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The Role of Customer Trust and Online Reviews in E-Commerce Purchase Decisions: A Study in Prakasam District

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the role of customer trust and online reviews in e-commerce purchase decisions. The study considers trust in e-commerce websites, payment security, product authenticity, delivery promises, brand reputation, return policies, and online review characteristics. The supplied questionnaire-response workbook contains 96 completed records. Descriptive analysis was conducted using frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores for five-point Likert-scale statements. The responses show that online reviews are common: 81.2% agreed or strongly agreed they read reviews before purchasing and 81.2% reported that positive reviews and high ratings make them more likely to purchase. The mean response for reading reviews was 4.38 out of 5. Trust-related responses were more varied: 50.0% agreed or strongly agreed they trust e-commerce websites to deliver products as promised. The results suggest that reviews are a main influence in the submitted respondents' purchase evaluations whereas trust in delivery and product-related assurances is more variable. Since the dataset does not identify respondents' district, the results should not be represented as district-specific until the sample location is verified.

Keywords: Customer trust; online reviews; e-commerce; purchase decision; consumer behavior; Prakasam District.

1. Introduction of the Study

E-commerce allows customers to search for products, compare alternatives, read customer reviews, and purchase. Unlike a physical store, an online buyer cannot inspect a product before ordering. As a consequence, consumers may rely on trust cues such as platform reputation, payment security, product descriptions, delivery promises, and return policies when deciding to purchase.

Online reviews provide information from previous buyers. Review ratings, number of reviews, detailed comments, and positive or negative experiences can assist consumers in evaluating product quality and comparing alternatives. The supplied literature-review sheet describes studies connecting electronic word-of-mouth, review characteristics, trust, perceived risk, and purchase intention. It also identifies a need for research in a specific Indian district context.

The present project focuses on customer trust and online reviews in e-commerce purchase decisions, with Prakasam District as the intended geographical setting. The supplied survey data are analysed descriptively. As no location item appears in the response sheet, confirmation of respondents' residence or study-area eligibility is required before the findings can be attributed specifically to Prakasam District.

2. Research Gap

The supplied literature review includes studies from Vietnam, China, South Korea, Pakistan, Romania, and Indonesia. These studies examine review quality and quantity, trust and distrust, perceived risk, source credibility, review inconsistency, and purchase intention. The gaps recorded in the supplied review include limited focus on Indian district-level consumers, studies centred around other countries or social-commerce settings, and research that examines trust or reviews separately rather than jointly. The present study addresses this proposed contextual gap by examining trust and online reviews together in an intended Prakasam District setting. The geographic gap can only be claimed as addressed after respondent location is verified.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To examine respondents' trust in e-commerce websites and online sellers.
- To identify how customers use online reviews, ratings, and review quantity to evaluate products.
- To understand respondents' perceptions of positive reviews, negative reviews, and detailed review content.

- To examine respondents' reported influence of customer trust and online reviews on e-commerce purchase decisions.
- To provide practical suggestions for e-commerce platforms and online sellers based on the survey responses.

4. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are proposed for statistical testing. The supplied report presents descriptive results; inferential tests of these relationships have not been conducted in this draft.

H0₁: Customer trust is not significantly associated with e-commerce purchase decision responses.

H1₁: Customer trust is significantly associated with e-commerce purchase decision responses.

H0₂: Online review evaluations are not significantly associated with e-commerce purchase decision responses.

H1₂: Online review evaluations are significantly associated with e-commerce purchase decision responses.

H0₃: Customer trust and online reviews jointly do not significantly explain e-commerce purchase decision responses.

H1₃: Customer trust and online reviews jointly significantly explain e-commerce purchase decision responses.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study is designed as a quantitative, descriptive survey based on structured questionnaire responses. The analysis summarizes respondent characteristics and stated views on trust, online reviews, and purchase decisions.

5.2 Sample Design

The supplied response workbook contains 96 records. The sampling technique and recruitment procedure are not documented in the workbook. Sample size is therefore reported as the number of available responses, rather than a confirmed probability sample. Respondents' district is not recorded in the supplied questionnaire.

5.3 Data Collection

The dataset was supplied as an Excel export of questionnaire responses, with a timestamp, demographic and online-shopping questions, and 20 five-point agreement statements. The response sheet contains no missing values in the displayed fields. The collection mode and exact field dates should be confirmed by the researcher before final submission.

5.4 Questionnaire Preparation

The questionnaire contains profile questions (age, gender, education, occupation, online-shopping frequency, preferred platform, product category, monthly spending, and experience with online shopping) and Likert-scale statements. Agreement responses are coded as Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Neutral=3, Agree=4, and Strongly Agree=5 for descriptive calculations.

5.5 Data Analysis

Frequency and percentage distributions were used for categorical profile items. For Likert statements, mean scores and the number and percentage of Agree/Strongly Agree responses were calculated. A mean closer to 5 indicates stronger agreement. These descriptive statistics do not establish statistical significance or causation.⁶ Data Analysis and Interpretation

Analysis

Customer trust plays a vital role in online shopping. Customers rely on the credibility of the e-commerce site and make their purchase decisions with the assurance of buying original products. Building trust in the e-commerce platform, mode of payment, product details, delivery and return policy, among other factors, reassures customers and influences their purchase decisions.

Besides trust, online reviews also play a critical role in influencing customers' purchasing behavior. Most buyers always search for a product review before buying a product. Reviews help customers compare one product to another and make their choices based on the opinion of other buyers. The star ratings and the number of reviews also help customers identify which product to buy based on their satisfaction level. Moreover, buyers can decide which item to purchase based on negative reviews and avoid buying a certain item due to dissatisfaction reports by other customers.

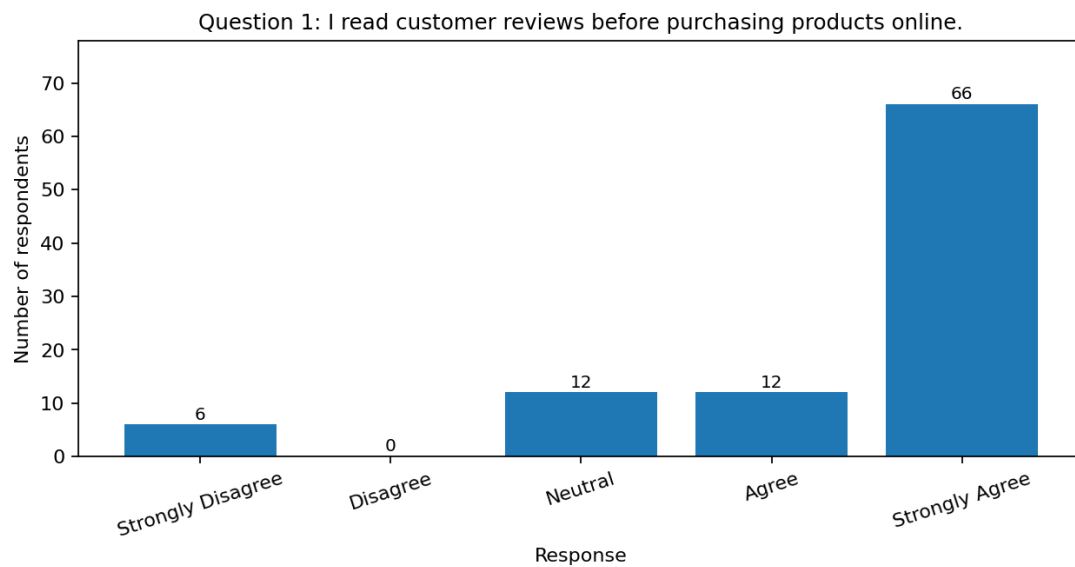
Therefore, when customers are motivated to buy a certain product due to trust and reviews, their purchasing behavior is influenced. Thus, the factors used in the study are vital in understanding the decision-making process of customers during online shopping.

6.1 Respondent Profile

6.2 Trust and Online Review Statements

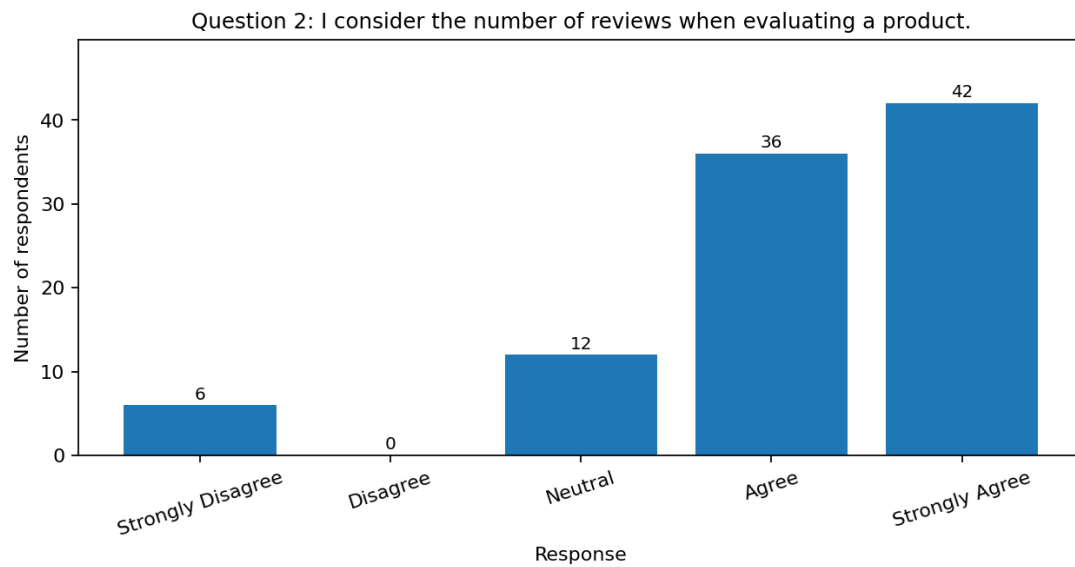
The following individual bar charts show the number of respondents selecting each response option for ten online-review and purchase-decision statements (n = 96).

Question 1: I read customer reviews before purchasing products online.

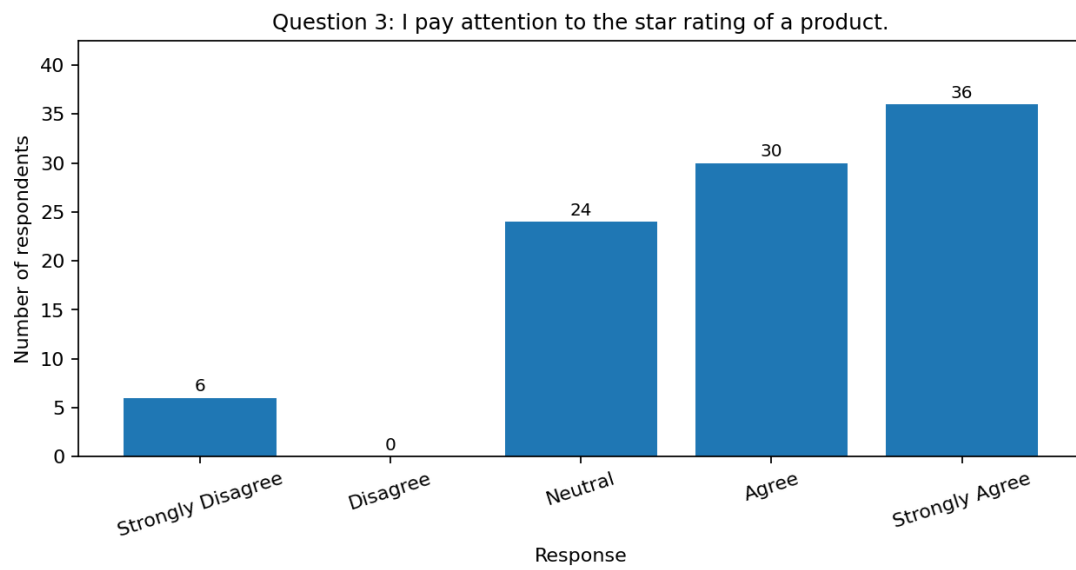


Response counts (n=96): Strongly Disagree: 6 | Disagree: 0 | Neutral: 12 | Agree: 12 | Strongly Agree: 66

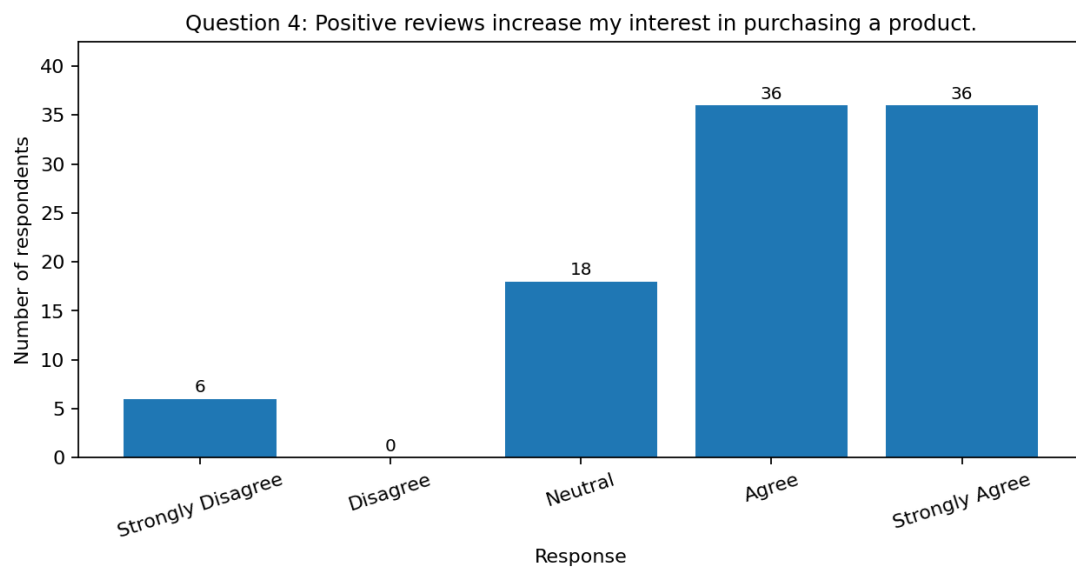
Question 2: I consider the number of reviews when evaluating a product.



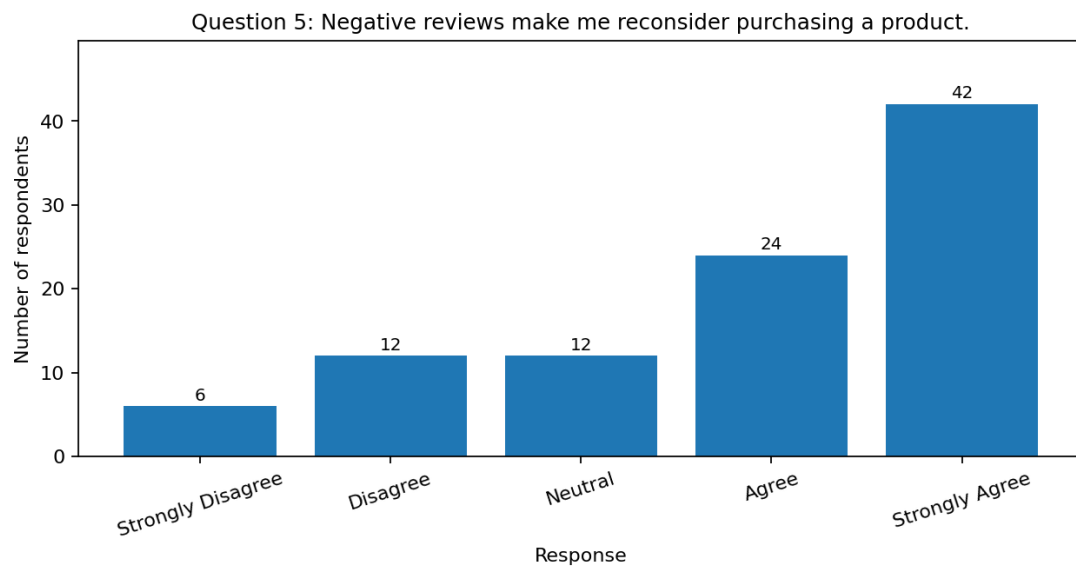
Response counts (n=96): Strongly Disagree: 6 | Disagree: 0 | Neutral: 12 | Agree: 36 | Strongly Agree: 42

Question 3: I pay attention to the star rating of a product.

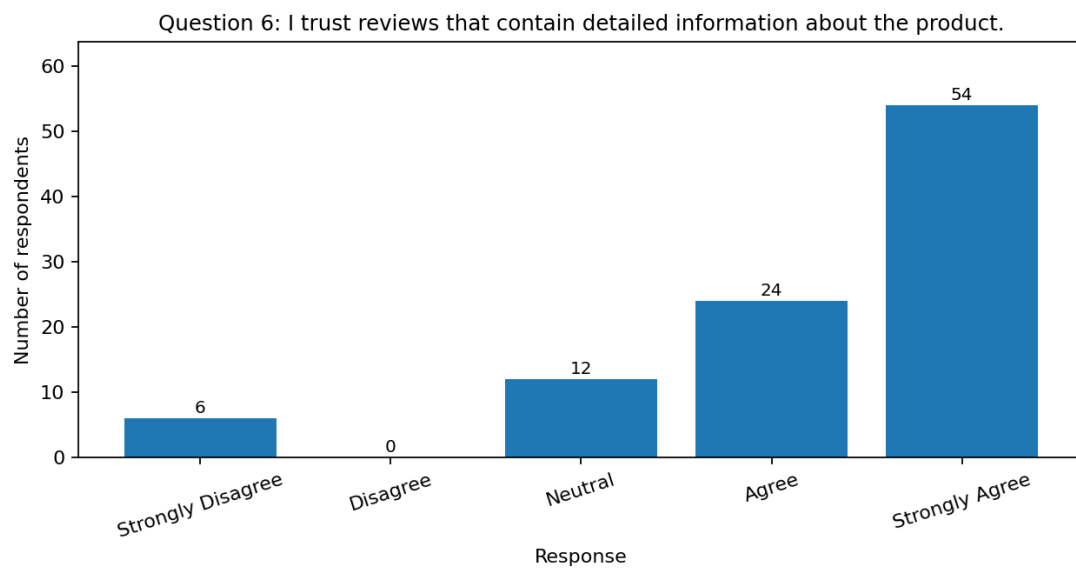
Response counts (n=96): Strongly Disagree: 6 | Disagree: 0 | Neutral: 24 | Agree: 30 | Strongly Agree: 36

Question 4: Positive reviews increase my interest in purchasing a product.

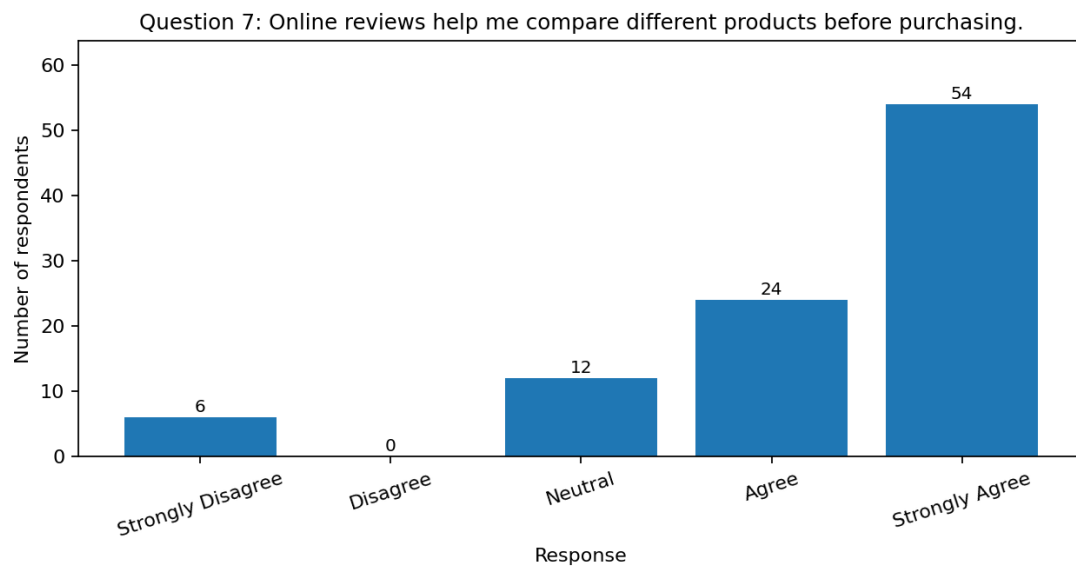
Response counts (n=96): Strongly Disagree: 6 | Disagree: 0 | Neutral: 18 | Agree: 36 | Strongly Agree: 36

Question 5: Negative reviews make me reconsider purchasing a product.

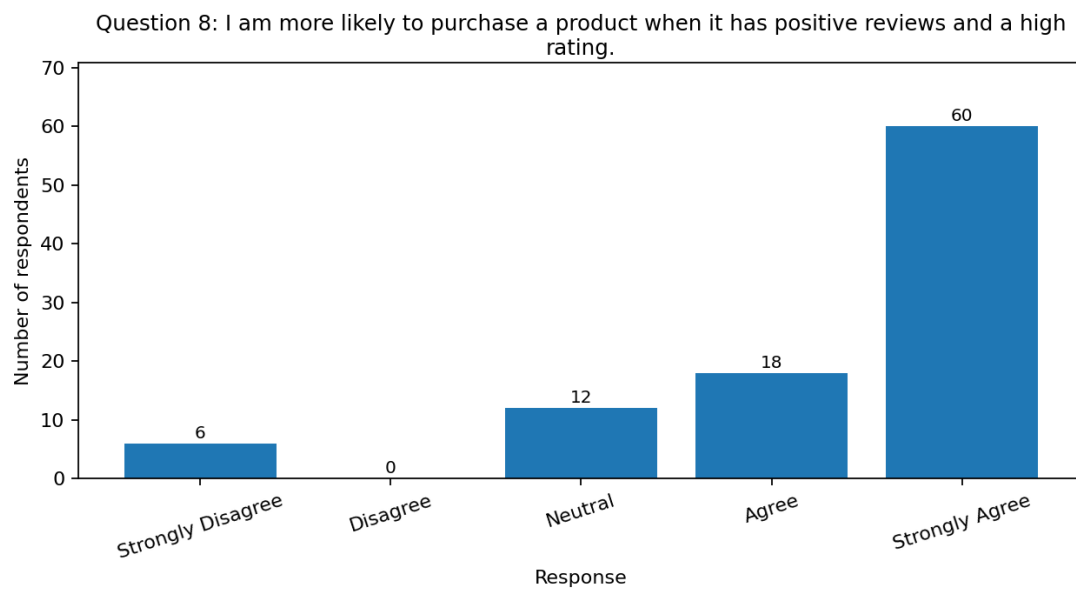
Response counts (n=96): Strongly Disagree: 6 | Disagree: 12 | Neutral: 12 | Agree: 24 | Strongly Agree: 42

Question 6: I trust reviews that contain detailed information about the product.

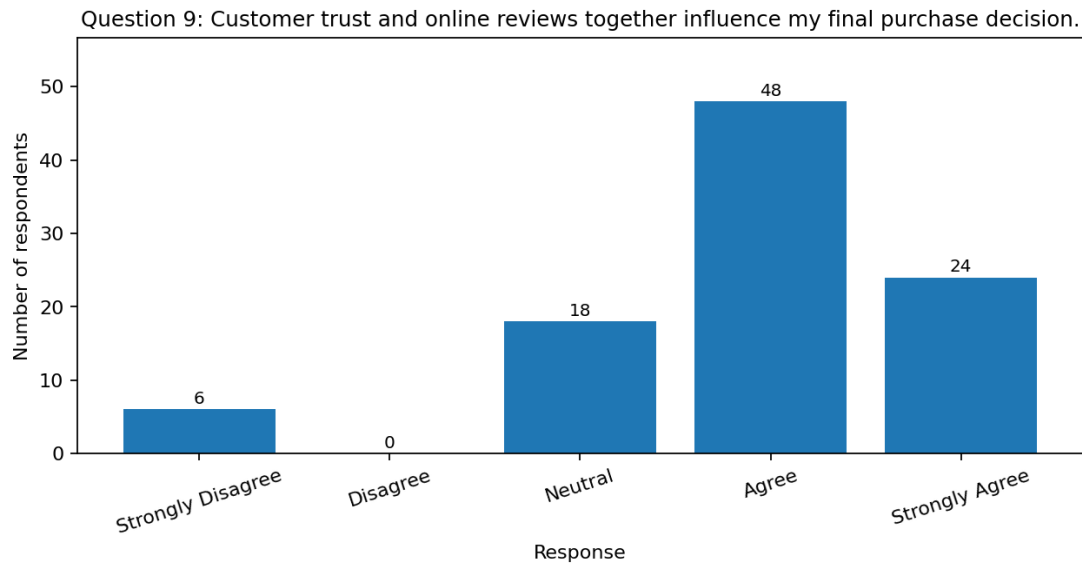
Response counts (n=96): Strongly Disagree: 6 | Disagree: 0 | Neutral: 12 | Agree: 24 | Strongly Agree: 54

Question 7: Online reviews help me compare different products before purchasing.

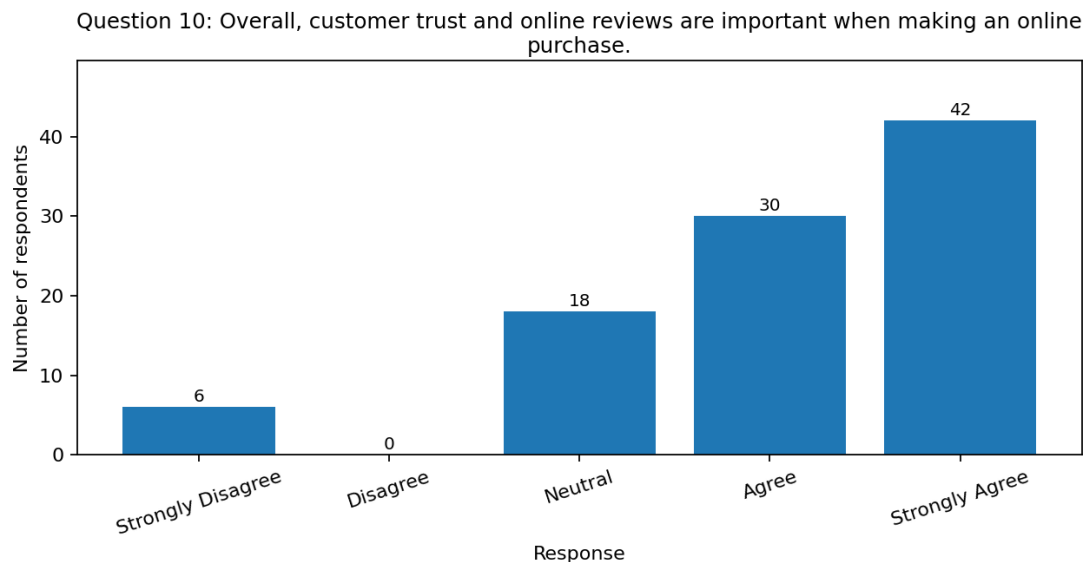
Response counts (n=96): Strongly Disagree: 6 | Disagree: 0 | Neutral: 12 | Agree: 24 | Strongly Agree: 54

Question 8: I am more likely to purchase a product when it has positive reviews and a high rating.

Response counts (n=96): Strongly Disagree: 6 | Disagree: 0 | Neutral: 12 | Agree: 18 | Strongly Agree: 60

Question 9: Customer trust and online reviews together influence my final purchase decision.

Response counts (n=96): Strongly Disagree: 6 | Disagree: 0 | Neutral: 18 | Agree: 48 | Strongly Agree: 24

Question 10: Overall, customer trust and online reviews are important when making an online purchase.

Response counts (n=96): Strongly Disagree: 6 | Disagree: 0 | Neutral: 18 | Agree: 30 | Strongly Agree: 42

Interpretation: The top mean scores in the displayed statements relate to reading reviews before purchase (4.38), greater likelihood of purchase when reviews are positive and ratings are high (4.31), and trusting detailed reviews / using reviews to compare products (all 4.25). The statement regarding trusting websites to deliver as promised has a mean of 3.5 and 50.0% agreement. This indicates comparatively less consistent confidence in delivery promises in the submitted responses.

6.3 Overall Interpretation

Across the submitted responses, customers report actively consulting online reviews and using review information in product evaluation. Trust-related indicators show a more mixed pattern, particularly around delivery promises, product genuineness, and return/refund policies. The descriptive results are consistent with the study's focus on the combined relevance of trust and reviews, but they do not by themselves prove a statistically significant relationship between the constructs.

7. Findings

- The dataset contains 96 completed response records, with no missing values in the analysed columns.
- Respondents are predominantly aged 18–25, undergraduate students, and male; this limits how broadly the results can be generalized.
- Amazon is the most frequently reported e-commerce platform in the sample.
- 81.2% agreed or strongly agreed that they read customer reviews before purchasing.
- 81.2% agreed or strongly agreed that positive reviews and high ratings make them more likely to purchase.
- Detailed reviews and reviews used for product comparison each received a mean score of 4.25 out of 5.
- Only 50.0% agreed or strongly agreed that e-commerce websites deliver products as promised, making this one of the more mixed trust indicators.
- The supplied data do not identify respondents' district, so district-specific findings remain unverified.

8. Suggestions

- E-commerce platforms should make verified-purchase reviews, detailed feedback, and product ratings easy to find.
- Platforms and sellers should provide accurate product descriptions, clear images, and transparent information about product specifications.
- Delivery timelines, tracking updates, return conditions, and refund procedures should be communicated clearly to strengthen confidence.
- Platforms should monitor suspicious or misleading reviews and provide mechanisms for reporting them.
- Online sellers should respond constructively to negative feedback and use recurring complaints to improve service and product quality.
- Future data collection should include a mandatory district/town question and confirm that respondents belong to the intended Prakasam District study population.
- Future analysis may test the proposed hypotheses using suitable correlation or regression methods after the sample, construct scoring, and assumptions are checked.

9. Conclusion

The descriptive analysis of the 96 supplied responses suggests that online reviews play a noticeable role in consumers' online product evaluation and reported purchase decisions. Respondents commonly read reviews, consider review quantity and ratings, and use detailed comments to compare products. Trust is also relevant, although confidence in delivery promises and some other trust indicators is less uniform. The study therefore highlights the importance of both review information and trust-building practices in e-commerce. However, the current dataset does not establish causality or statistical significance, and it does not record respondents' district. The title's Prakasam District scope should be confirmed through respondent-location information before the findings are presented as representative of that district.

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