

## The Influence of Bloggers' Recommendation on Consumer Purchasing Behavior

### Authors' Details:

<sup>(1)</sup>Syed Muhammad Sahal Alvi

Scholar, Greenwich University, Karachi, Pakistan. Email: sahal@buildcon.net

<sup>(2)</sup>Dr. Masood Hassan

PhD, IoBM, Karachi, Pakistan and Visiting Faculty Greenwich, Karachi, Pakistan, Email: masoodhassan1@hotmail.com (Corresponding Author)

### Abstract:

*Blogs have become vital part of World Wide Web being the fastest and easily accessible source of getting updated information on various topics and trends. Blogging has been emerged as a tool for recording personal views and reviews. Whether one wants to plan a trip, or planning to buy a new product or looking for best restaurant in town, tends to search information on internet and blogs on internet appear as search result with most helpful recommendations and reviews. This study is conducted to enquire the impact of blogger's recommendation on purchase intention of products in context of their credibility and reputation as a source of information. The study is empirical in nature based on consumers who use blogs to browse information. The research framework of this study illustrates trustworthiness, expertise and reputation as independent variables showing their impact on purchase intention. Data from 50 blog readers is collected using convenience sampling to investigate whether the recommendations from bloggers impact their purchase intention of products. The outcome of this study shows that bloggers' recommendations have significant impact on purchase intention being credible and reputable source of information. Moreover, results suggest that since consumers perceive blogs as credible source of getting information related to products and services, therefore marketers should consider blog as an effective electronic word of mouth (eWOM) channel and design promotional strategies using blogs and monitor data on blogs to receive consumer feedback.*

**Keywords:** *Blogger, Source Credibility, Trustworthiness, Expertise, Reputation, Purchase Intention.*

### Introduction

This research reveals the impact of blogger recommendation on buying intention of products. Blogs are being considered as a new category of electronic word of mouth (eWom), many empirical studies illustrates that a blogger's credibility and built reputation make customers relying on their recommendation while making purchase decision. Blogging channels are used for reading and talking about opinions, suggestions and feelings in context of specific product or events in daily life. Approximately 900,000 different articles are posted daily on different blogs (Singer, 2009). According to Wegert (2010), 81% of consumers browse social sites to seek recommendations before making purchase and 74% of those people found these advices influential on their purchases, therefore blogging is now becoming an important factor in pre-purchase process. As consumer wants to make perfect decision before making any purchase they rely on trusted recommendations. When people tend to buy products, they rely more on abundance of information provided on internet sources about products that can be accessible conveniently (Fan and Miao, 2012). Credibility is the core factor of this research that how consumers perceive the reliability of the available information and how they perceived the credibility of bloggers and how this credibility does affect customers purchase intention. Different methods and concepts have been applied to gain further the insight about the impact of blogger's credibility and reputation on the purchase intention of consumers.

### Literature Review

#### *Underpinning and Supporting Theories*

#### **1. Theory of Reasoned Action**

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) explains that premeditation of a person is the combination of two core factors; his/her attitude towards behavior and the subjective norm. To make this theory work in a more effective

way, it is assumed that the rationality in human beings has the upper hand and they tend to use the available information in a systematic way (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). It explains that individuals tend to develop beliefs by alluding to information available to them from a group and peers or from their normative practices; as a result these developed beliefs will direct individual behavioral intention. Recommendations of such groups are found to have more influencing in purchase decisions when new or expensive product or service is concerned. In comparison to formal channels of marketing such as print ads and web ads, bloggers' recommendations are one of the informal channels of communication. Consumers are likely to consider blogger's recommendations more positively since they are non-commercial in nature.

## **2. The Purchasing Process Theory**

The purchase process theory is based on the three basic stages of the process of purchasing; pre purchase, purchase and post purchase. But this research exclusively gives an insight of the pre-purchase phase. Fundamental course of action performed in this phase is to gather information about the products customer desires to buy, especially from the people who are already using that brand. They tend to see the reviews regarding that product by which they can get a clear view of the experiences of those who have used that product before (Hennig-Thurau & Walsh, 2003)

## **3. Information Credibility**

The discernment of the source of information regarding a certain product is the information credibility. When a blog reader is set out to seek information about a particular product, they will opt for the blog which is more credible in their perception, amongst a stream of other blogs available on the web (Hsu and Tsou, 2011). Blog's credibility is important for multiple reasons, like them growing as an intrinsic component of the internet. Credibility becomes an important factor to make blogs transcending as a dominant source of getting updated information, news and reviews etc. as compare to other online sources (Johnson et al., 2007). Blogs being the source of online information, is the basic study of this research, therefore the instrument used here is the same as used by Freeman and Spyridakis (2004), first one is the credibility of the data present in the blogs which is measured by analyzing the expertise of the blogger which enlightens the readers whether the blogger is knowledgeable or professional; then the trustworthiness which ensures the readers that the information is honest and dependable.

### ***Empirical Reviews***

#### **1. Source Credibility:**

In eWOM literature, the terminology "source" is used to define the creator of message content (Dou, Walden Justin, Lee, & Lee, 2012). In online communities, the word credibility is used to refer the expertise and trustworthiness of the communicator on particular subject perceived by individuals who receive information produced by the communicator. According to Chaiken (1980) source credibility is used to refer a how receiver perceives the authenticity of source of message, not simply the material of the message. Recommendations from an authentic source have more grounded convincing effect on brand rating than from a source which lacks in credibility. According to previous studies source credibility plays a vital role for an online review to be strongly persuasive. Customers prefer reading online reviews and recommendations before making final purchase decision, especially in case of expensive or new products. Every day new products are launched, customers prefer reading experiences and recommendations of peer customers and on online social communities, it is very common to see reviews on different products given by users or asked by them. When consumers provide their reviews and rating of product and services online, other consumers can use them for evaluation purpose before purchasing them.

Fundamental sources that provide reviews on internet include bloggers, video bloggers, celebrities and many websites and social forums where users can post either with their identity or anonymously. There is a risk that users who upload comments or start discussions anonymously can mislead readers due to lack of expertise in particular subject. Alternatively, they might have no actual usage of certain product for which they are

providing evaluation, it can affect the credibility of discussion and also there is probability that consumers attitude towards a particular product may get affected, for these reasons users find risk to rely upon online reviews. Hence it highlights the importance of source credibility while considering the perception of online recommendations. As indicated by Ohanian's (1990) theory of source credibility, individuals have a tendency to get more influenced by a reliable source and it depends on two imperative elements trustworthiness and expertise (Hovland et al., 1953).

Proficiency of bloggers is vital factor as it is characterized as an ability to provide convincing recommendations (McCracken, 1989). This extent can be assessed by different aspects, such as skills of source, knowledge and experience (Erdogan, 1999). Ohanian (1990) has listed the five adjuncts of expertise dimension: experienced, expert, qualified, knowledgeable, and skilled. Studies have demonstrated that if the source is experienced in product or service assessment, it can positively affect the buying choice of recipient of information and perceived credibility (Smith et al., 2005).

Trustworthy source is defined as an audience's perception that the communicator is honest, unbiased, genuine, and reputable in providing information (Nelson & Pearson, 1988; Ohanian, 1991). McCracken (1989) defined it as a source ability to provide accurate information. Ohanian (1990) defined trustworthiness of message source as sincerity and reliability of communicator to determine whether a source is trustworthy. According to Doney and Cannon (1997) trust is a perception of considerations and credibility in view of the recipient of information. Customer prefers to receive product data from direct media such as blogs and different reference sources to lessen any risk. Blogs are transcending as most reliable eWOM platforms (Johnson & Kaye, 2009; Lee & Youn, 2009). A consumer prefers reading the blogs which he believes that it is tenable. According to Salo and Karjaluoto (2007) trust is an imperative factor for productive blogging and key for engaging and persuading readers to make purchase decision of product or service (McKnight & Chervany, 2002). Many past researches have affirmed that trust is emphatically connected with buying intentions of particular products in online business (Kuan & Bock, 2007). Therefore to urge readers to be persuaded by recommendations, bloggers need to provide accurate information (Dayal et al., 1999).

## 2. Reputation

Many previous studies have viewed reputation as vital factor for influencing attitude and purchasing behavior. Indeed, these empirical examinations have shown reputation to be influential on trust or buying intentions (Casalo et al., 2008). Blogging is likewise a type of user generated content, recommendations from a reputable blogger are more impactful in relation to a not reputable one (Burgess et al., 2009). In this way, it is indicated that bloggers with variable level of reputation will impact blog users' perception of the particular content or recommendation in different ways.

For instance, through a regulating impact, a very reputable blogger may achieve high esteem that his/her opinions affecting others decision to shop on the web. In light of social capital point of view, an individual with a decent social connection online can become highly esteemed that his/her views can positively impact the persuasiveness of information and therefore influence others' buying conduct (Hung & Li, 2007). Moreover, earlier investigations also verified that customers rely upon data provided by sources of good repute during purchasing process (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). According to Shamdasani et al. (2001) a convincing message from a reputable source will positively impact the blog reader's reliance on a particular product/service. Website's reputability significantly affects the eWOM impact and is more prominent for site with built up reputation than for less reputable one (Park & Lee, 2009). This website source impact is relative to the blogging context. Blog content generated by good repute source may create greater impact of eWOM posted on the blog than the blogger with less reputability. Blogs are considered to be most powerful eWOM platforms in context of product reviews which can potentially impact the consumers' product assessment (Lee & Youn, 2009). Empirically it is identified that suggestions given by bloggers with low reputation had no immediate impact on the attitude and intention of consumers. In fact, the descriptive statistics of trust rating demonstrate that high-reputation blogger are highly impactful compared to low reputation bloggers (Hsu et al., 2013). Considering all the findings discussed, it is revealed that blog readers' perception towards credibility and reputation of blogger

to be huge in influencing the perceived effectiveness of blogger suggestion. In this manner, the bloggers' credibility and reputation are vital factors for creating influence of recommendations given by bloggers. Reviews and recommendations from tenable and trustworthy bloggers can reduce the search time, uncertainty and cost and also enhance the effectiveness of assessment in various products alternatives.

### 3. Purchase intention

The most essential outcome of this empirical research is the influential relationship between browsing and reading about products on blogs and blog user's behavior and intention of buying certain products. Theory of planned behavior (TPB) entails that intentions are similarly as imperative as real conduct (Hsu et al., 2006). Purchasing procedure takes place with the buyer starting search for products and read their reviews to evaluate, which thusly may prompt the purchase of a particular thing. In this manner, it is pivotal to consider buying as a procedure of sequential steps, in which the searching and evaluating activity goes before the buying action (Tauber, 1972). This connection amongst searching and purchase intention is especially vital in context of web based browsing and buying (Shim et al., 2001). Buyers consider exceedingly the assessment of products provided by different consumers while shopping, in this bloggers with maximum number of views may have positive impact on readers' decision to purchase certain product. Bloggers are considered to hold ample opportunities for product promotion and endorsement because they are seen as opinion leaders. This show as opposed to the conventional direct trust toward brands or items, customers' buying decision now depends on their trust of bloggers, which can transform into trust for an item, bringing about so-called trust transfer in exchange. According to Stewart (2003) trust can be exchanged through various diverts in online environment. Today, numerous famous bloggers can draw in an extensive number of loyal readers, and hence they can be attributed to trustworthiness. Along these lines, this examination meant to research the impact of customers' trust of blogger's recommendations on their buying intention.

This research portrays effect of various indicators on intention to utilize blog for getting data about items and its effect on buying intention of the purchasers. Blogs have developed as another Internet based specialized instrument for organizations. Online blogs are recorded on World Wide Web giving data about products. This examination investigates the potential of blogs in the hands of buyers to get the desired data of the items they need to buy. This investigation additionally turns out with another approach which can help organizations outlining their marketing and promotional activities utilizing information on blogs. Various empirical researchers propose that readers utilize blogger's recommendations as a method for approving their purchase choices. They go online to discover recommendations and reviews posted by bloggers about the item they may have planned to buy and by utilizing the communication options on the blogs; they ask suggestions and views from the blogger and different blog users, seeking to get help regarding their purchase decision. Purchasing behaviors as an outcome of online blogs can contrast altogether from the purchasing conduct that happens in different types of web-based social networking. As explained above, blogs can depict a few distinct types of advertising that interest to the buyers. Composed from an unbiased perspective, readers tend to put more trust into the reviews of different users of products than they would in different types of promotional tools, for example, ads, banners or PR proclamations. The promoting endeavors that can be found in blogs can have an enormous effect on a customer and along these lines on the purchasing procedure in itself (Solomon, 2011).

Purchase intention is a customer's target aim toward an item (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Spears and Singh (2004) characterize buying intention as a buyer's intended plan or aim to make efforts towards buying an item. Furthermore, online buying intention concentrates on whether shoppers are eager and proposing to purchase a specific item by means of online exchange mediums (Pavlou, 2003). Study of Bouhleb et al. (2010) demonstrates positive impact of customer attitude toward a blog on buying intention of customer. Additionally, quality of correspondence can make a favorable attitude towards the blogs, which inclines customers more towards buying a certain product (Chen, Ching, Tsai, & Kuo, 2008; Fiore, Jin, & Kim, 2005). This examination subsequently put forward that if customers will believe the content of a proposed recommendation posted by credible and reputable blogger, they will probably shape their purchase intention with respect to the product/service suggested by the blogger.

### Theoretical Framework

Based on the above discussed views and concepts and objective of the study following research framework is used for this study. Figure given below illustrates the impact of trustworthiness, expertise and reputation on purchase intention.

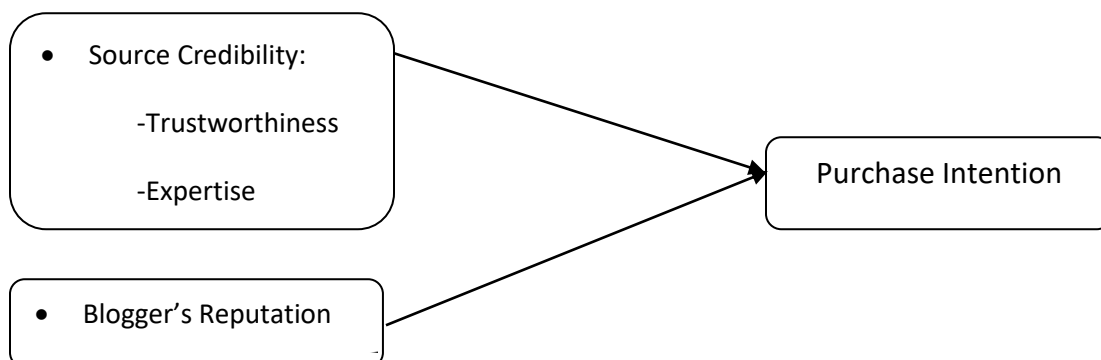


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework  
Source: Chaovalit, P. (2014)

### Hypothesis

Based on the above literature review, following hypotheses are developed:

- ❖ There is a significant impact of blogger’s trustworthiness on purchase intention
- ❖ There is a significant impact of blogger’s expertise on purchase intention
- ❖ There is a significant impact of blogger’s reputation on purchase intention.

### Methodology

This study has under taken quantitative approach based on questionnaires used to gather data from target population. The survey questionnaire is used as an instrument to gather primary data. The target population of this study is consumers of age 18-40 years with experience of reading online blogs.

### RESULTS & FINDINGS

The analysis is done on data collected from 50 people. Respondents are the internet users who are used to read blogs.

#### RESPONDENTS’ PROFILE

##### 1. Age

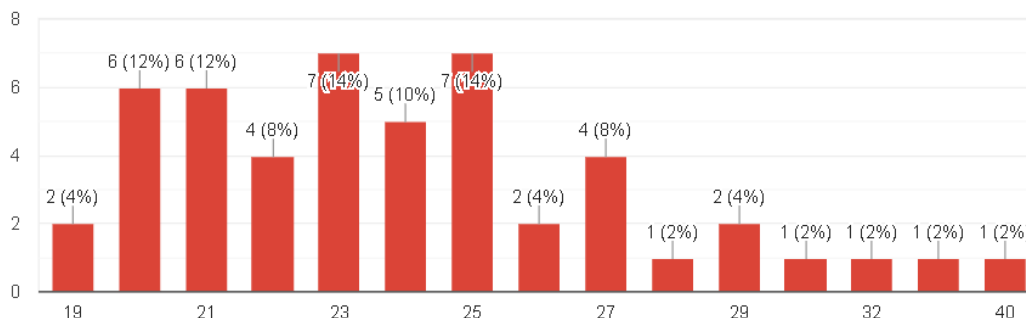
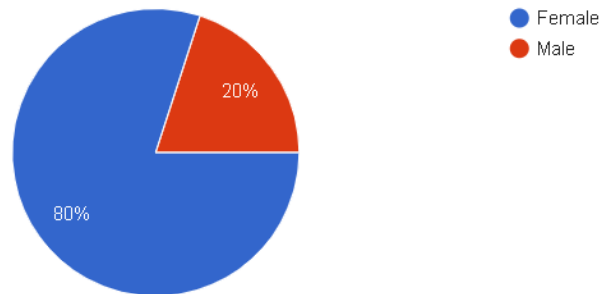


Figure 2. Graph 1

The above graph shows the ages of respondents from 18 - 40 out of which 23 and 25 are the highest on graph bar.



## 2. Gender



The above graph shows that 80% respondents were female and 20% were male.

Figure 3. Graph 2

## 3. Online Blog Reading Experience

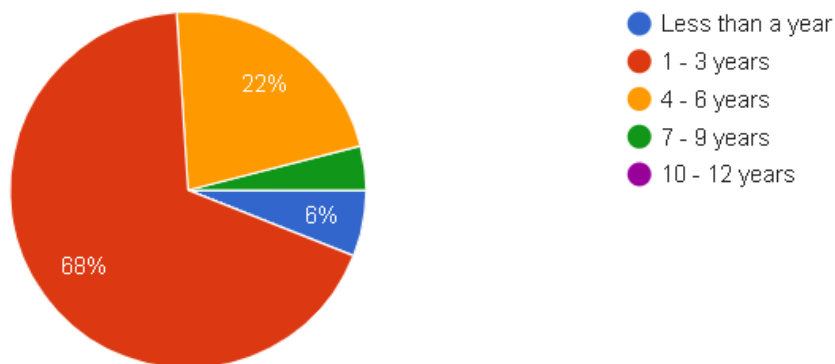


Figure 4. Graph 3

The above graph shows that 68% of the respondents have 1-3 years of online blog reading experience, 22% have 4-6 years and rest 6% have less than a year of online blog reading experience.

## Descriptive Analysis

I believe bloggers' recommendations to be true.

50 responses

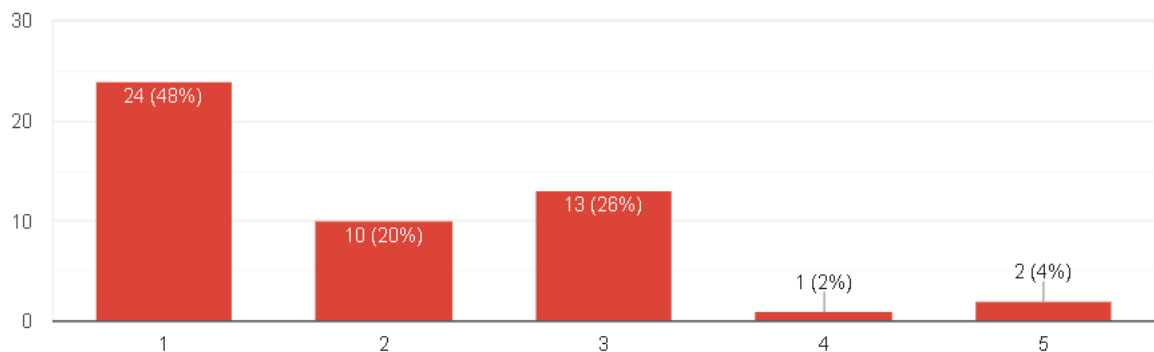


Figure 5. Graph 4

The above graph shows the majority of respondents i.e. 48% strongly agreed that they believe bloggers recommendations to be true.

I trust information on blogs to be true.

50 responses

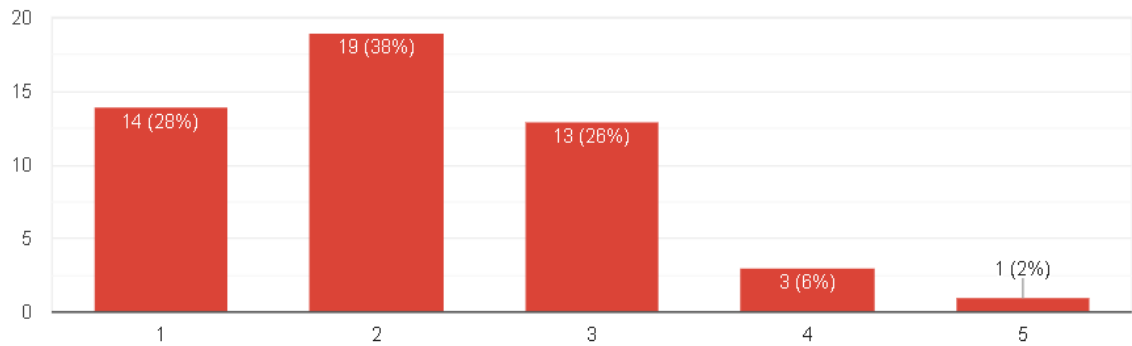


Figure 6. Graph 5

The above graph depicts that 38% respondents agreed that they trust information on the blogs to be true.

The blogger shares his/her sincere opinion(s) about the reviewed product(s).

50 responses

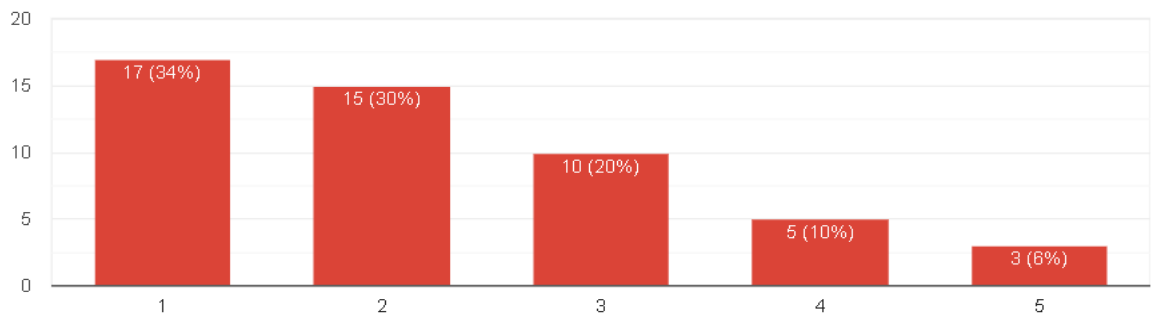


Figure 7. Graph 6

The above graph shows that the highest number (34%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the bloggers share their sincere opinions about the reviewed products.

Bloggers are trustworthy.

50 responses

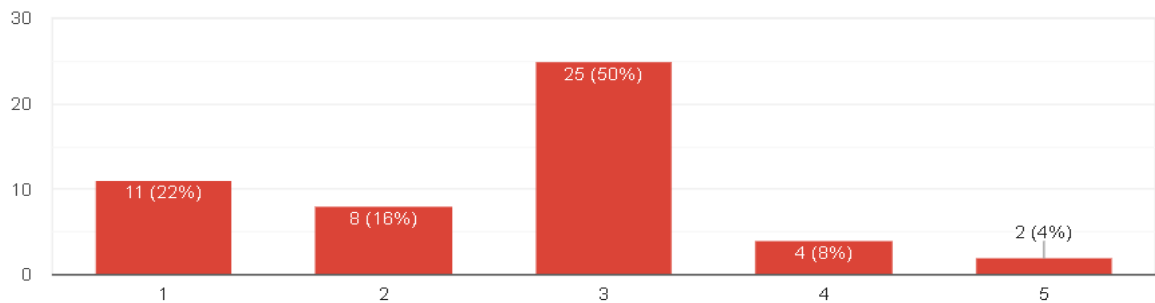


Figure 8. Graph 7

The above graph depicts that 25 (50%) of the respondents were neutral about the statement that the bloggers are trustworthy.

The blogger is perceived to be knowledgeable about the discussed topic(s).

50 responses

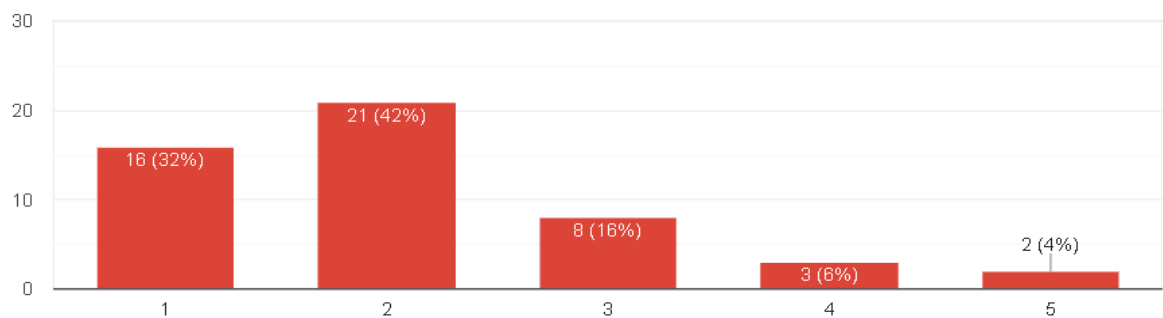


Figure 9. Graph 8

According to the above graph, 42% of the respondents agreed that a blogger is knowledgeable about the topics they discuss.

The blogger has actual usage experience(s) with the reviewed product(s).

50 responses

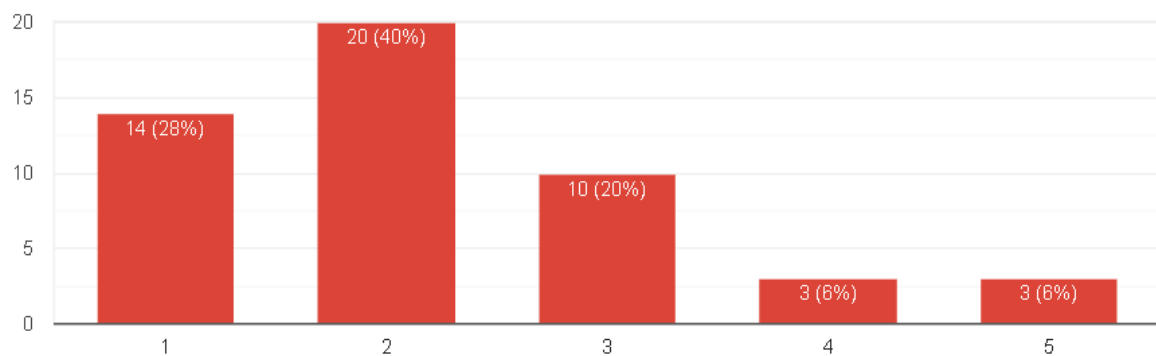


Figure 10. Graph 11



The above graph shows that 40% of the respondents agreed that the blogger actually uses then reviews the product.

Bloggers who write products reviews are experts in evaluating the quality of products.

50 responses

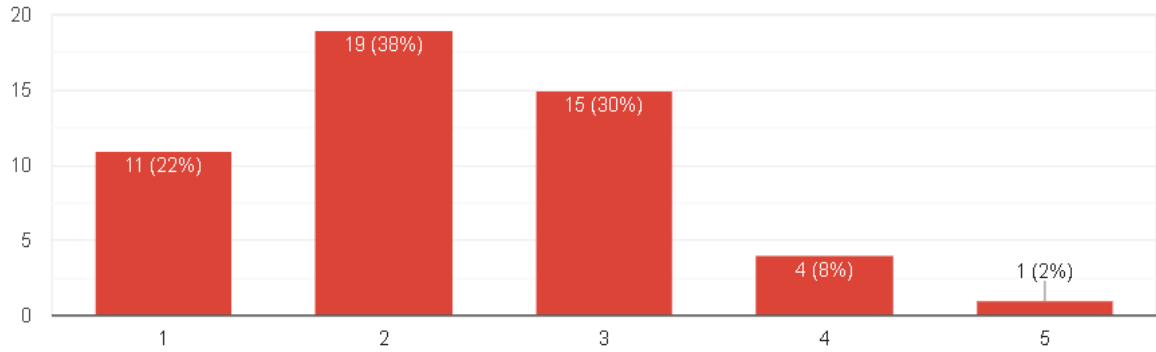


Figure 11. Graph 10

The above graph shows that 38% respondents agreed that bloggers have the expertise to evaluate the quality of products.

Bloggers have a reputation for being honest.



50 responses

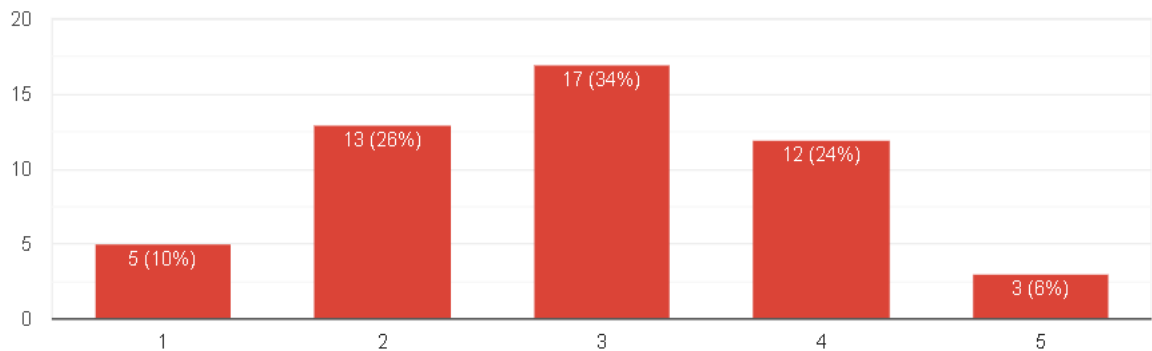


Figure 12. Graph 11

The above graph shows that 34% of the respondents were neutral about the bloggers' reputation for being honest.

Bloggers have a good reputation on the internet.

50 responses

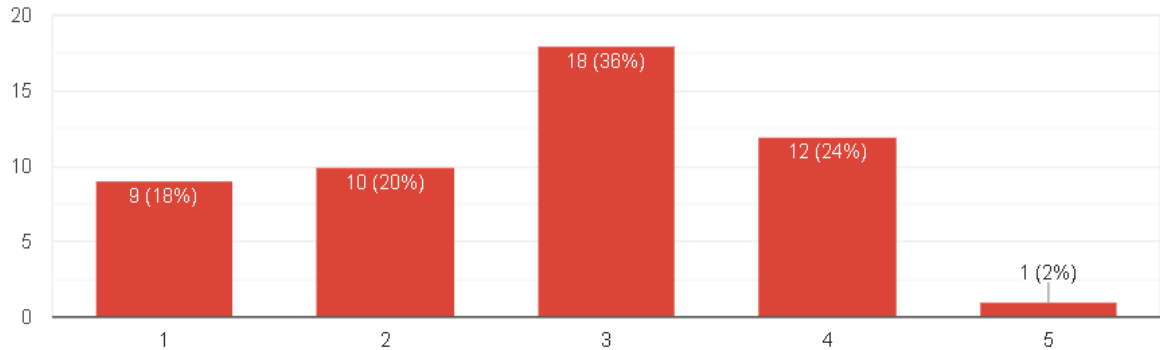


Figure 13. Graph 12

The above graph shows that the majority of the respondents (36%) were neutral about the statement that bloggers have good reputation on the internet while 24% disagreed.

After some time and thought, I would buy one or more products which I have browsed on a blog.



50 responses

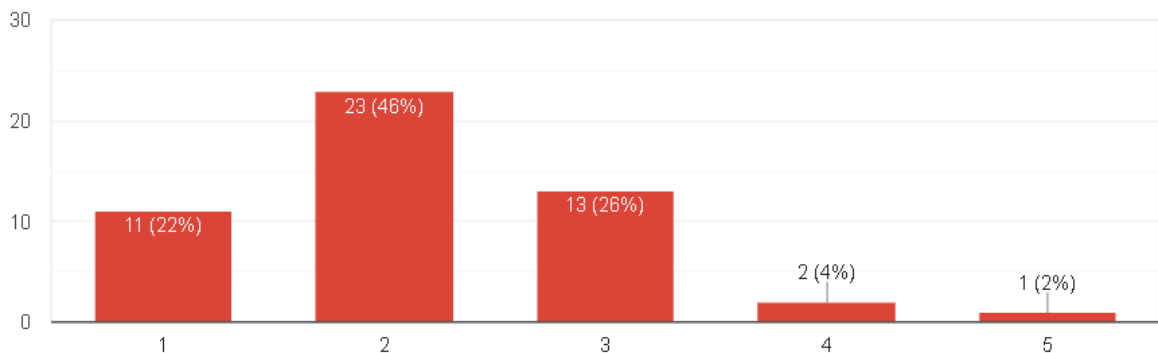


Figure 14. Graph 13

The above graph shows that 46% of the respondents agreed that after some time and thought, they'd buy one or more products reviewed on blogs.

I have purchased one or more of the products which I have browsed on a blog.



50 responses

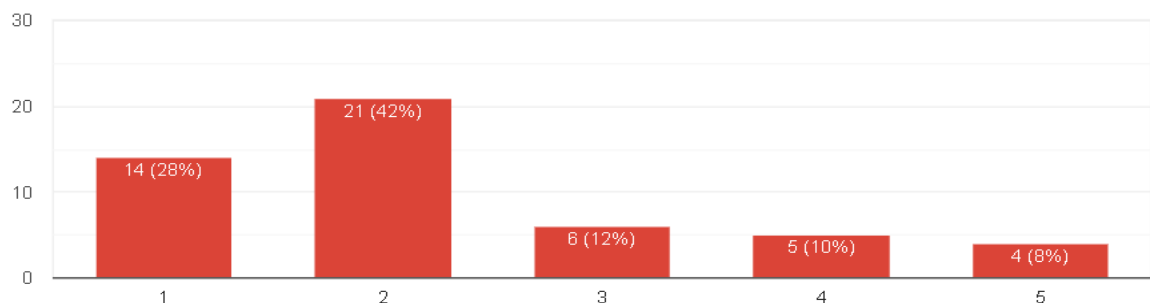


Figure 15. Graph 14

The above graph shows that 42% of the respondents agreed that they have purchased one or more products browsed on a blog.

I buy products I see on blogs through e-shops.

50 responses

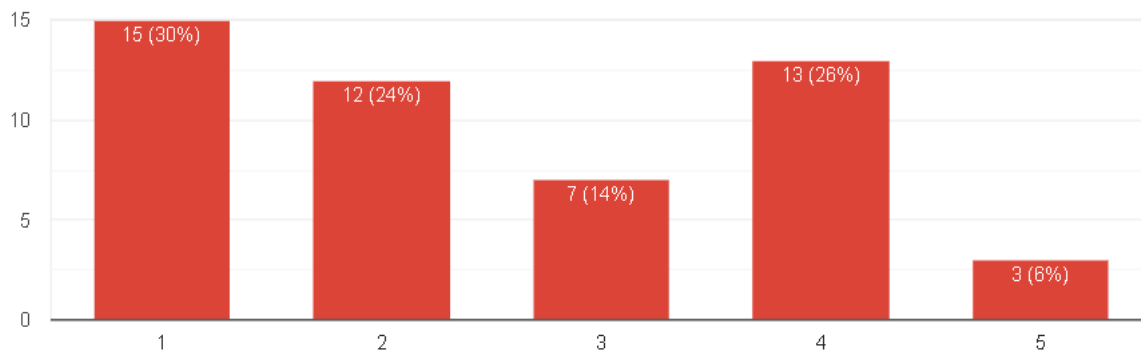


Figure 16. Graph 15

According to the above graph, 30% of the respondents strongly agreed that they buy products they see on blogs through e-shops (online).

I buy products I see on blogs through shops nearby me.

50 responses

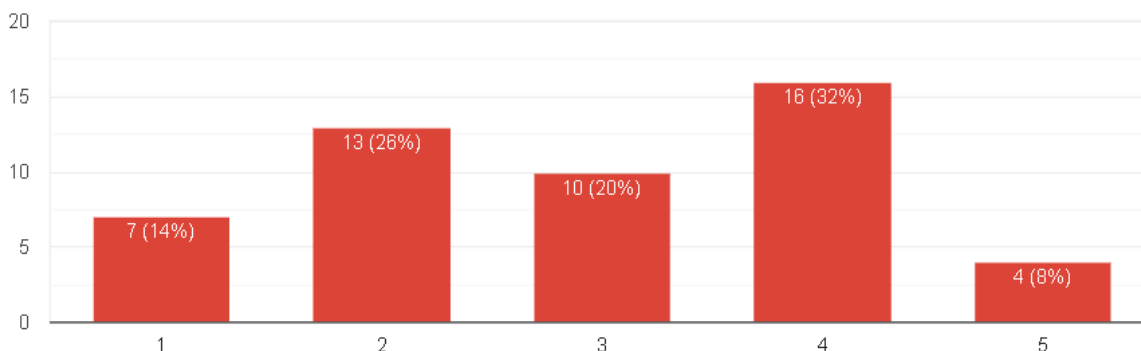


Figure 17. Graph 16

According to the above graph, 26% of the respondents agreed that they buy products that they saw on blogs through nearby shops while 32% disagreed.

I will continue using blogs to buy products in the future.

50 responses

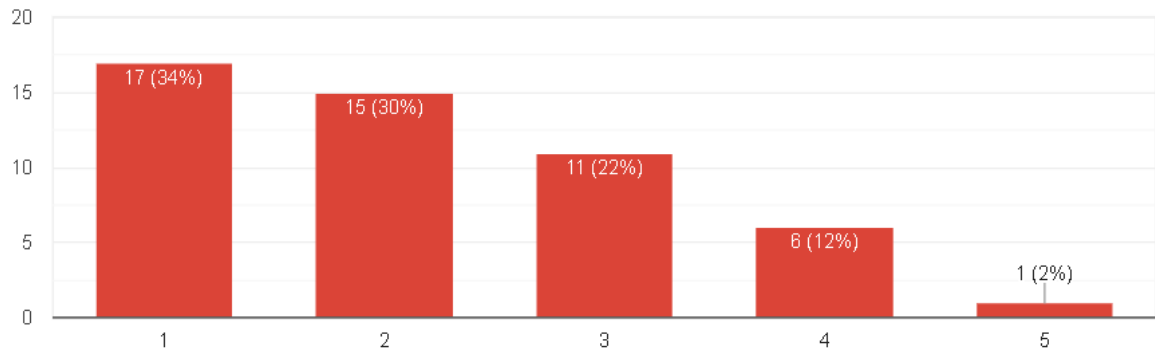


Figure 18. Graph 17

The above graph shows that 34% of the respondents strongly agreed to use blogs to buy products in the future.

### Hypotheses Assessment

The objective of the study is to investigate the significant impact of blogger's trustworthiness, blogger's expertise and blogger's reputation on purchase intention of products.

Below are the hypotheses to examine the above question

*Ha1: There is a significant impact of blogger's trustworthiness on purchase intention*

*Ha2: There is a significant impact of blogger's expertise on purchase intention*

*Ha3: There is a significant impact of blogger's reputation on purchase intention*

The assessment summary explains that all hypotheses are accepted and supported.

### Conclusion

Blogs are everywhere on internet, when people use internet to search information regarding any product or service, link of multiple blogs appear as a search result to provide complete information which user is seeking. That's why most of the people who seek information tend to rely on blogs to get complete information and recommendation. The core purpose to conduct this study is to analyze the impact of blogger's recommendation on the purchase intention of products, for this purpose credibility and reputation of bloggers are being studied as variable influencing purchase intention of blog readers who use blogs to gather information and seek recommendations for products. As identified by Ohanion (1990) source credibility is measured by analyzing the expertise of the source and trustworthiness of source of information. Reputation of blogger is also very important in giving credence to their recommendations. Descriptive analysis is done to represent the demographics of research participants of this study.

Underlying the findings of this investigation, it is recommended that while designing marketing strategies companies must consider blogs as effective channel of promotion. Companies should monitor that how information on blogs impacts purchase decision of customer and how it impacts the image of the company. Companies must select bloggers with care, as credibility and reputation of bloggers are important to provide assertions to their recommendations. Bloggers must remain honest while providing recommendations in order to remain credible and to build reputation.

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Appendix- Survey Questionnaire

### Influence of Blogger's Recommendation on

Please answer the following questions based on your experience of reading blogs about any particular product.

I believe bloggers' recommendations to be true. \*

|                |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                   |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
|                | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |                   |
| Strongly agree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly disagree |

I trust information on blogs to be true. \*

|                |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                   |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
|                | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |                   |
| Strongly agree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly disagree |

The blogger shares his/her sincere opinion(s) about the reviewed product(s). \*

|                |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                   |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
|                | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |                   |
| Strongly agree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly disagree |

Bloggers are trustworthy. \*

|                |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                   |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
|                | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |                   |
| Strongly agree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly disagree |

The blogger is perceived to be knowledgeable about the discussed topic(s). \*

|                |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                   |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
|                | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |                   |
| Strongly agree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly disagree |



The blogger has actual usage experience(s) with the reviewed product(s). \*

|                |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                   |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
|                | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |                   |
| Strongly agree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly disagree |

Bloggers who write products reviews are experts in evaluating the quality of products. \*

|                |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                   |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
|                | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |                   |
| Strongly agree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly disagree |

Bloggers have a reputation for being honest. \*

|                |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                   |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
|                | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |                   |
| Strongly agree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly disagree |

Bloggers have a good reputation on the internet. \*

|                |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                   |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
|                | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |                   |
| Strongly agree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly disagree |

After some time and thought, I would buy one or more products which I have browsed on a blog. \*

|                |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                   |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
|                | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |                   |
| Strongly agree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly disagree |

I have purchased one or more of the products which I have browsed on a blog. \*

|                |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                   |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
|                | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |                   |
| Strongly agree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Strongly disagree |

I buy products I see on blogs through e-shops. \*

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly agree      Strongly disagree

I buy products I see on blogs through shops nearby me. \*

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly agree      Strongly disagree

I will continue using blogs to buy products in the future. \*

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly agree      Strongly disagree

Your name? \*

Short answer text

Age? \*

Short answer text

Gender? \*

Female

Male

Online Blog Reading Experience? \*

Less than a year

1 - 3 years

4 - 6 years

7 - 9 years

10 - 12 years