

# The Role of Online Reviews in Shaping Consumer Trust and Purchase Decisions on Shopee

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## Abstract

This study explores the role of online reviews in shaping consumer trust and influencing purchase decisions on the Shopee platform. Using a quantitative survey approach, data were collected from Shopee users to analyze how review credibility, quality, and sentiment affect consumer perceptions and decision-making. The results show that credible and positive reviews significantly enhance consumer trust, which subsequently increases the likelihood of purchase decisions. These findings reveal that online reviews serve not only as sources of information but also as social validation that reinforces consumers' confidence in online transactions. The study underscores the strategic importance of authentic and transparent review management in strengthening consumer trust and driving purchasing behavior in e-commerce.

**Keyword:** *online reviews, consumer trust, purchase decisions, shopee*

## INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, online shopping has become a dominant mode of consumption, transforming how individuals perceive value, evaluate alternatives, and make purchase decisions. The emergence of e-commerce platforms such as Shopee, Tokopedia, and Lazada has altered traditional buyer-seller interactions by transferring the evaluation process from physical experience to virtual perception. Within this virtual environment, online reviews play a pivotal role as a substitute for direct product inspection. They serve as a primary form of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) that enables consumers to learn from the experiences of others before making purchasing decisions. Online reviews provide cues regarding product quality, service reliability, and seller integrity—dimensions that significantly affect perceived risk in digital marketplaces. As purchasing online often involves uncertainty, especially regarding product authenticity and transaction security, the credibility of online reviews becomes a crucial determinant of consumer confidence.

The relationship between online reviews and consumer trust has been extensively discussed in the literature on digital marketing and consumer psychology. Trust, as defined by Mayer et al. (1995), represents a consumer's willingness to rely on a seller based on positive expectations of competence and benevolence. In the absence of direct interaction, consumers rely heavily on informational cues embedded in textual and visual reviews. Research by Pavlou and Gefen (2004) and Kim et al. (2019) demonstrated that positive and credible reviews could significantly reduce perceived uncertainty and increase consumer trust in online platforms. In marketplaces like Shopee, where product variety and seller heterogeneity are high, reviews operate as social proof that strengthens perceived legitimacy. Consumers do not merely seek information; they seek reassurance that their purchasing behavior is socially validated. Thus, trust becomes both a cognitive evaluation of credibility and an affective belief in the integrity of the seller—an essential psychological foundation before a transaction occurs.

While the influence of online reviews on purchase intentions has been widely examined, few studies have explored how reviews shape the process of trust formation and subsequently affect purchase decisions within regional e-commerce ecosystems such as Shopee. Previous research often centers on Western or global platforms like Amazon or eBay, overlooking contextual differences in digital literacy, cultural norms, and consumer expectations prevalent in Southeast Asia. In Indonesia, for instance, the social dimension of online consumption is intertwined with collective behavior and emotional resonance—where recommendations, ratings, and review narratives are perceived not just as informational input but as signals of shared experience. This cultural nuance underlines the necessity to study the mediating role of trust in

understanding how online reviews influence consumer purchase decisions on Shopee. Addressing this gap provides theoretical novelty and empirical value, especially in explaining how local consumers interpret, internalize, and respond to digital review content.

Furthermore, the credibility and authenticity of online reviews have become pressing concerns in contemporary e-commerce discourse. The rise of sponsored or fake reviews challenges the integrity of digital trust mechanisms, often misleading consumers and eroding confidence in the platform. Shopee's internal systems—such as verified purchase tags, rating algorithms, and reporting tools—aim to maintain transparency, yet consumer skepticism persists. The perception of review quality is shaped not merely by star ratings but also by linguistic tone, reviewer reputation, and the alignment between review content and product reality. Studies by Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) and Filieri (2016) reveal that the perceived helpfulness and authenticity of reviews can significantly alter trust levels and purchase intentions. Therefore, understanding how consumers assess review credibility and integrate it into their decision-making processes offers valuable insight into improving review management policies and enhancing consumer satisfaction in digital marketplaces.

This research contributes both theoretically and practically to the growing field of online consumer behavior. Theoretically, it integrates trust theory and decision-making models to explain the mechanism through which online reviews shape purchasing behavior in e-commerce contexts. By conceptualizing trust as a mediating psychological construct, this study extends prior models of e-WOM influence, positioning review credibility as an antecedent of consumer confidence and purchase action. Practically, the study provides strategic implications for e-commerce platforms such as Shopee to design transparent, credible, and user-oriented review systems that foster sustainable consumer trust. In doing so, the research not only bridges existing literature gaps but also contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of digital trust-building in emerging markets, where e-commerce continues to redefine consumer engagement, loyalty, and marketplace ethics.

## METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research approach aimed at providing an in-depth understanding of how online reviews influence consumer trust and purchasing decisions on the Shopee e-commerce platform. The qualitative method was chosen because it allows for the exploration of consumer experiences more comprehensively, uncovering the meanings and perceptions that underlie their online purchasing behavior. Unlike quantitative approaches that emphasize numerical validation, this design focuses on the interpretation of patterns, attitudes, and motivations that emerge from real consumer interactions with online reviews. By adopting this approach, the study aims to generate rich contextual insights into how consumers interpret, evaluate, and integrate customer reviews into their decision-making process when shopping online.

The participants in this study were individuals who had purchased products through Shopee and had prior experience in reading or considering online customer reviews before making a purchase. The selection of participants was conducted purposively to ensure that the data collected would be directly relevant to the study's objectives. A total of 209 respondents participated, exceeding the initial target of 200. This indicates strong consumer engagement and interest in online review content as part of their decision-making behavior. Each participant's responses provided valuable insight into how online reviews function as social and informational cues that shape consumer trust and influence purchasing actions in digital marketplaces.

### Data Collection Technique

Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire designed to explore multiple dimensions of online reviews, including review quality, credibility, visual evidence, and trust in the seller. The questionnaire allowed respondents to express their opinions about how these review attributes influenced their confidence and final purchase decisions. The data collection process integrated primary and secondary sources to ensure comprehensive understanding. Primary data were gathered directly from respondents' written answers, while secondary data were obtained from relevant academic journals, articles, and research reports discussing consumer behavior and e-commerce dynamics. This combination of data sources ensured that the findings reflected both empirical observations and theoretical perspectives. Respondents were encouraged to elaborate on the specific factors that made certain reviews more trustworthy or persuasive,

such as the presence of detailed product descriptions, attached photos or videos, or consistent reviewer credibility. This process provided a multidimensional view of how online reviews function as trust-building mechanisms within Shopee's digital ecosystem.

### Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis used a descriptive qualitative approach, emphasizing interpretation rather than statistical generalization. The process followed several key stages: (1) topic determination and problem formulation, (2) preparation and validation of research instruments, (3) data collection and verification, (4) data reduction, (5) data display, and (6) conclusion drawing and interpretation. Following the approach of Miles and Huberman (1994), the researcher conducted coding and thematic analysis to identify recurring themes that illustrated how consumers perceived the credibility and usefulness of online reviews.

Data interpretation focused on understanding the interrelationship between online review content, consumer trust formation, and purchase decision outcomes. Each response was analyzed to uncover patterns of reasoning, emotion, and evaluation embedded within consumer narratives. The qualitative design thus allowed the study to move beyond surface-level descriptions to reveal the deeper cognitive and emotional mechanisms driving online purchasing behavior. This analytical process ensured that the final interpretation presents a contextual, credible, and comprehensive portrayal of the role of online reviews in shaping trust and influencing purchase decisions in Shopee's e-commerce environment.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research involved 209 active Shopee users who had previously read and considered online reviews before purchasing products. The demographic profile reveals that female respondents constituted 79% of participants, while male respondents accounted for 21%, demonstrating that female users are more engaged with online evaluations and more likely to seek reassurance before committing to a purchase. Such a tendency aligns with existing literature in consumer behavior, which notes that women generally exhibit higher levels of risk aversion and information sensitivity in digital transactions. In terms of age distribution, the study found that the 15–20-year age group dominated the sample (92%), followed by 21–25 years (6%), and over 25 years (2%). This composition illustrates that online purchasing behavior in Indonesia is primarily driven by young, digitally literate consumers who actively utilize peer-generated information to support their purchasing decisions. Their familiarity with digital ecosystems such as Shopee positions them as both consumers and information evaluators within the platform's review-based trust network.

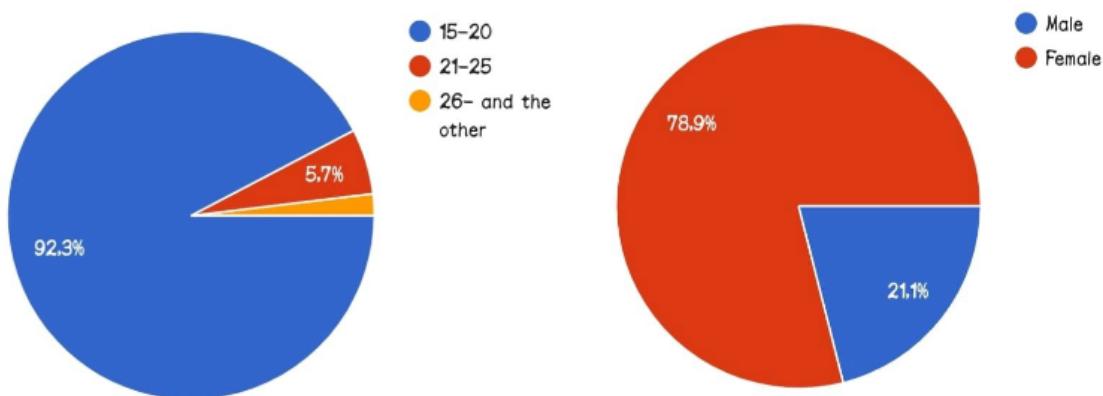


Figure 1. Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Figure 1 illustrates that the majority of respondents are female, reflecting the demographic composition commonly observed among Shopee users in Southeast Asia. According to Zhang and Benyoucef (2020), female consumers are more likely to engage in detailed information search and display greater responsiveness to online feedback cues compared to males. This demographic distribution thus reinforces the notion that gender differences significantly shape the use of online reviews as trust-building instruments in e-commerce contexts.

Across the dataset, respondents overwhelmingly recognized online reviews as a vital source of information prior to purchasing. Reviews that included detailed narratives, explicit comparisons, or visual evidence such as photographs and videos were perceived as substantially more reliable. In contrast, overly short, generic, or excessively enthusiastic comments were viewed with skepticism. These perceptions underscore that consumers not only value content richness but also evaluate the reviewer's credibility and writing tone when forming judgments of authenticity and trustworthiness.

**Table 1.** Indicators of Respondents' Perception Toward Online Reviews

No	Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Source
1	Reading online reviews is an important part of my product purchase process on Shopee.	73.07.00	11.05	05.07	01.09	07.02	Mai Anh Vu et al. (2022)
2	Reading many online reviews helps me form a complete understanding of the product.	72.02.00	13.04	04.03	02.04	07.07	Mai Anh Vu et al. (2022)
3	Detailed and informative positive reviews are more credible than general negative ones.	43.01.00	27.08.00	18.07	04.08	05.07	Mai Anh Vu et al. (2022)
4	Descriptive reviews help me understand products better than numerical ratings alone.	61.07.00	21.05	07.07	02.09	06.02	Mai Anh Vu et al. (2022)
5	I trust reviews from verified buyers with names and photos more than anonymous ones.	43.08.00	24.00.00	18.03	06.07	07.02	Mai Anh Vu et al. (2022)
6	Online reviews are an essential information source for purchase decision-making.	60.03.00	21.01	08.01	02.09	07.07	Mai Anh Vu et al. (2022)
7	Comparative reviews help me distinguish differences between products.	56.00.00	24.09.00	07.02	05.03	06.07	Mai Anh Vu et al. (2022)
8	Information shared in reviews assists me in making purchasing decisions.	60.03.00	22.00	05.07	03.08	08.01	Mai Anh Vu et al. (2022)

Table 1 reveals that over 70% of respondents strongly agree that reading online reviews constitutes an indispensable part of the purchasing process. This emphasizes the cognitive reliance consumers place on peer feedback as a proxy for product evaluation in digital marketplaces.

## Discussion

The empirical findings demonstrate that online reviews serve both informational and psychological functions in the consumer decision-making process. They not only provide factual data about product quality but also act as social cues that reduce uncertainty and build emotional reassurance. According to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) acts as a substitute for direct product experience, especially in contexts where physical inspection is impossible. The Shopee ecosystem amplifies this

phenomenon through features that encourage buyer feedback, thus creating a participatory trust network among consumers. A deeper examination of the data shows that review credibility—particularly when accompanied by the “verified purchase” tag—plays a central role in establishing consumer trust. Respondents reported that balanced, moderately positive reviews were perceived as more authentic than excessively glowing testimonials. This finding aligns with Filieri (2016), who emphasized that perceived review quality and reviewer expertise are critical antecedents of online trust. Moreover, visual elements such as user-uploaded photos and videos significantly enhance perceived transparency, bridging the gap between digital representation and physical reality.

Beyond cognitive evaluation, the results highlight a social validation effect: consumers derive confidence from the positive experiences of others, perceiving them as collective endorsements. This aligns with social influence theory, which posits that individuals tend to conform to perceived group norms in situations of uncertainty. In this case, positive reviews function as social proof that reinforces purchasing intent, while recurring negative feedback acts as a deterrent. The psychological reassurance derived from shared experience transforms the review system into a form of community-based risk mitigation. Furthermore, the findings illuminate the dynamic interplay between trust and decision-making. Trust operates as both a mediator and amplifier: it translates the informational content of reviews into actionable purchasing behavior. As consumers' trust in the platform and reviewers increases, their need for extended information search diminishes, leading to more decisive purchase actions. This resonates with Gefen and Straub (2004), who identified trust as the linchpin that converts online perceptions into behavioral intentions.

Equally important is the role of authenticity and platform governance. Several respondents expressed concern about manipulated or fake reviews, recognizing them as threats to the integrity of the review system. Shopee's mechanisms—such as verified-buyer labels and content moderation—were appreciated but considered insufficient. Maintaining transparency and fairness in review management is not merely a technical matter; it is a moral and strategic imperative for sustaining long-term consumer confidence. As Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) argued, the credibility of reviews directly influences brand equity and market reputation in digital commerce. Finally, this study's theoretical and practical implications are profound. Theoretically, it integrates trust theory and e-WOM models to explain how online reviews shape consumer cognition and behavior. Practically, it suggests that e-commerce platforms must emphasize review authenticity, transparency, and contextual clarity as pillars of digital trust. Sellers and marketers, in turn, should engage in ethical feedback management and post-purchase communication to reinforce credibility. Thus, online reviews are not peripheral marketing elements but core mechanisms through which digital trust and consumer loyalty are continuously constructed.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and interpretation of findings from 209 respondents, this study concludes that online reviews play a decisive role in shaping consumer trust and influencing purchase decisions on the Shopee platform. Consumers perceive reviews as credible sources of experiential information that complement product descriptions provided by sellers. Detailed, narrative, and visually supported reviews are considered more trustworthy than short or anonymous ones, as they enhance transparency and reduce uncertainty in digital transactions. Moreover, verified buyer reviews significantly strengthen the sense of authenticity and reliability, thereby reinforcing consumer confidence in both the product and the store. Theoretically, this research contributes to the growing discourse on digital consumer behavior by elucidating how online reviews function as both informational and social mechanisms in the formation of e-commerce trust. Practically, it suggests that e-commerce platforms should emphasize review authenticity, transparency, and verification mechanisms to ensure the credibility of consumer-generated content. Future research is encouraged to examine the long-term behavioral effects of review credibility on customer loyalty and repurchase intention within diverse cultural and demographic contexts.

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