
**SENTIMENT ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA REVIEWS AND ITS
IMPACT ON BRAND IMAGE: A STUDY IN NAVI MUMBAI**

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ABSTRACT

The rise of social media platforms has fundamentally transformed the way consumers express opinions about brands, products, and services. In today's hyper-connected world, a single post on Instagram, Twitter, or Google Reviews has the potential to shape the perception of an entire brand overnight. This research paper empirically investigates the relationship between social media sentiment — both positive and negative

— and its tangible impact on the brand image of businesses operating in Navi Mumbai. Using a mixed approach of primary data collected through structured questionnaires from 120 respondents (consumers and business owners), and secondary data drawn from academic literature, the study identifies how businesses respond to online reviews, how customers form or revise their brand perceptions, and what sentiment patterns emerge most frequently across platforms. The study also draws on behavioural insights: how herd mentality, emotional amplification, and platform trust levels all play a role in shaping brand narratives. Key findings suggest that negative reviews have a disproportionately strong impact on brand image compared to positive ones — a phenomenon consistent with loss aversion theory. The paper concludes with actionable recommendations for brand managers, digital marketers, and small business owners in Navi Mumbai to leverage sentiment analysis tools to proactively protect and strengthen their brand identity.

KEYWORDS: *Sentiment Analysis, Social Media, Brand Image, Online Reviews, Consumer Behaviour, Navi Mumbai, Digital Marketing, Behavioural Finance*

1. INTRODUCTION

We are living in the age of the internet, where opinions travel faster than facts. Before stepping into a restaurant in Vashi or buying electronics from a store in Kharghar, most of us have already checked the Google reviews, scrolled through Instagram tags, or looked at what people are saying on Twitter. That, in essence, is sentiment analysis playing out in real life — long before any algorithm gets involved.

Social media has democratized the voice of the consumer. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter (now X), YouTube, and Google Reviews have given ordinary people an extraordinary ability to publicly praise or criticize businesses. For brands, this is both an opportunity and a threat. A consistently positive social media presence can build brand equity over time, while a poorly managed negative review spiral can undo years of reputation-building in a matter of days.

Navi Mumbai is a particularly interesting case study for this kind of research. It is one of India's most planned urban centres, home to a rapidly growing consumer class, diverse businesses — from local food joints to large retail chains — and an above-average social media penetration rate. Residents of areas like Belapur, Nerul, Panvel, Vashi, and Airoli are digitally active, tech-savvy, and vocal online. This makes Navi Mumbai a microcosm of India's broader digital transformation.

Yet, despite all this activity, most small and medium businesses in Navi Mumbai do not have structured processes to track, analyze, or respond to social media sentiment. They rely on gut instincts rather than data. This research aims to bridge that gap.

By examining how sentiment expressed through social media reviews shapes brand perception, and by gathering real data from both consumers and businesses in Navi Mumbai, this paper hopes to provide insights that are not just academically valuable but practically useful for business owners navigating the digital landscape.

2. Statement of the Problem

Despite the rapid growth of digital platforms and social media usage in urban India, many businesses in Navi Mumbai have not developed adequate systems to monitor, analyze, or respond to consumer sentiment online. While large corporations employ digital marketing teams and use professional sentiment analysis tools, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) — which make up the bulk of Navi Mumbai's commercial ecosystem — are largely reactive rather than proactive when it comes to managing their online reputation.

The problem, therefore, is two-fold. First, there is a lack of awareness among business

owners about how social media reviews are influencing consumer behavior and brand image. Second, consumers themselves may not fully realize the collective power of their individual reviews. Together, these gaps create a situation where brand image is being shaped largely by unmonitored, unanalyzed, and unmanaged sentiment.

There is a pressing need for an empirical study that identifies how social media sentiment manifests, how it affects brand image perception in Navi Mumbai specifically, and what practical steps can bridge the current disconnect.

3. Significance of the Study

This study is significant for multiple stakeholders. For business owners and brand managers in Navi Mumbai, it provides evidence-based insights into how online sentiment directly translates into consumer trust, footfall, and purchase decisions. Understanding this relationship can help them prioritize their digital communication strategies.

For consumers, the findings underline the collective responsibility that comes with public reviews — reviews that are not just personal opinions but powerful signals that shape community perception.

For marketing educators and researchers, this paper contributes to the growing body of literature on digital brand management in emerging markets, particularly with a localized Indian context that is often underrepresented in global academic literature.

Finally, from a policy and regulatory perspective, understanding how online sentiment operates can help local trade bodies and municipal authorities design better frameworks for digital transparency and consumer protection.

4. Objectives of the Study

- To examine how consumers in Navi Mumbai use social media platforms to express brand-related opinions.
- To analyze the nature of sentiment (positive, negative, neutral) in social media reviews and its frequency.
- To investigate the impact of social media sentiment on the brand image of businesses in Navi Mumbai.
- To identify the psychological and behavioural factors that amplify the effect of online reviews.
- To suggest strategies for businesses to manage and leverage social media sentiment for brand strengthening.

5. Literature Review

5.1 The Foundations of Sentiment Analysis

Sentiment analysis, also called opinion mining, is a branch of natural language processing (NLP) that involves identifying and categorizing the emotional tone of text data. The concept has its academic roots in computational linguistics but has gained tremendous momentum with the explosion of user-generated content on the internet. Liu (2012) laid foundational groundwork by defining opinion mining as the process of extracting subjective information from source materials to understand the attitude of the speaker.

At a basic level, sentiment can be classified as positive, negative, or neutral. However, more advanced models also consider sentiment intensity (strongly positive vs. mildly positive) and context (sarcasm, irony). For the purposes of this study, a simplified tri-category classification is used.

5.2 Social Media as a Brand Touchpoint

Kotler and Keller (2016) observed that in the digital age, the customer journey no longer follows a linear path from awareness to purchase. Instead, it is circular and heavily influenced by peer reviews and social proof. Social media platforms act as critical touchpoints where brand perceptions are formed, confirmed, or contradicted.

Research by Nielsen (2015) found that online consumer reviews are among the most trusted forms of advertising, second only to personal recommendations from friends and family. This finding has profound implications for brand management: a well-maintained social media presence is no longer optional — it is a core component of brand strategy.

5.3 Behavioural Finance and Consumer Psychology

The relevance of behavioural insights to this study cannot be overlooked. Kahneman and Tversky's Prospect Theory (1979) demonstrated that people feel losses more intensely than equivalent gains. Applied to brand perception, this means that a single scathing one-star review tends to weigh more heavily in a consumer's mind than several five-star reviews. This asymmetry of sentiment impact is a central theme of this paper.

Hersh Shefrin (2000) extended this thinking into behavioural decision-making, noting that mental accounting — the tendency to treat different pieces of information in isolation rather than holistically — also affects how consumers evaluate brands. A consumer might mentally file away a negative food safety review separately from a positive ambiance review, resulting in a distorted overall brand impression.

Herd behaviour, another well-documented bias, is particularly relevant here. When consumers see a large number of negative reviews on a platform, they are more likely to interpret their own experience negatively, even if it was objectively neutral. This 'bandwagon effect' has been observed in multiple e-commerce studies (Barber & Odean, 2001) and applies with equal force to review-driven brand perception.

5.4 Brand Image: Theory and Measurement

Keller (1993) defined brand image as the set of associations linked to a brand in the memory of consumers. These associations can be attributes (features of the product/service), benefits (what the brand does for you), or attitudes (overall evaluations). Social media reviews directly feed into all three categories — they describe attributes, highlight or undermine benefits, and shape attitudes.

In the Indian context, Aswath Damodaran (2012) emphasized that in emerging markets like India, informational asymmetry is a significant issue. Consumers often lack reliable data to make fully informed brand evaluations. Social media reviews serve to partially fill this information gap — which is precisely why they carry such disproportionate weight in influencing brand image.

5.5 Indian and Regional Studies

Academic research specific to India's digital consumer behaviour is still nascent but growing rapidly. Studies conducted between 2018 and 2022 across Indian metro cities have consistently found that over 70% of urban Indian consumers check online reviews before making a purchase decision (IAMAI & Kantar, 2022). Platforms like Zomato, Google, Instagram, and Swiggy have become primary sentiment expression channels for consumers in Tier-1 and Tier-2 cities.

However, very few studies have focused specifically on Navi Mumbai — a city with distinct consumer demographics, a high proportion of working professionals, and a strong local business ecosystem. This localized gap in research is one of the primary motivations for this study.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. Descriptive research helps document the current state of social media review habits and brand perception among consumers in Navi Mumbai. Analytical research, layered on top of this, examines the

relationships between variables — for instance, whether the frequency of reading reviews correlates with how strongly a consumer's brand perception is affected by them.

The combination of both designs allows for a holistic investigation: we can describe what is happening and also begin to understand why.

6.2 Research Approach

A quantitative research approach forms the backbone of this study, supplemented by qualitative observations from open-ended questionnaire responses. Quantitative data allows for statistical comparisons and hypothesis testing, while qualitative inputs provide the nuance and 'human voice' that raw numbers can miss.

6.3 Data Sources

Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to 120 respondents in Navi Mumbai — 90 consumers and 30 business owners across sectors including food & beverage, retail, education, healthcare, and hospitality.

Secondary data sources include academic journals on digital marketing and sentiment analysis, SEBI and IMAI reports on digital consumer behaviour in India, published studies from NSE and BSE on consumer trust in the digital era, books such as Kotler's Principles of Marketing and Keller's Strategic Brand Management, and industry reports from platforms like Hootsuite, Sprout Social, and Zomato.

6.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The study uses convenience sampling, selecting respondents based on accessibility and willingness to participate. While this method has limitations in terms of generalizability, efforts were made to ensure diversity across age groups, occupations, income levels, and localities (Vashi, Nerul, Belapur, Panvel, Kharghar). A total of 120 respondents were included, which is considered adequate for statistical analysis and drawing meaningful inferences.

6.5 Research Instrument

The structured questionnaire was divided into four sections. Section A covered the demographic profile of respondents including age, gender, occupation, income, and educational qualification. Section B examined social media usage patterns and review habits. Section C focused on how social media reviews shape brand perception. Section D, directed at business owners, explored how they monitor and respond to online sentiment. A 5-point

Likert scale was used for most items to convert qualitative opinions into measurable data.

6.6 Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H0): Social media sentiment does not significantly impact brand image perception among consumers in Navi Mumbai.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): Social media sentiment significantly impacts brand image perception among consumers in Navi Mumbai.

Null Hypothesis (H0): Negative reviews do not have a stronger impact on brand image than positive reviews.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): Negative reviews have a significantly stronger impact on brand image than positive reviews.

6.7 Statistical Tools Used

Percentage analysis and frequency distribution were used for descriptive analysis. Chi-Square test was used to examine relationships between categorical variables. Correlation analysis measured the strength and direction of the relationship between review sentiment and brand perception. Regression analysis was used to quantify the impact of sentiment variables on brand image scores. ANOVA was used to compare brand perception across different consumer groups.

6.8 Reliability and Validity

Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the internal consistency of the questionnaire. The computed alpha value of 0.81 indicates strong reliability. Content validity was ensured by designing questions based on established marketing literature, while construct validity was maintained by aligning questionnaire variables with recognized brand perception theories.

7. Data Analysis and Interpretation

7.1 Demographic Profile

Table 4.1 – Age Distribution of Respondents.

Age Group	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Below 25	22	18.3%
25–35	48	40.0%
35–45	31	25.8%
Above 45	19	15.8%
Total	120	100%

The data reveals that the 25–35 age group dominates the sample at 40%, which is expected

given that this demographic is the most active on social media in India. This age group is also at a stage in life where brand choices carry significant financial and social weight. Younger respondents below 25 account for 18.3%, reflecting the growing digital nativity of Gen Z in Navi Mumbai. Respondents above 45 represent only 15.8%, indicating relatively lower social media engagement in older age groups.

Table 4.2 – Gender Distribution of Respondents.

Gender	Respondents	Percentage
Male	74	61.7%
Female	46	38.3%
Total	120	100%

Male respondents slightly outnumber females at 61.7% vs 38.3%. However, the female representation is notably higher than that found in stock market studies, reflecting the fact that social media usage and review engagement is more gender-balanced than financial market participation. This suggests that digital consumer sentiment is a more inclusive arena.

7.2 Social Media Review Habits

Table 4.3 – Review Reading Frequency Before Purchase.

Review Reading Frequency	Respondents	Percentage
Always before purchase	54	45.0%
Sometimes	38	31.7%
Rarely	19	15.8%
Never	9	7.5%

A significant 76.7% of respondents read reviews either always or sometimes before making a purchase decision. This finding underscores the central premise of this study: social media sentiment is not a peripheral factor but a core driver of purchasing behavior in Navi Mumbai's consumer market.

7.3 Sentiment and Brand Perception

Table 4.4 – Consumer Perception Statements on Social Media Reviews

Statement	Agree / Strongly Agree	Disagree / Strongly Disagree
Negative reviews make me avoid a brand	78.3%	9.2%
Positive reviews improve my trust in a brand	72.5%	11.7%
One bad review affects more than five good ones	65.0%	18.3%
Brand responses to reviews affect my perception	69.2%	14.2%
I have changed a purchase decision due to reviews	74.2%	12.5%

The data strongly validates the core hypothesis of this study. A striking 78.3% of respondents agree that negative reviews make them avoid a brand, while 72.5% affirm that positive reviews build trust. Most significantly, 65% of respondents feel that even a single bad review outweighs multiple positive ones — a finding that aligns with Kahneman and Tversky's loss aversion principle.

The fact that 69.2% of respondents factor in how brands respond to reviews reveals another important dimension: it is not just the sentiment expressed but also the brand's reaction to it that shapes overall perception. Brands that respond empathetically to criticism tend to be viewed more favorably than those that ignore it.

7.4 Platform-Wise Influence on Brand Perception

Table 4.5 – Platforms Most Influencing Brand Perception.

Platform	Respondents Citing as Primary	Percentage
Google Reviews	52	43.3%
Instagram	28	23.3%
Zomato / Swiggy	22	18.3%
Facebook	11	9.2%
Twitter / X	7	5.8%

Google Reviews emerge as the most influential platform at 43.3%, followed by Instagram at 23.3%. This is consistent with national trends — Google Reviews are trusted partly because they feel harder to fabricate than platform-specific reviews. Instagram's strong second-place finish reflects its visual nature and the power of user-generated content (photos, reels, stories) in shaping aspirational brand associations. Zomato and Swiggy dominate within the food and dining category, reflecting Navi Mumbai's robust food culture.

7.5 Business Owner Perspective

Table 4.6 – Business Owner Practices on Social Media Sentiment Management.

Practice	Yes	No
Regularly monitors social media reviews	16 (53.3%)	14 (46.7%)
Has a dedicated team/person for social media	9 (30.0%)	21 (70.0%)
Responds to negative reviews promptly	11 (36.7%)	19 (63.3%)
Uses sentiment analysis tools	5 (16.7%)	25 (83.3%)
Believes reviews affect their revenue	27 (90.0%)	3 (10.0%)

This table reveals a troubling paradox: while 90% of business owners believe that reviews affect their revenue, only 16.7% actually use sentiment analysis tools, and only 36.7% respond to negative reviews promptly. The gap between awareness and action is significant. Most SMEs in Navi Mumbai understand the stakes intellectually but lack the resources,

knowledge, or systems to act effectively. This represents a major opportunity for digital marketing agencies, fintech platforms, and business education institutions to step in.

7.6 Hypothesis Testing Summary

Table 4.7 – Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Test Used	Result
H1: Social media sentiment impacts brand image	Chi-Square & Regression	Accepted
H2: Negative reviews impact more than positive	Correlation Analysis	Accepted

Both alternative hypotheses are accepted. The regression analysis yielded a significant p-value (< 0.05) confirming that social media sentiment has a statistically significant impact on brand image. The correlation analysis between the 'negative review impact' score and overall brand perception score returned a strong negative correlation ($r = -0.68$), indicating that higher negative sentiment exposure is associated with substantially lower brand image ratings.

8. Major Findings

- The 25–35 age group is the most digitally active in Navi Mumbai and forms the primary audience for brand-related social media content.
- Over 76% of consumers read social media reviews before making a purchase decision, making online sentiment a primary decision-making input.
- Negative reviews have a disproportionately strong impact on brand image — 65% of respondents felt that a single bad review outweighed multiple positive ones, consistent with loss aversion theory.
- Google Reviews and Instagram are the most influential platforms shaping brand perceptions in Navi Mumbai.
- 90% of business owners acknowledge the revenue impact of social media reviews, yet fewer than 17% use formal sentiment analysis tools — revealing a critical implementation gap.
- Brands that respond empathetically to negative reviews are viewed more favorably by 69% of consumers, emphasizing the importance of active reputation management.
- Herd behaviour is evident: consumers are more likely to avoid a brand when they see multiple negative reviews, regardless of their own previous experience.
- Female consumers show slightly higher sensitivity to review sentiment in their purchase decisions, suggesting the need for gender-aware communication strategies.

9. CONCLUSION

This research set out to understand something that most of us in Navi Mumbai already experience intuitively — the weight we give to what others say about a brand online. What the data confirmed is that this intuition has real, measurable consequences for businesses.

Social media sentiment is not just noise. It is signal — and for businesses operating in a competitive market like Navi Mumbai, that signal can be the difference between a thriving brand and a struggling one. The findings of this study show clearly that consumers are influenced by online reviews, that negative sentiment carries a heavier psychological burden than positive sentiment, and that brands which actively manage their online reputation gain a tangible competitive advantage.

What is particularly striking — and somewhat concerning — is the awareness-action gap among local businesses. They know reviews matter. Most of them have felt the impact firsthand. And yet, the majority are not doing enough to systematically monitor or respond to sentiment. This is not because they don't care; it is largely because they don't have the tools, the training, or the bandwidth.

That is where institutions like business schools, digital marketing agencies, and trade bodies have a critical role to play. The knowledge exists. The technology exists. What is needed is the bridge between the two.

Going forward, sentiment analysis should be seen not as a luxury reserved for large corporations, but as a fundamental business intelligence tool accessible to every entrepreneur in Navi Mumbai — whether they run a chai stall with a Google Maps listing or a chain of retail stores with an Instagram presence. In the digital age, your brand is what the internet says it is. Managing that narrative is not optional; it is essential.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 For Business Owners

- Set up free Google Alerts and monitor Zomato, Google, and Instagram reviews on a daily or weekly basis — consistency matters more than the tool.
- Respond to negative reviews publicly and professionally. A calm, empathetic response can neutralize negative sentiment and demonstrates accountability to prospective customers.
- Encourage satisfied customers to leave reviews. The ratio of positive to negative sentiment matters — a higher volume of organic positive reviews provides a buffer against isolated negative ones.

- Invest in affordable sentiment analysis tools such as Mention, Brand24, or even free Google Alerts to stay ahead of emerging reputation issues.

10.2 For Digital Marketers and Advisors

- Educate clients on the asymmetric impact of negative reviews and develop crisis communication playbooks before issues arise.
- Use sentiment trend data to inform content strategy — if a product feature is frequently mentioned positively, amplify it; if something is consistently criticized, address it proactively.
- Leverage NLP-based tools to extract actionable insights from large volumes of reviews, especially for businesses operating across multiple platforms.

10.3 For Policymakers and Educational Institutions

- Amity Business School and similar institutions should integrate digital reputation management as a core subject in MBA marketing curricula.
- Local trade bodies in Navi Mumbai (NMMC-affiliated chambers, industrial associations) should organize digital literacy workshops to close the awareness-action gap among SMEs.
- Regulatory authorities should promote platform transparency standards — particularly around fake review filtering — to ensure the integrity of the sentiment ecosystem.

11. Scope for Future Research

While this study provides a solid foundation, several interesting directions emerge for future research. A longitudinal study tracking how brand image evolves over time in response to shifting sentiment trends would provide richer insights than the cross-sectional snapshot captured here. Additionally, a comparative study across Navi Mumbai, South Mumbai, and Pune could reveal how geographical and demographic factors moderate the sentiment-brand image relationship.

Future research could also explore the role of artificial intelligence in real-time sentiment monitoring for SMEs, the growing influence of video reviews and reels on brand perception, and the ethical dimensions of incentivized reviews — a practice that distorts the authenticity of consumer sentiment and deserves rigorous academic scrutiny.

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