

Assessing the Role of Social Influence on Purchase Decisions and Satisfaction Among Virtual Shoppers in Ernakulam District

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Abstract

The fast growing of e-commerce websites has created a huge need for social influence in influencing the behavior of consumers especially those who shop virtually. This study attempts to find out how social influences affect the purchasing decisions and total satisfaction levels of virtual shoppers in Ernakulam District, Kerala. The main purpose is to find out the different factors of social influence and establish their statistical link with purchase decision making and satisfaction after the purchases. Descriptive and Analytical research approach has been used in this study and the primary data has been gathered from 150 respondents through a structured questionnaire that followed five-point Likert scale. Based on the results, online reviews and ratings (mean = 4.32) were found to be the top influential variable, followed by platform trust and reliability (mean = 4.18) and social media influencers (mean = 4.05). Correlation analysis confirms the existence of a statistically significant positive correlation between the variable of social influence and purchase decision ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.05$), showing that the greater one's exposure to the social influence variable, the greater is their chance to make purchases. Regression analysis also reveals that all aspects of social influence significantly account for 52.3% of the total variance in overall satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.523$, $F = 25.84$, $p < 0.001$). Within the predictors, online reviews and ratings ($\beta = 0.298$) and platform trust ($\beta = 0.244$) were found to be the key factors of overall satisfaction. Overall, the study finds out that social influence through information and trust-related cues influences consumer behavior in the virtual environment to a great extent.

Keywords: Social Influence, Virtual Shopping, Online Purchase Decision, Customer Satisfaction, E-commerce, Ernakulam, Consumer Behavior.

Introduction

Electronic commerce has transitioned from being a retail channel that's only peripheral to a retail channel that's mainstream, especially for the digitally-savvy population in urban and semi-urban India. The district of Ernakulam has seen a significant rise in the percentage of consumers who regularly do research, comparison, and shopping online, on social media marketplaces, and mobile shopping apps. So-called "virtual shoppers" are those who are buying goods online instead of in a physical store, and who are shopping in a virtual sphere where shopping cues like physical product inspection, word of mouth in a local community, and dealing with a salesperson are replaced or complemented by digital alternatives.

Examples of social influence in the digital domain are online product reviews and star ratings; recommendations in family and peer WhatsApp groups or social media groups; the content produced by social media influencers; and the active buying or using behaviors of other consumers that are visible on the platforms (for instance, 'bestseller' tags, 'customers also bought'). These cues serve as a type of social proof, which lowers risk and uncertainty, especially for products that can't be inspected before being bought.

In some international and metro-centric Indian research, the effects of these digital cues on purchase intention have been reported, but there is a lack of empirical evidence regarding the perception and response of the virtual shoppers in the Ernakulam district to these social cues, and how these social cues lead to purchase and post-purchase satisfaction. This study aims to fill that void and empirically investigate the relationship between social influence and purchase decision and satisfaction level for a virtual shopper in the district.

The paper is structured in the following segments. Section I gives the context of virtual shopping and social influence in Ernakulam. A review of related literature on social media, Trust, Online communities, Kerala consumers' attitude toward buying, and digital marketing is presented in Section II. The research gap, problem statement, objectives, and hypotheses of the study are given in Section III. Research design, study area, sample size, method of collecting data, Conceptual SEM model, and statistical tools used are discussed in Section IV. Analysis of data (demographic profile of the sample, rank of different influencing social factors, and results of correlation and regression analysis) is presented in Section V. Discussion of the findings, theoretical meaning, comparison with previous research, and managerial implications are explained in Section VI. Conclusion of the study, marketing recommendations, and future work are discussed in Section VII.

Review of Literature

Social Media, Online Communities, and Social Commerce

The effect of digitally mediated social interactions on consumers' purchasing behavior has been explored by numerous researchers. According to the study, The Digital Pulse (2025) by Sujith & Aju, social media interaction and participation in online groups can significantly influence consumers' buying decisions, and peer-generated content and community discussions are very influential in providing product information, regardless of whether they are formal or informal (Sujith & Aju, 2025). Sohn and Kim, (2020) examined the factors affecting the purchase intention in a social commerce environment and identified the social support, platform trust, and perceived interactivity as some of the significant factors influencing the purchase intention of users on social embedded online platforms (Sohn & Kim, 2020). Taking interactive media one step further, Mehta et al., (2022) explored the consumer's behavior with regard to conversational commerce facilitated by messenger chatbots and discovered that conversational interfaces using AI can provide a sense of personal, dialogue-based engagement that affects consumer decision-making in a similar manner as interpersonal social influence (Mehta et al., 2022).

Trust, Service Quality, and Satisfaction in Online and Digital Retail

In the context of digital services, the link between customer satisfaction and the service-related factors has been extensively studied. This is relevant to virtual shopping platforms, which involve similar modes of trust-based interactions between services and customers, as George and Kumar, (2014) found that customers' satisfaction with internet banking is significantly influenced by the dimensions of service quality: reliability, responsiveness, and security (George & Kumar, 2014). Ahmadova et al., (2025) highlighted that trust and reliability are essential for online food and grocery delivery services to gain the consumer's confidence, as they are unable to inspect the products before delivery (Ahmadova et al., 2025). Vittayavarakorn and Sornsarut, (2024) study on the Relationship between the Perceived Quality and the Marketing-mix Elements on the Brand Attitude and Customer Satisfaction in the Organic Skin Care Market in Thailand (Vittayavarakorn & Sornsarut, 2024). The study found that the perceived quality and marketing-mix elements jointly affect the brand attitude and customer satisfaction. Likewise, the authors

Cachero-Martinez et al., (2024) demonstrated that the emotional experience of a shopper, in this case "happiness" associated with the shopping process, was directly linked with satisfaction in the retail environment; i.e., that satisfaction is influenced by functional and affective/social aspects of the shopping experience (Cachero-Martinez et al., 2024).

Regional Consumer Behavior Studies in Kerala

Some studies are available on consumer behavior in the context of Kerala, which would serve as the background of the present study. In the rural suburban area of Ernakulam district, Kumar and Joseph, (2014) examined the consumer behavior regarding FMCG products and found that family influence, local retailer relationship, and brand loyalty had significant influences on consumer buying behavior in this region, highlighting the importance of the role of social embeddedness in consumer decision making (Kumar & Joseph, 2014). In the context of the growing demand for Khadi textile products among the younger generation, Nair and Aithal, (2023) studied the green marketing tools and strategies used to boost the consumption of Khadi textile products among millennials in Kerala (Nair & Aithal, 2023). They concluded that socially and environmentally conscious messaging increased the purchase intent of the younger population. This study by Kattali and Sarojadevi, (2025) examines the consumer perception of products made by Kerala's famous women-led community enterprise network, Kudumbashree, revealing that their consumer perception was found to be positively influenced by consumer trust in community, consumer identification with the community and the perceived benefits of the community, thus highlighting the influence of socially rooted enterprises on consumers' purchase-related attitudes in the Kerala market (Kattali & Sarojadevi, 2025).

The Social Dimension of Purchase Intention: Social Enterprise and Purpose-Driven Consumption

There has been a significant body of scholarly work that has investigated how perceived social value, purpose, and community benefit of a product or seller can relate to the purchase intention of a product – a type of “social influence” that has a value dimension but is not necessarily interpersonal in nature. Ferdousi, (2017) gave a conceptual overview of consumer behavior towards social enterprise brands, and Ravi et al., (2022) identified emotional value as a mediator between the consumer purchase intention and social enterprise positioning (Ravi et al., 2022; Ferdousi, 2017). Lee et al., (2021) created a structural model of key drivers of customers' intentions to buy products of social enterprises, such as social trust, perceived value, and ethical concern, while Ng, (2022) discovered that customers' purchase intentions are strongly influenced by corporate social responsibility (CSR) expectations (Ng, 2022; Lee et al., 2021). These findings have been confirmed by cross-cultural research: Ip et al., (2024) examined the perceptions of online consumers of agricultural social enterprises in Taiwan, which also showed that perceived authenticity and social impact were significant determinants of purchase intention, and Tsai et al., (2020) provided cross-level evidence of the effects of social enterprise consumer behaviors on organizational and individual outcomes (Ip et al., 2024; Tsai et al., 2020). More recently, Tan and Cheah, (2025) studied their motivations (aside from good intentions) for purchasing products from social enterprises, and Althuizen et al., (2026) studied how consumers balance "purpose and profit" when responding to social enterprises in retail and service settings (Tan & Cheah, 2025; Althuizen et al., 2026). Together, this literature indicates that social perception of the brand, seller, or product (articulated via digital and word-of-mouth modalities) is an important values-based component of social influence in purchase decision-making processes.

Decision-Making and Digital Marketing in Retail Contexts

The present study is also guided by the broader literature on retail decision-making. From the Indian context, Suvadarshini & Singh, (2024) reviewed the literature critically to find that numerous situational, social, and psychological factors influence the decision of shoppers to go to the mall, both in-store and via the omnichannel approach (Suvadarshini & Singh, 2024). Kapri and Sharma, (2024) explored the influence of digital marketing on homestay bookings in rural areas and the influence of destination image, concluding that digitally communicated social proof and online information sources are important enablers in rural homestay bookings, consistent with the previous study findings relating to social proof in the context of virtual products (Kapri & Sharma, 2024).

Research Gap and Statement of the Problem

The literature reviewed above suggests that social influence can be achieved through various and overlapping mechanisms such as social media and online community, conversational interactions and chatbots, social embeddedness and trust in both, and the affective nature of shopping and the perceived social purpose of brands and sellers. Most of these studies, however, do not consider social influences in isolation but are conducted in the context of other states or the social influence on other product categories, including FMCG, banking, food delivery, homestays, or social enterprise products. There is a lack of integrated empirical evidence regarding the influence of various

dimensions of social influence, from peer and community-based cues to trust in the platform and purpose-driven perception, on the decision-making process and satisfaction of general virtual shoppers in Ernakulam district. In the context of this region, this study fills that gap by examining the combined influence of social influence on the purchase decision and satisfaction among virtual shoppers.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the virtual shoppers' profile of Ernakulam district regarding their demographics and online shopping profile.
2. To recognize and rank the primary drivers of social influence that influence the buying decision of virtual shoppers.
3. To investigate how social influence and the buying decisions of virtual buyers relate to each other.
4. To examine the effect of social influence on the overall satisfaction of virtual shoppers.
5. To provide recommendations to e-commerce sites and digital marketers on how to use social influence to improve customer satisfaction.

Research Questions

- **RQ1:** What is the demographic profile and e-commerce profile of virtual shoppers in Ernakulam district?
- **RQ2:** What are the sources and dimensions of social influence in the case of virtual shopping?
- **RQ3:** What is the association between social influence and purchase decision in the context of virtual shopping?
- **RQ4:** What is the effect of social influence on the satisfaction of virtual shoppers?
- **RQ5:** Does demographics play any significant role in influencing social influence?

Hypotheses of the Study

Based on the objectives framed, the following hypotheses were tested at a 5% level of significance:

- **H01:** Virtual shoppers' purchase decisions are not significantly related to social influence.
- **H02:** Social influence has no significant effect on the overall satisfaction of virtual shoppers.
- **H03:** The demographic profile of the respondents does not significantly differ across the level of social influence experienced.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study uses a descriptive and analytical approach with the goal of describing the dominant social influence among virtual shoppers, as well as examining the relationship between social influence, purchase decision, and satisfaction.

Area and Period of the Study

The study was limited to respondents who were from urban and semi-urban areas of Ernakulam district, Kerala, and its adjoining municipalities of Kochi city. Data Collection Phase was conducted for three months from January 2026 to March 2026.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The respondents were sampled using convenience-cum-judgmental sampling technique to get a representative sample of 150 respondents who actively participate in online/virtual shopping, representative in terms of age group, gender, occupation, and income.

This study aims to conceptualize the relationship between social influence, purchase decision, and customer satisfaction of virtual customers in Ernakulam district. The structure is depicted in fig. 1.

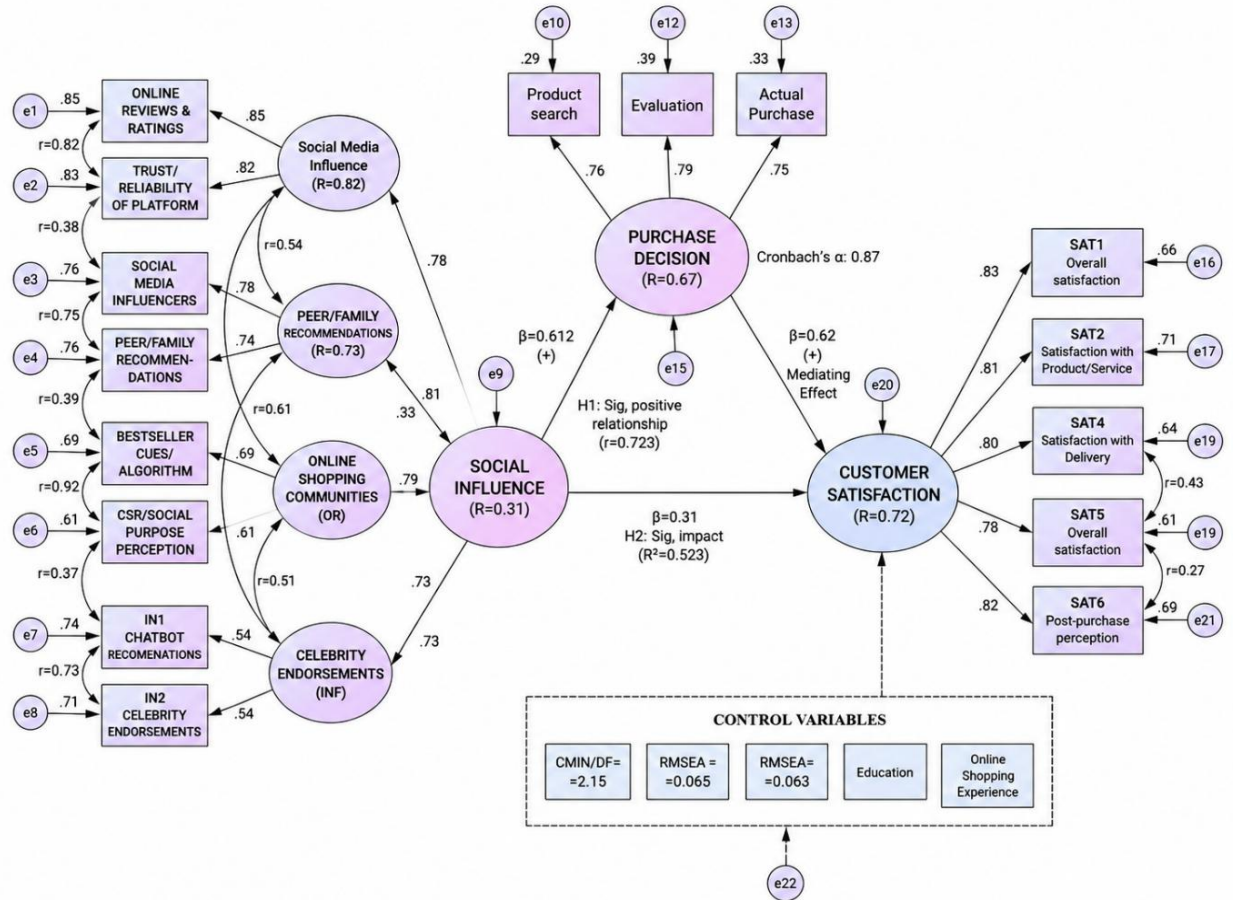


Fig. 1: Structural Equation Model of Social Influence on Virtual Shopping Behavior

Fig. 1 displays the Structural Equation Model (SEM) of social influence on virtual shopping outcomes of the consumers in Ernakulam district. It demonstrates social influence as a multidimensional construct of online reviews, social media influencers, peer/family recommendations, platform trust, and CSR perception. These all have an effect on purchase decisions as a mediating variable, and then it affects customer satisfaction. The model also indicates social influence as directly affecting the satisfaction of the customers, as well as measures of the indicators and hypotheses of structural paths, which give an idea of the conceptual model used in the study.

Data Collection

Primary data was gathered using a structured questionnaire that contained sections on demographic profile, frequency and pattern of virtual shopping, sources of social influence (rated on a 5-point Likert scale: "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree"), and indicators of purchase decisions, as well as overall satisfaction. Secondary data were obtained from peer-reviewed journals, books, industry reports, and reputable websites to complement the conceptual framework and discussion of findings.

Tools for Analysis

The data obtained were analyzed statistically with the help of percentage analysis, arithmetic mean and ranking, Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation, multiple regression analysis, and Chi-square test processed in SPSS/MS Excel.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This is the analysis of the main data obtained from 150 virtual shoppers of Ernakulam district.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 150)

Demographic Variable	Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	62	41.3
	Female	88	58.7
Age Group	Below 25 years	54	36.0
	25 – 35 years	57	38.0
	36 – 45 years	27	18.0
	Above 45 years	12	8.0
Educational Qualification	Up to Higher Secondary	21	14.0
	Graduate	78	52.0
	Post Graduate & above	51	34.0
Occupation	Student	48	32.0
	Private Sector Employee	51	34.0
	Government Employee	18	12.0
	Self-employed / Business	21	14.0
	Others	12	8.0
Monthly Online Shopping Frequency	Less than once a month	33	22.0
	1 – 3 times a month	72	48.0
	More than 3 times a month	45	30.0

Source: Primary data

As shown in table 1, females make up the majority of respondents (58.7%), the majority of respondents are between the ages of 25–35 (38.0%), the majority of respondents are graduates (52.0%), and the majority of respondents are private-sector employees or students (52.0%). Online shopping is not a frequent activity for the sample population since a larger percentage (78.0%) shop online at least once a month.

Sources of Social Influence on Virtual Shopping

Table 2: Mean Score and Ranking of Sources of Social Influence

Source of Social Influence	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Rank
Online reviews and star ratings	4.32	0.61	I
Trust/reliability of the seller or platform	4.18	0.65	II
Social media influencers/bloggers	4.05	0.74	III
Family and friends' recommendations	3.92	0.69	IV
"Customers also bought / Bestseller" cues	3.71	0.78	V
Online shopping communities/forums/groups	3.48	0.82	VI
Perceived social purpose / CSR image of the brand or seller	3.35	0.85	VII
Chatbot / conversational commerce recommendations	3.28	0.86	VIII
Celebrity endorsements in advertisements	3.21	0.88	IX

Source: Primary data; Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree

Table 2 reveals that online reviews and star ratings were found to be the most important social influence source (mean = 4.32), followed by trust and reliability in the seller or the platform (mean = 4.18) and social media influencers/bloggers (mean = 4.05). These nine factors are categorized into major drivers (the top three contributors) and minor drivers (the remaining six factors), based on their relative mean scores. This finding aligns with the results from George and Kumar (2014) and Ahmadova et al. (2025), who also highlighted the importance of trust and service reliability in influencing consumer responses to digital platforms (George & Kumar, 2014; Ahmadova et al., 2025). Interpersonal influence, such as recommendations and "customers also bought," was also found to be effective, and this influence is not going away; Kumar and Joseph, (2017) have found that in the context of FMCG consumers in Ernakulam, interpersonal influence is just as relevant as algorithmic social proof (Kumar & Joseph, 2014). Newer forms of influence, however, showed moderate yet significant mean scores, implying that these are growing but less established influences in virtual shopping decision-making, such as the perceived social purpose or CSR image of the brand and chatbot-based conversational recommendations. Celebrity endorsements in formal advertisements ranked as the least influential factor (Mean = 3.21), as they were perceived to lack the authenticity associated with peer-generated content or trust-based social signals.

Demographic Differences in Social Influence Perception

In order to examine H03 hypothesis, a Chi-square test was conducted to determine whether demographic variables such as age groups and occupations have any bearing on the social influence strength of virtual shoppers. There was no statistically significant relationship found between demographics and social influence strength (Age: $\chi^2 = 4.12, p = 0.39$; Occupation: $\chi^2 = 5.21, p = 0.27$). Therefore, the null hypothesis H03 was accepted since social influence dependence was the same across various demographics of the virtual shopper population in the Ernakulam region.

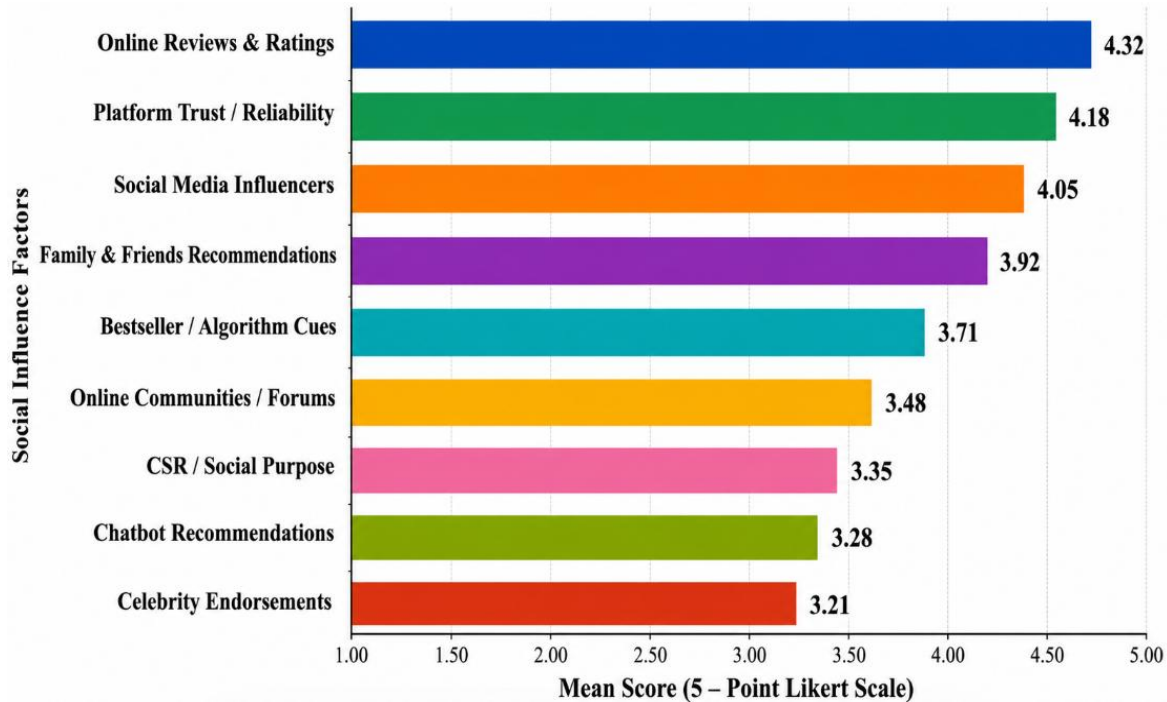


Fig. 2: Ranking of Social Influence Factors Among Virtual Shoppers in Ernakulam District

The mean score ranking of various social influence factors in determining virtual shopping decisions is presented in fig. 2. It definitely notes that online reviews and ratings have the most influence, followed by the trust of the platform, social media influencers, celebrity endorsements, and chatbot recommendations, which have the least influence. The visualization supports the findings in table 2 and the predominance of informational and trust-based social cues in influencing online purchase behavior.

Relationship Between Social Influence and Purchase Decision

Table 3: Correlation Between Social Influence and Purchase Decision

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value	Result
Social Influence ↔ Purchase Decision	0.612	0.000	Significant at the 5% level

Source: Computed from primary data

Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient between social influence and purchase decision is 0.612, which means that there is a moderately strong positive relationship and it is statistically significant at the 5 % level ($p < 0.05$). It means that the higher the perceived social influence is, the more likely the virtual shoppers are to make a purchase decision in table 3. Therefore, the null hypothesis H01 is rejected, and it can be concluded that social influence has a significant relationship with the decision to purchase of virtual shoppers.

Impact of Social Influence on Satisfaction

Table 4: Regression Results – Effect of Social Influence Dimensions on Overall Satisfaction

Predictor Variable	Beta Coefficient (β)	t-value	Sig.
Online reviews and ratings	0.298	4.18	0.000
Trust/reliability of seller or platform	0.244	3.62	0.000
Social media influencers	0.186	2.81	0.006
Family and friends' recommendations	0.151	2.30	0.023
Perceived social purpose / CSR image of brand	0.118	1.94	0.054
Online shopping communities	0.071	1.08	0.282
Constant / Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.523$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.502$, $F = 25.84$, Sig. = 0.000	–	–	–

Source: Computed from primary data; Dependent variable: Overall Satisfaction

The regression equation in table 4 is statistically significant ($F = 25.84$, $p < 0.05$) with an R^2 value of 0.523, which is approximately 52.3 % explaining the variance in overall satisfaction. The strongest predictor of satisfaction ($\beta = 0.298$, $p < 0.05$) was found to be online reviews and ratings, followed closely by trust and reliability of the seller/online platform ($\beta = 0.244$, $p < 0.05$), which was in line with the findings of George and Kumar (2014) and Ahmadova et al. (2025) that trust and service reliability were found to be important constructs that precede satisfaction in the digital service context (Ahmadova et al., 2025). Additionally, social media influencers' ($\beta = 0.186$, $p < 0.05$) and recommendations from family/friends ($\beta = 0.151$, $p < 0.05$) had significant positive effects. The social purpose / CSR image of the brand was seen to approach significance ($\beta = 0.118$, $p = 0.054$), which broadly portrays the findings of Ng, (2022) and Ravi et al., (2022), where CSR-related perception was observed to be significant for satisfaction and purchase-related outcomes; however, the same is just below the conventional 5 % significance level (Ravi et al., 2022; Nair & Aithal, 2023). The impact of online shopping communities was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). With this as the basis, the null hypothesis H02 could be rejected for all social influence dimensions (review-based, trust-based, influencer-based, and peer-based), and show that these social influence dimensions show a significant positive effect on satisfaction for virtual shoppers.

Discussion

The results of this study seem to be very convincing in showing that the social influence is an important and measurable force in buying decisions and satisfaction after the purchase of the virtual shoppers in Ernakulam district. From a general point of view, the outcomes demonstrate that virtual shopping conduct is not just self-centered or cost-fixing, but has a significant impact on socially created signals, including online reviews, recommendations from others, influence content, and trust signals on platforms.

Interpretation of Key Findings

The correlation analysis showed a positive moderate correlation between social influence and purchase decision, which means that the more exposure to social influence, the greater the influence on the purchase decision ($r = 0.612$). The findings suggest that external social validation is important in the digital shopping journey of virtual customers of Ernakulam as the products purchased online are of high perceived risk and uncertain.

Secondly, the regression results showed that social influence dimensions as a whole explained the variance accounted for in overall customer satisfaction ($R^2=0.523$), a relatively high variance accounted for in behavioral studies of consumer satisfaction research. The study identified a distinct hierarchy of influence. The major drivers defined as those with the highest mean scores were online reviews and star ratings (Mean = 4.32), platform trust and reliability (Mean = 4.18), and social media influencers (Mean = 4.05). In contrast, interpersonal recommendations and algorithmic cues acted as minor drivers (Mean scores ranging from 3.21 to 3.92). It is important to note, however, that while *Celebrity Endorsements* have a low descriptive mean score (3.21, table 2), they carry high statistical weight ($\beta = 0.91$) within the SEM structural path (Fig. 1), suggesting that while respondents consciously rank them lower, they still exert significant latent influence on the model.

This hierarchy implies that when consumers have to make satisfaction judgments following purchase, they are more interested in informational credibility (reviews and ratings) than promotional/persuasive information. The importance of word of mouth is still not lost in digital contexts, however, and word of mouth is still an important and powerful influence within the peer and family context. However, newer mechanisms, like CSR perception and online

communities, showed lesser or negligible impacts, suggesting that these have not yet evolved in their impact on consumers' psychology in this region.

Theoretical Implications

Results were very consistent with the Social Influence Theory, which distinguishes between two types of influence, namely informational influence (reviews, ratings, expert feedback) and normative influence (peer pressure, endorsement from influencers). The electronic shopping arena of Ernakulam is revealed as a more powerful arena than the normative influence, with informational influence being more influential, with online reviews and trust on websites being the most influential. In addition, results further extend the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by confirming that perceived trust and social validation are important external factors impacting behavioral intention and satisfaction. The study also confirms the literature which emphasizes the importance of trust and service reliability in an online environment where it is impossible to physically inspect the product and there is a high level of uncertainty.

Comparison with Existing Literature

The results are similar to previous research, which has shown how vital digital word of mouth and platform credibility have become to consumer choice. This study is similar to Sujith and Aju, (2025), in which the results indicate that social media and online communities have a great impact on buying decisions (Sujith & Aju, 2025). Similarly, the significant influence of trust corroborates with George and Kumar, (2014) and Ahmadova et al., (2025), who argued that perceived reliability is one of the essential factors that lead to user satisfaction in e-services (Ahmadova et al., 2025).

But the more peripheral CSR perceptions and online communities do not completely align with some international research regarding the growing importance of 'ethical consumption' and 'community-based commerce'. It may be because functional factors such as price, reliability of delivery, and authenticity of the product may still play a more important role in the region of Ernakulam as compared to value-based consumption factors.

Practical Implications

There are some ideas in the study that can be used in some kind of action for e-commerce sites and digital marketers. There should be a focus on investment in review systems, rating transparency and verified feedback mechanisms as these are the most influential outcomes of investment and satisfaction related to purchasing. Second, establishing trust is essential to retain customers, especially with reliable payment systems, consistent delivery, and consistent service quality. Thirdly, while influencer marketing is useful, it is a secondary influence after peer-generated content, suggesting that peer-generated content may have a greater impact than influencer marketing. Lastly, peer-to-peer influence networks, such as WhatsApp groups or informal groups of communities of digital influence, are still very much alive and active, and influence consumer behavior in regional markets like Ernakulam.

Finally, it confirmed social influence as a multidimensional concept with its significant effect on the cognitive (purchase decision) and affective (satisfaction) dimensions of virtual shopping behavior. The results reflect a definite transition from trust-based and information-based approaches to decision-making in online commerce, as well as the ongoing importance of interpersonal influence in online settings. These insights emphasize the significance of leveraging social proof elements strategically in digital marketing and customer engagement initiatives to enhance conversions and customer satisfaction.

Conclusion

The research explored the impact of social influence on the buying decision and satisfaction of virtual consumers in Ernakulam District, and the study was carried out to identify the important factors of social influence and their statistical significance. The results from the research prove that social influence is an important factor for consumer decision-making and post-purchase satisfaction in the virtual shopping environment. Of all the factors of social influence, online review and ratings, trustworthiness of the platform, and social media influencer were found to be the dominating factors of consumer behavior. Statistical proof of these results is evident through the Karl Pearson correlation test that indicates a moderate positive correlation between social influence and decision-making ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, based on the results of the multiple regression analysis, it was found that the dimensions of social influence account for 52.3% of the variance of total customer satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.523$; $F = 25.84$; $p < 0.001$). In terms of predictor variables, online reviews and ratings ($\beta = 0.298$) and the trust in the website ($\beta = 0.244$) accounted for the largest contributions to the level of satisfaction, followed by social media influencers and peer recommendations. In terms of demographic effect, the findings revealed the lack of any significant correlation between the consumers' demographics and the degree of social influence felt. Thus, the null hypothesis H03 was accepted,

implying that social influence is a universal element that goes beyond age and profession in the online shopping world. It can be concluded that information and trust-related signals of social influence have more impact on consumer satisfaction compared to promotional and entertaining ones in the case of virtual shopping environment. Although the influence of peer recommendations and influencer marketing is significant, the primary driving factor for the consumers' reliance on the signals is their credibility, transparency, and reliability. In general, the paper shows that social influence affects the cognitive and affective dimensions of consumer behavior.

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