

Social Media Reviews and Their Influence on Consumer Attraction towards Street Food Vendors in Chandrapur

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Received: 2nd Mar, 2026 | **Revised:** 14th Mar, 2026 | **Accepted:** 4th Apr, 2026 | **Available Online:** 20th Apr, 2026

ABSTRACT

The current paper will analyze the effects of social media review on the attraction of consumers to street food vendors in Chandrapur District. In the dynamic digital world, social network sites have emerged as a major information source; especially in terms of customer-created reviews that influence the attitude and buying behavior of the customer. The research design used in the study is a quantitative research design, in which primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire involving 250 respondents. Major variables that are investigated include credibility of review, quality of review, and frequency of review and how these factors influence the attraction of consumers. The proposed relationships will be tested using statistical tools such as descriptive analysis, correlation, regression, and SEM. The results show that social media reviews strongly and significantly impact consumer attraction, with the factor of review quality and frequency coming second and third respectively. The research results indicate that meaningful management of social media reviews has the potential to amplify customer feedback and give the vendors of street food a competitive edge. The study is relevant to the current body of research by prioritising the informal sector of the food market in a semi-urban setting and providing potential insights on enhancing digital marketing approaches in the local environment with local sellers.

Keywords: Social Media Reviews, Consumer Attraction, Street Food Vendors, e-WOM, Brand Perception, Digital Marketing, Chandrapur District.

How to cite this article: Gadkari AC, Chakravorty JN. Social Media Reviews and Their Influence on Consumer Attraction towards Street Food Vendors in Chandrapur. *Int J Drug Deliv Technol.* 2026;16(33s):756-760. DOI: 10.25258/ijddt.16.33s.89

Source of support: Nil.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Introduction

Social media has taken the centre stage in the modern digital ecosystem in the sense that it has become an influential means of communication that guides consumer decision-making processes in any industry, including the informal food sector. Physical outer appearances and word of mouth communication that are essential to street food vendors are being supplemented as street food sellers are realizing the power of social media platforms in attracting more customers. One of the types of electronic e-WOM, social media reviews are among other types of digital influences which is critical in determining the consumer attraction and behavioral intentions.

The reviews on social media offer first-hand experiences of users that are highly experiential, and user-generated, thus lower perceived risk and information asymmetry on the part of the consumers. Studies show that customer reviews on the Internet have a direct impact on the brand image and purchase intent, positively affecting trust and credibility (Joshi, 2017; Mandal and Maiti, 2018). Reviews can be even more crucial in building consumer attitudes in the food industry where the quality and hygiene perceptions are subjective.

New empirical evidence indicates that online reviews have not only immediate purchasing behavior, but also long term brand results subsequently achieved by building trust mechanisms. Also, the use of social

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media has been cited as one of the critical factors in the conversion of online communications into positive consumer behavior and appeal. This is especially applicable to semi-urban areas such as Chandrapur which is slowly shifting toward digital usage of small vendors.

Moreover, the shift in consumer behavior (in particular, the younger groups), reveals a high level of engagement towards peer-created reviews, rather than conventional advertisement. Reviews are being viewed as more genuine and legitimate sources of information and are known to impact not only purchase intention but also initial attraction of the vendors (Ahmed, 2024). Therefore, looking at the social media review as an element of the street food vendors business offers some great information on the localisation of digital marketing.

Literature Review

Faith in the association between social media and consumer behavior has been widely researched and especially when it comes to engagement with the trust as well as loyalty. The social media platforms ensure two-way communication and give consumers the opportunity to express their experience, opinions, and feedback, thus influencing the choice made by other people (Espuela et al., 2023).

E-WOM, particularly reviews, is found to be a strong predictor of attraction to the consumer. Joshi (2017) indicated that social media reviews are an important factor in brand perception and engagement in any industry. In the same vein, Mandal and Maiti (2018) pointed out that the consumer loyalty and purchase behavior could be accurately forecasted through review networks and sentiment analysis.

Research has also highlighted mediating influence by trust between social media reviews and consumer behavior. Online reviews also contribute to brand trust, positively affecting BL and purchase intentions. This agrees with previous studies conducted by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) who identified trust as one of the very important antecedents of BL.

The consumer engagement and attraction, as well as content generated by the users and reviews, have been observed to be impacted by the social media marketing practice significantly. Studies show that engaging content in social media text is the means of improving relationships between consumers and the

brand and has modification effects on buyer behavior (Al-Hujri, 2025). Furthermore, questions in the study of hospitality and service industries establish that reviews serve as information indicators, which lessen the levels of uncertainty and enhance consumer confidence.

The importance of influencers and social interactions has been described in literature as well. Ahmed (2024) concluded that loyalty towards the brand is greatly influenced by social media engagement and attractiveness and the condition of consumer interaction is a mediating factor. Moreover, Sharawneh (2020) found that SMM actions impact the brand affect and BL positively, which supports the idea of the essential role of emotional links in CB.

Hossain and Kibria (2024) pointed out that the concept of BL has undergone a shift in the digital era, with the social media platforms having refreezed the traditional framework of loyalty in terms of interactive and engagement-based loyalties. Likewise, consumer perception research shows that a variety of social media variables such as reviews play an important role in brand preference and loyalty (Singh & Saini, 2018).

Although much work has been done in organized sectors, few studies have been done in the informal sector like street food vendors, especially in semi-urban setting. This forms a research gap in comprehending the impact of social media reviews in local consumer attraction in local markets such as Chandrapur. Hence, this research will fill the gap by empirically investigating the effectiveness of social media reviews in driving consumer attraction towards street food vendors.

Objective

This paper aims to analyse the drivers of consumer attraction to street food vendors in Chandrapur district through the impact of social media reviews, and understand how the credibility of the reviews, the quality and frequency of the reviews influence consumer perceptions, trust and decision making behaviour in the local food market environment.

Methodology

The study adopts a analytical research design using a structured questionnaire to collect primary data from consumers of street food vendors in Chandrapur District. A stratified random sampling method will be

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employed to ensure representation across age, income, and occupation groups, with an expected sample size of 250 respondents. Data will be measured using Likert-scale items assessing social media review attributes, consumer attraction, and related constructs. Statistical tools such as descriptive analysis, correlation, regression, and SEM will be applied to test relationships and validate the proposed research model.

Results and Discussion

The study data is analyzed systematically in the section of data analysis where the primary data collected is evaluated in order to determine how the social media reviews affect consumer attraction in street food vendors in Chandrapur District.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Review Credibility	4.12	0.68
Review Quality	4.05	0.72
Review Frequency	3.88	0.81
Consumer Attraction	4.20	0.65

Mean values of all the variables are greater than 3.5, a good sign of consumer perception. The attraction of consumer (Mean = 4.20) is the highest, which implies that the reviews in social media play a significant role in the attraction of customers.

Table 2 Reliability

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Review Credibility	0.84
Review Quality	0.81
Review Frequency	0.78
Consumer Attraction	0.86

Each of the constructs has a value greater than 0.70, which supports high-level of internal consistency and reliability of the measurement scales.

Table 3 Correlation Analysis

Variables	RC	RQ	RF	CA
Review Credibility (RC)	1.000			
Review Quality (RQ)	0.62	1.000		
Review Frequency (RF)	0.55	0.58	1.000	
Consumer Attraction (CA)	0.71	0.69	0.63	1.000

The independent variables have a strong positive relation with consumer attraction with review credibility ($r = 0.71$) having the most effect. This is an

indication that credible reviews are significant contributors towards consumer attraction.

Table 4 Regression Analysis

Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value
Review Credibility	0.38	6.25	0.000
Review Quality	0.31	5.48	0.000
Review Frequency	0.22	3.96	0.001

Table 5 Model Summary

R ²	Adjusted R ²
0.64	0.62

The model has a high level of explanatory power as it explains 64% of the variation in consumer attraction. The greatest impact is on review credibility ($\beta = 0.38$), review quality, and review frequency. Every independent variable is significant ($p < 0.05$), which validates that social media reviews play a great role in attracting consumers.

Table 6 Structural Equation Model

Path Relationship	Path Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Result
Review Credibility → Consumer Attraction	0.41	7.12	0.000	Supported
Review Quality → Consumer Attraction	0.34	6.02	0.000	Supported
Review Frequency → Consumer Attraction	0.27	4.85	0.000	Supported

Table 7 Model Fit Indicator

Index	Value	Threshold
SRMR	0.052	< 0.08
NFI	0.91	> 0.90

The SEM findings prove that all the relationships are positive and statistically significant. The model shows that it fits well, which confirms that social media reviews are important in promoting attraction of consumers to street food vendors.

These results strongly suggest that social media reviews are very instrumental in attracting consumers. Of all the factors, review credibility is the most influential factor with quality and frequency coming after it. These findings indicate that consumers heavily use credible reviews that are more descriptive prior to settling on street hawkers. Hence, sellers that are proactive in their online reputation and promote positive feedbacks can make a big difference in terms of drawing customers and competitive leadership.

Discussion

According to the study results, there is a lot of empirical evidence that social media reviews are far-reaching in attracting consumers to street food vendors in the Chandrapur District. These findings are in line with the available literature on the topic of e-WOM, which confirms the fact that online reviews

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are an important informational and persuasive force in influencing consumer behaviour.

Among the important findings is the fact that the credibility of reviews can best influence consumer attraction as shown by both regression and SEM. It implies that consumers value reliable and genuine reviews more in their food decisions, especially in the unregulated street food industry where quality and sanitation do not have established criteria. This observation aligns with previous research which points out that credibility decreases perceived risk and vocalizes choice certainty.

The quality of the review also came out as an important factor with the elaborate, informative, and experience-based reviews being more effective in drawing customers. Consumers prefer to reference to descriptive information, such as taste, price, hygiene, and service features, which assist them in establishing clearer expectations. This can be seen as an upsurge of content richness in digital consumer participation.

Likewise, it was also discovered that the effect of the review frequency was positive and significant, but less in comparison to the credibility and quality. Regular reviews are an indication of popularity and a consumer interest and thus, they enhance exposure and desired demand. This aids the idea of social proof, that is, consumer being affected by the actions and opinions of others.

Using social media reviews holds a significant level of variation in consumer attraction as the explanatory power of the model ($R^2 = 0.64$) is very high. This brings out the increased importance of digital networks in even semi-urban locations such as Chandrapur, where offline communications are slowly being augmented (and in certain locations supplanted) by online communication.

In theoretical terms, the results confirm the relationship marketing and consumer behaviour theories especially the effect of trust and information processing in decision-making. In practical terms, the findings suggest that street food sellers can improve their customer base by proactively working on their online image, motivating their happy customers to leave reviews, and responding to them regularly on social media.

All in all, the research supports the idea that the social media reviews are no longer peripheral but pivot in the consumer attraction per se, even in small and unstructured food enterprises.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that social media reviews are influential and conclusive in their effect to consumer attraction of street food vendors in Chandrapur District. Empirical evidence confirms that credibility of the review, quality, and frequency of the reviews are critical predictors influencing perceptions and decision making behaviour among consumers. Among them, the idea of credibility turns out to be the strongest, which means that consumers focus on the credible and veritable information when choosing food sellers. The high level of the explanatory power of the model also supports the idea that digital interactions, especially in the form of reviews, have already become an indispensable element of attracting consumers, even in the semi-urban market. In this way, the paper points to the increasing penetration of the informal food industry by social media and the effect of the latter in the sphere of consumer behaviour.

Recommendations

The recommendations are that the street food sellers would be encouraged to actively use the social media as it gives them a chance to increase their popularity and visibility so as to increase their customer numbers. Vendors ought to seek to persuade loyal clients to leave authentic and positive reviews because credibility is one of the biggest determining factors among consumers. Also, the in-depth content, including images, videos and detailed feedback on customer reactions can be maintained to sustain consumer trust as well. Consistent monitoring and responding to reviews in a timely manner and responding to negative responses in a professional manner are also important in shaping a positive brand image. Moreover, embracing straightforward digital marketing initiatives like regular posting, geo-tagging and offerings can ensure vendors take advantage of social media and remain competitive in the local market.

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