EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF REVIEW AUTHENTICITY ON CONSUMER TRUST IN THE ONLINE E-COMMERCE INDUSTRY IN THE UK

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Declaration Form.

I **Atik Yasinbhai Vahora**, declare that this dissertation has been composed by myself, that the work contained herein is entirely my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or qualification, in whole or in part, except as specified.

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The aim of the research is to critically evaluate the impact of review authenticity on consumer trust in the online E-commerce industry in the UK. Shift to ecommerce shopping has increased since past few years and Covid-19 triggered the pace. In this context, online shopping increasingly makes consumers inclined to check reviews and purchase products. However, fake reviews or questions about review authenticity creates confusion among consumers and this triggers the question of consumer remain loyal to the brand. This aspect is important and reflects the research significance.

Methods: The study considered positivism for its objective assumption and based on deductive approach the specific observation of the research context has been ensured. The study has conducted a survey with 100 sample size and has used SPSS for interpreting the research findings. The study has followed descriptive statistics, correlation test, ANOVA and regression methods to interpret the results.

Findings: The analysis provides an understanding of the influence of providing authentic reviews. It explains the market condition of the UK where the consumers look after the online reviews and base their decisions around this understanding. Positive skewness, huge data variation and positive correlation has shown that review authenticity has a significant impact on consumer trust in the UK ecommerce industry. Consumer trust is a vital factor in the ecommerce industry and in this dimension, authentic reviews and ratings can help the ecommerce brands to achieve. The study findings could help the academicians and research scholars to delve more into this topic with primary observations who are willing to conduct research with a closer topic

Implications: The need for authentic reviews and ratings highlighted in the results comes as a roadmap for market practitioners or decision makers in ecommerce industry which could make them understand that how authentic reviews can influence consumer trust. The study has been able to enrich existing theoretical base by emphasis that how much authentic reviews and ratings are influential for achieving consumer trust

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Trust is an important factor in any relationship. In business, relationships such as those between the seller and a buyer are identified as key factors of brand success. Abyad (2017) states that the trust factor seems to be more important for an organisation which is working in online in compared to offline landscape in retail operations. The article has effectively integrated the definition of trust by defining that the trust factor is developed only when the consumers anticipate that the retail seller is not going to take advantage of consumers' unawareness or weakness. Hence, this is more relevant in online buying sectors, where consumers rely only on the description and images to make the purchase decision. Therefore, it can be said consumer trust is a vital aspect which supports consumer to make positive decisions towards purchase.

The choice of purchasing from online sites using e-commerce services is found to be critical for a consumer, as it pertains to the virtual point of source of information. As found by Misra, Dutta and Bhatta (2024), this is why the consumers of e-commerce organisations rely greatly on reviews. The article further entails that, online reviews of a product or service in e-commerce influences highly the brand reputation. However, the article also identifies that certain consumers prefer reviews that are forwarded by reviewers with better reputations. This often includes influencers who have made an impression of genuineness in their activities. This helps in understanding that consumers not only consider reviews as an important determinant of their decision-making but also consider the reputation of the authenticity of the reviews. However, a number of aspects are associated with review generation on e-commerce sites. Given the wide target market of e-commerce companies, there is less chance that consumers will find the same influencer review, which they trust, on all products they aim to buy. Hence, there might be a differential influence of different kinds of reviews on consumer purchasing behaviour. This raises a serious question about the authenticity of reviews for online purchases, especially through e-commerce platforms.

It can be further highlighted that consumer trust being a vital role player in building the reputation of a brand, it is necessary for consumers to find authentic reviews to make purchase decisions. Therefore, further research is necessary on this aspect for evaluation of authentic reviews on purchase intention of customers.

1.2 Research Problem

The problem that the researcher aims to focus on in the current research is the authenticity of reviews produced against online products on e-commerce platforms. As identified by Allard, Dunn and White (2020), negative reviews are found to be equally effective in discouraging consumers from a purchase as positive ones encourage them to make a purchase. Thus, it is a matter of concern for both the consumers and sellers. Further, as stated by Cao (2023), fake reviews of a product or a brand is liable to reduce the goodwill of the e-commerce platforms. The article states that appearance of fake reviews is often misleading as they cannot be distinguished from the genuine ones. As a result, these reviews may push a consumer towards making wrong decisions due to exposure to fake reviews. Thus, this entails that both the sellers and the consumers are impacted to some extent by such practices. The current research aims to highlight this aspect. The research therefore aims to indulge in conducting critical analysis of the true impact of authentic reviews over e-commerce platform on consumer trust.

The current research, therefore, wants to focus on the aspect like critical analysis of the influences produced by authentic reviews on consumers in e-commerce. In the process, the challenges of identifying authentic reviews will be analysed by the current research.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

The research intends to present a critical analysis regarding impact of review authenticity on consumer trust in the online E-commerce industry in the UK. The study will also aim to review the challenges that might be faced due to inauthentic reviews in e-commerce mediums in terms of influencing consumer trust.

Below are the research objectives.

- To analyse the concept of review authenticity on consumer trust in the purchasing process from e-commerce sites
- To evaluate the impact of review authenticity on consumer trust in the online E-commerce industry in the UK
- To demonstrate the challenges associated with review authenticity on consumer trust in the online E-commerce industry in the UK

- To elucidate recommended strategies for overcoming challenges associated with review authenticity on consumer trust in the online E-commerce industry in the UK

1.4 Research Questions

RQ 1: What is the concept of review authenticity and its relationship with consumer trust?

RQ 2: How can review authenticity influence customer trust in E commerce?

RQ 3: What are the challenges associated with review authenticity on consumer trust in the online E-Commerce industry in the UK?

RQ 4: What are the recommended strategies for overcoming challenges associated with review authenticity on consumer trust in the online E-Commerce industry in the UK?

1.5 Research Rationale

Shift to ecommerce shopping has increased since past few years and Covid-19 triggered the pace. In this context, online shopping increasingly makes consumers inclined to check reviews and purchase products. However, fake reviews or questions about review authenticity creates confusion among consumers and this triggers the question of consumer remain loyal to the brand. In this context, study of Chen et al. (2022) can be taken where the author mentioned that focus on online reviews based on consumers purchase decision making has been focused; however, the evidence lacks in terms of consumer loyalty and also geographical area of UK. Moreover, little evidence is available about understanding how review authenticity influences consumer trust and thus, this motivated the researcher to conduct the study.

1.6 Dissertation Structure

The dissertation will follow the following structure.

Chapter 1: Introduction	This chapter introduces the topic and provides a background information to reveal the context with formulated aim, objectives, and questions. It also informs about the problem identified by the researcher within the current research context.

	It will also identify the significance of the research, proving the effectiveness of choosing the topic.
Chapter 2: Literature Review	The second chapter provides a review based on the existing studies to reflect on themes, concepts and models within the present research context. The chapter will help in defining the variables considered in the research topic. In the process, the chapter will also help in understanding the relationship between the variables. This chapter also identifies the theories and models underlying the topic and the variables considered in the topic. The researcher will intend to identify gaps in the existing literature and based on those gaps, this chapter will provide a comprehensive review to fill the missing parts. Thus, the chapter will help produce preliminary knowledge for the researcher.
Chapter 3: Methodology	Methodology is the third chapter of the dissertation that helps in laying down the chosen methods for conducting the research. The chapter will identify the research approach considered by the researcher along with the philosophy, strategy, data collection and analysis methods. The chapter will detail the choices made by the researcher to conduct the current research and will also provide justification for the choices by citing scholarly articles. The chapter will also identify the limitations of the research to inform about the attributes associated with the research findings.
Chapter 4: Data analysis	This is the chapter where the researcher will present the data analysis. The chapter will conduct an analysis based on the research questions to identify the information from the data collected to answer the research questions. This chapter will also group the information under relevant categories based on the research objectives. The information will be produced in the form of graphs, charts or illustration.
Chapter 5: Discussion	This chapter will help link the information collected by the researcher with the research objectives. The discussion will

	interpret the data collected and answer the questions developed at the beginning of the research. The chapter will also relate the research findings to the findings of the literature review, which will help validate the research findings.
Chapter 6: Conclusion	This is the last chapter where main findings are summarised in order to present the research conclusions. Some recommendations will also be presented to help future research professionals and also business market practitioners in online retail industry.

Table 1.1: Dissertation structure

(Source: Self-developed)

1.7 Theoretical framework

Dependent variable: Consumer trust

Consumer trust is associated with the perception of eligibility of an organisation to be dependable in terms of consumer satisfaction.

Independent variable: Review authenticity

Review authenticity indicates the authentication of the feedback produced by consumers to rate the service or product of an organisation.
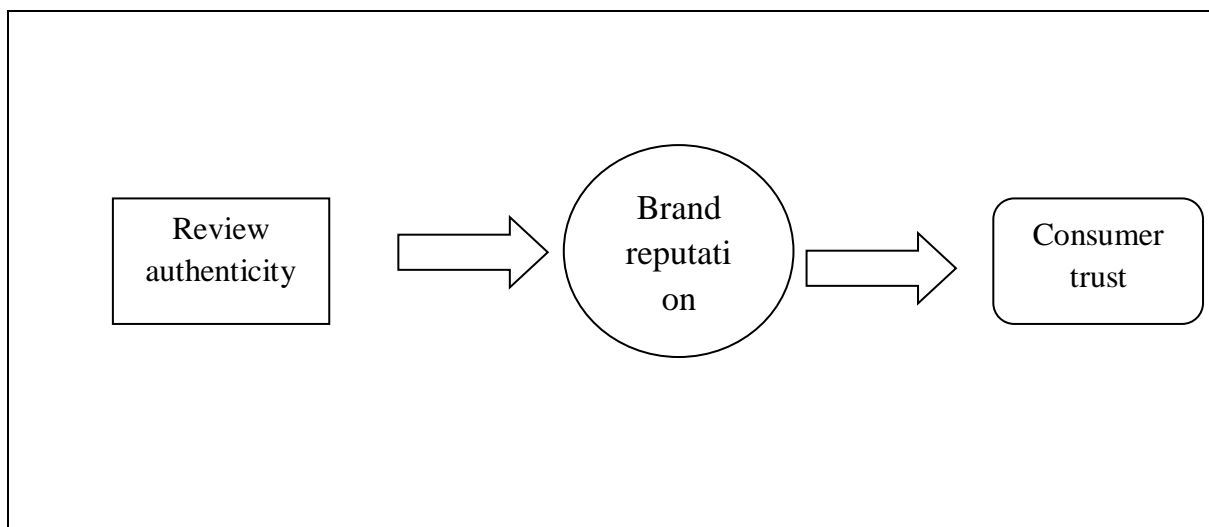
Figure 1.1: Theoretical framework

(Source: Self-developed)

The theoretical framework presented above show that authenticity of reviews on a product or service in the e-commerce medium produces significant impact on the brand reputation. Authentic positive comments in reviews help in improvement of the consumer perception about services. Thus, there is improvement of overall view of brand reputation. Positive brand reputation of an organisation in the e-commerce sector is found to be positively associated with the consumer trust. Hence, the framework shows that interim brand operations like development of positive perception of brand reputation are necessary in order to build aspects like consumer trust.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter literature review has a connection with reviewing collection of secondary scholarly data by reviewing the scholarly articles published by previous scholars. The researcher has established the variables which are linked with the research context to highlight dependent and independent variables. The researcher critically evaluated the findings in the literature review by presenting arguments produced by different scholars. Besides, the chapter will also identify the literature gap that will be considered by the researcher to be fulfilled in the current research. The information gathered in the current research will act as preliminary knowledge and will also complement the primary research work.

2.2 Overview of the concept of consumer trust in the retail industry

Consumer trust is one of the common concepts of business. Khamitov et al. (2024) mentioned that trust is one of the significant aspects that is considered in consumer research. The article identifies that trust is an important attitudinal or behavioural aspect that reflects on the consumers' notion of perception and belief in an organisation. The findings in the study of Isaeva, Gruenewald and Saunders (2020) show that consumer trust in different service or product industries are largely associated with consumer loyalty. Thus, additionally, it is induced with substantiate attributes that also include sales effective and successful exchange of relationship through cooperative and collaborative behaviour. Therefore, from the findings of both these articles, it can be stated that both of them are in agreement with each other. Consumer trust has indeed been given high importance in the business world.

On the other side, opinion of Chen et al. (2022) highlighted that trust has become an essential factor in both online and offline transactions. With the increase of digital engagement in business activities and transactions with consumers (and other stakeholders), organisations are more bound to use technological measures to conduct digital operations for business transactions. The article finds that the trust of consumers in a brand positively impacts consumer relationships. Consumer engagement with the product or service base is identified to have an intermediate role in improving consumer trust in the organisation. In a brief discussion, the article also shows that in such cases, it is needed to understand level of consumer loyalty regarding a brand. The findings claim that this aspect helps in defining the relationship between

consumer loyalty. The literature in the discussion above has also been found to have mentioned the intermediate role of consumer engagement and loyalty. Hence, a supporting finding is produced by Chen et al. (2022) that proves that consumer engagement and loyalty are important determinants of consumer trust.

The overview of the concept of trust in business in general shows its important influence on positive business development. The topic of the current research focuses on that consumer trust in a special scenario, that is, during e-commerce transactions. As realised from the background study of the topic, e-commerce operation is an innovative measure of a business model that involves digital communication. The discussion in this section by Chen et al. (2022) has shown that digital transactions have induced online operations. Consumer trust is identified as an important concept in digital transactions. Hence, the role of consumer trust needs to be studied differentially to determine the special case of consumer engagement.

As stated by Falahat et al. (2019), e-commerce operations have grown rapidly in the past few decades and have emerged as a significant trend with additional technological aid. The article finds that certain factors are strongly linked with e-commerce consumer trust and engagement. A few of these factors include the level of brand recognition, service quality of the brand and service security. Service security in the context of e-commerce functioning is a vital aspect because it indicates the safe delivery of service and the ability to live up to consumer expectations. The article effectively describes the fact that e-commerce operations consider the significant differences between consumer trust and consumer satisfaction. In an ecommerce environment, it is noted that consumer trust is influenced by the factors that can be observed before purchasing from a seller. This is unlike the purchase cycle in physical brick-and-mortar shops. Hence, the article explains that consumer satisfaction is not an antecedent of consumer trust in e-commerce environment. Thus, the article claims that word of mouth plays an has a significant role in development of consumer trust in e-commerce services.

The discussion above shows that though consumer trust is an important factor, however it is also a volatile factor in e-commerce operations. This is because; the e-commerce operations show that consumer trust in the e-commerce industry is derived before the development of consumer satisfaction. This is mainly because when a consumer orders a purchase on the e-commerce platform, it can be assumed that they have already derived trust in the seller. Thus, the trust factor can only change into satisfaction after a consumer completes a purchase from the current e-commerce clients. The valuable insights and in-depth introspection from the

above discussion, shows that further analysis is required to be conducted to understand the determinants of consumer trust in e-commerce operations.

2.2.2 Consumer trust and its determinants in e-commerce

As realised from the discussions above, consumer trust is an important factor that determines consumer satisfaction, specifically in the field of e-commerce operations. Further discussion in this section will help in identifying the determinants of consumer trust in e-commerce operations. The findings of Bojang et al. (2017) show that an organisation is liable to derive consumer trust in the e-commerce format by improving the perceived security of the consumers. The article further shows that an organisation in the e-commerce market can improve the perceived security of the consumers by improving the perceived reputation. The article finds that the perceived privacy of the consumers while making a purchase from online platforms is a vital role player to enhance improvement in the perceived reputation of the brand. Thus, the virtual e-commerce environment leverages perceived privacy and security to influence consumers positively and build trust that drives them to make a purchase.

The growth of e-commerce businesses has attracted various profitable opportunities for retailers. This has led to overcrowding of the e-commerce platforms. Hence, this has led to tough competition to win consumer attention and trust. Bhat and Darzi (2020) state that this is a key challenge for the brands operating in the e-commerce medium. Consumers are able to easily switch over to other sellers as they have a wide pool of options and low switching costs. The article states that this is the primary attribute due to which e-commerce companies try to develop quality features on the web services so that they remain differentiated from the competitors. It must be realised that this is also another way for e-commerce companies to attract consumers to their brand. This is considered to be an important determinant in evoking positive trustworthiness among online consumers. This phenomenon points out the fact that e-service operations aim to focus on attributes that help improve perceived usefulness. From the findings of Bojang et al. (2017), it is seen that the perceived usefulness of the e-services helps in improving the e-trust of the consumers. Hence, a consensus finding can be spotted here that shows the positive influence of the perceived usefulness of a product in an e-commerce platform helps in building e-trust. Thus, the findings of Bhat and Darzi (2020) indicated that perceived usefulness positively mediates on influencing on the e-trust of consumers.

The findings of Bhat and Darzi (2020) explain that the development of trust in an organisation in the e-commerce platform is an important prerequisite for organisational success. The article states that a consumer hesitates to make a purchase on e-commerce platforms until a level of trust has been built between the e-retailer and e-buyer. Hence, it is also clear from the findings that trust encourages consumers to opt for an online purchase. Mayayise (2023) further shows a similar finding that says that elements like seller reputation have a pivotal role to play in development of consumer trust in ecommerce business operations. Apart from that, the findings in this article show that positive product reviews and the authentication of the review raisers also play important roles in the development of consumer trust. However, the article has explored another dimension of influencers of consumer trust in online purchasing. The article mentions that website quality and structural assurance of the website of an e-commerce seller play an important role in influencing buyers' perspectives. Good website quality imparts an idea of organisational commitment. The consumers feel reassured of the authenticity of the brand and its presence. This is an important aspect that is necessary for operating in e-commerce platforms with digital operations. This is an important contribution of the article that helped in understanding the contribution of website quality as a determinant of consumer trust.

2.2.3 Overview of the British retail industry with respect to e-commerce

Studying the ecommerce market and the different factors that affect e-commerce functioning in the UK market, there is a significant importance to understand the deliverables of the UK retail market. As stated by Ward (2024), as of January 2023, about 314,040 retail businesses were operating in the UK market. Hence, it can be understood that the retail business market holds a significant place in the British economy. In the same year, retail sales were found to be at 510 billion dollars, reflecting a 3% hike compared to previous year (Ward, 2024). On the other hand, Statista (2023) states that the United Kingdom is one of the most advanced markets for e-commerce. In 2023, the country consisted of about 60 million e-commerce users. This leaves out the non-digital buyer population, which is in the minority. According to Statista (2023), the overall retail sales made in e-commerce operations constitute about the overall retail sales in the United Kingdom in 2022. E-commerce sales have been found to have increased rapidly since the integration of the internet and its introduction into the daily lives of the common people. Based on the findings, since the inception of the Internet in 2020, the retail sales rate has grown by about 47% (Statista, 2023). In the same year, the market share of e-commerce retail sales was 32.5% (Coppola, 2023). However, Statista (2023) also identifies that

retail sales, especially in the e-commerce sector, have received a significant blow during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The discussion above therefore highlights ecommerce retail in UK plays a vital role in the entire retail landscape of UK.The industry has shown strong signs of growth in the previous years. According to Coppola (2023), the industry has a high potential to grow up to achieve a market share as high as 38.6 per cent. Hence, it is believed that the prevalence of e-commerce sales will increase further in the coming years, considering it is an important part of the UK economy. Thus, the e-commerce market has ample scope to flourish in the long term.

2.2.4 Overview of the Concept of Review and Ratings in E-commerce and Critical Review

Prominent e-commerce platforms have a long-standing trend to allow consumers to write reviews for the products they have purchased and used. This measure of collecting reviews is a more fruitful and flexible form of review collection and the consumers can leave their review at any stage of their purchase. This is an important method of collecting information from consumers based on their experience. These online reviews have been considered an important form of data that is also known as e-word of mouth in the e-commerce retail service (Kaushik et al., 2018). The article also restates an important fact identified earlier in the literature that is these reviews play an integrated role in shaping the perceptions about the product. The article identifies that sequence of positive reviews against a product helps in offering informativeness of the product (Kaushik et al., 2018). This significantly adds to the value of the product helping in improving sales.

On the other hand, in a similar tone, Md Altab et al. (2022) state that review content and ratings are important indicators of the consumer shopping experience. It also aligns with the findings above showing that the reviews explicitly influence the reputation of the seller. All these attributes influence the consumers in several ways. Md Altab et al. (2022) also state that several types of reviews are usually produced by the consumers such as textual reviews, photo reviews, and video reviews that help in understanding the consumers' feelings about the product. Hence, it can be understood from the discussion that reviews and ratings on e-commerce websites enable consumers to share their post-purchase experience. This is an important attribute of the authenticity of the review and rating process in e-commerce systems, which is an important part of the concept of review and ratings.

The discussion above identifies the meaning and importance of online ratings and reviews in e-commerce operations. When the influence of reviews is considered on the perception and reputation of the product and the seller respectively, naturally, the question arises on the process of evaluation and understanding of the reviews. Hendrawan, Suryani and Oktavia (2017) identify in their study that about 87% of consumers read at least 10 reviews to be sure of the perception that they are going to derive from e-commerce reviews. One important aspect that is looked at by the consumers while going through reviews is the quality of the review. The article identifies that review given by consumers are analysed is conducted on the basis of three characteristics such as metadata, structural and readability. Structural characteristics include the number of sentences, characters used, and word attributes used to describe the experience of the product. Besides, it is understood that it is not necessary for the positive reviews to be good in quality. However, an indirect yet undeniable contribution is produced by the positive reviews produced in sequence. A new form of rating system has been introduced by Venkatesakumar et al. (2020) that shows the imperativeness of star ratings in online ratings and reviews. The example of Amazon has been used to show the effectiveness of star rating as an important communication strategy that enables easy perception of the review. A comparison of two e-commerce giants, Flipkart and Amazon, Venkatesakumar et al. (2020) show that different outcomes may be produced due to differences in the communication strategies used by the e-commerce websites.

Thus, the empirical findings show that the concept of review and ratings has well been invested in the business operations of e-commerce. The e-commerce giants are using these attributes to effectively communicate with the consumers at multiple points resulting in communication of messages regarding the quality and experience of a product. However, there is still a question associated with ensuring the authentication of the reviews.

2.2.5 Challenges associated with collecting authentic review

As realised from the discussion above, consumer reviews and ratings an important attribute for e-commerce word of mouth. The quality of the reviews is found to be a significant concern as the previous discussion has identified three characteristics to identify the quality of the reviews. There is a requirement of further discussion to identify the aspects that can challenge ensuring the authenticity of the reviews produced on e-commerce websites. Malte and Martin (2020) identify that incidents of fake reviews are extremely common in the e-commerce market. The article specifies that as the internet has changed the process of information search and shopping

behaviour, online platforms act as a medium to exchange information. Therefore, the suppliers or the manufacturers are not the only medium from which the information reaches the consumers. Such a situation has significantly increased the scope of the generation of fake reviews due to the lack of need for verification for posting a review on e-commerce. High market competition and intentions of the consumers to depend on their purchase decision-making on online reviews increase the need for having repeated positive reviews against a product. This is an important aspect that prevails as a cause of producing fake reviews on e-commerce platforms. Hence, in such cases fabricated positive reviews influence consumer purchase decision-making. This is a significant challenge of relying on reviews and ratings for e-commerce purchases.

Salminen et al. (2022) derived a critical discussion related to the detection of fake reviews on online products. The findings in the article show that it is difficult for humans to identify fake reviews on e-commerce platforms. Thus, here comes the role of technology that can be used by e-commerce operators to detect fake reviews by identifying the reviews coming without any purchase history on that particular product. Hájek, Hikkerova and Sahut (2023) furthermore support this point showing that fake reviews can be detected using aspect-based sentiment analysis, which is a fake review detection model. This model considers the type of the product to investigate and identify any fake reviews. Two categories are considered for the same such as verified purchase attribute and product category. Besides, greater emphasis is produced on the description of experience in the reviews, which is considered to be an important identity of the fake reviews.

Kumar, Mukherjee and Rana (2023) have further indulged in identifying latent characteristics that can be considered to identify a fake review. The article identifies that such characteristics are often totally opposite to those of the authentic reviews. Such reviews often lack product recommendations. This is shown as a significant economic disadvantage to the e-commerce company as it may

These attributes are found important than the previous findings because they help in producing the ability of the consumers to identify the fake reviews. This provides power to the consumers to identify whether the reviews and authentic. This can immensely help in improving the reliability of the consumers on e-commerce reviews as they are considered to be important in shaping purchase decisions. The findings from the already existing literature help in realising that consumers may be helpless in the face of fake reviews and inauthentic attributes. Hence,

this is a challenging situation that may dilute the trust of the consumers in particular e-commerce sellers. Hence, it is realised that additional measures are important for organisations in the e-commerce market to ensure that consumers' reliability is maintained.

2.2.6 Strategies to overcome the constraints regarding review authenticity in UK ecommerce industry

Online reviews and its authenticity are a factor that poses challenges for customers because they often feel confused whether the reviews are authentic or not. As cited by Gupta et al. (2023) ecommerce market practitioners are asked for responding quickly both to negative and positive reviews. Answering to reviews within few days can enhance reputation management of a brand and also increase trust among consumers. Gupta et al. (2023) further opined that content of reviews should be reviewed and ecommerce brands can conduct a poll with customer care agents and focus on those specific areas that trips up typical consumers which makes consumer to abandon the product at the cart. Resolving these types of problems following this strategy could help ecommerce brands to concentrate their efforts and consume the time of representatives.

Besides these strategies, it is suggested by Hamad, Elbeltagi and El-Gohary (2018) that ecommerce brands help to identify the pathways that could foster strong relationship with customers. This is because review authenticity is an incumbent issue that ecommerce brands face and, in this context, they do not have control over eliminating or filtering fake negative reviews. This harms consumer trust and brand reputation. Therefore, ecommerce brands can choose other way where consumer trust can be achieved and a large loyal customer base is achieved despite the issue review authentication. In this context Hamad, Elbeltagi and El-Gohary (2018) and Risberg (2022) further suggested that ecommerce brands can focus on providing high-quality customer service, offering attractive promotions and discounts or practice efficient return facility and secure payment systems could help to establish consumer trusts.

Product information with its authenticity can be reached to customers which can be beneficial to gain consumer trust is taking the facility of partnering with influencers or bloggers that could help in promoting products and services (Martínez Otero, 2021) and (Rosário and Raimundo, 2021). Engaging with influencers could increase their audience base because the followers of those influencers could likely engage with the brands and trust for the influencers will also

show trust to the brand. Moreover, Martínez Otero (2021) also cited an influencer endorses a brand who have built a solid following and are well-known for their online or offline activities. This could ensure consumers to feel products trustworthy and the interest to purchase from that brand increases. Following this approach can be a beneficial strategy to overcome the constraint of review authenticity and achieving consumer trust. Another thing that could be encouraged as a measure to overcome the issue review authentication. In this context, opinion of Banerjee and Chua (2023) highlights that ecommerce brands can focus on understanding online fake review strategies. It is suggested that strong algorithms and computational experiments should be considered that could easily detect fake reviews and brands can remove them from websites. In-depth detection and understanding of fake reviews could help ecommerce practitioners to remove those reviews and ensure keeping authentic reviews on the websites which could help consumers to evaluate the product with trusted information source. This in turn supports in brand reputation enhancement and engagement with loyal customers.

2.3 Analytical assessment of the information collected

2.3.1 Strengths and weaknesses, research method and importance of findings

The literature review conducted in the above discussion shows certain very important attributes. The findings in most of the literature have been found to have identified the importance of authentic reviews and ratings on the products. These attributes involve collection of measures that reflect on the ability of an organisation to attract consumers by producing positive perception of the products. The strength of the findings produced from empirical analysis using previous literature is that the findings have revealed important attributes associated with the role of reviews and ratings in e-commerce. This is a strength as the literature acts as base research for proceeding with the current research that can indulge in analysis in different dimensions like ensuring and recognising the authenticity of the reviews and ratings in e-commerce sales and consumer decision-making. Certain weaknesses like lack of evidence of appropriate differentiation of authentic and fake reviews and inability to identify measures for the consumers to identify them have been significant drawbacks. A table below is presented that can be helpful in depicting the methodology used by the previous scholars to research the e-commerce-related review and rating system.

Sl. No.	Author, Year	Title	Methodology used
	Khamitov et al. (2024)	*"Consumer Trust: Meta-Analysis of 50 Years of Empirical Research"*	Empirical research based on empirical generalisations
	Isaeva, Gruenewald and Saunders (2020)	*"Trust theory and customer services research: theoretical review and synthesis"*	Theoretical review paper
	Chen et al. (2022)	*"The influence of customer trust and artificial intelligence on customer engagement and loyalty – The case of the home-sharing industry"*	Primary quantitative (survey)
	Falahat et al. (2019)	*"A model for consumer trust in e-commerce"*	Primary quantitative (survey)
	Bojang et al. (2017)	*"Determinants of trust in B2C e-commerce and their relationship with consumer online trust"*	Primary quantitative (survey) and analysis using SPSS
	Bhat and Darzi (2020)	*"Online Service Quality Determinants and E-trust in Internet Shopping: A*	Primary quantitative (e-survey) and analysis through Structural equation modelling

		Psychometric Approach"	
	Mayayise (2023)	*"Investigating factors influencing trust in C2C e-commerce environments: A systematic literature review"*	Systematic literature review
	Ward (2024)	*"Retail sector in the UK"*	Primary report – Statistics
	Statista, 2023	*"E-commerce in the United Kingdom (UK) - statistics & facts"*	Industry data – Statistics
	Coppola, 2023	*"E-commerce share of retail sales revenue in the United Kingdom (UK) from 2020 to 2025"*	Industry data
	Kaushik et al., 2018	*"Exploring reviews and review sequences on e-commerce platform: A study of helpful reviews on Amazon.in"*	Secondary, case study
	Md Altab et al. (2022)	*"Understanding Online Consumer Textual Reviews and Rating: Review Length With Moderated Multiple*	Primary, econometric analysis

		Regression Analysis Approach"	
	Hendrawan, Suryani and Oktavia, 2017	*"Evaluation of E-Commerce Product Reviews Based on Structural, Metadata, and Readability Characteristics"*	Primary, observation
	Venkatesakumar et al. (2020)	*"Distribution characteristics of star ratings in online consumer reviews"*	Primary data collection of reviews in 11 product categories
	Malte and Martin (2020)	*"Fake Reviews in E-Commerce Marketing"*	systematic literature review on different databases
	Salminen et al. (2022)	*"Creating and detecting fake reviews of online products"*	Synthetic review generation
	Hájek, Hikkerova and Sahut (2023)	*"Fake review detection in e-commerce platforms using aspect-based sentiment analysis"*	Unsupervised attention-based aspect extraction model
	Kumar, Mukherjee and Rana (2023)	*"Exploring Latent Characteristics of Fake Reviews and Their Intermediary Role in Persuading Buying Decisions"*	Empirical investigation

Table 2.1: Research method of literatures (Source: Self-developed)

The findings of the literature review are important for the current research because it has provided the researcher in the current research with a preliminary idea about the prevailing situation in the e-commerce industry. The current trends and common behaviour of consumers regarding their purchase decisions and the role of review and ratings in e-commerce operations have been identified critically.

2.4 Underlying theories

To understand the mechanism of consumer trust, the underlying theories of the phenomenon of the development of consumer trust are required to be studied. This section will identify and discuss the theories associated with consumer trust.

Expectation-Confirmation Theory

Expectation-Confirmation Theory is a cognitive theory that relies on its execution and findings on the expectations of the people considered in this research context. The theory explains the aspects of the impact of people's expectations on their perceptions. This perception, therefore, is also related to the judgements they make. The findings in Rahi and Abd. Ghani (2019) shows that the Expectation-Confirmation Theory indicates that consumers' continuous intentions has a significant impact. Hence, this indicates the claim of the theory that there is a direct impact of the expectations of the consumers on their perceptions. The theory can be strongly associated with the findings in the current research. The research considers consumer trust as the dependent variable, which has been found to be influenced by consumer perceptions of the brands in retail e-commerce industry. Therefore, this theory comes as a guidance to the ground of the research and can be effective in viewing the influence of consumer perception on a brand in the e-commerce market.
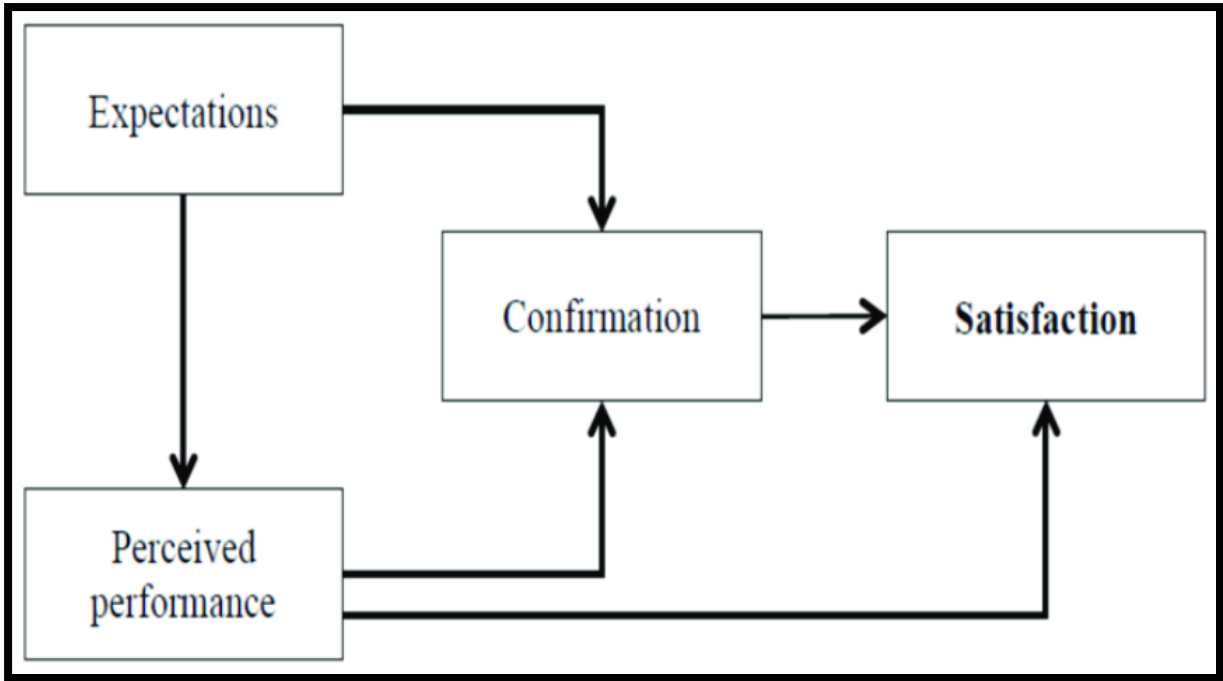
Figure 2.2: Expectation-Confirmation Theory

(Source: Ghani, 2019)

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory has a focus on sociological and psychological theory revolving around interaction manners of people as the area of study. The theory claims that people's interactions with fellow beings and decision-making are strongly reliant on weighing costs and benefits. The theory proposes that people, in general, try to make decisions targeting having maximum benefits and minimum loss in an event (Ahmad et al., 2023). Thus, the theory defines the relationship between the decision-maker and the factors associated with the consequences of the decision. The theory can be effectively applied in current quantitative research as it has the potential to define the underlying value that guides consumers' decisions to purchase. It can be stated, based on the claims of the theory, that consumers in the e-commerce sector would proceed with their purchase based on their trust in the brand only when they perceive greater scopes of gains over a lower chance of loss.

Information Processing Theory

Information Processing Theory is a cognitive theory that describes the process of acquiring, strong and using knowledge by the human mind (Shahid, 2022). The theory uses a model to define the measures and explain the process of filtering the information and encoding it into memory (Shahid, 2022). Gordon and Woods (2021) defined the theory as a development approach that enables the human mind to lay a structural foundation for decision-making. The theory assumes that the human mind processes information received from the external environment based on the senses. The theory also assumes that mental structures contained in the human mind help in the assessment of the information. The theory can be effective in current research because it can help define the required intensity of information for the decision-making of consumers regarding the purchase of a product or service (Makkonen, 2020). The theory can help identify the key factors impacting consumers' perception of the depth and breadth of information needed to decide the trustworthiness of e-commerce services. The depth and breadth of information may include the development of a fit between solutions and needs and the number of solutions available to fulfil needs related to e-commerce purchases.

Trust and Distrust Theory

Trust and Distrust Theory is considered to be a crucial aspect of human interaction. The theory is considered the basis of a variety of business and organisational contexts. This theory forms the basics of the relationship between two individuals, whether or not they know each other (Gefen, Fresneda and Larsen, 2020). The article identifies that some amount of information is produced from socialisation, which is considered to be an important mediation in the development of trust between two individuals. Lee et al. (2018) identifies that trust and distrust are important matters in e-commerce operations. This is mainly because the individuals indulging in e-commerce transactions are not likely to know each other. Hence, trust influences the buyers' judgment. Thus, this proves that this theory is important for the topic of understanding the influence of reviews and ratings on the perception of e-commerce consumers. Considering the importance of the authenticity of the reviews, the researcher can use this theory to understand the holistic approach that can help in understanding the impacts of authentic and inauthentic reviews on the perception of the consumers.

2.5 Research Gaps

The previous literature has identified important marks that help in identifying the nature of the review and the outcomes produced by the online reviews on the consumers of e-commerce. The findings show significant outcomes in terms of identifying the nature of reviews that are real to differentiate fake from real ones. However, the findings in the literature review show only limited discussion regarding the processes of identifying inauthentic or fake reviews. This is a significant gap in the previous literature. Although Kumar, Mukherjee and Rana (2023) have been able to identify certain characteristics like lack of description of experience and lack of recommendations, it does not effectively help in differentiating all fake reviews from the right ones. Furthermore, Hikkerova and Jean-Michel Sahut (2023) have identified that it is important for an organisation in the e-commerce market to indulge in technology-based review screening and scrutiny to identify each respondent against their purchase to claim the findings as fruitful. Hence, the researcher has identified that the previous literature lacks appropriate measures to differentiate fake reviews on e-commerce platforms from authentic ones. Thus, the researcher considers identifying the measures to differentiate fake reviews in e-commerce from authentic ones.

2.6 Summary

This section has focused on reviewing the previous literature to gain an understanding of the findings produced by the previous scholars on the topic of consumer trust in e-commerce industry and its role of review authenticity on consumer trust. The chapter has not only reviewed the previous literature but also engaged in a critical discussion, which has helped in identifying the supporting or contradictory views of different scholars on the topic area. The chapter has explored the attributes effectively to understand the arguments and forward them to improve the knowledge and understanding of the researcher. The chapter has also identified the strengths and weaknesses of the previous literature and derived an understanding of the methods followed by the previous scholars and the favourability of the outcomes or findings based on the methods considered.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter undertakes the methods and techniques that has been followed in the research to frame a robust methodology. It highlights about the chosen methods, gives a brief discussion and also the rationale behind choosing those methods. Research methodology gives direction to researcher that helps in choosing methods linked with research aim and objectives. The chapter will not only identify the chosen methods for the research but will also provide appropriate justification for the choice. This justification will also be supported by appropriate literary articles. The chapter also highlights the research limitations that has been a guiding tool for the researcher to understand the areas of improvement required in the future research nad could broaden the scope.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is the method that includes a set of fundamental beliefs to help the researcher to execute a research study. Research philosophy helps build assumptions by effectively understanding the associated scenario on the research ground. Four main types of research philosophies are chosen for the purpose of the research (Hackfort and Schinke, 2020). These are positivism, interpretivism, realism and pragmatism. Each of the research philosophy has a significant influence on the research. For the current research, the researcher has chosen the positivist research philosophy.

Positivism research philosophy is considered to be a sociological method. This philosophy uses numeric measurements with associated reasoning to make appropriate observations regarding an ongoing scenario considered in the research topic. The researcher has selected positivist philosophy in the current research because it enables logical progression by understanding the social sciences as reasoning behind a particular phenomenon (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The use of positivism in current research will additionally help the researcher quantify the findings from quantitative observations. It gives accuracy to the findings based on the belief that the ability to measure something gives way to knowing the determinants for certain (University of Nottingham, 2023). Therefore, based on this philosophy, the researcher will be able to explore the relationship between the authenticity of consumer reviews and the effectiveness of such authenticity on outcomes in terms of consumer trust.

Positivism considers human experience to be a central source of information, which is not possible through interpretivism. As interpretivism indulges in allowing greater participation of the researcher, it may cause the addition of personal viewpoint, while analysing the data, which is not possible in positivism (Dudovskiy, 2022). Similarly, realism and pragmatism focus on the real world with pre-posited ideas. It may reduce the effectiveness of deriving new explanations of the occurrence of a situation, which is the aim of the researcher in the current research. Therefore, this may prove to be a disadvantage of the use of positivist research philosophy as it may give rise to personal biases and ignore the concepts of cause, time and space. Additionally, descriptive findings in the positivist philosophy may cause a lack of insight due to the inclusion of the in-depth issues associated with a phenomenon (Dudovskiy, 2024). Thus, these factors may limit the effectiveness of the research outcomes as significant determinants may be overlooked due to the quantitative focus of the research.

3.3 Research Approach

The research approach method indicates as a research outline which considers in practices associated for data collection, analysis and also interpreting the collected data to meet objectives. The choice of research approach is dependent on the research problem (Taherdoost, 2022). The research approach can be of three types: inductive, abductive and deductive. The choice of one of these approaches helps determine whether the researcher wants to consider quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods for the data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

In link with this research, deductive research approach has been considered. The deductive research approach helps the researcher to begin the findings with a theory in the form of a hypothesis. The researcher reaches generalisation by testing the hypothesis by involving observation. The researcher selected this method because it helps to collect the information that is known by all (that is, the subjects or samples considered in the data collection) (Kim, 2021). The deductive approach, therefore, helps in increasing the scope of development of an understanding of consumer expectations and behaviour. This reflects on the potential to derive opportunities to consider humans as the central piece in the research. The advantage of the deductive approach is that it helps in theory building and gives way to critique existing research (Dudovskiy, 2019). Therefore, the current research contributes to contesting and testing the existing understanding of the influence of review authenticity of the e-commerce industry on consumer trust.

The deductive approach, therefore, has indicated the use of quantitative observations to answer the research questions. Thus, the researcher has chosen the quantitative method of data collection and analysis. This is liable to support the chosen approach, improving the scope of effective analysis in the research.

3.5 Research Design

This method intends to show the blueprint of the research which guides a researcher to proceed in which way and how data collection and other methods needs to be associated. As per the statement of Melnikovas (2018) there are three types of research designs commonly considered and those are descriptive, normative, and exploratory. Descriptive study states about describing the data and variables based on their characteristics (Ranganathan and Aggarwal, 2018). Normative studies aim to study variety of features and exploring possible developments, while exploratory aims in exploring the covered aspects of a research or discover something new (Melnikovas, 2018). This study has considered descriptive research design which intended to give description of the variables and helped in understanding relationship between variables. As cited by Aggarwal and Ranganathan (2019) descriptive designs of a chance observation open an entirely new line of investigation and this design has been taken because of the ability to describe distribution of one or more variables. Descriptive design has thus been rationale to take because it described the study variables both independent and independent. Independent variable is reviewing authenticity and dependent variable consumer trust has been described regardless of the establishment of hypothesis.

3.6 Methodological Choice

Methodological choice is the guide through which selection of method like qualitative, quantitative or mixed method is noted through which the method opted for collecting data and other research methods for a study are opted. This study has considered mono-method quantitative research because here single data collection technique has been followed. Quantitative choice emphasises on collecting data through numbers and statistics which enriches the findings by understanding correlation among the variables. As cited by Barroga and Matanguihan (2022) quantitative methodological choice emphasises on enquiring the correlation among the variables which are framed in the study. The study measures responses of subjects in relation with variables. Numerical interpretation with the inquiry to know about

the relationship among variables has been logical for this study to understand the relationship between consumer trust and review authentication.

3.7 Type of Data Collected

Two types of data can be collected and included in research: primary and secondary data collection methods. For the current research, the researcher has chosen to collect primary data. Primary data is the information that is collected for the first time directly from the source. Primary data collection involves human participants who share their experiences as evidence in the primary data. Therefore, the researcher will collect first-hand data to identify the impact of the authenticity of the review against products on e-commerce platforms on the trust factor of the consumers. The primary data was collected from the users of the e-commerce sites, who are potentially the consumers in the UK.

3.8 Data Collection Technique

Based on the above discussion, the researcher has chosen the quantitative form of data collection. Quantitative data collection is associated with the numeric representation of the data during the collection as well as at every step of data analysis and interpretation (Maida et al., 2022). Using the quantitative data collection, the researcher will be able to report the level of engagement between the review authenticity and the consumer trust in an e-commerce organisation.

Quantitative data collection is associated with the conduction of a survey where the experience and opinions of the respondents can be represented with a value. The survey questionnaire is the data collection instrument considered by the researcher to collect quantitative data for the current research. The questionnaire will include closed-ended questions and options in the 5-point Likert scale format. This is effective for the researcher in identifying respondents' opinions and experiences on the topic area. The survey will be conducted online, and the completed questionnaire will be collected to interpret and analyse the findings.

3.9 Sampling

The sampling strategy for the current research is the random sampling technique. Random sampling is a probability sampling technique that considers random participant selection. With

this form of sampling, the researcher will be able to select any random participant from the target population.

The data collection will involve human participants in the process, which will be done with the help of a survey questionnaire. The samples for the collection of data considered by the researcher include the consumer base of the e-commerce industry. The sample population was selected from the UK consumer base. This has helped me understand the experience and perception of the UK's e-commerce consumer base. The researcher selected samples from among the consumers who have produced ratings and reviews against e-commerce products through their social media profiles or email. The common e-commerce websites are surfed to find consumers that have produced reviews and rates with pictures of the product or outcome of services. This will be effective for the researcher in obtaining the opportunity to collect data from the sample population that has knowledge and experience of using e-commerce.

The sample size selected for the researcher is 101. A sample size of 101 has been selected by the researcher in order to maintain data accuracy, enrich research results with a large sample size. According to Memon et al. (2020), a sample of 100 respondents should be considered for conducting regression analysis. This will ensure accuracy in the data collection, which will help in improving the authenticity of the findings. The regression analysis will be conducted for the current research because it helps in facilitating decision-making by explicitly determining the correlation between the dependent and the independent variables in the research (Skiera, Reiner and Albers, 2021). Thus, it helps in understanding multiple variables and helps in the development of the linear relationship, which is supported by the chosen positivism philosophy.

3.10 Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis strategy is a systematic process of investigation that involves facts and figures and passes through a variety of techniques to make conclusions or answer specific research questions. In this research, the researcher has chosen the quantitative data analysis strategy. Exploratory data analysis will be conducted using the quantitative data collected through the survey (Mahsin, 2022). The exploratory analysis will include the use of software like SPSS to interpret the data and produce findings. Thus, statistical and numerical analysis will be conducted on the gathered data to derive findings. This will then be interpreted further to

understand the relationship between consumer trust and review authenticity in the reviews on ecommerce platform.

3.11 Research Limitations

The researcher has identified certain limitations in the current research. Foremost, the researcher has selected the minimum sample size for the current research because of limited time and resources for conduction of the survey. This is liable to limit the accuracy of findings against a bigger sample size. Hence, the researcher encourages future researchers to consider a bigger sample population considering the findings in this research as the base findings.

Secondly, considering the quantitative method for the research has provided opportunities to complete the research in a shorter time and with few resources, it may have limited the scope of the research by constricting the contextual outcomes. The quantitative method does not allow for considering subjective experiences in a wider and more in-depth sense. This may be a significant limitation of the research.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Considering primary data has higher concern in terms of ethical aspect and as per the opinion of Laryeafio and Ogbewe (2023) research ethics considers the act of doing good and protection of rights of research participants. In primary research, ethical concerns arise in terms of the approaches like confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent, data protection and other formal ethical requirements. The survey has been conducted by giving online forms, however the participants were informed with clarity for which they are been asked to take part in the survey. The participants also were asked to give their consent and for that they filled up consent form along with it, they were not forcefully included. The study did not manipulate or falsified any data for sake of early research completion. It also properly acknowledged external information and avoided plagiarism. The collected data does not include personal information, but still those data will be kept in locked and secured areas. University drive folder and in locked cabinets of university record rooms the data will be kept which only have restricted access. Moreover, the research has maintained data reliability and validity by including relevant opinions and this has been done by choosing a proper sampling strategy. The participants were chosen who are users of ecommerce industry and are accustomed with the concepts of review and consumer loyalty. Proper analysis technique further ensured validity of the data.

3.13 Summary

The chapter has shown the details of the chosen methods with brief explanation to justify the reason behind considering those methods. The study considered positivism for its objective assumption and based on deductive approach the specific observation of the research context has been ensured. Descriptive design helped in describing the research variables and quantitative method enriched the findings with numerical values and statistical interpretation. The study has conducted a survey with 101 sample size and has used SPSS for interpreting the research findings. The study has followed descriptive statistics, correlation test, ANOVA and regression methods to interpret the results.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

The e-commerce business in the UK is growing at an unprecedented speed and trendy collections, customer convenience, great offers, and immersive experiences are attracting the lion's share of UK consumers towards e-commerce. However, with the growth of digital marketing activities, consumers are considering online reviews before purchasing a product. As a result, brands are using online reviews to influence the purchase decision-making of consumers, but sometimes, e-commerce companies are getting involved in dark practices like promoting fake or manipulated reviews to foster a positive brand image. This research has explored the impact of review authenticity on consumer trust in the limelight of the UK's e-commerce industry by statistically analysing the collected primary quantitative data.

4.2 Hypotheses development

This research has developed two hypotheses between consumer trust (DV) and review authenticity (IV). These hypotheses are:
H0: There is no connection between consumer trust and review authenticity in the UK's e-commerce sector.

H1: Consumer trust is dependent on review authenticity in the UK's e-commerce industry.

The first hypothesis signifies the null hypothesis (H0), and the second hypothesis is the alternative hypothesis (H1).

4.3 Statistical analysis

4.3.1 Demographic statistics

The demographic factors of the survey population have been analysed to understand whether they are using e-commerce sites, how often they use e-commerce sites to buy products or services, and how frequently they purchase online.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	98	98.0	98.0	98.0
	No	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

1. Are you using Online E- Commerce sites to buy products or services?

Figure 4.1: Frequencies of survey population using E-commerce sites

(Source: Generated using IBM SPSS)

Out of the 100 surveyed individuals, 98 individuals stated that they are using e-commerce websites in the UK to buy products or services. However, two individuals mentioned that they are not using e-commerce.
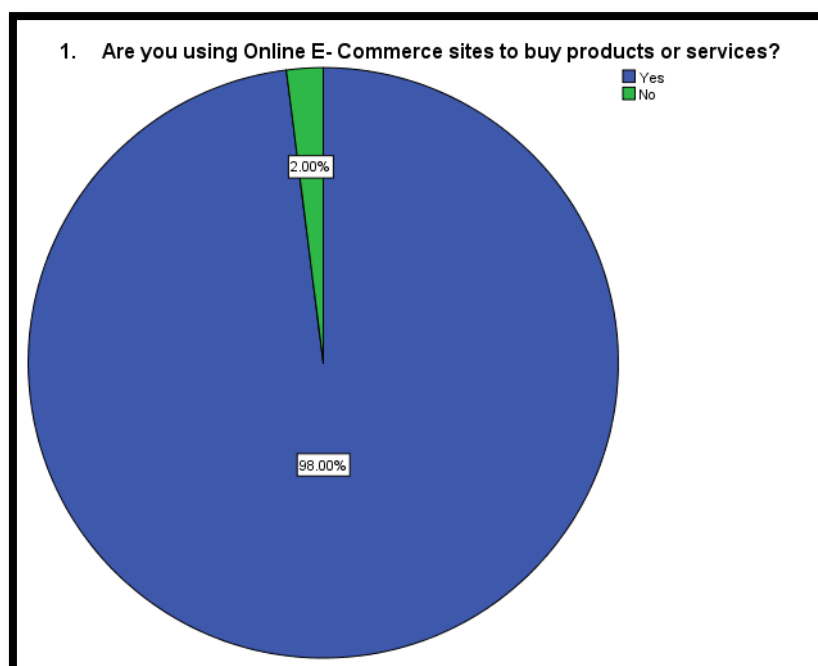
Figure 4.2: Percentile of survey participants using e-commerce sites

(Source: Generated using IBM SPSS)

Figure 4.2 shows that 98% of the survey population is using e-commerce sites to buy products or services. This shows the increasing dominance of e-commerce sites in the UK over traditional brick-and-mortar stores.

2. How long have you been purchasing online?		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Recently	27	27.0	27.0	27.0
	More than 5 years	73	73.0	73.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.3: Frequencies of how long survey participants buy products or services using e-commerce sites

(Source: Generated using IBM SPSS)

Seventy-three survey participants have been using e-commerce sites for more than five years to purchase products and services. This shows how impactful e-commerce businesses are in terms of attracting consumers. However, 27 individuals stated that they have started using e-commerce sites recently. This means the growth of e-commerce platforms in the UK is still growing.

Figure 4.4: Percentile of how long survey participants are purchasing online

(Source: Generated using IBM SPSS)

It has been mentioned that 73 participants have been using e-commerce sites for more than 5 years and as the survey has been conducted among 100 individuals, 73 participants denote 73% of the entire survey population. Hence, the majority of the survey participants are using e-commerce sites for purchasing products and services in the UK.

3. How frequently do you shop online?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daily	4	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Weekly	19	19.0	19.0	23.0
	Monthly	68	68.0	68.0	91.0
	Rarely	9	9.0	9.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.5: Frequencies of how frequently the survey population shops online

(Source: Generated using IBM SPSS)

Based on Figure 4.5, it can be mentioned that the survey participants are purchasing products and services from e-commerce sites in a controlled manner, as 68 participants stated that they purchase from e-commerce sites monthly, whereas only four individuals stated their purchasing frequency as "daily". Notably, 9 individuals stated that they rarely shop from e-commerce sites.
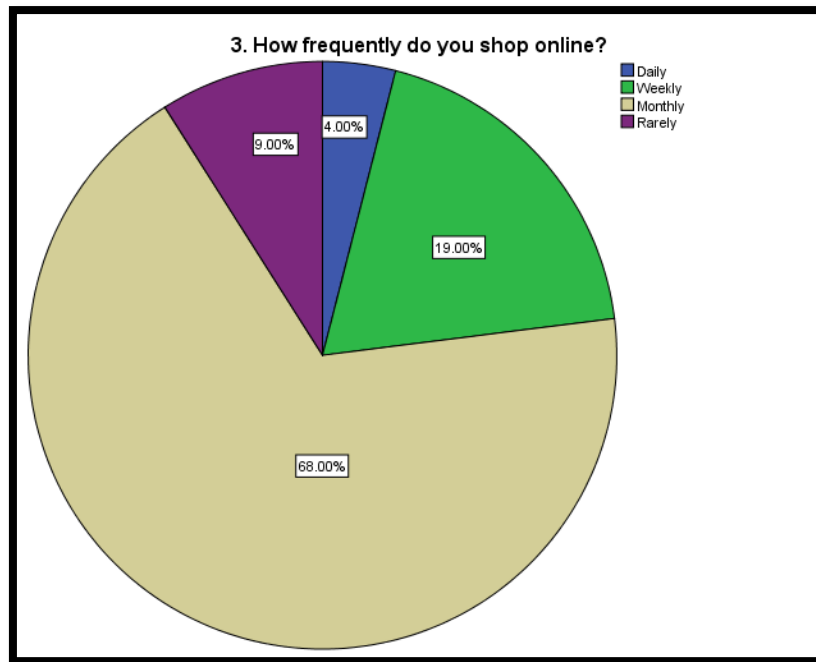
Figure 4.6: Percentile of how frequently the survey population shops online

(Source: Generated using IBM SPSS)

A staggering 68% of the selected sample size for the survey mentioned that they shop monthly from e-commerce sites in the UK. The lowest selected option was "daily" with only 4% of responses following "rarely" with 9% of total responses.

Demographic questions 4. Age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Under 18 years	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	18 to 30 years	56	56.0	56.0	58.0
	31 to 40 years	24	24.0	24.0	82.0
	41 to 50 years	10	10.0	10.0	92.0
	Above 50 years	8	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.7: Frequencies of age group

(Source: Generated using IBM SPSS)

The highest selected age group was "18 to 30 years" with 56 responses, following "31 to 40 years" with 24 responses. Therefore, the selected sample size represents a younger population of the UK. Further, two survey participants are less than 18 years old, and 8 participants are aged more than 50 years.
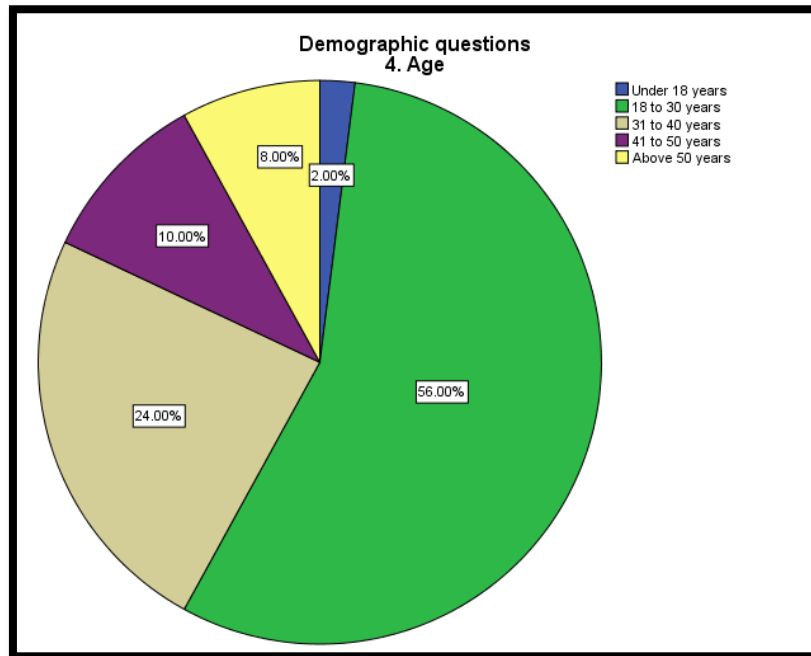
Figure 4.8: Percentile of age group

(Source: Generated using IBM SPSS)

With 56% of responses, "18 to 30 years" represents a large portion of the survey group, signifying the selected population size represents a younger generation. On the other hand, 8% of the participants are aged more than 50 years and 10% are aged between 41 to 50 years.

4.3.2 Descriptive statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
IV	100	5.00	15.00	8.5000	2.11058	.553	.241	.303	.478
DV	100	6.00	17.00	11.1000	2.12964	.302	.241	.374	.478
Valid N (listwise)	100								

Descriptive Statistics

Figure 4.9: Descriptive statistics of the collected data

The minimum and maximum value of IV and DV shows that there is some variability but not extreme. The standard deviation statistics of 2.110 and 2.129 show almost similar deviations from the mean in the case of both IV and DV, suggesting a comparable level of spread of responses given by the survey participants. On the other hand, a Skewness value of .553 of IV means that IV is slightly skewed to the right (Hatem *et al.* 2022). Similarly, a positive skewness value of .302 means DV is also slightly skewed to the right, indicating that most of the values are concentrated on the positive end. In terms of Kurtosis value, .303 (IV) and .374 (DV) show that both distributions have a similar tail with no significant outliners. In total, the descriptive statistics of the analysed data state that the data appeared to be normal, with mild skewness and no extreme kurtosis.

Correlation test

The correlation test has helped to understand whether there is any relationship between IV and DV and, if there is a relationship, then how the relationship occurred (Li and Gospodarik, 2022). In order to effectively predict the relationship between the two variables of this research, the Pearson correlation method has been followed.

Correlations		IV	DV
IV	Pearson Correlation	1	.506**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
DV	Pearson Correlation	.506**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Figure 4.10: Correlation test between IV and DV

The value of Pearson correlation ranges from -1 (maximum negative correlation) to +1 (maximum positive correlation (Baak *et al.* 2020). The ideal point between the lower and upper

limit of Pearson correlation, zero, depicts that there is no correlation between tested variables. A .506 Pearson correlation value between IV and DV describes these two variables are having a moderate positive correlation as the value falls between the moderate positive correlational range of 0.4 to 0.8. Therefore, customer trust and review authenticity in the UK's e-commerce sector are positively correlated, and based on this result, the null hypothesis between these two variables can be rejected. Further, the Significance value of .000 states the correlation between IV and DV is statistically significant and the relationship is significant at 0.01 significant level. Therefore, the observed correlation between these variables occurred due to specific reasons and not by chance or sampling error.

Regression analysis

The understanding from the regression analysis demonstrates the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. It does not define the degree of relationship but examines the probability of the occurrence of the degree of change with the movement of the independent variable with the dependent variable (Abadie *et al*. 2020). The following statistical table demonstrates the various aspects of regression analysis in detail.

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.506[a]	.256	.248	1.84669
a. Predictors: (Constant), IV				

Figure 4.11: Model summary

(Source: Generated using IBM SPSS)

The above table represents the R^2 value that is obtained from the regression analysis and is considered the first step of this analysis. It is a basic representation of the goodness of fit of the given model and the way an authentic review influences consumer trust. The value is found to be 0.506. This means that 50.6% of the change in consumer trust is explained by a unit change in the percentage of authentic reviews. Hence, there have not been many significant changes in the consumer trust level that is being defined by the change in the number of authentic reviews. It refers to the presence of a linear relationship between the variables, which is important in the context of the research in meeting the hypothesis.

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	114.796	1	114.796	33.662	.000[b]
	Residual	334.204	98	3.410		
	Total	449.000	99			

a. Dependent Variable: DV

b. Predictors: (Constant), IV

Figure 4.12: ANOVA test between IV and DV

(Source: Generated using IBM SPSS)

Now, coming to the main analysis part, it can be seen that the relationship between the dependent and independent variables is significant. The p-value is identified as 0.000, which is less than 0.05 showing that the probability of occurrence is significant. It depicts that there is a 95% probability of occurrence of the change that is described by the R^2 value. The understanding from the regression analysis shows that consumer behaviour is typically dependent on their emotion and ability to perceive a particular situation. Their ability to differentiate right from wrong in terms of identifying an authentic review describes the perception towards the decisions made to purchase a product. Now, in the above table, the F-statistics have also been provided where the value is 33.662, which is very high. This higher F-value signifies that the group means of the variables are far more significant than the natural variances. It is also one of the indicators of rejecting the null hypothesis with the F-value being higher than the p-value (Johnson, Pramanik and Shudde, 2023). In this instance, rejecting the null hypothesis demonstrates that there is no evidence from the analysis that would state there is no connection between the variables. Hence, the alternative scenario which states that the consumer trust is dependent on authentic review gets accepted through this analysis.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	6.763	.770		8.784	.000		
	IV	.510	.088	.506	5.802	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: DV

Figure 4.13: Coefficients-collinearity statistics

(Source: Generated using IBM SPSS)

The regression analysis does depict that the consumers accept the premises of trustworthy reviews that influence their trust level for a certain brand or object. In this model, the presence of multicollinearity is going to be minimal because this model deals with a single independent variable. Hence, the VIF value, which detects the multicollinearity is 1, which signifies the presence of non-correlation.
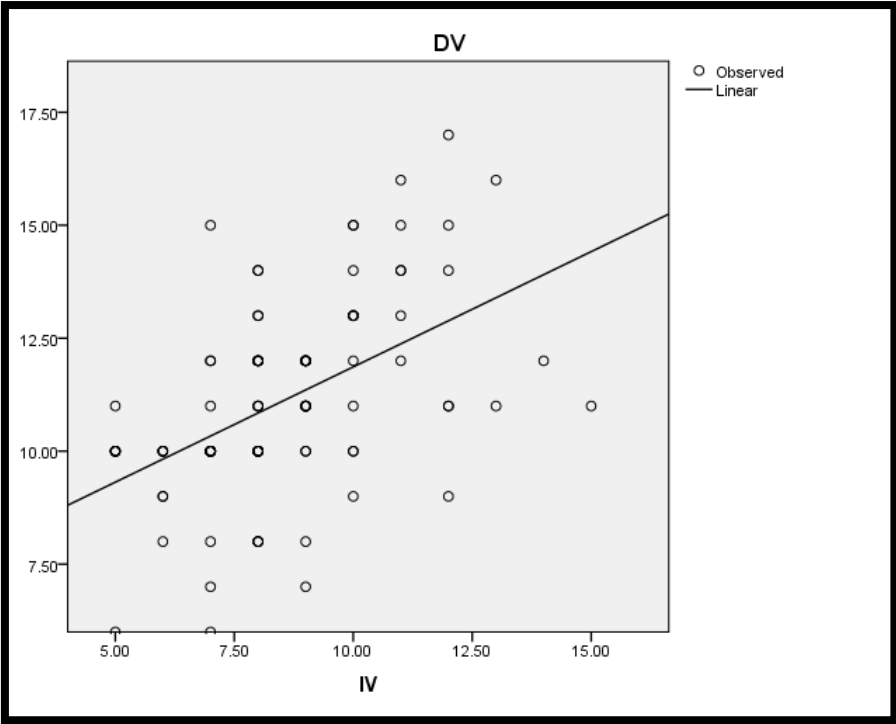

Figure 4.14. Movement of the dependent variable

The regression analysis demonstrates the presence of linearity in the model. Even though the R^2 values, it can be seen that the dependent variable experiences a significant movement due to the movement of the independent variable. It is represented through the above diagram, where most of the observed dependent variables are moving along the linear line (Abadie *et al.* 2020). Hence, it is not surprising to observe the correlation which is depicted to be moderately high. The above diagram is also a representation of the situation that showcases that consumer trust is moving in a positive direction as that of the number of authentic responses. It represents that the constructed model is valid and describes the situation with high effectiveness.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.672	.672	2

ANOVA with Friedman's Test

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Friedman's Chi-Square	Sig
Between People		670.000	99	6.768		
Within People	Between Items	338.000[a]	1	338.000	60.573	.000
	Residual	220.000	99	2.222		
	Total	558.000	100	5.580		
Total		1228.000	199	6.171		

Grand Mean = 9.8000

a. Kendall's coefficient of concordance W = .275.

Figure 4.15. Reliability test and ANOVA with Friedman's Test

In the first table the reliability test for the given model. The Cronbach alpha test demonstrates the measures of internal consistency. To put it in simpler terms, the way the internal set of variables are related to each other and the presence of noise variables are minimal. The Cronbach alpha is obtained as 0.672, which is considered as moderately accepted. The understanding from this test is to show that the selected variables are related but in this case, there are a few aspects that have been omitted as described by the reliability model (Kennedy, 2022). It indicates that the constructed model does not describe the complete relationship. The consideration of other variables would have explained the model more accurately.

The Friedman test of chi-square value is conducted to ensure that the values used in the Likert scale are different from each other. It ensures that the model tests the available data from different perspectives before reaching a final conclusion (Kennedy, 2022). The value is significantly high indicating that the presence of a link between the variables within the model is minimal. Therefore, all the selected variables explain the movement of the dependent variable in line with the independent variable. It also indicates a way of rejecting the null hypothesis. The p-value or the significance value is less than the chi-square value depicting that the null hypothesis gets rejected, which was already established on the earlier occasion.

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.500
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	28.789
	df	1
	Sig.	.000

Total Variance Explained						
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.506	75.282	75.282	1.506	75.282	75.282
2	.494	24.718	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						

Figure 4.16. KMO and Bartlett's Test

(Source: Generated using IBM SPSS)

The issue with the selection of variables is further depicted through the KMO and Bartlette's test. The value of sampling adequacy is found to be 0.500, which means that the test result is mediocre. It means that the selected variables are highly correlated. Therefore, the selected variable does not significantly depict the situation. It is the case that depicts that the single variable is highly correlated with another variable. Even though, the model describes the situation accurately, it would further need evaluation by adding other variables and conducting an analysis from a different perspective to conclusively state that consumer trust is significantly influenced by the level of trustworthy reviews for an e-commerce business. At the moment, the understanding is broad and the model can fail under specificity.

To address the problem of specificity, the principal component analysis has been conducted through which important information is extracted based on which the analysis is being conducted. The initial eigenvalues display the amount of variance taking place in the original dataset (Kennedy, 2022). From the given table, the percentage of variance from the initial eigenvalues with the percentage of variance of the extracted sum needs to be considered. In the table, it can be seen that the percentage change for the variances is equal, which demonstrates that the extracted groups represented similar variability as that of the initial changes. To put it in simpler terms, it demonstrates that the sub-groups created from the collected data represent the given scenario to accurately explain the original dataset. It also checks the validity of the given dataset, that describes the model.

The complete understanding from this analysis describes that change in the independent variable, which in this case is the accurate reviews does influence the dependent variable,

which is the trust factor. Therefore, the selected variables accurately explain the result of the hypothesis constructed for the given purpose.

4.4 Final hypothesis of this research

The hypothesis constructed and are tested in this scenario. The following table provides an overview of the hypothesis testing for the given scenario.

Hypothesis	Description	Significance
H1: Accepted	Consumer trust is dependent on review authenticity in the UK's e-commerce industry.	**0.000**

Table 4.1. Summary of hypothesis testing

The above table denotes the fact that consumer trust is significantly dependent on the quality of authentic customer reviews provided that is described through the given model.

4.5 Summary

The analysis provides an understanding of the influence of providing authentic reviews. It explains the market condition of the UK where the consumers look after the online reviews and base their decisions around this understanding. It is also observed that a high percentage of sample space belongs to the young age. It can have an influence on the result as young adults have experience in handling the online market and hence, they prefer to be confident in the decisions they undertake.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the critical interpretation and analysis of the research results. It intends to link the research results with the insights explored in literature review to tie up the research questions. Four research questions and objectives have ben tried to tied up in this section with special emphasis on comparison of own research outcomes and insights gained from past studies. This is one of the final parts of the research where brief recap of the main results and puts them into context of the overall research. This section has focussed on bringing together all the sections and allowed the researcher to see the connections between each part of research paper. The meaning and relevance of the research results has been explained and tried to fit with the research and has explained how the outcomes fit with existing research theories. Interpretations and research implications of the research outcomes has been presented in this chapter.

5.2 Discussion of Results

The survey results based on the responses of 100 participants have given first-hand observations on understanding the concept of consumer trust and review authenticity in UK ecommerce. The results highlighted that out of 100 participants, 73% of consumers have been using ecommerce platforms for more than 5 years indicating ecommerce has been an impactful aspect to attract consumers for online shopping. The findings of Bojang et al. (2017), has been explored in literature, which reflects a close perception that perceived usefulness of the e-services helps in improving the e-trust of the consumers which in turn increases consumer engagement in ecommerce industry. Besides this, it is further explored in the literature based on the study of Falahat et al. (2019), that e-commerce operations have grown rapidly in the past few decades and certain factors are strongly associated with e-commerce consumer trust and engagement. However, from the results it is evident that 68% of the respondents said that despite trust they shop monthly from ecommerce sites which indicates shopping in a controlled manner. 4% stated that they purchase daily from online ecommerce and this indicates heavy dependence of consumers and high willingness to purchase from ecommerce. On a close note, based on the literature insights, the study of Chen et al. (2022) has shown that digital transactions have induced online operations. This further emphasises on Consumer trust is

identified as an important concept in digital transactions. Hence, the role of consumer trust needs to be studied differentially to determine the special case of consumer engagement.

On the other hand, 9% of consumers revealed that they rarely shop from ecommerce websites. Similarly, from the study of Bhat and Darzi (2020) introspected in literature is that a consumer hesitates to make a purchase on e-commerce platforms until a level of trust has been built between the e-retailer and e-buyer. Hence it indicates development of trust in an organisation in the e-commerce platform is an important prerequisite for organisational success. The study findings have been evaluated on the basis of younger population of UK because 56% of the survey population belong to age group of 18-30. In this context, 68% stated that they order from ecommerce at a controlled manner indicating that young population also do not have intention to purchase regularly or weekly from ecommerce websites. The insights explored in previous section based on the findings of Mayayise (2023), Bojang et al. (2017) have highlighted that, consumer prefers to purchase from ecommerce websites because their trust is influenced by several factors. Perceived usefulness of services and seller reputation of the ecommerce brand are influencing to gain consumer attention and trust that instigates them to purchase from ecommerce websites.

The results highlighted that the standard deviation statistics of 2.110 and 2.129 show almost similar deviations from the mean in the case of both IV and DV. This indicates a comparative level of spread is derived from the responses of survey participants. This indicates that the variation in consumer trust and review authenticity exists. Consumer trust is dependent on various aspects that considers review authenticity in ecommerce platform. The study of Kaushik et al. (2018) reviewed in literature highlighted that reviews are influential for consumer trust because consumer consider those as an important attribute for being a source of word-of-mouth. On the other hand, literature further introspected the study of Md Altab et al. (2022) that review ratings are extremely important to customers because they take it as source to know about reputation of the seller. Furthermore, based on the study Hendrawan, Suryani and Oktavia (2017) which is explored in literature identified that one important aspect considered by consumers while going through reviews is the review quality. The author also pointed that evaluation of the review is conducted based on three characteristics such as metadata, structural and readability. The results on the other aspect revealed that a skewness value of .553 of IV and value of .302 means DV means that IV and DV are slightly skewed to the right indicating that most of the values are concentrated on the positive end. The skewness

of data towards right further established that review authentication has an influence on consumer trust in ecommerce shopping. Therefore, on the basis of insights explored in literature and the results derived in this research it is established review authenticity varies in consumers' perception and they check for variety of aspects which in turn influences their trust.

The regression analysis from the results has revealed that consumers accept the premises of trustworthy reviews that influence their trust level for a certain brand or object. The VIF value, which detects the multicollinearity is 1, which signifies the presence of non-correlation. From the literature, a similar approach has been explored based on the study of Hendrawan, Suryani and Oktavia (2017) that most of the consumers read at least 10 reviews to be sure of the perception that they are going to derive from e-commerce reviews. The results have shown regression analysis demonstrates the presence of linearity in the model. The R^2 values can be seen that the dependent variable experiences a significant movement due to the movement of the independent variable.

The dependent variable is linear which highlighted that consumer trust is moving in a positive direction as that of the number of authentic responses. It represents that the constructed model is valid and describes the situation with high effectiveness. From the literature, based on the opinion of Kaushik et al. (2018) prominent ecommerce platform has a trend to write reviews and collecting reviews is a fruitful approach and it acts as a e-word-of mouth in the ecommerce sector. Similarly, the opinion of Md Altab et al. (2022) has been reviewed in literature stating that review content and ratings are important indicators of the consumer shopping experience. The alternate hypotheses with 0.000 significance establish that consumer trust has a dependency with review authenticity in UK ecommerce industry. In this context, the results based on chi-square test the values used in Likert scale indicated that dependent and independent variable is in line with the and indicates that null hypothesis gets rejected.

On the same token, Venkatesakumar et al. (2020) has stated reviewed in the literature that star ratings or reviews are imperative because it is a communication strategy for retailers like Amazon, Flipkart which enables the perception of review and this helps to build a consumer trust. However, based on the review of Malte and Martin (2020), literature introspected that there are some challenges which are related to collection of authentic reviews because fake reviews are extremely common things in ecommerce industry. This is because posting reviews does not need verification and this lacuna creates trouble for ecommerce market practitioners as well as consumers to evaluate and filter the authentic reviews. Salminen et al. (2022),

corresponding cited that human eye cannot detect fake reviews on online products ad in this context technology should be incorporated to detect fake reviews without any purchase history on the specific product. In this context, literature has introspected from the study of Gupta et al. (2023) that review content needs to be checked and reviewed and ecommerce brands can conduct a poll with customer care agents and focus on those specific areas that trips up typical consumers which makes consumer to abandon the product at the cart. This problem could be a strategy to overcome the issue of fake reviews. The critical evaluation and this discussion have been able to tie up the research aim highlighting that impact of review authenticity on consumer trust is positive in the online e-commerce industry in the UK. The four research questions have been tied up with this analytical discussion.

5.3 Theoretical Implications

The study findings have been able to contribute an expansion to existing theoretical concept. It has been able to bridge the gaps by providing a review of review authenticity and its impact consumer trust from the lenses of UK ecommerce market. The responses retrieved from UK customers of ecommerce industry has been able to enrich existing theoretical base by emphasis that how much authentic reviews and ratings are influential for achieving consumer trust. The findings have expanded knowledge e in terms of understanding the ability to differentiate fake reviews which was missing areas in previous areas. The explored theories in literature review have further implications in terms of results of this study. From the viewpoint of trust and distrust theory, based on social interaction done through reviews it helps to identify judgement of a buyer by another buyer which establishes their trust and makes them take decision whether to purchase the product or not. Similarly social exchange theory has been helpful to establish the findings that interaction and exchange of perception by authentic reviews and ratings, buyers feel trustworthy about a brand and they took decision to purchase a product.

5.4 Managerial Implications

The study findings have shown some important implications from managerial perspective which could be helpful for the ecommerce brands. The study has thoroughly reviewed and established that how consumer trust plays a vital role in ecommerce brand and which determinants are influential for consumer trust. These valuable insights can be knowledge enhancement are for the ecommerce market practitioners and also consider following in own business operations which could help in gaining consumer trust. The need for authentic reviews

and ratings highlighted in the results comes as a roadmap for market practitioners or decision makers in ecommerce industry which could make them understand that how authentic reviews can influence consumer trust. The challenges that have shown in the study along with the strategies would also be helpful for ecommerce brands to be aware about collecting authentic reviews. Moreover, the strategies mentioned can also provide assistance to the brands to resolve the challenges.

5.5 Summary

The chapter has provided link of the research findings with the insights explored in previous section. To reflect on the study findings' relevance, it has critically evaluated the results which showed that results are relevant and has practical significance. The chapter has shown that there have been no such huge contradictory opinions which could nullify the present research results and this reflects that the results are significant. Positive skewness, huge data variation and positive correlation has shown that review authenticity has a significant impact on consumer trust in the UK ecommerce industry. Consumer trust is a vital factor in the ecommerce industry and in this dimension, authentic reviews and ratings can help the ecommerce brands to achieve it.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

Fake reviews are a problem for ecommerce sites and firms in online business and the results of this study indicates that review authentication appears an important aspect to detect fake reviews and engage consumer trust. The growing dependence on ecommerce industry and the issue of fake reviews intended the research to set the objective of identifying the importance of consumer trust in ecommerce trust and also the influence of review authentication on consumer trust. The research has identified that there is a connection between review authentication and consumer trust. With primary quantitative research based on the survey the research has been able to establish the positive correlation between consumer trust and review authentication in UK ecommerce industry. The results have identified positive skewness, huge data variation and positive correlation has shown that review authenticity has a significant impact on consumer trust in the UK ecommerce industry.

The study further identified that consumer trust is a vital factor in the ecommerce industry and in this dimension, authentic reviews and ratings can help the ecommerce brands to achieve it. The results show that quality of information reviews is a determining factor to influence consumer trust. The study has identified the need for detecting reviews and strengthen some measures on review and rating system so that the issue of reviews gets reduced and consumer trust is promoted. The results also indicated an in-depth understanding that ecommerce industry face the issues regarding collection of authentic reviews and following up with authentic reviews is challenging for the brands. Additionally, the study also evaluated some pathways that can be helpful to mitigate the challenges that becomes potential barrier for ecommerce brand to ensure consumer trust and identify fake reviews.

6.2 Linking with Objectives

In link with first objective the literature highlighted that the concept of review authenticity on consumer trust in the purchasing process from e-commerce sites has a significant contribution. The literature highlighted that measure of collecting reviews is a more fruitful and flexible form of review collection and the consumers can leave their review at any stage of their purchase. This is an important method of collecting information from consumers based on their experience. It is also explored in the literature that reviews play an integrated role in shaping

the perceptions about the product. The results based on descriptive statistics has revealed that review authentication has a significant contribution and a positive relationship with consumer trust for ecommerce industry. The results have revealed mild skewness in terms of dependent and independent variables with both the variables having similar tail which indicated that the both the variables have a strong impact in ecommerce industry. The concept of review authentication on consumer trust in ecommerce industry thus has been shown in this study.

The second objective in connection with literature review has highlighted reviews are important part of ecommerce business operations. It also indicates review concept has a strong influence on consumer trust. Consumer trust in e-commerce business operations is found to be influenced by the factors that can be observed before purchasing from a seller. On the other hand, literature further noted that reviews play a vital role in shaping the consumers' perceptions regarding a product quality or information. It has been explored in the study that positive reviews against a product helps in offering informativeness of the which in turn adds value to the product leading to increase in sales. The results established this introspection by conducting a correlation test and the value of Pearson correlation between DV and DV has been calculated as 0.506 which indicates a positive connection. Based on this result, the null hypothesis between these two variables have been rejected in the research results and analysis, The significance value of .000 states the correlation between IV and DV is statistically significant and the relationship is significant at 0.01 which indicates that there exists a strong corelation between these two festivals occurs and not by chance it is retrieved. Therefore, the study has shown that there exists a strong influence of review authentication on consumer trust in UK ecommerce industry.

In link with third research and fourth research objective, the research has identified the challenges faced by ecommerce sites for collecting authentic reviews. Furthermore, the study has also reviewed some strategies that can be potential measures to resolve the challenges in collecting authentic reviews. It has been evident that fake reviews are common incidents in ecommerce sites because anybody without any restriction can post anything without proper verification. This creates difficult for the brands in competitive industry and consumers are often seen to switch to other brands. Seeing negative reviews, consumers' purchase intentions are diverted and this indicates the need for strategies that could resolve the challenges. Difficulty to detect fake reviews by humans is a barrier and this triggers the need for technology that can identify fake reviews and remove from website. The study has also revealed that

product information with its authenticity can be reached to customers. This is aiding approach for the brands to gain consumer trust and also can take the facility of partnering with influencers or bloggers that could help in promoting products and services. The study thus has connected the objectives with results and insights derived from literature which in turn acknowledges the four objectives and establishes the research aim.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research Scope

Given the nature of the study with its cross-sectional method and primary quantitative method, the study has some limitations. The data collected was particularly focussed n ecommerce stores of UK. This limits the generalisation of the results and for this research has a chance to enlarge its scope in future by conducting a multicultural research perspective. Future research could also consider other areas like consumers' attitude and emotions in evaluating authentic reviews which has not been considered in this research. In the current analysis the impact of fake reviews on consumer trust has been shown, however it has not emphasised on understanding the effect or impact of review authenticity on the marketplace. This could be a potential avenue or future research. Moreover, the study only conducted primary quantitative method which has done survey on consumers. Future scope could be broadened by choosing mixed method which means inclusion of qualitative method. This could help in getting textual interpretation of the study context with a broadened implications about fake reviews based on managers' perception with interview analysis.

6.4 Recommendations

- The study suggests the ecommerce market players should focus on ensuring information that other buyers provide through is high-quality which could further give a message of reliable and valuable reviews (Peña-García et al. 2024)
- The ecommerce brands could implement or have control systems in their rating systems which can support in bring information symmetry and reduce information asymmetry between the product and reality (Peña-García et al. 2024). Control systems like secured protocols, SSL encryption can be used to protect the personal and financial information of their users
- The brands are also suggested to encourage customers about giving reviews for purchase process of an article which are published on the online sales platform.

- Brands can also focus on the facilitating tailored recommendations by enabling personalized marketing strategies that could help the ecommerce brands by collecting data on consumer preferences (Gupta et al., 2023). This helps in increasing consumer satisfaction and loyalty

6.5 Practical Implications

The study with its potential findings highlights some fruitful implications that could be a roadmap for academicians and research scholars. The study findings could help the academicians and research scholars to delve more into this topic with primary observations who are willing to conduct research with a closer topic. The study reflects its value by examining the impact of review authenticity on consumer trust in the ecommerce industry of UK where little evidence is available regarding this topic. Furthermore, the findings can be used by ecommerce market practitioners to maximise benefit in this industry. The organisations could ask customers for giving reviews to purchase process of an article which are published on the online sales platform. Ecommerce organisations could work on the insights gained in this study that consumer trust is a vital factor and to achieve it, authentic reviews and ratings are helpful.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Consent Form

Participation Consent Form

University of Wales Trinity Saint David (c

Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Participant Identification
Number:

PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM
(for researcher to fill)

Project Title: EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF REVIEW AUTHENTICITY ON CONSUMER TRUST IN THE ONLINE E-COMMERCE INDUSTRY IN THE UK

Name of Researcher: Atik Yasinbhai Vahora	Name of Supervisor: Laila Maazouz

Email of Researcher: 2315701@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

Aim of Research: Dissertation

(for participant to fill)		YES	NO
1	I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated _____ for the above study.		
2	I understand there are no material benefits for participating.		
2	I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.		

3	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.		
4	I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, articles or presentations by the researcher.		
5	I consent for my name and title to be used within this study.		
	Where applicable, I understand that my details will not be anonymous.		
6	I agree to be recorded (audio and/or audio-visual video).		
7	I agree to take part in the above study.		

Researcher's Name (Print)		Signature		Date	
Participant's Name (Print)		Signature		Date	

You may decline to participate in this study. You may end your participation in this study at any time. All data generated from this or any interview will remain confidential. For more information, please view the university's Research and Data Management Policy.

When completed please email a copy to the below address to be kept on the file of the researcher and retain a copy for yourself.

Subject Title: [**NAME OF PARTICIPANT**] – **Participant Consent Form**

Email: @student.uwtsd.ac.uk

Appendix 2: Survey Questions

Sample Population Selection Questions

1. Are you using Online E-Commerce sites to buy products or services?

- Yes
- No

2. How long have you been purchasing online?

- Recently
- More than 5 years

3. How frequently do you shop online?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Rarely
- Never

Demographic questions

4. Age

- Under 18 years
- 18 to 30 years
- 31 to 40 years
- 41 to 50 years
- Above 50 years

5. Occupation

Topic related questions:

6. How influential do you think are the online reviews and ratings when making purchase decisions on e-commerce websites?

- Very influential

- Somewhat influential

- Neutral

- Not very influential

- Not at all influential

7. How important are ratings and reviews in decision-making while shopping online?

- Very important

- Somewhat important

- Neutral

- Not very important

- Not at all important

8. How often do you read reviews while purchasing online?

- Always

- Often

- Sometimes

- Rarely

- Never

- Only in case of costly items

9. What is your view of the star ratings on products on e-commerce websites?

- It is critical for making decisions.

- It is a helpful reference but not the only factor

- It is fairly important

- It is not at all important

10. How confident are you regarding the authenticity of e-commerce websites?

- Very confident

- Somewhat confident

- Neutral

- Somewhat sceptical

- Very sceptical

11. Are you able to differentiate between authentic and fake or manipulated reviews?

- Always
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

12. What are the challenges you face while buying online? (- Fake Manipulated reviews, Other,)

- Ignore the review
- Ignore the product
- Look for other reviews
- Report the review on the platform

13. Do negative reviews impact your buying decisions?

- Always
- Sometimes
- Neutral
- Rarely
- Never

14. Do positive reviews impact your buying decisions?

- Always
- Sometimes
- Neutral
- Rarely
- Never

15. Which reviews do you consider to be authentic on e-commerce websites?

- Verified buyers
- Influencer review

- Other

16. Do the reviews with pictures act as a measure of authenticity in e-commerce platforms?

- Always
- Somewhat
- Neutral
- Rarely
- Never

17. Which of the following features do you think will be appropriate to improve the authenticity of online reviews on e-commerce platforms?

- Prioritising the review of verified buyers
- Allowing reviewing with a picture of the item purchased
- Relying more on influencer review
- Others