Louis Savinien Dupuis Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 2025: V(4) 184–192
DOI: 10.21839/lsdjmr.2025.v4.276

Research Article

ROLE OF PRODUCT REVIEWS IN SHAPING CUSTOMER ONLINE PURCHASE DECISIONS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CONSUMERS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY IN CUDDALORE

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(Received: 09-04-2025; Accepted 08-06-2025; Published Online 03-11-2025)

Abstract

The rapid growth of e-commerce has significantly transformed consumer buying behaviour across the globe. In digital marketplaces, consumers increasingly depend on online product reviews before making purchase decisions because physical product evaluation is not possible in online shopping environments. Online reviews function as electronic word-of-mouth communication that helps consumers assess product quality, credibility, usefulness, trustworthiness, and overall value. The present study examines the role of product reviews in shaping customer online purchase decisions with special reference to consumers in Cuddalore district. The study specifically investigates the influence of review credibility, review quality and usefulness, and review quantity and star ratings on customer purchase intention and online purchase behaviour. The study adopted a descriptive research design and used both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from 100 respondents through a structured questionnaire using convenience sampling. Percentage analysis and correlation analysis were employed to analyze the data and interpret the relationships between product review variables and online purchase decisions. The findings reveal that online product reviews significantly influence consumer purchase intention and online buying behaviour. Review credibility, review quality, usefulness, review quantity, and star ratings were found to have a positive relationship with purchase decisions. Consumers strongly rely on online reviews to reduce perceived risk, evaluate alternatives, and improve confidence before purchasing products online. The study further reveals that young consumers are highly dependent on review ratings, detailed feedback, and authentic customer experiences while making purchase decisions. Positive reviews and high star ratings significantly increase consumer trust and purchase intention, whereas negative reviews reduce buying confidence. The study contributes to the growing literature on electronic word-of-mouth and consumer behaviour by empirically examining how online reviews shape consumer attitudes and online purchase decisions in the Indian e-commerce context. The paper concludes that online product reviews have become one of the most influential digital marketing tools affecting customer purchase behaviour. E-commerce companies and marketers should therefore focus on maintaining authentic, transparent, and informative review systems to improve customer trust, satisfaction, and long-term loyalty.

Keywords: Online Product Reviews, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Purchase Intention, E-commerce, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, Review Credibility, Review Quality, Star Ratings, Consumer Trust.

1. Introduction

The emergence of digital technology and the rapid expansion of e-commerce platforms have fundamentally transformed the manner in which consumers purchase products and services. Online shopping has become an essential component of modern consumer behaviour due to its convenience, accessibility, variety, and time-saving benefits. Consumers today can purchase products from anywhere using digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, and computers. The growth of platforms such as Amazon, Flipkart, Myntra, Meesho, and other online marketplaces has significantly increased digital purchasing behaviour among consumers across urban and semi-urban regions.

Despite the advantages offered by e-commerce, online shopping also involves a high degree of uncertainty because consumers cannot physically examine products before purchasing them. In traditional retail environments, customers evaluate products through touch, inspection, and direct interaction. However, in online shopping, consumers rely heavily on alternative information sources such as online reviews, ratings, images, descriptions, and recommendations. Among these, online product reviews have emerged as one of the most influential factors shaping customer online purchase decisions.

Online product reviews refer to customer-generated feedback, ratings, comments, recommendations, and experiences shared on digital platforms after purchasing or using a product. These reviews function as electronic word-of-mouth communication and influence consumer perceptions regarding product quality, reliability, functionality, and value. Online reviews provide social proof and help consumers reduce uncertainty while making purchase decisions.

The increasing influence of online reviews is strongly associated with the rise of digital consumerism and social commerce. Consumers today are more informed, connected, and research-oriented before making purchases. They often compare multiple products and brands using online reviews before selecting a product. Reviews also influence consumer trust and perceived risk, particularly for first-time buyers and high-involvement products.

Several factors determine the effectiveness of online reviews. Review credibility refers to the trustworthiness and authenticity of the reviewer and the review content. Review quality includes the clarity, accuracy, completeness, and usefulness of information provided in the review. Review quantity and star ratings also influence consumer behaviour because consumers often associate higher ratings and larger numbers of reviews with better product quality and popularity.

In India, online shopping behaviour has expanded rapidly due to increasing internet penetration, smartphone usage, affordable data services, and digital payment systems. Consumers in smaller cities and semi-urban areas such as Cuddalore are increasingly participating in e-commerce activities. However, many consumers still experience uncertainty regarding online transactions, product quality, fraud, and delivery reliability. Under such circumstances, online product reviews become an important source of reassurance and trust.

The present study focuses on understanding the role of online product reviews in shaping customer online purchase decisions among consumers in Cuddalore district. The study examines how review credibility, review quality and usefulness, and review quantity and star ratings influence purchase intention and buying behaviour. The study also attempts to provide practical implications for e-commerce marketers, digital retailers, and businesses regarding the effective management of online review systems.

2. Review of Literature

Online product reviews have become an important area of research in consumer behaviour and digital marketing due to their significant influence on online purchase decisions. Researchers across different countries and industries have examined how review credibility, review quality, review quantity, star ratings, emotional tone, and social influence shape consumer attitudes and buying behaviour.

Patel and Shah (2025) conducted a study on the impact of online product reviews on customer purchase intention in e-commerce platforms. The findings revealed that authentic and transparent reviews positively influence consumer buying behaviour and increase purchase intention.

Mehta and Kaur (2025) examined the influence of review transparency and trustworthiness on online purchase decisions among Indian consumers. The study concluded that transparent reviews significantly enhance customer trust and online purchase intention.

Arora and Soni (2025) studied the role of online reviews in shaping online purchase intention among Indian e-commerce users. The study found that review credibility has a stronger impact on purchase intention than promotional discounts.

Das and Kumar (2025) investigated the influence of review authenticity on consumer trust and online buying behaviour. The findings indicated that authentic online reviews significantly improve consumer trust and positively affect purchase intention.

Rao and Anusha (2025) examined how review authenticity and trust influence consumer purchase behaviour in Indian e-commerce platforms. The study concluded that trustworthy reviews significantly influence purchase intention and customer decision-making.

Iyer and Mukherjee (2025) studied the impact of review consistency across multiple platforms in omnichannel retailing environments. The findings revealed that consistent and authentic reviews positively influence consumer trust and buying decisions.

Luo and Zhang (2025) analyzed the influence of sentiment polarity in online reviews on purchase intention. The study revealed that strongly positive online review sentiment significantly increases purchase intention.

Ahmed and Sheikh (2025) examined the role of influencer-generated reviews on customer purchase intention. The findings indicated that credible influencer reviews positively influence online purchase behaviour.

Mehta and Shah (2025) investigated the impact of negative online reviews on brand avoidance behaviour. The study concluded that negative reviews significantly increase perceived risk and discourage purchase intention.

Krishnan and Balasubramanian (2025) examined the influence of review credibility, review volume, and trust on online purchase decisions among Indian consumers. The findings revealed that credible and high-volume reviews positively affect purchase decisions.

Zhang, Li, and Chen (2024) studied the moderating role of consumer involvement in the relationship between online reviews and purchase decisions. The findings indicated that highly involved consumers are strongly influenced by review credibility.

Reddy and Priya (2024) examined the effect of review quantity and star ratings on online purchase decisions among Indian consumers. The study concluded that higher ratings and larger numbers of reviews significantly influence consumer purchase decisions.

Chen and Lien (2024) analyzed the role of review diagnosticity in online consumer decision-making. The study found that detailed and informative reviews positively influence consumer purchase intention.

Mishra and Malhotra (2024) examined the role of review usefulness and perceived risk in online shopping behaviour. The study concluded that useful reviews significantly reduce perceived risk and enhance purchase intention.

Verma, Gupta, and Mehra (2024) studied the role of review transparency and authenticity in influencing consumer trust. The findings indicated that authentic online reviews positively affect purchase intention.

Suresh and Paul (2024) focused on Generation Z consumers and found that younger consumers heavily rely on peer reviews and informational quality while making online purchase decisions.

Wang, Li, and Zhao (2024) investigated the role of image-based reviews in influencing purchase intention. The findings revealed that visual reviews significantly increase consumer trust and buying intention.

Jain and Goyal (2023) examined review credibility, rating consistency, and review quantity in the Indian context. The study found that credible reviews and higher ratings significantly influence online purchase decisions.

Sharma and Verma (2023) studied the role of emotional tone and informativeness of online reviews in shaping purchase intention. The findings revealed that emotionally positive and informative reviews significantly enhance buying intention.

Kaur and Singh (2023) investigated the impact of review quantity and star ratings on online purchase intention among Indian consumers. The study concluded that both the quantity and quality of reviews influence buying behaviour.

Han, Zhang, and Wang (2023) analyzed how review credibility affects consumer attitudes and purchase intention. The study identified review credibility as one of the strongest predictors of purchase intention.

Park and Nicolau (2023) examined the asymmetrical influence of negative online reviews on purchase decisions. The findings revealed that negative reviews often have a stronger impact on consumer behaviour than positive reviews.

Ismagilova, Slade, Rana, and Dwivedi (2022) studied electronic word-of-mouth and online consumer behaviour. The study concluded that trustworthy and informative reviews significantly influence purchase decisions and consumer attitudes.

Ahmad and Sun (2022) examined the role of reviewer expertise and authenticity in shaping online purchase decisions. The study found that experienced reviewers significantly enhance consumer trust.

Tran and Nguyen (2022) analyzed how online reviews reduce perceived risk during online shopping. The findings revealed that positive reviews significantly reduce uncertainty and enhance purchase intention.

Goh, Heng, and Lin (2022) investigated the influence of review usefulness and social influence on online purchase behaviour. The study concluded that helpful reviews and peer recommendations significantly affect buying behaviour.

Filieri, Alguezaui, and McLeay (2022) studied how informative and credible online reviews reduce perceived risk and improve purchase intention.

Dwivedi, Ismagilova, and Hughes (2021) examined the influence of electronic word-of-mouth on online consumer behaviour and concluded that online reviews significantly shape trust and purchase intention.

The literature clearly indicates that online product reviews play a decisive role in shaping online consumer purchase decisions. Previous studies have consistently highlighted the importance of review credibility, review quality, usefulness, quantity, and emotional tone in influencing trust and purchase intention. However, limited research has specifically examined the influence of online reviews among consumers in Cuddalore district. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this research gap.

3. Research Gap

Although several studies have examined the impact of online product reviews on purchase intention and consumer behaviour, many studies have focused primarily on metropolitan cities, developed digital markets, and large urban populations. Limited studies have investigated the influence of online product reviews among consumers in smaller districts and semi-urban regions such as Cuddalore.

Further, previous studies have often focused on isolated review variables such as review credibility or star ratings without comprehensively examining multiple review dimensions together. The present study attempts to bridge this gap by examining the combined influence of review credibility, review quality and usefulness, and review quantity and star ratings on customer online purchase decisions.

The study also contributes to the Indian e-commerce literature by examining online consumer behaviour among young and educated consumers in Cuddalore district.

4. Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the influence of review credibility factors on customer purchase intention and online purchase decision.
2. To analyze the impact of review quality and usefulness factors on customer purchase intention and online purchase decision.
3. To study the effect of review quantity and star ratings factors on customer purchase intention and online purchase decision.
4. To understand the overall role of online product reviews in shaping customer online purchase decisions.
5. To provide suggestions for improving online review systems and consumer trust in e-commerce platforms.

5. Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

$H0_1$: There is no significant relationship between review credibility factors and purchase intention and online purchase decision.

$H0_2$: There is no significant relationship between review quality and usefulness factors and purchase intention and online purchase decision.

$H0_3$: There is no significant relationship between review quantity and star ratings factors and purchase intention and online purchase decision.

6. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the study is based on consumer behaviour theories and communication theories explaining how online information affects purchase behaviour.

6.1 Consumer Decision-Making Theory

According to the Consumer Decision-Making Theory, consumers pass through multiple stages before purchasing a product, including problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation. Online product reviews significantly influence the information search and evaluation stages because consumers rely on customer experiences to compare products and reduce uncertainty.

6.2 Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour developed by Ajzen explains how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control shape behavioural intentions.

In online shopping:

- Positive reviews create favourable attitudes toward products.
- High review volume creates social influence.
- Detailed reviews increase consumer confidence and perceived control.

Thus, online reviews significantly influence consumer purchase intention.

6.3 Information Adoption Model

The Information Adoption Model explains how consumers adopt information available in online environments. According to this model, information quality and source credibility are important determinants of information adoption.

Consumers are more likely to trust and use reviews that are:

- Informative
- Accurate
- Detailed
- Transparent
- Credible

Therefore, review quality and credibility directly influence purchase decisions.

6.4 Elaboration Likelihood Model

The Elaboration Likelihood Model explains that consumers process persuasive information through two routes:

1. Central Route – Consumers analyze detailed review content.
2. Peripheral Route – Consumers rely on cues such as star ratings and review quantity.

Both routes influence online purchase behaviour in digital shopping environments.

6.5 Perceived Risk Theory

Online shopping involves financial, product, and delivery risks. Online reviews reduce uncertainty and perceived risk by providing real customer experiences and product evaluations.

6.6 Trust Theory

Trust is a major determinant of online purchase behaviour. Positive and authentic online reviews increase trust toward products and e-commerce platforms.

7. Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables

- Review Credibility
- Review Quality and Usefulness
- Review Quantity and Star Ratings

Dependent Variable

- Customer Online Purchase Decision

The framework assumes that online review-related variables positively influence customer purchase intention and online buying behaviour.

8. Research Methodology

8.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design. Descriptive research helps in systematically describing the characteristics, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviour of respondents.

8.2 Data Collection

Primary Data

Primary data were collected from respondents using a structured questionnaire.

Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected from journals, books, websites, articles, and previous research studies related to online reviews and consumer buying behaviour.

8.3 Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling technique was used for selecting respondents.

8.4 Sample Size

The study included 100 respondents from Cuddalore district.

8.5 Statistical Tools Used

The following statistical tools were employed:

3. Percentage Analysis
4. Correlation Analysis

8.6 Period of Study

The study was conducted from January 2026 to March 2026.

9. Data Analysis and Interpretation

9.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Gender Distribution

The study revealed that 54% of respondents were male and 46% were female. This indicates that male respondents slightly dominated the sample population.

Age Distribution

The majority of respondents belonged to the age group of 21–25 years (49%), followed by 26–30 years (18%), below 20 years (17%), 31–35 years (15%), and above 35 years (1%). This indicates that young adults formed the major portion of the respondents.

10. Consumer Perception Toward Online Product Reviews

10.1 Review Credibility Factors

The study identified review credibility as one of the major factors influencing online purchase decisions.

- Consumers strongly agreed that authentic reviews increase trust in products.
- Respondents preferred products with verified customer reviews.
- Consumers considered reviewer expertise and genuine customer experiences before purchasing products.
- Fake and misleading reviews negatively affected purchase intention.

These findings indicate that review credibility significantly influences consumer trust and online purchase decisions.

10.2 Review Quality and Usefulness Factors

The study found that review quality and usefulness strongly affect online purchase behaviour.

- Consumers preferred detailed and informative reviews.
- Reviews explaining product advantages and disadvantages were considered more useful.
- Consumers relied on reviews containing images and real usage experiences.
- Clear and understandable review content improved consumer confidence.
- Informative reviews reduced perceived risk and uncertainty.

These findings demonstrate that consumers highly value review usefulness and information quality while making online purchase decisions.

10.3 Review Quantity and Star Ratings Factors

The study observed that review quantity and star ratings significantly affect purchase intention.

- Consumers preferred products with higher star ratings.
- Large numbers of reviews created perceptions of product popularity and reliability.
- Positive ratings improved purchase confidence.
- Negative reviews and low ratings discouraged consumers from purchasing products.
- Consumers often compared star ratings before selecting products.

These findings indicate that review quantity and star ratings function as important decision-making cues in online shopping.

10.4 Consumer Trust and Purchase Behaviour

The study further revealed that online reviews significantly influence consumer trust.

- Positive reviews increased confidence in online transactions.
- Consumers felt more comfortable purchasing products after reading multiple reviews.
- Online reviews reduced fear regarding poor product quality and fraud.
- Trustworthy reviews improved purchase intention and customer satisfaction.

The findings indicate that online reviews act as trust-building mechanisms in e-commerce environments.

11. Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between online review variables and customer online purchase decisions.

11.1 Relationship Between Review Credibility and Online Purchase Decision

The correlation coefficient between packaging design and consumer buying behaviour was found to be r = 0.742 with a p-value of 0.000.

Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Table 1

Variable	r value	P value	Result
Review Credibility and Online Purchase Decision	0.742	0.000	Significant Relationship Positive

The findings indicate that authentic and credible reviews significantly influence customer online purchase behaviour.

11.2 Relationship Between Review Quality and Usefulness and Online Purchase Decision

The correlation coefficient between packaging design and consumer buying behaviour was found to be r = 0.826 with a p-value of 0.000.

Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Table 2

Variable	r value	P value	Result
Review Quality and Usefulness and Online Purchase Decision	0.826	0.000	Significant Relationship Positive

The findings reveal that consumers strongly rely on detailed, informative, and useful reviews while making purchase decisions.

11.3 Relationship Between Review Quantity and Star Ratings and Online Purchase Decision

The correlation coefficient between packaging design and consumer buying behaviour was found to be r = 0.691 with a p-value of 0.000.

Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Table 3

Variable	r value	P value	Result
Review Quantity and Star Ratings and Online Purchase Decision	0.691	0.000	Significant Relationship Positive

The findings indicate that consumers are significantly influenced by higher ratings and larger numbers of reviews.

12. Discussion

The findings of the study clearly indicate that online product reviews significantly influence customer online purchase decisions. Review credibility, review quality and usefulness, and review quantity and star ratings were all found to positively influence purchase intention and online buying behaviour.

Among the various dimensions, review quality and usefulness exhibited the strongest relationship with customer online purchase decisions. This finding suggests that consumers increasingly rely on detailed and informative reviews before making online purchases. Consumers prefer reviews that clearly explain product performance, advantages, disadvantages, usability, and real customer experiences. Such reviews reduce uncertainty and improve confidence in online transactions.

Review credibility also demonstrated a strong positive relationship with online purchase decisions. Consumers are more likely to trust products that have authentic and verified reviews. Fake or misleading reviews negatively influence purchase intention and create distrust toward e-commerce platforms.

The findings further revealed that review quantity and star ratings significantly affect purchase behaviour. Consumers often use star ratings as quick indicators of product quality and popularity. Higher ratings and larger numbers of reviews create perceptions of reliability and social acceptance.

The findings support previous studies conducted by Patel and Shah (2025), Krishnan and Balasubramanian (2025), Zhang et al. (2024), Reddy and Priya (2024), and Ismagilova et al. (2022), which identified online reviews as important determinants of consumer purchase behaviour.

The study also demonstrates that online reviews reduce perceived risk associated with online shopping. Consumers often hesitate to purchase products online due to uncertainty regarding product quality, delivery, and fraud. Positive and informative reviews function as risk-reduction mechanisms and increase consumer trust.

Young and educated consumers were found to be highly dependent on online reviews before making purchase decisions. This reflects the growing digital awareness and research-oriented shopping behaviour among modern consumers.

Overall, the findings emphasize that online product reviews are not merely optional feedback mechanisms but strategic digital marketing tools that significantly shape consumer attitudes, trust, purchase intention, and online buying behaviour.

13. Findings of the Study

The major findings of the study are summarized below:

1. Male respondents constituted the majority of the sample population.
2. Most respondents belonged to the age group of 21–25 years.
3. A majority of respondents were undergraduates and postgraduates.
4. Private employees formed the major occupational group among respondents.
5. Consumers strongly rely on online product reviews before making purchase decisions.
6. Review credibility significantly influences consumer trust and buying behaviour.
7. Consumers prefer authentic and verified customer reviews.
8. Detailed and informative reviews positively influence purchase intention.
9. Review quality and usefulness emerged as the most influential factors affecting purchase decisions.
10. Consumers strongly depend on star ratings while evaluating products.
11. Larger numbers of reviews increase perceptions of product reliability.
12. Positive reviews enhance consumer trust and purchase confidence.
13. Negative reviews significantly discourage online purchase intention.
14. Online reviews reduce perceived risk and uncertainty associated with online shopping.
15. Online product reviews significantly influence customer online purchase decisions.

14. Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are offered:

1. E-commerce platforms should encourage genuine customer reviews to improve consumer trust.
2. Businesses should implement verification systems to reduce fake reviews.
3. Detailed and informative reviews should be promoted through customer engagement strategies.
4. Companies should respond professionally to negative reviews to maintain customer confidence.
5. Review systems should include photos, videos, and verified purchase indicators.
6. Businesses should monitor review authenticity regularly to prevent misleading information.
7. E-commerce platforms should encourage customers to provide balanced and transparent feedback.
8. Marketers should use review analytics to understand customer expectations and improve products.
9. Companies should educate consumers about identifying genuine reviews.
10. Positive customer experiences should be encouraged to generate favourable electronic word-of-mouth communication.
11. Online retailers should ensure transparent communication regarding products and services.
12. Businesses should improve customer support services to enhance positive review generation.

15. Implications of the Study

15.1 Managerial Implications

The study provides important insights for marketers, e-commerce platforms, and businesses regarding the influence of online reviews on consumer behaviour. Businesses can improve customer trust, satisfaction, and purchase intention by maintaining transparent, informative, and credible review systems.

15.2 Academic Implications

The study contributes to the literature on electronic word-of-mouth, consumer behaviour, and digital marketing by empirically examining the role of online product reviews in shaping customer online purchase decisions.

15.3 Social Implications

The study highlights the importance of authentic online information and responsible digital communication in helping consumers make informed purchase decisions.

16. Limitations of the Study

The study has certain limitations:

1. The study was limited to 100 respondents.
2. Convenience sampling technique may limit generalizability.
3. The findings are based on respondents' perceptions and opinions.
4. The study focused only on selected review-related variables.
5. The research was confined to consumers in Cuddalore district.
6. Other factors such as pricing, brand loyalty, and promotional offers were not included.

17. Scope for Future Research

Future researchers may:

1. Conduct studies using larger sample sizes.
2. Compare urban and rural online consumer behaviour.
3. Examine the role of artificial intelligence in review systems.
4. Investigate the influence of video reviews and influencer marketing.
5. Study demographic differences in online review perception.
6. Apply advanced statistical techniques such as regression analysis, structural equation modelling, and factor analysis.
7. Explore the influence of social media reviews on consumer behaviour.
8. Compare the effectiveness of reviews across different e-commerce platforms.

18. Conclusion

The present study examined the role of online product reviews in shaping customer online purchase decisions with special reference to consumers in Cuddalore district. The findings clearly indicate that online product reviews significantly influence consumer trust, purchase intention, and online buying behaviour.

Review credibility, review quality and usefulness, and review quantity and star ratings were all found to positively influence customer online purchase decisions. Among these factors, review quality and usefulness emerged as the strongest determinants of online purchase behaviour. Consumers increasingly depend on informative, detailed, and authentic reviews before making purchase decisions in digital marketplaces.

The study further demonstrates that online reviews reduce perceived risk and improve confidence in online shopping environments. Positive reviews and high star ratings significantly increase consumer trust, whereas negative reviews discourage purchase intention.

The findings emphasize that online product reviews are powerful digital marketing communication tools that shape customer attitudes and online purchase decisions. Therefore, businesses and e-commerce platforms should invest in maintaining transparent, credible, and consumer-oriented review systems to enhance customer trust, satisfaction, and long-term loyalty.

Overall, the study contributes to the understanding of electronic word-of-mouth and online consumer behaviour

in the Indian e-commerce context and provides valuable implications for marketers, researchers, and digital businesses.

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