

**THE IMPACTS OF ONLINE CUSTOMER REVIEWS ON CUSTOMER PURCHASING
DECISIONS IN THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**

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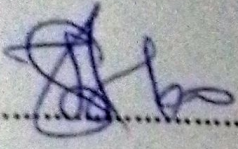


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APPROVAL

I hereby confirm that this research report, authored by Kirabo Ivy Martha (S20B63/001), was conducted under my supervision and is now ready for submission.

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DECLARATION

I, **KIRABO IVY MARTHA** hereby declare that this is my original work, is not plagiarize and has not been submitted any other institution for any award.

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.....

Signature.

15/09/2023
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Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to my cherished parents, whose unwavering support and love have been my constant motivation.

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First of all, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Almighty God for enabling me to come this far. I could not have completed the internship without the help, love and support from a plethora of people. First and foremost I would like to thank the School of Business and it's staff for their help and support. I would especially like to thank my supervisor, Mr. Juuko Julius for his help and support and always encouraging us to do our best, the students who agreed to be part of the survey process for allowing me to learn and work from their experiences. I gained valuable knowledge and experience and also formed great relationships.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

1. eWoM- Electronic Word of Mouth

Abstract

The purpose of the study is to investigate the impacts of online customer reviews on consumer buying decisions in Uganda at Uganda Christian University. This was guided by the following objectives: to examine consumer buying behavior, to examine online customer reviews and to establish the impact of online customer reviews on consumer buying behavior

This study was conducted using a correlational research design with a quantitative approach. The study population consists about 13,000 people. The sample consisted of 30 respondents selected from the target population. This study employed simple random sampling, voluntary response sampling, and convenience sampling techniques to select the sample. The researcher largely used closed-ended questionnaires to collect primary data from the respondents in the sample. In addition to the use of questionnaires, data was collected through observation of the setting and environment of the organization. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire were ensured through a rigorous process. After validation, the data was coded to facilitate computer entry and analysis.

The study also found out that the respondents are beginning to rely more on online customer reviews when purchasing products and services. The study found out that positive reviews play a pivotal role in building product credibility, attracting potential buyers, and fostering a positive brand image. Conversely, the presence of negative reviews can lead to hesitations and even deter consumers from making a purchase. The majority ranking demonstrated that most people would not be comfortable purchasing a product or service without reading reviews. In conclusion, the study findings demonstrate that there is an impact of online customer reviews on customer buying decisions as demonstrated from the study findings generated. The major recommendation is that tourism and hospitality establishments should increase their online presence because travellers today depend on online reviews to gain insights into product performance, quality, and overall user experiences

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the study background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, scope of the study, and the significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

Due to the various advancements in technology all over the world, the tourism and hospitality industry is becoming more dependent on reviews (electronic word of mouth) for people to decide which destination they want to visit. Due to globalization, it has become easier for tourists, both foreign and international to access information about tourism and hospitality establishments and book them according to the amenities, prices and quality of services provided. In response to the global competition, tourism and hospitality organizations have adopted digital marketing for example social media and websites like trip advisor and booking.com to ensure that customers gain awareness of the business and consider visiting.

Consumer buying behaviour is the study of how people buy, what they buy, when they buy and why they buy (Kotler, 1994). Consumer buying behaviour is the behaviour that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs (Schiffman, 2007).

Consumer buying behavior depends on various factors such as needs, preferences, budget and the influence of advertising and promotions (Verma and Singh, 2017; Foxall, Goldsmith and Brown,1998). Customers purchasing decisions are also influenced by brand loyalty. word of mouth from friends and relatives, social media and peer pressure. Some of these factors may be less important depending on individual consumers and their situations (Wahab et al, 2016; Al Muala et al 2012).

Customers face some issues when purchasing goods and services online such as online shopping feels risky because their is no face to face interaction to develop trust (Bilgihan, 2016, George et al 2015). Trust is essential when one wants to transform potential customers to

actual customers. However, the internet provides unlimited products and services, but along with those unlimited services, there is perceived risk in digital shopping such as mobile application shopping, catalogue or mail order (Tsiakis, 2012; Forsythe et al., 2006; Aziz and Wahid, 2018).

Online customer reviews are defined as evaluative information generated by customers and posted on a company or third party web sites (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). An online review is also defined as any positive or negative portrayal of a (previous) client about a product or service of a specific organization composed on the web (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Online customer reviews given help the potential customers to overcome the threats of perceived risks for example financial risk, product risk, non delivery risk and convenience risk. This is because online customer reviews consists of feed back given to customers who have used the product or service provided and can rate it's ability to satisfy needs of customers. There are a number of factors that affect the credibility of online customer reviews for example the ability of a review to provide complete and correct information (Daft and Lengel, 1986), the ability of the review to provide up to date information based on when it was written (Jamila and Hasnu, 2013), large number of reviews which suggest different customer perspectives, (Filiari & McLeay, 2013), degree to which information in review is consistent with that in other reviews (Chang et al 2015), reviewers experience which contributes to potential customers seeing their reviews as competent (Fang, 2014), product or service ratings (Filiariand McLeay, 2013) and website reputation based on integrity and popularity (Lin, 2007).

These reviews aid in purchase decisions because they describe user experience rather than features of the product (Chen and Xie, 2008, Dellarocas, 2003). Online customer reviews are influenced by a consumers level of satisfaction from using the goods and services and the feeling invoked in them is what causes customers to write reviews.

This study will focus on the impact of online customer reviews on customer buying decisions

1.2 Statement of the problem

Technological advancements and globalization have led to the increased use of online customer reviews. These reviews have consequently led to the decline in the the number of customers, a tourism and hospitality establishments gets incase the reviews are a form of sabotage from competitors or disgruntled customers who want to ruin the establishments name. Consumer buying behaviour is affected by the various risks that are associated with purchasing goods and services online from someone you do not know face and face with no assurance they will provide value for money.

The risks involved in purchasing goods and services online include precieved risks for example financial risk (this has to do with the website disclosing the financial information of the business), product risk (product being different from what the customer ordered or being faulty), non delievery risk (customer can pay for the product or service and the tourism or hospitality provider doesn't fulfil their end of the bargain), and convenience risk (customers belief that they will face problems in order placement, cancellation, delivery and recieving products)

Customers acting contrary with supplier expectations is mainly due to negative online reviews in the tourism and hospitality industry

Due to an increase in technological advancements and globalization there has been an increased dependence on online customer reviews when purchasing goods and services

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the impacts of online customer reviews on customer buying decisions in the tourism and hospitality industry

1.4 Objectives of the study

They should be as follows:

1. To examine customer buying decisions n the Tourism and Hospitality industries.
2. To examine online customer reviews in the Tourism and Hospitality industries.

3. To establish the impact of online customer reviews on consumer buying decisions in the Tourism and Hospitality industries.

1.5 Research questions

1. What are consumer buying decisions in the tourism and hospitality industry?
2. What are online customer reviews in the tourism and hospitality industry?
3. What is the impact of online customer reviews on customer buying decisions ?

1.6 Scope of the study

1.6.1 Content scope

The study focused on investigating the impacts of online customer reviews on customer buying decisions in the tourism and hospitality industry

1.6.2 Geographical scope

The study was conducted at Uganda Christian University, along Bishop Tucker road on plot 4 Mukono, Uganda

1.6.3 Time scope

The study adhered to University research writing time scope. Primary data was collected from May to August, 2023. Secondary data was gotten from years ranging from 1986 to 2018 supplemented the primary data especially from electronic sources.

1.7 Significance of the study

Undertaking this study will be significant in the following ways:

- The study will help tourism and hospitality establishments to incorporate online reviews as a way of marketing their products and services to customers who are increasing beginning to rely on online customer reviews when making buying decisions

- The study findings will add more information to existing literature about online customer reviews and customer purchasing behavior
- The findings will be useful to interested tourism and hospitality business owners who may use the findings to improve on their marketing and build trust, and thus attract more customers.
- The findings will be useful to future researchers who may cite them in their own studies.
- The study will also enable the researcher fulfil partial academic requirements for the award of Bachelor of Tourism and Hospitality management

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter captures a review of related studies on the impacts of online customer reviews on customer purchasing decisions. The literature is as per the objectives of the study.

2.1 Customer buying decisions

Customer buying decisions have been influenced by the emergency of technology that has enabled the interconnectivity and interconnectedness of customers of the tourism and hospitality establishments around the world through online customer reviews.

Customer buying decisions are continually evolving and the way business think about them as changed. Originally customers were thought as rational and were believed to act in consistent patterns but as research on customer buying decisions progressed it became apparent that consumers often behave irrationally with many factors determining their buying habits. Tourism and hospitality establishments have had to look at growing trends to determine which tourism and hospitality packages to offer to their customers for example preference for travel in small groups rather than mass tourism, preference for places that are highly digitized, preference for reduced impact on the community they visit (ecotourism and sustainable tourism) has caused customers to refused to go and purchase from tourism and hospitality establishments that are not mindful of the changing trends (Weng et al 2022)

Customer buying decisions are influenced by a number of factors for example cultural, social, personal and phycological factors

Personal factors

These refer to a set of traits which are unique to a particular individual. These factors typically consist of age, occupation, lifestyle, personality and values. Kotler & Keller (2016) opined that business organization should personal factors when making products for example

A. Age

As people age their tastes and preferences change for example older clients may prefer to go for quieter and less vigorous tourism activities like bird watching, cultural tourism while the younger tourists prefer adventure tourism and enjoy the thrill of the outdoors. These tastes and preferences are likely to dictate the products that the customers are going to purchase (Abhijeet Pratap, 2017)

B. Occupation

Another important personal factor is occupation. This refers to one one does to earn a living. A person's occupation influences their purchasing power. A person with higher purchasing power is most likely to go in for expensive hotels and holidays because they can afford to do so while people with low purchasing power are more likely to go in for alternative accommodations like hostels, student centers and BnB's because that is what they can afford (Ramya et al 2016)

C. Self concept

This is how a person sees them selves or what they would like to be (Phau, 2004). If a person cares about conservation and would like to be viewed as a conservationist he or she is like to practice eco tourism and sustainable tourism and visit eco friendly places but if a person isn't a nature enthusiast he or she is less likely to care about the environment and indulge in activities that could be a threat to the environment

Social factors

Social factors include the social circle of the consumer and their opinions..

A. The social class of a consumer.

This affects the consumers purchasing decision because they will only purchase goods that meet their class for example rich people who belong in higher society demand quality goods and services wherever they go while people who are lower down in society are more tolerant of of substandard goods and services and hence they are more likely to go to restaurants and

hotels with less than 5 star ratings (Kotler, 2017) A recommendation from someone in higher society would go a long way to potential customers (Anderson, 2009) hence tourism and hospitality establishments should try to recruit these different members of high society to promote the goods and services offered

B. Family

Customers are heavily persuaded by their family members as they have strong bonds with them (Ming, 2007, Limayem, 2000). Family help to give their opinions to different family members about certain goods and services they have used and because this recommendation is given by someone they know the customers are willing to take the risk and purchase the tourism and hospitality goods from the different service providers

Economic factors

The state of the economy is another factor that affects consumer buying behavior. A country for example that is going through inflation influences customer buying decisions because customers have lower disposable income to go for holidays and trips hence tourism businesses should focus on making low budget trips or organizing mass tourism trips to maximise economies of scale. They can also focus on sales promotions like offering discounts

Psychological factors

These are internal factors that affect a customer's buying decisions within their body (Ramya and Ali, 2016)

A. Motivation

This is the behavior of a person that is propelled by a need. It can be either internal and external or positive and negative. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the most important needs are the physiological needs such as food and water followed by safety and security, feelings of belonging, need for status quo achievement/ ego needs and then needs for self-actualization. It is therefore important for tourism and hospitality establishments to

provide and see that each of these needs are met on the tourism packages designed such that people can readily purchase

B. Perception

Kotler et al. (2018) defined perception as the process of selecting, organizing and interpreting information input to create a meaningful picture of the world. It is basically what someone thinks of a product or service before and after purchase. It is fueled by personal experience and natural thought hence tourism and hospitality establishments should strive to create a positive brand name such as to change people's perception about the products and services offered for example by giving excellent customer service, offering first replies to customer queries, maintaining a high standard of cleanliness (Hassanein, 2007)

2.2 Online customer reviews

Customers for a very long time have benefitted from exchanging information with one another about their experiences, usability of the product and the quality of the product and services. With the rise of internet, e-commerce and online platforms, ratings and reviews have become more accessible around the world. Many customers leave ratings and reviews on these platforms to inform other customers if they were satisfied with their purchase and what can be done better by the tourism and hospitality providers. Tourism and hospitality establishments have recognized the power online customer reviews have on customers purchasing decisions and have begun to use these platforms to advertise their businesses. In addition to written online reviews, video reviews have been introduced (Pew Research center, 2016)

Studies have shown that online reviews are a great determinant to whether the customers will purchase the products and services or not. If the product's reviews are excessively positive, this increases the chances of purchasing the good or service. A one-point increase in valence (positivity or negativity of reviews) brings about an increased buying chance of roughly 10% according to (Casaló et al., 2015).

Positive reviews increase bookings through convincing and trustworthy content. They convert internet user to customers of tourism and hospitality and they offer onsite to the businesses

about where they should focus their marketing power. In a survey conducted in 2013 in the UK, 8 out of 10 consumers stated that they trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations (LCSR, 2013). A 2014 study in Germany shows that 86% of consumers consider online reviews 'credible' or 'very credible' (Conrady, 2014) while negative reviews destroy the trust that potential customers have in the tourism and hospitality establishments making them too scared to transact with

Online customer reviews have different elements and are portrayed by use of star rating ("valence"), the number of "reviews" ("volume") and length ("informativeness") since online reviews influence individuals chances of buying something.

Valence

Valence is the rating of a product (Cui et al., 2012), usually stated as being either positive, negative, or neutral (Chen & Huang, 2013) for example the number of stars awarded to a product or service. Positive or negative valence is said to impact customer attitude (Liu 2006) and is a main attribute of OCRs that affect consumers buying intentions (Yen et al., 2011).

Online customer reviews valence has a stronger impact on the purchase intention of consumers with high level of experience than on those with low levels of experience (Park & Kim, 2008). However, Amblee and Bui (2011) stated that the rating of a product or service does not affect customer purchase decisions. Forman and Wiesenfeld (2008), suggest that negative valence might be a good thing.

Previous studies have reported that people do not attach the same importance to positive. (Doh & Hwang, 2009; Sen & Lerman, 2007; Zhang, Craciun, & Shin, 2010). Positive OCRs are about quality of good and service and if the supplier keeps producing good products and services he\ she gains a good reputation while negative OCRs are mostly to show ones distrust in a product and the service being offered (Cui et al., 2012). Customers are more likely to purchase based on negative reviews than positive reviews (Zhang et al., 2010), because negative information is often more insightful than positive information (Bone, 1995)

Consumers have been made aware of marketers strategies of putting positive evaluations on their sites in order to attract unsuspecting buyers, though the absence of negative reviews normally tips off the customers that the reviews are faked because in the world of tourism and hospitality people have different experiences (Schindler & Bickart, 2005). Negative reviews are helpful because they provide information for customers, even though positive reviews were rated as more helpful (Zhang, Li, & Chen, 2012). An investigation by Doh and Hwang (2009) shows that a few negative reviews promote the credibility of the OCRs, creating a positive attitude towards the website and improving its performance. Additionally, a set of positive reviews that includes negative reviews generates the impression that the reviews are more positive than they are (Purnawirawan et al., 2012).

Volume

Volume is the number of online reviews or ratings about a specific product or service. (Chintagunta et al., 2010). The high amount of review volume is associated with more product awareness and this results in higher sales (Anderson and Salisbury 2003; Archak et al. 2011; Bowman and Narayandas 2001). Consumers can be persuaded further when viewing products with a high volume of online reviews as it helps consumers become more informed about a product, which affects and influences product sales (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004; Salganik and Watts, 2008). Liu (2006) found that volume has an “informative influence on awareness.

Length

Shorter online reviews likely have fewer data in comparison to longer online reviews (Pan and Zhang, 2011). Longer online reviews offer more data and can be more persuading than shorter online reviews. Longer online reviews capture customers focus since buyers can find what they are searching for in longer online reviews. Length is one of the most significant signs buyers utilize while looking for products (Järveläinen et al., 2013). This implied that longer online reviews are increasingly helpful, contrasting to shorter online reviews (Mudambi and Schuff, 2010). Purchasers’ attitudes are influenced by the positive or negative remarks which will determine if they will like or dislike the products. When positive reviews emerge, shopper

motivation will grow to purchase the product or service. At the point when low quality reviews are rising, purchaser drive to purchase reduced due to fear of repeat situations

2.3 Relationship between online customer reviews and customer purchasing decisions

Customers act have began to depend on online customer reviews more and more to share shopping experience (Floh et al 2013) and in response to this growing trend a large number of studies has been carried out to determine the relationship between online customer reviews and their impact on customer buying decisions (Floh et al., 2013; Lackermair et al., 2013; Kang et al., 2020; Chen and Ku, 2021). These studies have shown evidence of valence intensity of online reviews on purchasing decisions. Lackermair et al 2013 showed that online reviews and ratings provide information to customers

Positive comments tend to inspire emotional trust, increase confidence and trust in the product and have a strong persuasive effect. On the contrary, negative comments reduce the generation of emotional trust and hinder consumers' buying intentions (Archak et al., 2010). Khammash (2008) studied the reason has to why customers rely on customer reviews and found out that customers use customer reviews when they are looking for information on a good or a service especially if it is there first time purchasing. Online customer reviews help in making the decision that customers make on which goods or services to purchase, provide customer feed back from customers who have used the goods and services before and offer recommendations. Bae and Lee, 2011 also concluded that customer reviews are the most credible source of information because the reviews are written by customers who do not stand to gain anything unlike when the reviews are given by the tourism and hospitality establishments (Mudambi and Schuff, 2010)

A study Zhong-Gang et al. (2015) reveals that , " Nearly 60% of consumers browse online product reviews at least once a week and 93% of whom believe that these online reviews help them to improve the accuracy of purchase decisions, reduce the risk of loss and affect their shopping options. When it comes to e-consumers in commercial activities on B2B and B2C platforms, 82% of the consumers read product reviews before making shopping choices, and 60% of them refer to comments every week. Research shows that 93% of consumers say online

reviews will affect shopping choices, indicating that most consumers have the habit of reading online reviews regularly and rely on the comments for their purchasing decisions" (Vimaladevi and Dhanabhakaym, 2012).

2.4 Summary of the literature review

In the above literature, various scholars have provided empirical evidence of the connection between online customer reviews and customer purchasing decisions. Literature has also suggested that online customer reviews are being used by organizations as marketing strategies due to the popularity of reviews with customers who use them to seek for information on the product hence online customer reviews are important factors for persuading customers to purchase tourism goods and services. Positive reviews help to build trust in the to purchase the goods and services while the negative reviews reduce that trust but it is important to note that sites that only have positive reviews are suspicious to customers because a few negative reviews help to authenticate the products and services.

However there has been little literature about the impacts of online customer reviews on consumer decisions (Christodoulides & Michaelidou, 2012). Stephen and Galak (2012) for example contextual measures such as numerical ratings have been the main focus of most online customer review studies (e.g. Chevalier & Mayzlin 2006; Duan et al. 2008); non-numerical factors, for instance, credibility, usefulness, and social support, on the other hand, have been ignored. Pan and Zhang (2011), furthermore, argue that despite the wide use online customer reviews little is yet known about the extent of their helpfulness. Also interactions between the customer and tourism and hospitality suppliers can't be assured and monitored, such interaction involves more risk and social uncertainty than offline shopping (Lee & Turban, 2001; Reichheld & Schefter 2000). Therefore, to fill this gap, this study sought to investigate the impacts of online customer reviews on customer buying decisions in the tourism and hospitality industry.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology of the research. Methodology is the detailed procedure used to answer the research questions. The methodology has the description of the research design, sampling techniques, instrumentation and data analysis techniques.

3.1 Research design

This study was conducted using a correlational research design with a quantitative approach. The use of this design allowed for efficient data collection within a short period, making it suitable for the limited time available to conduct the study. The quantitative approach enabled the researchers to gather numerical data and analyze it statistically, providing valuable insights into the relationships between the study variables.

3.2 Study population

The study population will consist of 13,000 students of Uganda Christian University.. This is the total number of service personnel in the school (Human Resource Manual, 2021).

3.3 Determination of the sample size

The sample consisted of 30 respondents selected from the target population where a population of 40 gave a sample of 30 surveys. This number was chosen to act as a representative of the entire population of Uganda Christian University

3.4 Sampling techniques

Probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to come up with categories of sample elements from the study population. This study employed simple random sampling, voluntary sampling, and convenience sampling techniques to select the sample.

Random sampling techniques were used to give equal opportunities to everyone in the study population to be included in the sample. Voluntary sampling was employed to give everybody who wanted to be given an opportunity to participate in the survey to do so keeping in mind people came to conduct their own business and may not wish to be disturbed.

Since the study population was not uniform and was scattered, convenience sampling techniques were utilized. This sampling technique involved selecting respondents who were easily accessible and willing to participate in the study.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The researcher largely used closed-ended questionnaires to collect primary data from the respondents in the sample. The questionnaires were designed with a five-point Likert scale, where respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the provided statements. These questionnaires were distributed to the students of Uganda Christian University

3.6 Reliability and validity

The reliability and validity of the questionnaire were ensured through a rigorous process for example through

Pilot testing: The questionnaire will be pre-tested on a small group of students to identify and rectify any issues with clarity and understanding.

Clear instructions: The questionnaire will have clear and concise instructions to avoid ambiguity. The researcher was also present in the vicinity of the sample study such that they might answer any further questions that the population had

Anonymity: Respondents will remain anonymous to encourage honest responses. The sample population did not provide their names such that there is no fear in giving truthful responses on the different questions asked

3.7 Data processing, analysis and presentation

The collected data underwent thorough editing and validation processes within the respective questionnaires to ensure accuracy and completeness.

After validation, the data was coded to facilitate computer entry and analysis. Microsoft Excel was employed as the primary tool for data entry and organization. The data was transformed into a digital format, enabling the researcher to perform various statistical analyses, including frequency distributions and other relevant statistical measures.

By utilizing Microsoft Excel's functionalities, the researcher was able to generate objective and meaningful conclusions based on the data. The statistical analyses provided insights into the research objectives, enabling the researcher to draw meaningful inferences and make informed interpretations from the findings. Data was presented in tabular form through descriptive statistics like frequency and percentages.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The researcher was conscious of ethical considerations during data collection and entire research.

a. Informed Consent: Participants will be fully informed about the purpose of the study and their voluntary participation.

b..Confidentiality: Personal information and responses will be kept confidential and used only for research purposes.

c. Data Security: Data will be stored securely to protect participants' privacy.

d. Anonymity of respondents. The names of the respondents were not recorded such that they may remain anonymous

Additionally, no form of bribery or coercion was used to ensure the avoidance of conflict of interest.

3.9 Limitations of the study

This study had some limitations as discussed below:

The researcher had a limited amount of time to conduct the investigation due to university standards and a set schedule for completion. To address this, the researcher carefully planned and prioritized tasks to ensure timely completion of the study.

There was a lack of funding to support the study's operations, including purchasing secondary research materials and printing questionnaires for primary research. To overcome this limitation, the researcher sought alternative sources of funding, such as seeking support from by utilizing personal resources to cover essential expenses. Additionally, cost-saving measures were implemented to manage data gathering and reporting costs efficiently

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.0 Introduction

This chapter provides the presentation, analysis and interpretations of data. The data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel and the findings are presented mainly in tabular form. This chapter is organized as per the questionnaire and study objectives.

4.1 Social demographic characteristics of respondents

The study paid attention to the social demographics of the respondents (age and gender). The data collected will be presented in percentages, frequencies and in tables where conclusions will be drawn . This is meant to generate backgrounds of the respondents

4.1.1 Gender of respondents

Personal Characteristic	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	08	32
	Female	17	68
	Total	25	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 reveals that majority of respondent (68%) were female. The male were 32%. This means that the female point of view dominated the findings of the study.

4.1.2 Age of respondents

In this section, the age of respondents is presented.

Table 2: Showing the age of respondents

Personal Characteristic	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18-22	20	80
	23-28	04	16
	29-32	00	00
	33 and above	01	4
	Total	25	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 above indicates that majority was 80% and the respondents were of the age group between 18-22 years. This means that the respondents are still within their youthful and adventurous making them more tech savvy and this increases the probability of them using online platforms for purchasing goods and services

4.1.3 Analysis based on characteristics of reviewers

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Do you need to read review before purchasing goods & services	09[36%]	12[48%]	02[8%]	01[4%]	01[4%]
Does the gender of the person who gave their review affect your	03[12%]	02[8%]	02[8%]	09[36%]	09[36%]

purchasing decision					
Do the user names from the people who gave their reviews affect your purchasing decision	03[12%]	01[4%]	07[28%]	09[36%]	05[20%]
Do spelling mistakes and grammar associated with the product or service you want to buy affect your purchasing decision	05[20%]	10[40%]	02[8%]	08[32%]	00[0%]

Source: Primary Data

This analysis was done on the effects of the characteristics of reviewers on customer buying behavior.

The respondents were asked if they need to read reviews before purchasing goods and services. 9 people strongly agreed, 12 people agreed that reading reviews was important, 2 people were neutral, 1 person disagreed and 1 strongly disagreed that reading customer reviews were important

The respondents were then asked if gender affected their customer buying decisions. 3 people strongly agreed, 2 people agreed, 2 people were neutral, 9 disagreed and 9 strongly disagreed that gender was important in deciding goods and services to purchase

The respondents were then asked if the user names of the people giving the reviews affected their buying decisions. 03[12%] strongly agreed, 1 agreed, 7 were neutral, 9 disagreed and 5 strongly disagreed that they considered user names of the reviewers

The respondents were asked if spelling mistakes and grammar associated with the product or service affected purchasing behavior and 5 people strongly agreed, 10[40%] agreed, 2 were neutral, 8 disagreed and 0 strongly disagreed

4.1.4 Analysis based on website that provides services

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Does the reliability of the website in terms of consumer protection policy like privacy of consumers personal and information affect your purchasing decision	07[28%]	09[36%]	05[20%]	03[12%]	01[4%]
Does the popularity of the website affect your purchasing decision	08[32%]	11[44%]	04[16%]	01[4%]	01[4%]
Do reviews from the company from which you are purchasing the goods and services affect your purchasing decision	07[28%]	09[36%]	05[20%]	03[12%]	01[4%]

Source: Primary Data

An analysis was carried out on the types of websites that potential customers used when purchasing goods and services

The respondents were asked if the reliability of the website in terms of consumer protection policy like privacy of consumers personal and information affected their purchasing decision 7 people strongly agreed, 9 agreed, 5 were neutral, 03[12%] disagreed and 1 strongly disagreed that reliability of the website mattered

The respondents were asked if the popularity of the website affects customers buying decisions. 8 people strongly agreed, 11[44%] agreed, 4 were neutral, 1 disagreed and 1 strongly disagreed that the popularity of the website mattered

The respondents were asked if reviews from the company from which they were purchasing goods and services affected their purchasing decision. 7 strongly agreed, 9 people agreed, 5

were netral, 3 people disagree and 1 person strongly disagreed that reviews from the company selling goods and services mattered

4.1.5 Analysis of response of reviewers

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
If you purchase a product without reading the reviews do you worry about your decision to purchase it	05[20%]	11[44%]	04[16%]	05[20%]	00
Do you believe that reviews left by consumers are a ploy to sabotage other players in the market	03[12%]	09[36%]	07[28%]	04[16%]	02[8%]
Negative reviews impact purchasing decision when buying an expensive good	05[20%]	07[28%]	07[28%]	03[12%]	03[12%]
Positive reviews impact the buying decisions when purchasing expensive goods	06[24%]	15[60%]	01[4%]	03[12%]	00
Does consistency of reviews affect your purchasing decision	08[32%]	11[44%]	04[16%]	02[8%]	00
Do high ratings of a product affect your purchasing decision	12[48%]	11[44%]	01[4%]	01[4%]	00

Source: Primary Data

An analysis on the response of reviewers was carried out

Respondents were asked if they worry about a product or service without reading customer reviews and 5 strongly agree, 11[44%] agree, 4 were neutral, 5 disagree and 0 people strongly

disagreed that that they worry if they don't read customer reviews before purchasing goods and services

Respondents were asked if rereviews left by consumers are a ploy to sabotage other players in the market. 3 strongly agreed, 9 agreed, 7 remained neutral, 4 disagreed and 2 strongly disagreed that reviews left by consumers were a ploy to sabotage other players in the market

Respondents were asked if negative reviews affect consumer buying decisions when purchasing expensive goods. 5 strongly agreed, 7 agreed, 7 were neutral, 3 disagreed and 3 strongly disagreed that negative reviews mattered when purchasing expensive goods

Respondents were asked if positive reviews affected consumer buying decisions when purchasing expensive goods. 6 strongly agreed, 15 agreed, 1 person was neutral, 3 disagreed and 0 people strongly disagreed that positive reviews were important

Respondents were asked if consistency in customer reviews affected their purchasing decisions and 8 strongly agreed, 11[44%] agreed, 5 were neutral, 2 disagreed and 0 strongly disagreed that consistency of negative reviews mattered

Respondents were asked do high ratings of a product affect your purchasing decision and it was found that 12[48%] people strongly agreed, 11[44%] agreed, 1 person was neutral, 1 person disagreed and 0 people strongly disagreed that high ratings of a product affect consumer purchasing decisions

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides the summary of the study findings and discussion as well as the conclusion and recommendations of the findings on the study objectives.

5.1 Summary of Findings

5.1.1 Consumer buying decisions in the tourism and hospitality industry

The study found out that most consumers read customer reviews before purchasing goods and services and hence they are a huge factor that affects their consumer buying behaviour

The study found that the reliability of the website in terms of consumer protection policy, popularity of the website and company effort to market their own goods and services are key factors that affect a customers buying decisions

During the analysis of the response, the study found out that most of the respondents agreed that they would worry about goods and services purchased if they did not read online reviews, the number of times reviews were given (consistency) was important

It was noted that factors influencing consumer buying decisions were valence (positive and negative reviews), website realibility, consistency of reviews, volume of reviews among others

5.1.2 Online customer reviews in the tourism and hospitality industry

The study found out that customers reviews are very important for the customers who are purchasing goods and services they have never used before because reviews can be informative and guide potential buyers to good suppliers. The tourism and hospitality establishments also need reviews has a marketing strategy. This is because before any of the customers buy a product or a service they read the reviews.

Customers are more likely to respond to reviews that are lengthy because they believe that they are more informative and they are more likely to learn about the product they are purchasing more. Positive reviews positively affect consumers purchasing decision though an influx of positive reviews makes customers suspicious that they are being deceived by the supplier. Consistency of the reviews is also important because if the product is really of good quality then many people should agree to the better features of the product

5.1.3 Impact of online customer reviews on customer buying decisions

The study found that online customer reviews greatly impact a customer's buying decisions, this is because from the study above the respondents agreed that reading online customer reviews was important and many people worried if they didn't read the reviews after purchasing products and services hence it can be concluded that online customer reviews impact online buying behavior. This research is in line with works such as Rizwan et al 2019 and Amal and Abdulrahman, 2013 which also concluded that online customer reviews impacted online buying behavior

5.2 Conclusions

In conclusion, the study findings demonstrate that the impact of online customer reviews on customer buying decisions in the tourism and hospitality industry. Online customer reviews are becoming more and more important to customers and are a cheap and efficient way for tourism and hospitality establishments to spread information about their products and services. Companies ought to build a strong online presence because of the new advancements in technology and globalization. Companies should not be afraid of online customer reviews but otherwise embrace customers' opinions in order to better develop their products to ensure longevity in business.

5.3 Recommendations

The study above revealed a number of aspects that a tourism and hospitality establishment can capitalize on in order to influence customers to purchase their goods and services

Improve Review Authenticity and Trustworthiness: Companies should prioritize maintaining the authenticity and trustworthiness of online customer reviews. Measures such as verifying the identity of reviewers, encouraging genuine and unbiased feedback, and addressing any potential review manipulation can enhance consumer confidence in the credibility of the reviews

Enhance Website Popularity and Consumer Protection Policies: Websites that host online customer reviews should focus on building popularity and ensuring robust consumer protection policies. A well established and trusted platform can attract more users and provide a reliable space for valuable reviews. Implementing strong consumer protection measures, such as safeguarding personal information and privacy, can

further strengthen user trust and engagement. **Emphasize the Role of Negative Reviews:** Businesses should recognize the value of negative reviews and view them as an opportunity for improvement. Negative reviews can provide valuable feedback and insights into areas that need attention. Companies should respond constructively to negative feedback, address customer concerns, and use it to enhance product/service quality and customer satisfaction.

5.4 Areas for Future Research

Further research should be done considering the qualitative approach. This will help to enrich the findings and elaborate more from the numerical and qualitative point of view

Future researchers should also increase on the number of respondents because 25 people is a small number to base the study off of as results might be refuted

Other researchers can carry out a research paper on the impacts of all other types of electronic word of mouth for example social media on consumer buying behavior and which is the most effective for customers and businesses to use

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6.0 APPENDICES

6.1.0 Proposed budget

Items	Price shs
Transport	50,000
Airtime	35,000
Stationary	80,000
Internet	50,000
Miscellaneous	30,000
TOTAL	245,000

6.1.1 Proposed work plan

Months	Chapter to complete
Creating online survey	15 May - 30 May
Conducting survey	10th June- 20th June
Chapter 1: General introduction	25th June - 10 th June
Chapter 2: Literature review	25th June- 01st July
Chapter 3: Methodology	5th July- 15th July
Chapter 4: Data Analysis, Presentation and Interpretation of Results	16th July- 25th July

Chapter 5:; Discussion of findings	15th August- 24th August
Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations	25th August-30th August
Submit to supervisor	31st August

6.1.2 Sample of survey form

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is **Kirabo Ivy Martha**, a student of Uganda Christian University pursuing a Bachelor of Tourism and Hoslitality management. Am doing research on the impacts of online customer reviews on customer buying decisions in the tourism and hospitality industry. I am kindly requesting your participation in the study by filling the following questionnaire. The views you give will only be used for study purposes only and shall be kept confidential to the highest level.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

1. Gender of Respondent:

(a) Male [] (b) Female []

2. Age of Respondents:

(a) 18-22 []

(b) 23-28 []

(c) 29-32 []

(d) 33 and above []

3. Email

On the scale provided below, rate each statement that describes the with food and beverages service delivery in restaurants.

Using The Likert Scale Of 1-5 Where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3 = moderately agree, 4 = agree, and 5= strongly agree.

ANALYSIS BASED ON CHARACTERISTIC OF THE REVIEW

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
Are reviews posted on an online booking platform important to your purchasing decision					
Do you believe that reviews left by consumers are a ploy to sabotage other players in the market					
Does consistency of customer reviews affect your purchasing decision					
What is the impact of negative reviews when purchasing an expensive good					
What is the impact of positive reviews when purchasing an expensive good and service					
Do high ratings for a product affect your purchasing decision					

ANALYSIS BASED ON WEBSITE

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
If you purchase a product without reading the reviews do you worry about your decision to purchase it					

If you purchase a product without reading the reviews do you worry about your decision to purchase it					
Do spelling grammar and mistakes associated with the product or service you want to buy affect your purchasing decision					
Does the popularity of the website affect your purchasing decision ?					
Does the reliability of the website in terms of consumer protection policy like privacy of consumers personal and financial information affect your purchasing decision					

ANALYSIS BASED ON REVIEWER

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
Do the user names from the people who gave their reviews affect your purchasing decision?					
Do reviews from the company from which you are purchasing the good and service affect your purchasing decision?					
Do the genders of the people who gave their reviews affect your purchasing decision ?					

Thank you for taking part in this exercise we appreciate your support.