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A Study on the Influence of Social Media Reviews on Consumers' Purchase Intention Towards Flats

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ABSTRACT:

Buying a flat is one of the biggest financial decisions most people ever make, and today many buyers begin their search on social media. This study looks at how social media reviews shape consumers' purchase intention towards flats, with a focus on review credibility, review quality and relevance, the effect of positive and negative reviews, and the role of social media in the search itself. Primary data were collected from 75 social media users interested in buying a flat, using a structured questionnaire and convenience sampling. The responses were analysed with percentage analysis, Pearson correlation, a paired samples t-test and the chi-square test. Review credibility showed a moderate, statistically significant positive relationship with purchase intention ($r = 0.543$, $p < 0.001$). Respondents rated positive and negative reviews at similar levels ($t = -1.66$, $p = 0.101$), and the platform used most often was not significantly associated with how much reviews raised purchase interest ($\chi^2 = 11.64$, $p = 0.706$). Instagram (64.0%) and YouTube (26.7%) were the most used platforms. The findings suggest that real estate developers and marketers should concentrate on genuine, detailed and property-specific customer feedback.

Keywords: Social media reviews, purchase intention, review credibility, electronic word of mouth, flats, real estate

Introduction:

Housing, Information and the Digital Buyer

Housing is a basic need, and in growing cities more families are choosing flats because of rapid urbanisation, smaller households and the need for secure, convenient living. Buying one means a large investment and a commitment that lasts many years, so buyers rarely decide in a hurry. They usually collect information from several places before they even visit a site.

Not long ago that information came mainly from agents, brochures, newspaper advertisements, relatives and site visits.

Smartphones, cheap data and social platforms have changed this. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Google now carry property photographs, walkthrough videos, ratings, comments and the experiences of people who already live in a project. A prospective buyer can read what residents say about construction quality, maintenance, amenities and the builder's behaviour long before speaking to a salesperson.

Social Media Reviews and Purchase Intention

Social media reviews are a form of electronic word of mouth (eWOM). They carry opinions from people with no direct stake in the sale, which is why many consumers treat them as more believable than company advertising. Purchase intention, meaning the willingness or likelihood of buying a product, is the point at which this information turns into a decision. For flats, intention depends on price, location, construction quality, amenities, safety and builder reputation, and reviews have become an extra layer in how buyers judge each of these.

Not every review is trusted equally, however. Buyers tend to ask whether a review looks genuine, whether it gives specific details, and whether it is relevant to the flat they are actually considering. Positive reviews can raise confidence, while negative ones can create doubt and push buyers to investigate further. Many people read both before forming a view.

Review of Literature

Earlier research supports the link between eWOM and buying behaviour. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) explained why consumers write online opinions in the first place, and Jiménez and Mendoza (2013) found that more credible online reviews were linked with higher purchase intention. Filieri (2015) showed that the quality of information in a review affects how useful it seems and whether readers adopt it. Erkan and Evans (2016) extended the

Information Adoption Model to social media and found that the characteristics of eWOM influence purchase intention. Ismagilova et al. (2020) and Qiu and Zhang (2024) reached similar conclusions through meta-analyses, and Rahaman et al. (2022) reported that eWOM quality and credibility matter in social media settings. In the property context, Al-Gasawneh et al. (2023) found that eWOM influenced customers' purchase intention in Jordanian real estate, and Andrean et al. (2024) found that digital marketing and eWOM affected property purchase decisions through purchase intention.

Most of these studies deal with general consumer products, online shopping, services or hospitality. Only a few look at buyers who are searching for residential flats, and fewer still combine several review characteristics in one study. This paper tries to fill that gap.

Relevance of the Study

Developers, marketers and property consultants now spend heavily on social media. Knowing which kinds of reviews buyers believe, and how those reviews affect their intention to buy, can help them communicate more honestly and respond better to customer feedback. The study also helps buyers by showing how other consumers use online reviews to reduce uncertainty.

Objectives:

1. To study the influence of social media reviews on consumers' purchase intention towards flats.
2. To examine the influence of review credibility on purchase intention.
3. To analyse the influence of review quality and review relevance on purchase intention.
4. To examine how positive and negative reviews influence purchase intention.
5. To examine the role of social media in the search for flats.

Methodology:

The study follows a descriptive research design, which describes the characteristics and opinions of a group without manipulating any variable. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 75 respondents who use social media and are interested in buying a flat. Respondents were chosen by convenience sampling, a non-probability method based on accessibility and willingness to take part, because it fitted the time and resources available. The questionnaire covered demographics, social media usage, review credibility, review quality, review relevance, positive and negative reviews, and purchase intention, with most items rated on an agreement scale. Secondary data came from journals, research articles, books and websites on eWOM, online reviews and purchase intention.

Percentage analysis was used to describe the sample and the responses. Pearson correlation tested the relationship between review credibility and purchase intention. A paired samples t-test compared ratings of positive and negative reviews. The chi-square test checked for an association between the most used social media platform and the extent to which reviews raised interest in buying a flat. All tests used the 5% level of significance.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

1. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS FOR AGE

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Below 20 years	10	13.3
21 – 30 years	56	74.7
31 – 40 years	5	6.7
41 – 50 years	2	2.7
Above 50 years	2	2.7
Total	75	100.0

INFERENCE

Most respondents (74.7%) belong to the 21–30 age group, followed by those below 20 years (13.3%). The 31–40 group makes up 6.7%, and the 41–50 and above 50 groups account for 2.7% each. The sample is therefore dominated by young adults, who are also heavy social media users.

2. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS FOR GENDER

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Male	33	44.0
Female	42	56.0
Total	75	100.0

INFERENCE

Female respondents form 56.0% of the sample and male respondents 44.0%, so both genders are represented, with a slightly higher share of women.

3. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS FOR MONTHLY INCOME

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Below Rs. 20,000	42	56.0
Rs. 20,000 – 40,000	25	33.3
Rs. 40,000 – 60,000	3	4.0
Above Rs. 60,000	5	6.7
Total	75	100.0

INFERENCE

More than half of the respondents (56.0%) earn below Rs. 20,000 a month, and another 33.3% earn between Rs. 20,000 and 40,000. Only 10.7% earn above Rs. 40,000, which fits the young age profile of the sample.

4. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS FOR DAILY SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Less than 1 hour per day	11	14.7
1 – 2 hours	32	42.7
2 – 4 hours	17	22.7
More than 4 hours	15	20.0
Total	75	100.0

INFERENCE

The largest group (42.7%) spends one to two hours a day on social media. Another 22.7% spend two to four hours and 20.0% spend more than four hours, so regular use is common among the respondents.

5. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS FOR MOST USED SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Instagram	48	64.0
YouTube	20	26.7
Facebook	2	2.7

PARTICULARS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
WhatsApp	3	4.0
X (Twitter)	1	1.3
Other / missing	1	1.3
Total	75	100.0

INFERENCE

Instagram is the most used platform (64.0%), followed by YouTube (26.7%). WhatsApp, Facebook and X are used by very few respondents. Visual platforms clearly dominate, which suggests that photographs and videos are an important part of how respondents come across property information.

6. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS FOR RESPONSES TO REVIEW-RELATED STATEMENTS

CONSTRUCT	STATEMENT	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE + SA
Credibility	I trust genuine social media reviews	24	21	60.0%
Credibility	I trust reviews that give real experiences	22	18	53.3%
Credibility	I trust reviews supported by photos/videos	30	16	61.3%
Credibility	I trust reviews from genuine users	30	19	65.3%
Quality	I prefer detailed information in reviews	36	12	64.0%
Quality	Reviews on price, location and facilities are useful	41	10	68.0%
Quality	Well-written reviews help me evaluate a flat	32	16	64.0%
Relevance	I prefer reviews that match my needs	35	17	69.3%
Relevance	Reviews about the same flat are more useful	36	15	68.0%
Relevance	Reviews with specific details are more relevant	39	11	66.7%
Pos./Neg. reviews	I pay attention to positive reviews	31	16	62.7%
Pos./Neg. reviews	I pay attention to negative reviews	27	19	61.3%
Pos./Neg. reviews	I consider both positive and negative reviews	32	24	74.7%
Pos./Neg. reviews	Repeated negative reviews make me cautious	30	19	65.3%
Purchase intention	I intend to buy a flat after considering reviews	18	29	62.7%
Purchase intention	Social media reviews increase my interest	20	27	62.7%

Purchase intention	I consider a flat that receives positive reviews	25	28	70.7%
Purchase intention	Reviews make me more confident about buying*	26	22	70.6%
Quality	I prefer detailed information in reviews	36	12	64.0%

Note: Percentages are calculated on 75 respondents. *This item has 68 valid responses.

INFERENCE

Combined agreement was highest for reviews that match the buyer's own needs (69.3%) and for reviews that mention price, location and facilities (68.0%). Photographs and videos (61.3%) and reviews from genuine users (65.3%) also raised trust, while 74.7% said they consider both positive and negative reviews. On purchase intention, 62.7% said they intend to buy a flat after considering reviews, 62.7% said reviews increased their interest, 70.7% would consider a flat that receives positive reviews, and 70.6% of valid respondents felt more confident after reading reviews. Trust in review credibility was not uniform, however:

32.0% disagreed that they trust reviews describing real experiences, so a sizeable minority remains sceptical.

7. CORRELATION ANALYSIS

H0: There is no significant relationship between review credibility and consumers' purchase intention towards flats.

H1: There is a significant relationship between review credibility and consumers' purchase intention towards flats.

VARIABLES	REVIEW CREDIBILITY	PURCHASE INTENTION
Review Credibility	1.000	0.543
Purchase Intention	0.543	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	0.000
N	75	75

INFERENCE

The correlation coefficient is 0.543 and the significance value is 0.000, which is below 0.05. There is a moderate, positive and statistically significant relationship between review credibility and purchase intention, so the null hypothesis is rejected. Buyers who find social media reviews more credible tend to report stronger purchase intention. Correlation shows association only and does not prove cause and effect.

8. PAIRED SAMPLES T-TEST

H0: There is no significant difference between respondents' ratings of positive reviews and negative reviews.

H1: There is a significant difference between respondents' ratings of positive reviews and negative reviews.

VARIABLE		N	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION		STD. ERROR MEAN
Positive Reviews		75	3.60	0.93		0.11
Negative Reviews		75	3.72	0.89		0.10
PAIR	MEAN DIFF.	95% CI		t	df	SIG. (2-TAILED)
Positive – Negative	−0.12	−0.26 to 0.02		−1.66	74	0.101

INFERENCE

The mean score is 3.60 for positive reviews and 3.72 for negative reviews. The t-value is –1.66 with 74 degrees of freedom and a significance value of 0.101, which is above 0.05. The difference is not statistically significant, so the null hypothesis is not rejected. The two ratings are also strongly correlated ($r = 0.765$, $p < 0.001$), meaning respondents who attend to one kind of review tend to attend to the other.

9. CHI-SQUARE TEST

H0: There is no significant association between the social media platform used most and the extent to which reviews increase interest in buying a flat.

H1: There is a significant association between the social media platform used most and the extent to which reviews increase interest in buying a flat.

TEST	VALUE	df	SIG.
Pearson Chi-Square	11.64	15	0.706
Likelihood Ratio	12.63	15	0.631
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.22	1	0.073
N of Valid Cases	75	—	—

INFERENCE

The Pearson chi-square value is 11.64 with 15 degrees of freedom and a significance value of 0.706, well above 0.05. There is no statistically significant association between the platform used most and the extent to which reviews raise interest in buying a flat, so the null hypothesis is not rejected. Many cells in such a table hold very small counts, so the result should be read with some care.

Results

The study examined how social media reviews relate to consumers' purchase intention towards flats. The sample was mostly young (74.7% aged 21–30), slightly more female (56.0%), and largely on lower incomes, with Instagram (64.0%) and YouTube (26.7%) as the main platforms. Respondents showed the strongest agreement with statements about reviews that give price, location and facility details and reviews that match their own needs, and 74.7% said they consider both positive and negative reviews.

Review credibility and purchase intention were moderately and significantly correlated ($r = 0.543$, $p < 0.001$). The paired samples t-test found no significant difference between ratings of positive and negative reviews ($t = -1.66$, $p = 0.101$), and the chi-square test found no significant association between the most used platform and the rise in purchase interest ($\chi^2 = 11.64$, $p = 0.706$). In short, how believable a review seems matters, whereas the tone of the review and the platform it appears on did not produce measurable differences in this sample.

Conclusion

The study concludes that social media reviews are a useful and widely used source of information for people considering a flat. Buyers pay attention to whether a review is genuine, detailed, relevant to the property and supported by photographs or videos, and the stronger they judge a review's credibility, the stronger their purchase intention tends to be. Positive and negative reviews were both taken into account, with no significant gap between them, so developers cannot assume that good reviews alone will carry the decision. Although Instagram and YouTube dominate, the particular platform did not significantly change how much reviews raised interest.

These findings suggest that real estate companies should encourage genuine customers to share specific, property-level experiences, publish honest photographs and videos, keep project information accurate, and respond professionally to negative feedback and repeated complaints instead of hiding them. Social media content that informs rather than only promotes is likely to build more trust.

The study has limitations. It is based on 75 respondents chosen by convenience sampling from a limited area, the sample is young and mostly on lower incomes, and the answers reflect personal perceptions. The results therefore cannot be generalised to all flat buyers. Future research could use a larger and more varied sample, include actual buyers, and test the relationships with regression or structural equation modelling.

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