very much used and are helpful with shaping the assortment.

The interviews shed important light on the significance of online customer evaluations, their influence on consumer behavior, and practical business techniques for utilizing them. The experts stressed the evaluations' growing importance, their authenticity and reliability, and the future evolution of video testimonies. The need for online security, data protection, and regulatory compliance were all highlighted as challenges and potential disruptions. Overall, online customer evaluations are extremely important for forming consumer impressions, influencing buying choices, and giving businesses insightful input to enhance their goods and services.

2.4.2 Survey results

The survey covered 313 people who had bought home appliances online at least once in the last year. Women make up 54.3% of the total, while men – 44,7%. Remaining 1% of survey applicants preferred not to say their gender. Dominant age group was 25-34 with 47.9%, followed by 18-24 year old's with 29.4%. Adults, whom age is 35-44 accounted 18.5%. Remaining age groups, such as 45-54 (3.2%), 55-64 (0.3%) and 65 or older (0.3%) make up the remaining 3.8%. The approximate monthly income of respondents varied a lot. Most common answer was 1200€ - 1600€ with 29%, similarly 1600€ - 2000€ income marked up 24% of respondents answers. 800€- 1200€ is the income of 15% people, who participated in survey. Very similarly, people, whom approximate monthly income is more that 2000€ consist of 14%. 3% of respondents approximate income is less that 400€, 6% earn somewhat from 400€ to 800€. 9% preferred not to say their rough estimate of monthly earnings.

The first control question was asked to find out which of the household appliances were most commonly bought by survey participants (Figure 5).

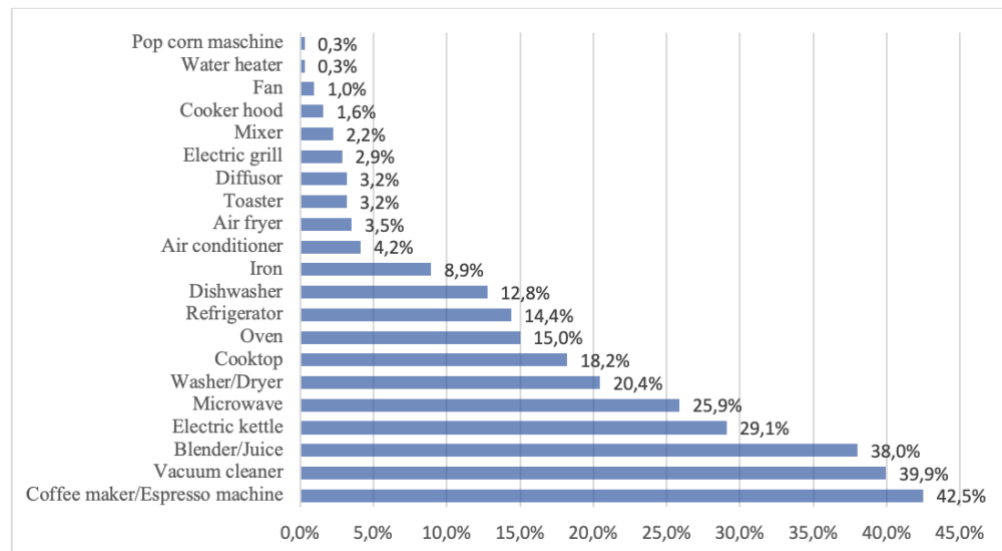


Figure 5. **Breakdown of respondents' answers to the question which of the household appliances they have bought online in the last year (%)**

According to the study, the most often purchased home appliance was a coffee maker/espresso machine, as 42.5% of respondents purchased one. A vacuum cleaner took the second most often purchased appliance place, with 39.9%. Blender/juice maker was another often chosen appliance (38%). In addition, 29.1% of respondents bought an electric kettle online, 25.9% bought a microwave, and 20.4% bought a washer/dryer. Oven (15%), refrigerator (14.4%), dishwasher (12.8%), iron (8.9%), air conditioner (4.2%), air fryer (3.5%), toaster (3.2%), diffuser (3.2%), electric grill (2.9%), mixer (2.2%), cooker hood (1.6%), fan (1%), water heater (0.3%) and popcorn machines (0.3%) were purchased by less people.

The second question sought to find out the price of home appliances that respondents usually buy online. Surprisingly, the distribution of responses was fairly even. The smallest proportion of respondents (5.1%) were unsure about the price they generally pay for home equipment. 7.7% of those who took part in the poll picked expensive purchases of above 1000€ or more. 16.3% of participants set a budget of less than 100€. An intriguing aspect of the poll was that the price range of 100€ to 999€ was picked almost exactly the same times. A purchase of 100€ - 249€ is typical for 22.4% of participants, 250€ - 499€ is typical for 24.6% (the top figure in this distribution of respondent replies), and 24% of respondents typically spend 500€ - 999€. **This disproves** the first hypothesis, which holds **that more expensive home items are less likely to be acquired online**.

With the third question, we sought to see how much respondents agreed with the following claims. The question was constructed using a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). First statement was, that “online consumer reviews influence my decision to purchase a household appliance”.

Table 5

Frequencies of statement “online consumer reviews influence my decision to purchase a household appliance”

Mean	4.23
Median	4
Standard deviation	0.849

	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree (1)	5	1.6 %	1.6 %
Disagree (2)	9	2.9 %	4.5 %
Neutral (3)	28	8.9 %	13.4 %
Agree (4)	139	44.4 %	57.8 %
Strongly agree (5)	132	42.2 %	100.0 %

Only 1.6% of respondents answered, that they strongly disagree to that statement, 2.9% marked, that they disagree, while 8.9% were neutral to the statement. Most of the respondents agreed (44.4%), that online consumer reviews influence their decision to purchase a household appliance. Similarly, 42.2% strongly agreed to the statement. A standard deviation of 0.849 indicates that the data points are very near to the mean and the data dispersion is minimal. The mean is 4.23, and the median, or middle value of the data set, is 4. Overall, this shows us that participants agree, that online consumer reviews influence their decision to purchase a household appliance.

Second remark was “I always read online consumer reviews before making a purchase of a household appliance”.

Table 6

Frequencies of the statement “I always read online consumer reviews before making a purchase of a household appliance”

Mean	4.13
Median	4
Standard deviation	0.829

	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree (1)	5	1.6 %	1.6 %
Disagree (2)	11	3.5 %	5.1 %
	41		

Table 6 (Continuation)

Neutral (3)	26	8.3 %	13.4 %
Agree (4)	166	53.0 %	66.5 %
Strongly agree (5)	105	33.5 %	100.0 %

Just a tiny percentage of respondents (1.6%) said they strongly disagreed with the statement, 3.5% said they disagreed, and 8.3% said they were neutral. The majority of respondents (53%) agreed, that they check internet customer reviews before purchasing a home item, and 33.5% strongly agreed to the statement. Again, standard deviation of 0.829 implies that the data points are close to the mean and there is little data dispersion. The mean is 4.13, while the data set's middle value is 4. Again, this proves the point, that people read online consumer reviews before making a purchase.

Moving further, third statement was “I consider online consumer reviews to be an important factor when purchasing a household appliance”

Table 7

Frequencies of statement “I consider online consumer reviews to be an important factor when purchasing a household appliance”

Mean	4.14
Median	4
Standard deviation	0.828

	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree (1)	5	1.6 %	1.6 %
Disagree (2)	8	2.6 %	4.2 %
Neutral (3)	34	10.9 %	15.0 %
Agree (4)	157	50.2 %	65.2 %
Strongly agree (5)	109	34.8 %	100.0 %

Only a small minority of respondents (1.6%) strongly disagreed with the statement, 2.6% disagreed, and 10.9% were neutral. The majority of respondents (50%) agreed that internet customer evaluations are an essential component to consider when purchasing a home appliance, and 34.8% strongly agreed. Again, a standard deviation of 0.828 indicates that the data points are quite near to the mean with low data dispersion. The mean is 4.14, while the data set's median is 4. This

demonstrates the fact that online reviews are an important factor when purchasing a household appliance.

Another assertion was that “online consumer reviews are a reliable source of information for me when making a decision to purchase a household appliance”.

Table 8

Frequencies of statement “online consumer reviews are a reliable source of information for me when making a decision to purchase a household appliance”

Mean	3.84		
Median	4		
Standard deviation	0.830		
	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree (1)	4	1.3 %	1.3 %
Disagree (2)	13	4.2 %	5.4 %
Neutral (3)	74	23.6 %	29.1 %
Agree (4)	161	51.4 %	80.5 %
Strongly agree (5)	61	19.5 %	100.0 %

According to the survey findings, 51.4% of respondents agreed, that internet reviews are an important factor to consider, with 19.5% strongly agreeing. Only 1.3% strongly disagreed, while 4.2% disagreed and 23.6% were neutral. The data have a low standard deviation of 0.830, indicating that the data points are near to the mean value of 3.84. The data set's median value is 4. In other words, poll respondents agreed on the relevance of internet consumer reviews while purchasing home goods.

With other statement we wanted to find out whether consumers are more likely to purchase a household appliance if it has positive online consumer reviews.

Table 9

Frequencies of statement “ I am more likely to purchase a household appliance if it has positive online consumer reviews”

Mean	4.24		
Median	4		
Standard deviation	0.769		

Table 9 (Continuation)

	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree (1)	2	0.6 %	0.6 %
Disagree (2)	9	2.9 %	3.5 %
Neutral (3)	25	8.0 %	11.5 %
Agree (4)	154	49.2 %	60.7 %
Strongly agree (5)	123	39.3 %	100.0 %

Only a small minority of respondents (0.6%) strongly disagreed with the statement, 2.9% disagreed, and 8% were neutral. The majority of respondents (49.2%) agreed that internet customer evaluations are an essential component to consider when purchasing a home appliance, and 39.3% strongly agreed. In this situation, the standard deviation of 0.769 indicates that the majority of responses were within one standard deviation of the mean value of 4.24. This shows that the respondents shared similar perspectives on purchasing.

With other statement we wanted to understand, have consumers ever changed their mind about purchasing a household appliance based on negative online consumer reviews. This is how the answers are distributed:

Table 10

Frequencies of statement “I have changed my mind about purchasing a household appliance based on negative online consumer reviews”

Mean	4.10		
Median	4		
Standard deviation	0.868		

	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree (1)	5	1.6 %	1.6 %
Disagree (2)	13	4.2 %	5.8 %
Neutral (3)	35	11.2 %	16.9 %
Agree (4)	154	49.2 %	66.1 %
Strongly agree (5)	106	33.9 %	100.0 %

Only 1.6% of respondents said they strongly disagreed with the statement, 4.2% said they disagreed, and 11.2% said they were neutral to the statement. The majority of respondents (49.2%)

agreed that internet customer evaluations impact their decision to purchase a home appliance. Likewise, 33.9% strongly agreed with the assertion. A standard deviation of 0.868 implies that the data points are fairly close to the mean (4.1), while data set's middle value is 4.

Now lets look of the frequencies of statement “the overall rating of a household appliance on a website influences my decision to purchase it”

Table 11

Frequencies of the statement “the overall rating of a household appliance on a website influences my decision to purchase it”

Mean	4.02		
Median	4		
Standard deviation	0.826		
	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree (1)	4	1.3 %	1.3 %
Disagree (2)	9	2.9 %	4.2 %
Neutral (3)	53	16.9 %	21.1 %
Agree (4)	159	50.8 %	71.9 %
Strongly agree (5)	88	28.1 %	100.0 %

In general, the majority (50.8%) of respondents agreed, and 28.1% strongly agreed, that they feel the overall rating of a home appliance on a website is impaccking their buying decisions, while just a small percentage (2.9% disagreed and 1.3% strongly disagreed) believe that ratings have no impact. The neutral group (16.9%) examine ratings, but feel that they are not impacted by them in their purchasing decisions. The data points are very near to the mean (standard deviation of 0.826), and a mean of 4.02 indicates that the average of the data set is a little bit higher than 4. So it is safe to claim that a home appliance's overall rating on a website impacts consumers' choice to purchase it.

After it was examined whether survey applicants “compare the online consumer reviews of multiple household appliances before making a purchase decision”.

Table 12

Frequencies of the statement “I compare the online consumer reviews of multiple household appliances before making a purchase decision”

Mean	3.86		
Median	4		
Standard deviation	0.914		

Table 12 (Continuation)

	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree (1)	5	1.6 %	1.6 %
Disagree (2)	24	7.7 %	9.3 %
Neutral (3)	54	17.3 %	26.5 %
Agree (4)	158	50.5 %	77.0 %
Strongly agree (5)	72	23.0 %	100.0 %

The majority of respondents (50.5% agreed and 23% strongly agreed) confirmed, that they compare online consumer reviews of multiple household appliances before making a purchase decision. A small percentage (7.7% disagreed and 1.6% strongly disagreed) dissagreed to the statement, and 17.3 % of respondents were neutral. The data has some variability (standard deviation of 0.914), but it is not excessively so. The mean of 3.86 indicates that the average rating for the statement is little under 4, which tells us that people usually compare the online consumer reviews of multiple household appliances before making a purchase decision.

Overall, the responses to all these 8 statements and their analysis **support** the second hypothesis **that online consumer reviews have a strong influence on purchasing decisions for home appliances.**

Further, we wanted to investigate if people have purchased a home item primarily based on internet user evaluations, without seeing it in person.

Table 13

Frequencies of the statement “I have purchased a household appliance solely based on the online consumer reviews, without seeing it in person”

Mean	3.53		
Median	4		
Standard deviation	1.09		
	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree (1)	18	5.8 %	5.8 %
Disagree (2)	38	12.1 %	17.9 %
Neutral (3)	71	22.7 %	40.6 %
Agree (4)	133	42.5 %	83.1 %
Strongly agree (5)	53	16.9 %	100.0 %

According to the survey findings, a minority of respondents (5.8%) strongly disagreed or disagreed (12.1%) with the statement. A bigger proportion of respondents (22.7%) were neutral by the assertion. However, 42.5% of respondents acknowledged that they had made a purchase exclusively based on online user reviews, rather than seeing it in person. Furthermore, 16.9% strongly agreed with the statement, which shows us a reasonably high level of dependence on online customer evaluations when making home appliance purchase decisions. There was some variation in the data, and the mean of 3.53 indicates that the average rating for the statement is somewhat less than 4. This shows us that respondents may have some misgivings about the statement.

Finally, the last statement was “I have left online consumer reviews for household appliances that I have purchased”.

Table 14

Frequencies of statement “I have left an online consumer reviews for household appliances that I have purchased

Mean	3.05		
Median	3		
Standard deviation	1.22		

	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree (1)	51	16.3 %	16.3 %
Disagree (2)	45	14.4 %	30.7 %
Neutral (3)	82	26.2 %	56.9 %
Agree (4)	107	34.2 %	91.1 %
Strongly agree (5)	28	8.9 %	100.0 %

This shows an interesting distribution of responses – as many as 16.3% strongly disagree to have ever left an online review, and 14.4% disagreed. Even 26.2% of the respondents remained neutral. Biggest portion – which is 34.2% agreed to the statement, and 8.9% agreed strongly. A standard deviation of 1.22 indicates a rather wide range of answers, and mean is 3 we can strongly say, that people enjoy reading the reviews, but don't rush to write them themselves. Another fascinating fact is that females are more likely to leave a comment (25.9% agreed or strongly agreed to the statement) when only 16.6% men agreed ever leaving a online consumer review for household appliances that they bought. Also, the most active when leaving a comment on their purchase was age group 25-34 with 16.9% agreeing, and 3.8% strongly agreeing to the statement.

The third question and its statement analysis also **verifies** the hypothesis, **that individuals rely on and consider online customer evaluations when making purchases, yet they are hesitant to write their own.**

Moving further, fourth question was about the importance of online consumer reviews in purchase decision-making process for household appliances. Absolute majority of respondents (63.9%) said, that it is very important in their purchase decision making process, 18.2% ranked is at extremely important. 7% of respondents were neutral about it, 4.5% said that it is slightly important, and only 1% said it is not important at all. Again, it appears that it is more essential to women, as 48.2% rated it as very important or extremely important, compared to 38.4%.

Fifth question focused on how each factor influences consumers trust in online consumer reviews. Four factors were presented to those taking part in the survey: the number of reviews, the average rating of the product, the quality of the reviews and the credibility of the review. This is how the answers distributed. The least number of respondents (2.9%) answered that the quantity of reviews has no impact on their trust in home appliances, 8.7% said it has a minor influence (influences a little bit), and 14.1% said it influences moderately. A larger proportion - 39.4% - agreed that it has a significant influence, with a comparable proportion (34.9%) saying that it influences them a lot.

Talking about the influence on trust of the average rating of the product, distribution was very similar. Smallest portion of respondents (1.3%) answered that the average rating of the product has no impact on their trust in home appliances. 4.5% reassured that it has a minor influence (influences a little bit), and 12.8% said it influences moderately. A larger proportion - 43.9% - agreed that it has a significant influence, with a comparable proportion (37.5%) saying that it influences them a lot.

When it came to the impact of the quality of the reviews on trust, the distribution, again, was relatively comparable. Only one survey participant (0.3%) stated that the quality of the reviews has no effect on their trust, 5.1% stated that it has a little bit of influence, and 12.5% stated that it influences moderately. Biggest part of respondents (48.9%) said, that the quality of the review might influence their trust a lot, and 33.1% marked, that it has a significant influence.

When it came to the credibility of the platform, there was a great mix of answers. Even though the percentage of people, who marked that it influences them a little bit (10.6%) or does not influence them at all (5.1%) got a bit bigger, the numbers were still more favorable to the positive side – 18% marked influences moderately, biggest percentage (35.7) stated that it influences a lot, and 30.5% said it has significant influence.

Overall, it is hard to say which of the four factors had the most significant influence, because numerically they all seem pretty important. The quality of the reviews, however, got most votes as

being the most influential. The credibility of the review platform, on the other hand seems to be the very least in the factors list.

The sixth question sought to ascertain if respondents had ever changed their purchasing decisions based on internet customer reviews. People's opinions did not differ considerably, and they were essentially on the same page. The majority (90%) admitted to changing their purchasing decision for a home item based on internet customer evaluations, while as few as 10% stated they never did.

It was intended to see how consumers perceived the veracity of online customer evaluations for home appliances in the seventh question. The range of responses was not particularly large, since people appear to view it similarly. Biggest portion of respondents agreed, that online consumer reviews are somewhat accurate (74.8%) or even very accurate (8.9%). Smaller portion stayed neutral, and just a tiny percentage saw it as not accurate at all (0.6%) or not very accurate (2.2%). The mean (3.89) is strongly concentrated in the data, since standard deviation is small (0.600).

The eighth question was about the types of online consumer reviews, and which of them people find most helpful for household appliances. People seldom to choose between a negative, positive, or mixed review as the most beneficial, as it appears that all of them are equally helpful for them. However, if they had to, they would pick a mix of a positive and negative review.

Next, we asked people which of the following factors might influence the reliability of online consumer reviews of home appliances and ranked them in order of importance (1 - most important, 7 - least important). Without much resistance factor “the overall rating of the product” took first place, with 40.9% votes of people who took part in the survey. Second place was also very confidently (40.9%) taken by the factor “the number of reviews for the product”. The use of specific details remained third, with 34.5% votes. The length of review took fourth place with 26.2%, followed up by the tone of review in the fifth place with 36.4%. Finally, last two places were taken by the reviewers profile information in sixth place (25.6%) and finally the platform, where the review was posted in the last place with 35.1%. So it is easy to say, that the overall rating, specific details in the review and the number of reviews are the main three factors, that influence the credibility of online consumer reviews for household appliances the most. It also **refutes** the hypothesis, **that the use of specific details has a greater influence on trust than the average rating of the product.**

Question number 10 aimed to understand how would people rate the overall impact of online consumer reviews on their purchasing behavior for household appliances, from not significant at all (1) to very significant (5). Least amount of respondents answered, that the impact is not significant at all (1%) or not very significant (2.9%). Bigger portion were neutral (9.4%), and the biggest chunk

(72.1%) admitted that it is somewhat significant or very significant (14.6%). Standard deviation shows us that there was little variation in the ratings given by participants.

With eleventh question we sought to understand how likely are the participants to write an online consumer review for a household appliance after making a purchase. The responses were fairly mixed. Even though 46% of respondents claimed, they are somewhat likely to leave a review after purchasing a household appliance, another big portion were not likely to do so (19.2%) or were neutral/undecided (18.8%). 9.6% claimed, that they are not likely at all to write a review after a purchase, and only 6.4% were very likely to do so. The standard deviation is **1.12**, indicating that the answers given by participants vary quite a lot (the replies to the question were distributed throughout a wide range). The concern is that a high standard deviation usually indicates that the replies are less consistent and dependable (Gunner, 2021).

It was decided to do a reliability analysis between the third question's last statement "I have left online consumer reviews for household appliances that I have purchased" and eleventh question that we were just analyzing (how likely are you to write an online consumer review for a household appliance after making a purchase?). Test-retest reliability assesses the consistency of findings when the same test is performed on the same sample at multiple points in time (Middleton, 2023). An item is considered reliable with Cronbach's alpha score greater than 0.6, suggesting that the items on the measure are strongly associated with one another and that they are assessing the same underlying concept. This implies that the measure is dependable and consistent, and that it measures what it is supposed to measure (Raharjanti *et al.*, 2022). As can be seen, the score is 0.818, indicating that both measurements are tightly related, which makes the survey reliable.

Following questions were about the e-shops people usually purchase their home appliances, specifically, how important is it to them that an e-shop has a review feature when purchasing household appliances online. In the Table 19 we can see how the answers distributed.

Table 15

Frequencies of question "how important is it to you that an e-shop has a review feature when purchasing household appliances online?"

	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Not important at all (1)	6	1.9 %	1.9 %
Slightly important (2)	18	5.8 %	7.7 %
Neutral (3)	49	15.7 %	23.3 %
Very important (4)	184	58.8 %	82.1 %
Extremely important (5)	56	17.9 %	100.0 %

The majority of respondents said the review function is very important (58.8%) or extremely important (17.9%). 15.7% remained neutral, and just a small percentage stated it is either slightly important (15.7%) or not important at all (1.9%). This indicates, that it is, in fact, very important for e-shops to have a review feature, because it's highly valued by customers.

When asked if respondents would buy a home appliance from an e-shop without a review option, the responses did not differentiate one answer more than the other. Even though the bigger portion of respondents (55.6%) indicated they would not buy from such an online store, 44.4% said they would.

However, when it came to the question about how much do these respondents trust in a e-shop, that does not have a review feature the answers were very varied. Biggest portion admitted, that they don't trust it very much (32.6%) or not at all (19.5%) and 23% kept neutral. However, 20.4% trust e-shops without a review feature moderately, and 4.5% trust them completely. The mean is 2.58, which indicates, that the answers were a little above 2. These findings shows us that a sizable majority of individuals do not trust e-commerce sites that do not offer a review option when purchasing home appliances online, but there is also a great degree of variation in the replies. This partially approved the hypothesis "absence of a review feature on an e-commerce site will have a detrimental influence on trust and purchase behavior.

Finally, the poll with the following question was concluded: if an e-shop did not offer an online review function, would candidates still consider purchasing from them, or would they select an other platform that does? The majority of applicants (35.8%) stated that they would study product evaluations on other platforms before making a selection. The equal number of individuals (both responses received 25.9% of votes) answered it would depend on the unique conditions, such as product availability, pricing, and shipping alternatives, or that they would not purchase from the site without a review function and would use an other platform. The minority of consumers (12.5%) did not see an issue with this and would continue to shop at the store without a review feature. Overall, this shows us that even though consumers are not super strict about not buying from such store, the reviews feature is important to them, since they would read about them in a different platform.

Analysis of the respondents' responses has produced insightful information. The majority of respondents acknowledged the importance of internet reviews in influencing their choice to buy home appliances, proving their importance. The survey also showed that customers examine internet reviews before making purchases and regard them as trustworthy sources of information. Purchase decisions were found to be highly influenced by positive reviews and overall product ratings, but negative reviews had the reverse impact. It's interesting to note that despite the fact that customers rely largely on internet evaluations, they are less likely to leave their own. These results underline

how crucial it is for businesses to carefully maintain and promote customer reviews, preserving their validity and maximizing their influence on consumer decision-making.

Overall, both the expert interviews and the analysis of the attitudes of the respondents in the second part of the study demonstrate the major impact of online consumer evaluations on the decisions of consumers to purchase home appliances. Experts stressed that consumer evaluations now outweigh conventional advertising in relevance, providing customers with more thorough and reliable information. The majority of respondents said that internet reviews are a crucial part of their decision-making process and depend on them as a trustworthy source of information. Positive reviews and total product ratings were found to have a significant influence on purchase choices, whilst bad reviews acted as a barrier. Notably, consumers showed a stronger propensity to depend on internet reviews than to leave their own. These findings underscore the growing prominence of online evaluations as a crucial marketing tool, but also raise challenges such as maintaining review validity, addressing negative comments, and leveraging emerging technologies. As businesses navigate the landscape of online consumer reviews, it is crucial for them to prioritize the authenticity and credibility of reviews, while also proactively engaging with customers to encourage their participation in leaving feedback.

III. PRACTICAL PROPOSITIONS FOR THE USE OF ONLINE CONSUMER REVIEWS INFLUENCING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES CATEGORY

This section will identify the problematic elements of online consumer reviews that affect consumer behavior in the household appliances category and, based on those findings, will offer recommendations on how to use online consumer reviews to affect consumer purchasing decisions in the household appliances category. Later, the benefits of constructed model will be presented.

3.1 Problematic aspects of online consumer reviews influencing consumer behavior in household appliances category

Based on the information provided in the expert interviews and survey, some potential problem areas regarding the impact of online reviews on consumer behavior were identified (see Figure 6).

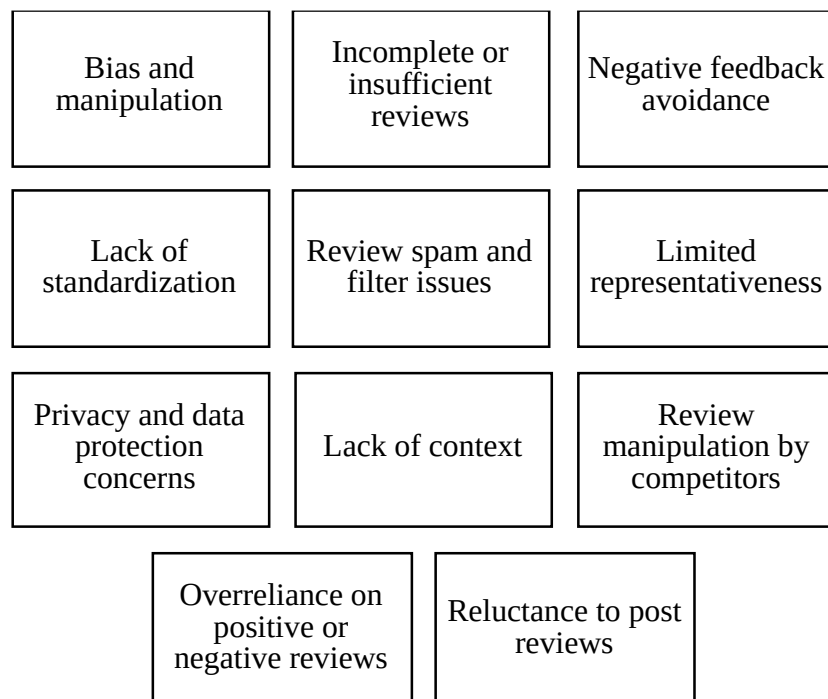


Figure 6. Identified problem areas regarding the impact of online reviews on consumer behavior in household appliances category

1. **Bias and manipulation:** companies or rivals may use phony positive ratings or maliciously bad evaluations to influence online reviews in their favor or to damage a product. This may deceive customers and influence their purchase choices.
2. **Incomplete or insufficient reviews:** reviews can range in terms of thoroughness and quality, with some omitting specifics or not addressing every facet of the item. Consumers may struggle to make educated judgments as a result of having inadequate information.
3. **Negative feedback avoidance:** some companies could be reluctant to accept or respond to critical comments. This avoidance can impede the openness and veracity of online evaluations and keep companies from discovering new ways to enhance their goods and services.
4. **Lack of standardization:** it's possible that multiple platforms or websites don't share the same review standards, rating frameworks, or procedures. When buyers evaluate evaluations from several sources, it might cause confusion.
5. **Review spam and filter issues:** online reviews can lose their validity if there is review spam, which is the practice of posting numerous fraudulent or irrelevant evaluations. The efficacy of review filtering algorithms in locating and eliminating spam or low-quality reviews can also differ, which has an impact on the review system's overall credibility.
6. **Limited representativeness:** it's possible that online evaluations don't always fully reflect the total customer base. A distorted view of a product's performance or quality may result from the over- or underrepresentation of particular customer groups or demographic groupings.
7. **Privacy and data protection concerns:** in order to gather and publish online customer evaluations, personal data must be handled. Businesses may find it difficult to provide appropriate privacy safeguards and adhere to data protection laws, particularly when trying to identify and validate reviewers.
8. **Lack of context:** online evaluations sometimes lack contextual information, such the particular requirements or expectations of certain customers. Consumers could have trouble connecting a review to their own preferences and needs if they don't comprehend the context in which it is provided.
9. **Review manipulation by competitors:** by posting unfavorable evaluations, rivals may attempt to damage a company's or its goods' reputation. This dishonest technique has the potential to undermine customer confidence in online reviews and skew their judgment of the value of a certain product.
10. **Overreliance on positive or negative reviews:** consumers could be swayed by extreme evaluations, which are either too favorable or negative, without taking the overall mood or a

wider range of reviews into account. This may lead to skewed judgments and a loss of chances for unbiased product evaluation.

11. **Reluctance to post reviews:** Some people could be reluctant to do so, which could mean that not all customer experiences are well represented.

Online shops should think about and deal with problems like bias and review manipulation, incomplete or insufficient reviews, avoiding negative feedback, lack of standardization, review spam and filter issues, limited representativeness, privacy and data protection concerns, a lack of context, competitor review manipulation, relying too heavily on extreme reviews, and customers who are reluctant to leave reviews. Online retailers may increase customer trust, increase the value of online reviews, and give more meaningful information to help shoppers make educated purchase decisions by solving these problems.

3.2 Model of effective online review management and leverage

Based on the large survey and in-depth expert interviews conducted, the resulting model comprises a set of strategic metrics specifically designed to help e-commerce businesses harness the potential of online customer evaluations to successfully influence consumer buying behavior. This strategy, as displayed in Figure 7, provides a neat structure that businesses can utilize to maximize the impact of customer reviews on their target market.

The graphic depiction in Figure 7 vividly illustrates how the many phases are interrelated and how they cooperate to provide an all-encompassing and integrated plan. It captures the spirit of a customer-centric strategy, where consumer reviews and comments are given top priority in corporate operations.

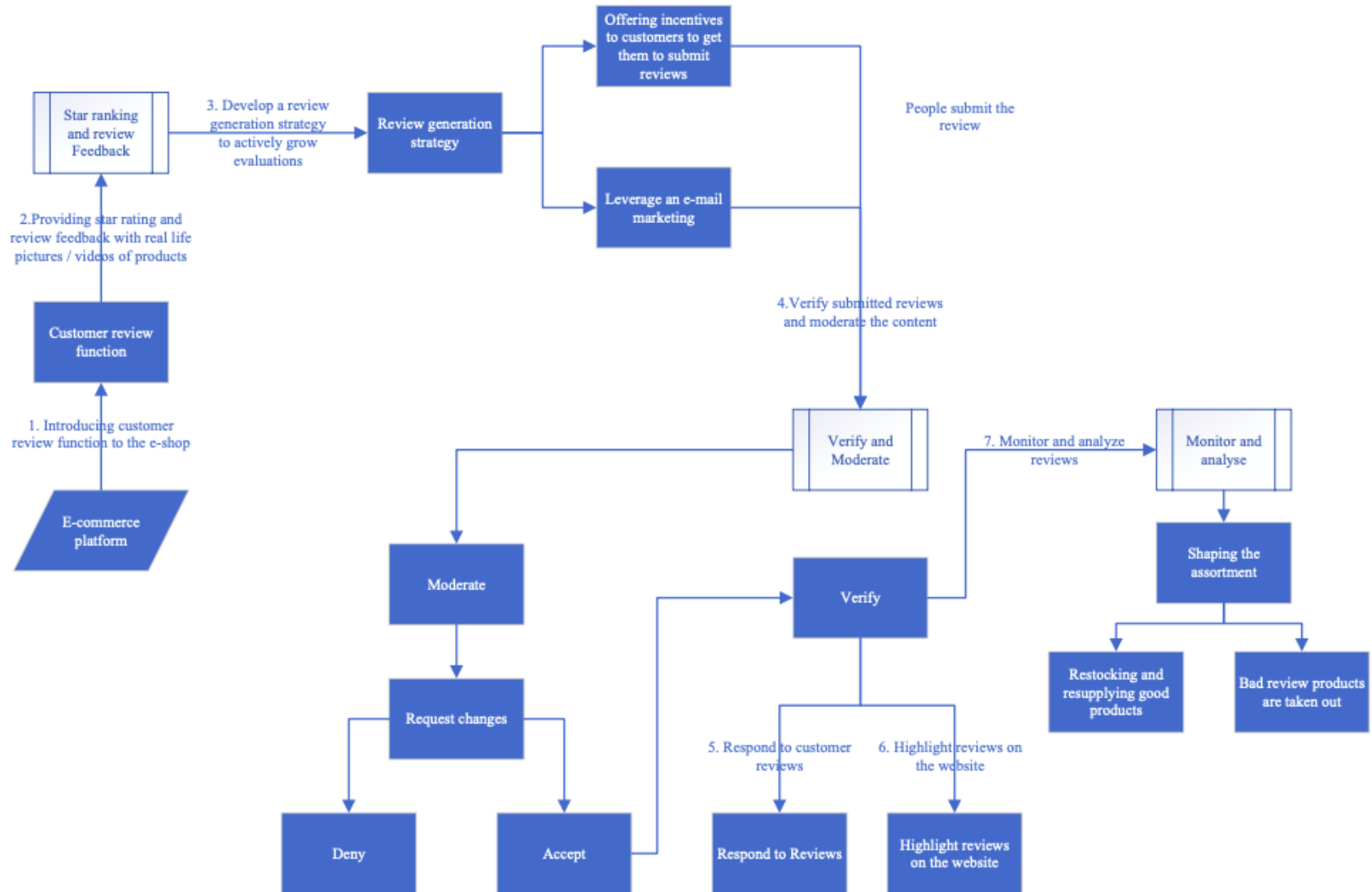


Figure 7. Model of effective online review management and leverage

First and crucial step is actually introduce an online feedback function to the e-commerce site – other ways you can't have valuable insights about your products or understand your consumers. Simply said, **customer reviews enhance conversions**. They may dispel any concerns potential clients may have about a product or assist in product selection. A call with an IT expert, whom has been working in the industry for 3 years now was made, and he told that implementing new functionality (in this case, customer reviews) in the e-shop depends on a few key things: the systems/frameworks used to create the e-shops (e.g. OpenCart, Wordpress E-commerce, Shopify), the size and experience of the programming team, and budget.

With regard to the first point, if the e-shop is developed using one of the online shop management systems, in many cases the implementation of a new module would not take long, because for that particular system, this type of modules and functionalities are either already developed or can be easily added at the click of a few buttons.

The second point is important if the e-shop has been developed from scratch, by the developers themselves, without the use of additional e-commerce systems. In such cases, it takes longer to create new functionality, such as customer reviews, because of the time it takes to create the entire module from scratch and to adapt it to an existing e-shop. This can take anywhere from a couple of weeks to a few months, depending on how much manpower and experience the team has. The third point is most relevant for smaller e-shops. In many cases, if the e-shop is developed using additional systems and the desired functionality (in this case customer feedback) has already been developed for that system, it costs between ~40 and 200 euros, depending on the scope and complexity of the functionality. In other cases, commissioning this type of module from a programming company and providing your own preferences may cost more. So overall, it is not very time consuming, neither expensive, and has high return on investment.

The next step after establishing the customer review feature is to make sure that the data users offer is as beneficial as feasible. This entails requesting feedback from clients in the form of a lengthy review that includes both **positive and negative comments** about the product, as well as an **overall star rating** for the product. Also, in this step it is important to encourage consumers to upload **actual photos or videos** of them **using the product** in order to improve the usefulness of these evaluations. This can make it easier for potential customers to visualize how the product will appear and function in actual settings. It is important not to forget, that clients not only want to see the reviews about the products they are buying, but to also **ask questions about the product**, so such functionality should be added in combination with the reviews feature.

Businesses may actively develop reviews on their website or wherever else product or service reviews appear on the internet in addition to depending on consumers to submit reviews on their own.

This is done by using a review generating plan, or so called “Review Generation Strategy” – rather than relying on customers to submit reviews on their own, a review generation approach enables you to actively grow evaluations on their website or anyplace else product or service reviews appear on the internet. Since our research shown, that consumers are reluctant to leave feedback, this third step may involve them more and encourage them to do so:

1. It is essential to streamline the procedure and make it as simple as possible for clients in order to guarantee that all customers can offer feedback. We can lessen friction by helping clients through each stage, providing support as they go, and reducing any possible roadblocks or technological difficulties. This may be done by reducing the amount of forms and touchpoints that must be completed, and by asking consumers direct questions in order to get their input. It's crucial to keep in mind that the more straightforward it is for consumers to offer input, the more probable it is that we will get the intended result.
2. It might be advantageous to offer incentives to customers to get them to submit reviews. Customers feel valued when incentives are offered, which motivates them to offer feedback. You may use a variety of incentives, including discounts, store credits, contest entry, and loyalty program point accumulation. Customers are more likely to consider leaving a review beneficial and are hence more willing to engage when these incentives are offered. In the end, incentives can successfully increase consumer involvement and the volume of worthwhile feedback obtained.
3. Leverage email marketing: utilize email marketing to its fullest potential by launching a well-planned post-purchase review email campaigns. These emails are an effective way to get feedback from customers and get insightful reviews, which will help you enhance your products and draw in more customers. You may actively engage consumers and underline the value of their input in generating product advancements and overall customer happiness by incorporating personalized and targeted email communication. Create persuading post-purchase emails that explain the importance of their feedback in plain terms and include practical choices for review submission.
4. Personalizing your email correspondence is one of the best ways to spark interest and encourage people to provide evaluations for your good or service. You may forge a deeper connection and raise the prospect of interaction with each receiver by personalizing the subject lines and content of your emails. Customers are more likely to offer their comments when you take the effort to customize your emails since it indicates that you appreciate their distinct experiences and viewpoints. Customer interest may be piqued and customers can be persuaded to leave insightful evaluations by sending them tailored emails. An example of

such personalized email is presented in the Figure 8. The customer is not asked to immediately describe the good or bad features of the product, or add the videos of use. This is done to not overwhelm the consumer. Since we found out in the survey, that the overall rating is the most influential component in the reliability of online customer evaluations for home appliances, email could ask only for this information, letting consumer add the positive and negative insights, as well as the photos or videos of usage later on.

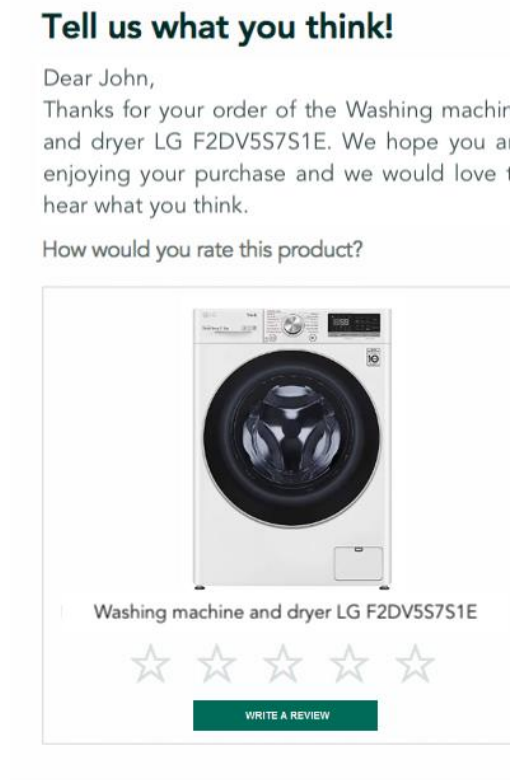


Figure 8. **An example of personalized email that could be used for consumers to leave a review**

Fourth step is about verifying submitted ratings or reviews and moderating the content. Businesses' levels of management of ratings and reviews vary, as do the strategies they employ. Generally, the e-commerce management process should the following steps:

1. **Verification:** while submitted ratings or reviews may be published directly, they should frequently be verified first. There should be a restriction that only customers who have made a purchase can leave feedback, as well as only registered and identified customers participate in the community.
2. **Moderation:** a review or rating's content may be controlled as a second stage. Different moderating requirements will apply to businesses. Reviews or ratings may be removed, rejected, or approved as a result of this. However, you should publish all reviews, regardless

of how favorable they are, so long as they are accurate and compliant. You should also make clear the circumstances in which a review may not be published or may be modified (for example, if it contains profanity, abusive language, or defamatory claims). This is crucial since negative, inflammatory, and irrelevant review content may damage the reputation of your business and mislead customers about your products and services.

3. Complaint resolution: businesses must respond swiftly and pro-actively to negative or low-rated reviews as part of a successful customer review management strategy. This strategy shows that you genuinely care about your consumers' problems and increases their faith in your company. Make it a point to reach out to unhappy customers and provide them specialized assistance to fix their particular problem. This proactive effort reassures them that you care about their happiness. Consider making a gesture of goodwill as well, such giving them a voucher or a discount off their subsequent purchase, to demonstrate your dedication to their pleasure. Businesses may successfully transform bad experiences into good ones and foster enduring customer connections by giving complaint resolution first priority.

Responding to customer reviews, the fifth step, is crucial to managing and leveraging customer reviews for your company. A customer service tactic that demonstrates your company cares about how its products affect customers' lives is swiftly responding to reviews. Respond to reviews you get from now on. As you extend your gratitude to the consumer for taking the time to submit a review, be sure to address any issues they might have raised. Unflinchingly honest feedback from your consumers is provided through unfavorable reviews. You will learn the precise reason why they are dissatisfied if they are. A few unfavorable reviews among a sizable number of good ones are unimportant, but a preponderance of unfavorable reviews point to an internal issue. You can figure out what needs to be fixed and how to go about doing that adjustment based on those unfavorable evaluations. In reality, you may look to the opinions of consumers themselves for tips on how to improve. Positive client feedback lends credibility to the goods you are offering and might be important for conversion rates. Customer feedback is far more genuine than pre-packaged marketing gimmicks, and both good and negative evaluations may be very beneficial to your company (Bush Brown, 2022).

Sixth step is all about making good customer reviews stand out on your website so that future consumers can notice them. That includes displaying reviews in a prominent location, and it may be accomplished by including reviews on the home page, adding a review-specific page, or placing them next to the goods being evaluated. Make sure to show the average star rating and number of reviews for each item in your top sellers carousel. Alternatively, think about including a top-rated items

carousel on your site. Since the first step in the consumer journey is the homepage, it gives a wonderful chance to direct them toward making a purchase. An example is was created in the Figure 9, where you can see top sellers carousel in Ermitazas.lt homepage (they do not have this feature, so this is an example of how could it look like):

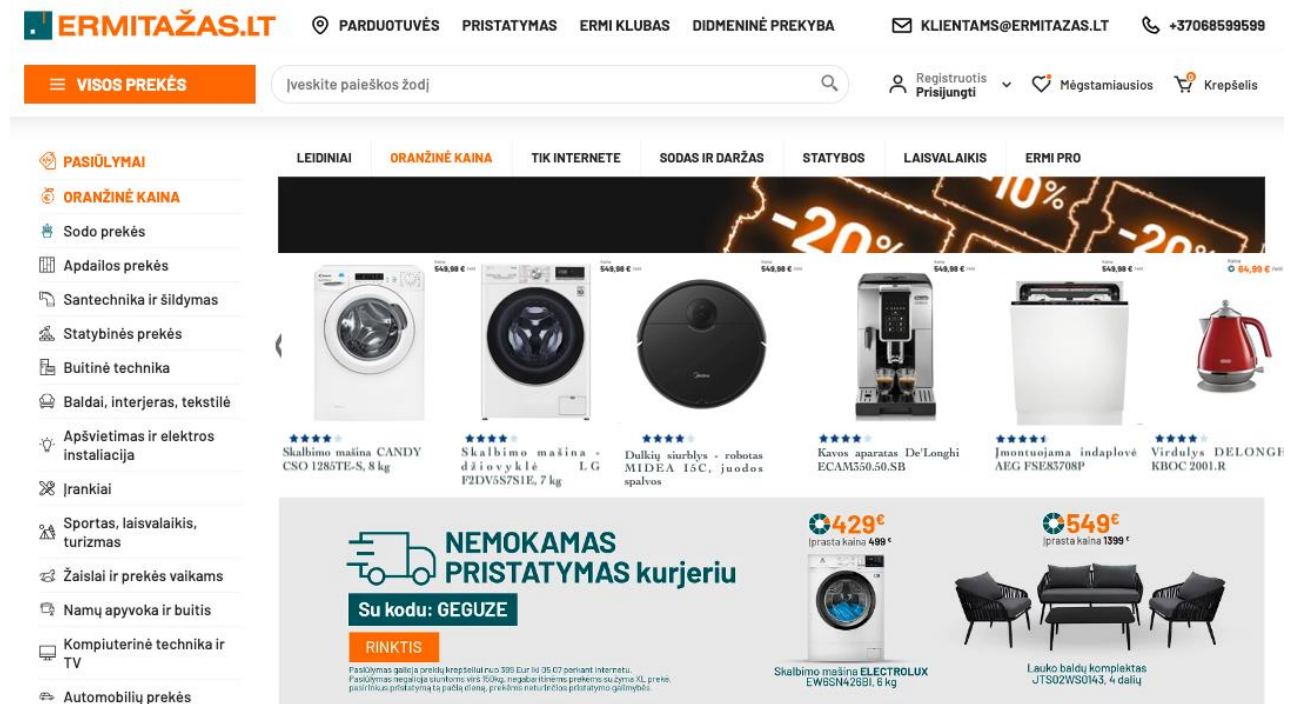


Figure 9. An example of displaying reviews in the home page

Seventh step, and probably the most important for an e-commerce business is monitoring and analyzing these reviews that you are getting. When you have implemented all the steps that were mentioned above, it is important to learn what do these reviews actually mean. Your strengths and shortcomings should be identified using the feedback you get, and modifications or improvements should be made as necessary. Your assortment could be shaped by these reviews, – bad reviews products could be taken out of the assortment, good reviews products – restocked and resupplied. In order to comprehend the general attitude of their evaluations, ecommerce organizations can also think about employing sentiment analysis. By doing so, it will be easier to spot patterns in the comments and respond to any problems or issues that clients frequently bring up. In order to understand how customer reviews affect your bottom line and modify your approach accordingly, it's also critical to measure how they effect business KPIs like conversion rates and revenues.

This manual offers an extensive, step-by-step process for e-commerce companies to use user reviews to boost their online visibility, boost consumer engagement, and boost sales. By putting these

tactics into practice, companies may increase the number of excellent reviews, interact with consumers, and use customer input to improve their goods and services. Businesses may find areas for improvement and alter their offers to better suit client expectations by regularly monitoring and evaluating feedback. Ultimately, e-commerce enterprises may boost customer loyalty, draw in more clients, and boost their sales by valuing consumer feedback and using it to enhance their online reputation.

3.3 Benefits and possibilities of the constructed model

The developed **Model of Effective Online Review Management and Leverage** for utilizing online customer evaluations in e-commerce enterprises provides a number of advantages and opportunities. E-commerce companies may acquire insightful information on their items and a better understanding of their customers by putting this model into practice. Let's explore the benefits and possibilities in more detail.

The ability to boost conversions is one of the main advantages. As were discussed in the theory part, having at least 10 customer reviews, as opposed to none, enhances search engine traffic by 15-20% (Elliott, n.d). For example, software for customer feedback and user-generated content Yotpo conducted their own research to determine how testimonials affect SEO rankings. They tested 30,000 ecommerce firms of all sizes and sectors to see how SEO traffic grew when the only thing they had in common was that they included reviews to their site. Over the course of nine months, they discovered that utilizing customer evaluations improves site traffic by roughly 45% on average (Cullinal, 2022). Purchase decisions are significantly influenced by customer reviews. They may allay potential buyers' worries, assure them that a product is of high quality, and assist in making a choice. Businesses may use customer reviews to increase conversion rates by adding a customer review tool.

Second benefit is that the process of putting the customer review function into action is neither **difficult** or **expensive**. Of course, it relies on elements including the e-commerce platform utilized, the size and expertise of the development staff, and the available budget. Implementing client review modules for e-commerce sites created using well-liked shop management systems may be done very quickly and easily. However, adding such capability could take more time and work for e-commerce sites that are specifically designed for it. But, given the high return on investment that customer reviews may provide, the expenditure is reasonable.

Improved client interaction is another advantage of the developed model. E-commerce companies may promote a feeling of community and involvement among their client base by actively

seeking out and presenting consumer feedback. Customers are more likely to feel connected to and remain loyal to a business when they perceive that their evaluations are recognized and acknowledged. This improved involvement may result in repeat business, word-of-mouth recommendations, and a better reputation for the company.

Additionally, organizations may learn a lot about client preferences, problems, and opportunities for change by examining customer feedback. This input turns into a useful tool that may direct efforts in customer support, marketing, and product development. It gives companies immediate access to client feedback, empowering them to make data-driven choices and anticipate market trends. Additionally, it enables companies to monitor the effectiveness of their products. Businesses may discover failed goods and abandon them by examining consumer feedback, which lowers the expenses associated with ineffective products. On the other hand, they may determine the best-selling items by looking at rave client evaluations and ratings. By effectively allocating resources, improving inventory control, and prioritizing the advertising of their best-selling items, firms may maximize their income potential.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Based on the theoretical analysis it can be concluded that in the digital age, online customer evaluations have become a potent marketing tool. Businesses may gain a lot from these evaluations, including free promotion, better brand recognition, strengthened client connections, and consumer behavior insights. Businesses show their commitment to client satisfaction by reacting to both positive and negative evaluations. This results in greater ratings and less negative comments. Online reviews also significantly impact consumer purchase choices by bridging the knowledge gap between customers and businesses, especially in cases when direct product evaluation is not possible.

The theoretical analysis has also highlighted valence, volume, and dispersion as important variables. Valence is essential for reducing information asymmetry and affecting consumers' opinions of product quality. It refers to the positivity or negativity of reviews. The quantity of reviews affects consumer awareness and functions as a gauge of the validity of the reviews, promoting trust and buy intent. Review dispersion, or the distribution of reviews among various consumer groups, may or may not have a positive effect on sales depending on the average rating and the degree of variety in ratings.

Finally, the purchase habits of consumers are a complicated phenomena that are impacted by several variables. Individual purchase decisions are significantly influenced by internal variables, such as personal wants, aspirations, and attitudes. As consumers look for approval and conformity within their social circles, social influencers including family, friends, and reference groups also have a significant impact. Consumer behavior is further influenced by cultural elements, which include conventions, values, and beliefs. These influences show how society has an impact on people's choices and purchasing habits. Furthermore, economic considerations like income, price sensitivity, and financial limitations have a significant impact on customers' purchasing power and choices.

2. Experts interviews showed that online customer reviews have emerged as a pivotal factor in influencing consumer decisions regarding the purchase of home appliances. It was agreed that online evaluations have surpassed traditional advertising methods in terms of importance and are gaining increasing popularity among consumers. It was also emphasized that these reviews provide more comprehensive, thorough, and accurate information compared to conventional advertising channels. Factors, such as the number of reviews, overall ratings, and the correlation between positive and negative feedback were identified as crucial elements in shaping consumer perceptions. The the growing significance of video testimonials and

authentic feedback, which contribute to the credibility and trustworthiness of the reviews were also emphasized. Online evaluations will continue to gain prominence and evolve into an indispensable marketing tool for the home appliance industry.

3. The survey showed that the majority of respondents agreed that online consumer reviews influenced their decision to purchase a household appliance, and that consumers read online reviews before making a purchase. Online reviews were considered an important factor in the decision-making process and viewed as a reliable source of information. Positive online consumer reviews and the overall rating of a household appliance influenced respondents' purchasing decisions, while negative online consumer reviews influenced not to purchase a particular item. Respondents also demonstrated a higher inclination to rely on online consumer reviews rather than writing reviews themselves. Survey **confirmed** these **hypothesis**: "*H2. Online consumer reviews have a significant impact on purchasing decisions for household appliances*", "*H5. Individuals rely on and consider online customer evaluations when making purchases, yet they are hesitant to write their own*". **Refuted** these: "*H1. More costly household equipment are less likely to be purchased online*", "*H3. The use of specific details has a greater influence on trust than the average rating of the product*", and **partially approved** "*H4. The absence of a review feature on an e-commerce site will have a detrimental influence on trust and purchase behavior*".
4. The expert interviews and survey highlighted several problem areas related to the influence of online reviews on consumer behavior. These areas include bias and manipulation, incomplete or insufficient reviews, negative feedback avoidance, lack of standardization, review spam and filter issues, limited representativeness, privacy and data protection concerns, lack of context, review manipulation by competitors, overreliance on extreme reviews, and reluctance to post reviews.
5. Based on the problematic areas, the model of effective online review management and leverage was formulated, outlining a strategic framework consisting of seven crucial steps for e-commerce businesses to effectively leverage online customer reviews and influence consumer purchasing behavior. These steps include introducing a customer review function, incorporating star ratings and real-life visuals, implementing a review generation strategy, verifying and moderating reviews, responding to customer feedback, highlighting reviews on the website, and monitoring and analyzing reviews.
6. Model of effective online review management and leverage provides e-commerce businesses with numerous advantages and opportunities. By implementing this model, companies can gain insightful information about their products and a better understanding of their customers.

The ability to boost conversions is one of the main benefits, as customer reviews have been shown to significantly enhance search engine traffic. Furthermore, incorporating customer evaluations can result in a substantial increase in site traffic. Customer reviews play a crucial role in influencing purchase decisions by allaying potential buyers' concerns, assuring them of product quality, and facilitating decision-making. The process of implementing the customer review function is relatively straightforward and cost-effective, making it accessible to businesses of all sizes. Additionally, the model promotes improved client interaction, fostering a sense of community and involvement, leading to increased customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. Lastly, analyzing customer feedback provides valuable insights that can inform customer support, marketing strategies, and product development, empowering companies to make data-driven decisions and anticipate market trends.

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