# SHAPING PURCHASE PATHS: THE INFLUENCE OF ONLINE REVIEW ENGAGEMENT ON BUYING CHOICES

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## ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the influence of online review engagement on consumer trust and purchase decisions among online shoppers. Using data from 374 survey respondents, it analyzes how specific review attributes—such as perceived product quality, reviewer credibility, expertise, and consistency—affect consumer perceptions and actions. The findings highlight that frequent, emotionally resonant, and in-depth engagement with reviews significantly shapes purchase decisions. While review sentiment had a moderate impact, it still contributed positively. Online reviews also played a key role in lowering perceived risks by offering detailed information, diverse viewpoints, experience-based insights, and trustworthy product ratings. Statistical analysis revealed notable differences in review engagement effects based on educational attainment and preferred shopping platforms. A strong and significant relationship was established between online review engagement and purchase intention. The study concludes that online reviews are essential in shaping consumer behavior in digital marketplaces. It recommends that e-commerce platforms prioritize authentic, diverse content, spotlight credible reviewers, and boost both emotional and cognitive engagement using visual and narrative features. Marketing strategies should be tailored to match consumer demographics and platform preferences to maximize impact. These insights offer valuable implications for online sellers aiming to enhance consumer trust and drive sales performance.*

**Keywords:** *Online review engagement, Consumer trust, Purchase decision, Perceived risk, Reviewer credibility.*

## INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly digitized marketplace, consumer behavior has undergone a profound transformation, particularly in how individuals evaluate products and make purchase decisions. One of the most influential developments in this transformation is the proliferation of online reviews, which have become a key source of information for potential buyers. As e-commerce continues to dominate retail landscapes, online review engagement—defined as the process by which consumers read, assess, and respond to user-generated feedback—has emerged as a crucial determinant of consumer trust and purchasing behavior.

The study titled *"Shaping Purchase Paths: The Influence of Online Review Engagement on Buying Choices"* seeks to investigate how engagement with online reviews affects the decision-making process of consumers. Specifically, this research explores how trust in product quality, perceived credibility of reviews, reviewer expertise, and consistency of review feedback influence consumer choices. These components are central to understanding the psychological mechanisms through which reviews shape perceptions and trigger purchase intentions. As online

platforms such as Shopee, TikTok Shop, Lazada, and others become primary shopping venues, the reliability of reviews becomes increasingly important in the absence of physical product evaluation.

While prior studies have explored the general influence of online reviews on consumer behavior, notable gaps remain. Many existing works focus heavily on quantitative metrics such as star ratings or review volume, often neglecting the qualitative dimensions of review content and consumer interpretation. Furthermore, there is limited understanding of how different levels of engagement with reviews—such as selective reading, cross-platform comparison, or reliance on specific reviewers—influence actual purchasing decisions. There is also insufficient literature examining how demographic factors such as age, income, education, and platform preference mediate the relationship between review engagement and consumer trust. Online shopping has transformed consumer behavior, with online reviews now serving as key social signals that influence trust, perceived product quality, and purchase intent. While prior studies highlight the role of reviewer credibility and review consistency in shaping consumer decisions, limited research exists on how these factors affect buyers in semi-urban areas like San Francisco and Bayugan City, Agusan del Sur. This study addresses that gap by examining local review engagement behaviors and their impact on trust, risk perception, and purchasing outcomes.

This research contributes significantly to the body of knowledge by addressing these gaps through a multidimensional analysis of review engagement. It moves beyond simplistic measures and incorporates nuanced variables that reflect real-world consumer behavior. Additionally, by considering the interplay of demographic variables, the study provides a more comprehensive view of the factors that shape online purchase decisions. The findings aim to inform e-commerce businesses, digital marketers, and consumer psychologists on how to better structure review systems, enhance authenticity, and build consumer trust in a saturated digital environment.

By shedding light on how online review engagement influences consumer choices, this study offers practical implications for improving user experience and strategic communication in e-commerce, while also enriching academic discourse in consumer research, behavioral economics, and digital marketing.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between online review engagement and consumer purchase decisions. This design was appropriate as it allowed the researchers to analyze naturally occurring associations among variables without manipulation, particularly focusing on how online interactions influence consumer trust, perceived risk, and purchasing behavior. The respondents were residents of San Francisco, Agusan del Sur, and Bayugan City who actively engage in online shopping. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation across barangays. Data were gathered using a researcher-made questionnaire, which included structured items measured through a 5-point Likert scale**.** To ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument, expert validation was conducted, followed by a pilot test and internal consistency testing using Cronbach's alpha**,** with a reliability threshold set at 0.70.

The collected data were analyzed using a range of statistical tools. Frequency count was used to present the respondents' demographic profiles. Mean scores assessed consumer perceptions related to trust, reviewer credibility, product quality, and emotional responses to online reviews. To test for significant differences between demographic groups, an Independent Samples t-Test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were applied where appropriate. Furthermore, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between online review engagement and purchase intention. This methodological approach ensured a rigorous, reliable, and comprehensive analysis, enhancing the study's contribution to understanding consumer behavior in digital marketplaces.

## DATA INTERPRETATION

The demographic and behavioral profile of the respondents offers valuable insights that are essential in understanding the dynamics influencing consumer decisions in the context of online shopping. The data shows a balanced distribution of respondents across various age groups, with the highest representation falling between ages

41–45 (16%) and 46–50 (15%). Processing the demographic profile of respondents is essential for identifying patterns and differences in consumer behavior based on age, gender, education, income, and occupation. It allows researchers to contextualize findings and determine how specific groups engage with online reviews and make purchasing decisions. Understanding these variables enhances the accuracy and relevance of the study's conclusions, supporting more targeted and effective marketing strategies. This indicates that middle-aged consumers are highly engaged in online shopping. Female respondents dominate the sample at 72%, suggesting that women are more active in online purchasing decisions.

**Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents**

| Variable | Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Age** | 20 Years and Below | 55 | 15% |
| | 21-25 years old | 28 | 7% |
| | 26-30 years old | 41 | 11% |
| | 31-35 years old | 56 | 15% |
| | 36-40 years old | 50 | 13% |
| | 41-45 years old | 61 | 16% |
| | 46-50 years old | 57 | 15% |
| | 51 & Above | 26 | 7% |
| | **TOTAL** | **374** | **100%** |
| **Sex** | Male | 104 | 28% |
| | Female | 270 | 72% |
| | **TOTAL** | **374** | **100%** |
| **Educational Attainment** | High School Level | 14 | 4% |
| | High School Graduate | 27 | 7% |
| | College Level | 92 | 25% |
| | College Graduate | 181 | 48% |
| | With Units in Masters Degree | 53 | 14% |
| | Masters Degree | 5 | 1% |
| | With Units in Doctorate | 2 | 1% |
| | **TOTAL** | **374** | **100%** |
| **Income Level** | Less than 10,000.00 | 69 | 18% |
| | 10,001.00-25,000.00 | 45 | 12% |
| | 25,001.00-50.000.00 | 114 | 30% |
| | 50,001.00-75,000.00 | 49 | 13% |
| | 75,001.00-99,999.99 | 75 | 20% |
| | Above 100,000.00 | 22 | 6% |
| | **TOTAL** | **374** | **100%** |
| **Occupation** | Private Employee | 61 | 16% |
| | Public Employee | 105 | 28% |
| | Business | 135 | 36% |
| | Students/Allowance | 73 | 20% |
| | **TOTAL** | **374** | **100%** |
| **Online Shopping Platform** | Lazada | 145 | 39% |
| | TEMU | 77 | 21% |
| | SHEIN | 53 | 14% |
| | Facebook Market Place | 17 | 5% |
| | Shoppe | 248 | 66% |
| | Tiktok Shop | 193 | 52% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Instagram Shops | 4 | 1% |
| | Other's | 8 | 2% |
| | **TOTAL** | **374** | **100%** |

Regarding educational attainment, a large portion of respondents are college graduates (48%) or have college-level education (25%), implying a well-informed customer base with the capacity to critically evaluate product quality and online reviews. Income levels reveal that a majority of respondents fall within the ₱25,001–50,000 range (30%), followed by ₱75,001–99,000 (20%), which may influence spending habits and expectations regarding value for money. The most common occupations include those in business (36%) and public employment (28%), reflecting economic stability and purchasing power. Platforms like Shopee (66%) and TikTok Shop (52%) emerge as the most used, indicating strong engagement with popular and accessible e-commerce channels. These demographic factors significantly contribute to how consumers assess trust in product quality, perceived credibility of reviews, reviewer's expertise, and consistency of review feedback. Understanding these profiles allows marketers and businesses to tailor strategies that build trust, enhance credibility, and provide consistent messaging, ultimately guiding consumer decision-making and increasing satisfaction in a highly competitive digital marketplace.

These consumers actively use platforms such as TikTok Shop, Shopee, and Lazada. This demographic is significant because individuals in this age group are generally financially stable, value convenience, and are highly engaged in digital environments. Their educational background contributes to their ability to critically assess product information, including online reviews, allowing them to make more informed and confident purchase decisions. The popularity of TikTok Shop, Shopee, and Lazada among this group can be attributed to these platforms' strong presence in the Philippine market, ease of navigation, affordable pricing, frequent promotions, and accessible customer reviews. These features meet the needs of busy professionals and homemakers who seek both efficiency and reliability when shopping online. From a research perspective, this information is valuable in interpreting how demographic factors influence online consumer behavior, particularly in relation to trust in product quality, review credibility, and purchase intent. The implication is clear: understanding this dominant consumer segment enables businesses to refine their digital marketing strategies, enhance review features, and foster consumer trust—ultimately improving customer satisfaction and loyalty in e-commerce environments. Understanding this demographic's behavior is significant for businesses aiming to tailor marketing strategies, improve customer engagement, and enhance user experience. In research, these insights provide context for interpreting consumer trust, review engagement, and purchasing behavior, helping identify patterns that guide effective e-commerce practices and consumer relationship management.

The findings imply that women, middle-income earners, and educated consumers are the most engaged in online shopping, especially via mobile and social platforms. Their active participation highlights the importance of credible online reviews in influencing purchasing behavior. Understanding these demographics helps e-commerce platforms and marketers tailor review strategies and interface designs to the needs and behaviors of their dominant users.

**Table 2. Impact of online review engagement on consumer trust in purchasing process**

| Indicators | Mean | Adjectival Rating |
|---|---|---|
| Trust in product quality | 3.545 | Strongly Agree |
| perceived credibility | 3.454 | Strongly Agree |
| Reviewer's expertise | 3.393 | Strongly Agree |
| Consistency of review | 3.463 | Strongly Agree |
| Over-all Mean | 3.464 | Strongly Agree |

The data presented in Table 2 illustrates the strong influence of online review engagement on consumer trust during the purchasing process. Among the four indicators measured, "Trust in product quality" received the highest mean score of 3.545, indicating that consumers strongly agree that their trust in a product increases when supported by positive reviews. This was followed by "Consistency of review" (3.463) and "Perceived credibility" (3.454), both of which also received ratings of "Strongly Agree." These results suggest that when online reviews are clear, consistent, and credible, they effectively foster consumer trust. "Reviewer's expertise," while slightly lower at 3.393,

still holds a positive influence, showing that knowledgeable reviewers contribute to building trust, even if to a slightly lesser degree. The overall mean of 3.464 reinforces the conclusion that review engagement plays a key role in consumer trust during online transactions.

These findings are consistent with earlier research by Park et al. (2007) and Montenegro (2024), which emphasize the importance of reliable, high-quality online reviews in shaping consumer decisions. The presence of detailed, trustworthy feedback not only enhances the perception of product quality but also reduces uncertainty and perceived risk in online shopping. When consumers encounter consistent messages and credible sources in product reviews, their level of confidence increases, making them more likely to complete a purchase. The study confirms that consumers actively seek out and interpret these reviews as part of their decision-making process, indicating the reviews' integral role in influencing purchase outcomes.

The implications of this research are highly relevant for businesses and marketers operating in the digital space. To build consumer trust and drive sales, brands must focus on promoting transparency and authenticity in review content. Encouraging verified buyers to share their honest experiences, highlighting expert opinions where applicable, and ensuring that product feedback is consistent across platforms can significantly improve consumer perception. This study underscores the value of review engagement as a strategic tool for enhancing consumer relationships. By understanding what elements of review content resonate most with buyers—namely trust in quality, credibility, expertise, and consistency—companies can develop more effective review management systems. This not only supports informed decision-making among consumers but also strengthens brand reputation and loyalty in an increasingly competitive online marketplace.

**Table 3. Extent of engagement with online reviews influence consumer purchase**

| Indicators | Mean | Adjectival Rating |
|---|---|---|
| Frequency of review engagement | 3.441 | Strongly Agree |
| Emotional response to review | 3.365 | Strongly Agree |
| Depth of review engagement | 3.299 | Strongly Agree |
| Review sentiment | 3.048 | Agree |
| Over-all Mean | 3.288 | Strongly Agree |

The data in Table 3 highlights the significant impact of consumer engagement with online reviews on their purchasing decisions. The indicator "Frequency of review engagement" recorded the highest mean score of 3.441, suggesting that consumers frequently consult reviews before making a purchase and strongly agree with the importance of this habit. This is followed by "Emotional response to review" (3.365) and "Depth of review engagement" (3.299), both of which were also rated as "Strongly Agree." These results imply that consumers are not only consistently reading reviews but also processing them on an emotional and analytical level. Although "Review sentiment" received the lowest mean of 3.048, it still received an "Agree" rating, indicating that while the tone or positivity of reviews matters, it is not the strongest driver of purchasing behavior when compared to how frequently and deeply consumers engage with the content.

The findings align with previous studies, such as those by Ismagilova et al. (2020) and Montenegro (2023), which point out that the behavioral and emotional engagement with reviews has a stronger influence on purchase intent than review tone alone. When consumers encounter reviews that are not only frequent and consistent but also evoke emotional responses—whether positive or negative—they are more likely to reflect deeply on their decision. Emotional resonance makes reviews relatable, while in-depth analysis in reviews helps consumers evaluate whether a product matches their specific needs or expectations. Thus, these forms of engagement shape the perceived value of the product and build a sense of trust and assurance before making a purchase.

From a research and practical perspective, these findings have meaningful implications for e-commerce platforms and online sellers. It is not enough to focus solely on generating positive sentiments in reviews; businesses must also encourage regular and meaningful interaction with review content. Creating spaces where consumers can leave detailed feedback, share personal experiences, and engage emotionally with the product or service adds greater depth and trustworthiness to the review section. For researchers, this data provides evidence that purchasing behavior

is driven more by the quality of review engagement than by surface-level sentiment alone. This insight contributes to a deeper understanding of consumer behavior in digital marketplaces and can help shape strategies for enhancing customer engagement, trust, and satisfaction across various online selling platforms.

**Table 4. Reducing perceived risk in consumer purchase decision**

| Indicators | Mean | Adjectival Rating |
|---|---|---|
| Information adequacy | 3.407 | Strongly Agree |
| Review of Volume and diversity | 3.461 | Strongly Agree |
| Experienced-based feedback | 3.480 | Strongly Agree |
| Product rating average | 3.470 | Strongly Agree |
| Over-all Mean | 3.455 | Strongly Agree |

The data presented in Table 4 clearly demonstrates that online review engagement plays a crucial role in reducing perceived risk in consumer purchasing decisions. Among the four indicators, "Experience-based feedback" received the highest mean score of 3.480, reflecting a strong consumer preference for reviews grounded in real-life product usage. This was closely followed by "Product rating average" (3.470) and "Review volume and diversity" (3.461), both rated as "Strongly Agree." These results underscore that consumers rely on both quantitative data, such as star ratings, and qualitative insights, such as varied user perspectives, to validate the reliability of a product. "Information adequacy" also received a favorable mean score of 3.407, suggesting that the completeness and clarity of the review content play a key role in shaping a confident buying decision. The overall mean of 3.455 affirms that consumers view reviews as essential tools for reducing uncertainty and building assurance before making a purchase.

These findings align with the studies of Kim, Lee, and Han (2021) and Montenegro (2025), who emphasized that the richness of online review content substantially impacts consumer confidence. When potential buyers see a wide range of experiences and consistently high product ratings, it not only verifies the quality of the item but also minimizes doubts and questions. The presence of diverse and experience-based reviews provides context and relevance, enabling consumers to relate the information to their own needs. This dynamic helps in mitigating psychological risks—such as fear of product failure or waste of money—which are common concerns in online shopping environments. Moreover, consumers tend to place greater trust in reviews that are detailed and specific, rather than generic or vague, thus influencing their willingness to proceed with a purchase.

The implications of this research are highly valuable for businesses aiming to optimize their online presence and improve consumer trust. Encouraging verified buyers to leave detailed, authentic, and diverse feedback not only enhances review credibility but also contributes to a more informed consumer base. E-commerce platforms should consider integrating features that highlight experience-based reviews, provide product rating breakdowns, and encourage varied perspectives. From a user experience and marketing standpoint, this strategy contributes to reducing consumer hesitation, increasing purchase confidence, and ultimately driving higher conversion rates. This study reinforces the importance of reviews not only as a post-purchase communication tool but also as a pre-purchase influence mechanism that significantly reduces risk perception in digital purchasing behavior.

**Table 5. Significant difference on the impact of online review engagement when grouped according to profile.**

| Sources of Variation | | Computed f | P-value | Decision | Conclusion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trust in Product Quality | Age | 0.690 | 0.684 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Sex | 0.310 | 0.579 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Education | 1.380 | 0.222 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Income | 0.840 | 0.521 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Occupation | 1.190 | 0.314 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Online Shop | 1.310 | 0.252 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Age | 1.080 | 0.374 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perceived Credibility | Sex | 0.500 | 0.478 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Education | 0.900 | 0.496 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Income | 1.380 | 0.231 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Occupation | 0.940 | 0.422 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Online Shop | 1.190 | 0.309 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| Reviewers' Expertise | Age | 1.600 | 0.135 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Sex | 1.170 | 0.280 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Education | 0.820 | 0.558 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Income | 1.140 | 0.339 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Occupation | 0.700 | 0.550 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Online Shop | 4.640 | 0.000 | Reject Ho | Significant |
| Consistency of Review Feedback | Age | 0.690 | 0.682 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Sex | 0.120 | 0.730 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Education | 2.600 | 0.018 | Reject Ho | Significant |
| | Income | 0.810 | 0.544 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Occupation | 0.760 | 0.516 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |
| | Online Shop | 1.010 | 0.427 | Failed to Reject Ho | Not Significant |

The analysis in Table 5 reveals that the overall impact of online review engagement on trust in product quality and perceived credibility does not significantly differ across demographic groups such as age, sex, education, income, occupation, and preferred shopping platform. This consistency suggests a universal recognition of the value of trust and credibility in online reviews among consumers, aligning with findings by Filieri (2015); Montenegro, D (2025) who noted that trust-building factors in e-commerce are broadly applicable across diverse consumer segments. However, significant differences emerged in two areas: consumers' perception of reviewer expertise varied by the online shopping platform used (p = 0.010), indicating that platform characteristics influence how expertise is judged. Additionally, perceptions of review consistency differed by educational attainment (p = 0.018), suggesting that higher education levels lead to greater scrutiny of review uniformity. These nuances emphasize the role of specific demographic factors in shaping consumer evaluation processes, resonating with research by Wang and Fesenmaier (2019) that highlights education and platform context as key moderators in online consumer behavior.

The findings imply that while trust and credibility in online reviews are generally stable across demographics, marketers should tailor strategies to accommodate variations in how expertise and consistency are perceived. Platforms might consider customizing content presentation and reviewer profiles to match user expectations, especially catering to more educated consumers who demand higher review rigor. he significant variations in how consumers perceive reviewer expertise based on their preferred online shopping platform, and how review consistency is judged differently by educational attainment, suggest that one-size-fits-all approaches may overlook important nuances. Montenegro, D (2023); Montenegro, D (2024) Businesses and e-commerce platforms should consider customizing how reviews are presented to match user expectations, especially for more discerning and educated consumers. These insights support the need for adaptive content strategies that enhance user experience and trust, ultimately improving purchase intention and customer satisfaction in digital marketplaces. This targeted approach can improve consumer trust and engagement, ultimately enhancing purchase intention and satisfaction in digital marketplaces.

**Table 6. Significant relationship between the impact of online review and the influence of purchase intention.**

| Variables Tested | | Computed r | P-value | Decision | Conclusion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trust in product quality | Frequency of review | 0.462 | 0.000 | Reject Ho | Significant |
| | Emotional response | 0.321 | 0.000 | Reject Ho | Significant |
| | Depth of review | 0.276 | 0.000 | Reject Ho | Significant |
| Perceived credibility of reviews | Emotional response | 0.462 | 0.000 | Reject Ho | Significant |
| | Depth of review | 0.321 | 0.000 | Reject Ho | Significant |
| | Frequency of review | 0.276 | 0.000 | Reject Ho | Significant |
| | Emotional response | 0.321 | 0.000 | Reject Ho | Significant |
| | Depth of review | 0.395 | 0.000 | Reject Ho | Significant |
| Reviewer's expertise | Frequency of review | 0.319 | 0.000 | Reject Ho | Significant |
| | Emotional response | 0.395 | 0.000 | Reject Ho | Significant |

| | Depth of review | 0.170 | 0.000 | Reject Ho | Significant |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Consistency of review feedback | Emotional response | 0.403 | 0.000 | Reject Ho | Significant |
| | Depth of review | 0.378 | 0.000 | Reject Ho | Significant |
| | Review sentiment | 0.137 | 0.008 | Reject Ho | Significant |

Table 6 highlights significant positive correlations between various dimensions of online review engagement and consumers' purchase intentions. Notably, frequency of review engagement, emotional response, and depth of engagement consistently showed strong, statistically significant relationships with trust in product quality (r = 0.462, 0.321, 0.276 respectively; p = 0.000). However, review sentiment alone did not significantly influence trust (r = 0.075, p = 0.149), indicating that the emotional tone of reviews is less impactful than other engagement factors. Regarding perceived credibility, all engagement variables—including review sentiment—were significantly correlated (frequency r = 0.564, depth r = 0.395, emotional response r = 0.319, sentiment r = 0.170; p ≤ 0.001), emphasizing that credibility is shaped by both the quality and intensity of consumer interactions with reviews. Reviewer expertise was significantly related to emotional response, depth, and sentiment (ranging from 0.292 to 0.400, p = 0.000), but not frequency, suggesting that consumers assess expertise through content depth and affect rather than volume. Consistency of review feedback showed the strongest correlations across all variables (frequency r = 0.713, depth r = 0.378, emotional response r = 0.270, sentiment r = 0.137; p ≤ 0.008), highlighting its vital role in purchase decisions.

These findings align with prior research emphasizing the multifaceted nature of online review influence. For instance, Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) underscored that frequent and detailed reviews enhance consumer trust, while Montenegro, D (2024) highlighted the emotional impact of reviews on purchase behavior. Moreover, Park et al. (2007) demonstrated the critical role of perceived credibility in online consumer decision-making. Anastasiei et al. (2025) emphasized that perceptions of product quality and emotional reactions to electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) fully mediate the link between eWOM credibility and purchase intention. This finding highlights the crucial role of both quality assessment and emotional engagement in shaping consumer behavior through online reviews. In a similar vein, Tahir and Khan (2020) revealed that online reviews significantly influence purchase intentions, with consumer trust acting as a partial mediator. Additionally, Ahn and Lee (2024) found that individuals with an interdependent self-construal are particularly responsive to review ratings and perceived group similarity, both of which significantly impact their purchasing decisions. Affording to Tamayo, R and Montenegro, D (2025) that processing the variables trust in product quality, perceived credibility of reviews, reviewer's expertise, and consistency of review feedback is essential in understanding consumer decision-making. These elements influence how buyers perceive and evaluate products online. Trust and credibility impact purchasing confidence, while expertise and consistency ensure reliable, informative feedback. By analyzing these variables, businesses can enhance marketing strategies, build stronger consumer relationships, and improve product development, leading to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty in a competitive digital marketplace.

This study suggests that marketers should prioritize strategies that encourage frequent, emotionally engaging, and in-depth review interactions to effectively build trust and credibility, thereby boosting purchase intentions. While review sentiment alone is less predictive, its influence combined with other engagement facets is essential in shaping consumer behavior. Tailoring review management to enhance consistency and reviewer expertise signals can further strengthen consumer confidence and drive conversions in digital marketplaces.

**FINDINGS**

This section highlights the demographic composition of the respondents and the measured influence of online review engagement on consumer trust and purchase intention. Through a detailed analysis of survey responses, the study aimed to uncover the extent to which digital consumer behavior, particularly the interaction with online customer reviews (OCRs), shapes trust and buying decisions. The demographic profile of the 374 respondents in the study reflected a wide range of backgrounds, which enhanced the reliability and representativeness of the findings. The majority were middle-aged, female, and college-educated, with a significant portion earning a mid-range monthly income. Occupational diversity was evident, with business owners and public employees forming the largest subgroups. Shopee emerged as the most preferred online shopping platform, further underscoring the relevance of the study to contemporary digital consumer behavior in the Philippine context. This demographic diversity served as a

strong foundation for analyzing the nuanced ways in which online review engagement affected consumer trust and decision-making.

The data presented on the impact of online review engagement on consumer trust in the purchasing process demonstrated that online review engagement played a pivotal role in enhancing consumer trust. Among the indicators, *trust in product quality* emerged as the most influential factor, followed by *perceived credibility of reviews* and *reviewer expertise*. The overall mean score of 3.464, interpreted as "Very High Impact," reinforced the idea that well-structured and credible reviews significantly shaped consumer confidence. This finding validated prior research emphasizing the importance of trust in the online shopping environment, especially in mitigating uncertainties related to product quality and seller reliability.

Building upon this, the analysis of how online review engagement influenced consumer purchase intention highlighted a strong impact on purchasing decisions. *Frequency of review engagement* stood out as the most significant factor, indicating that consumers who regularly interacted with reviews were more likely to be influenced in their buying behavior. Emotional responses and depth of engagement were also found to be highly influential, suggesting that not just the quantity but also the quality of engagement mattered in shaping purchase intent. Although *review sentiment* received a slightly lower score, it still contributed positively. The overall mean of 3.288, classified as "Very High Influence," affirmed that consistent and meaningful interaction with online reviews was a critical driver of consumer action.

The role of online reviews in reducing perceived risks associated with online purchases was confirmed through the analysis of consumer perceptions. Respondents relied most on *experience-based feedback* and *product rating averages* to feel secure in their decisions. These were followed by *review volume and diversity* and *information adequacy*. With an overall mean of 3.455, categorized as "Very Reduced Risk," the findings emphasized the importance of comprehensive, varied, and transparent reviews in creating a sense of assurance among consumers, thereby lowering both psychological and financial risks in online transactions.

Interestingly, the results on the significant differences in the impact of online reviews based on demographic profiles revealed a general consensus among respondents, regardless of age, gender, income, or occupation, in their perceptions of the trustworthiness and credibility of online reviews. However, notable exceptions emerged in the perception of *reviewer expertise* and *review consistency*. Specifically, *platform preference* influenced how credibility was perceived, while *educational attainment* affected how consistently reviews were interpreted. These findings suggested that although online reviews had a broadly accepted impact, individual perceptions were still mediated by demographic and contextual factors—indicating the need for platform-specific strategies in review presentation and credibility management.

The significant relationship between online review engagement and purchase intention was further confirmed through correlation analysis. The study found that frequent, emotionally resonant, and analytical engagement with reviews significantly influenced consumer trust, perceived credibility, and decision-making. While *review sentiment* alone showed limited impact on trust in product quality, it contributed meaningfully to *perceived credibility* and *review consistency*. These results reinforced the notion that emotional and cognitive dimensions of review engagement worked together to guide purchasing behavior. This aligned with the findings of Alsheikh, Shaalan, and Meziane (2019), who emphasized that emotionally balanced content enhanced consumer responses and minimized negative biases.

In response to these insights, the study presented the Online Review Engagement and Credibility Framework (ORECF)—a strategic model designed to improve the quality, reliability, and influence of online reviews across digital platforms. Key components of the framework included *structured and experience-based review prompts* to ensure relevance and depth of content, and a *tiered Reviewer Credibility Rating (RCR) system* to help consumers identify trustworthy feedback sources. To assist users in managing extensive review content, the study recommended *smart filters* based on relevance, recency, sentiment, and verification status. The inclusion of *AI-powered Emotional Sentiment Tagging* allowed for rapid sentiment summaries and highlighted product pros and cons, further enriching the user experience. For sellers, a *Review Engagement Analytics Dashboard* was proposed to monitor review trends and support responsive, data-driven decision-making. The framework also introduced a *balanced enforcement and incentive system* to maintain review integrity while encouraging high-quality contributions. Finally, the importance of

*continuous monitoring and evaluation* through audits, user surveys, and KPIs was emphasized to ensure ongoing improvement and transparency. Collectively, the findings and the proposed framework underscored the transformative potential of structured, credible, and interactive review systems in shaping consumer trust, reducing perceived risk, and driving more informed and confident purchase decisions in digital marketplaces.

## CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents the synthesized results of the study based on the data gathered from 374 respondents. It provides a detailed account of the respondents' demographic profile and analyzes the extent to which online review engagement influences consumer trust, purchase intention, and perceived risk in online transactions. Furthermore, it explores the role of demographic factors in shaping perceptions of review credibility and consistency. The demographic profile of the 374 respondents showcased a diverse and representative sample, primarily composed of middle-aged, female, and college-educated individuals, many of whom reported mid-range monthly incomes. With a mix of occupations—most notably business owners and public employees—and Shopee identified as the most preferred online shopping platform, the study captured a broad spectrum of consumer experiences. This diversity enhances the credibility and applicability of the findings, supporting the reliability of insights drawn regarding online review engagement and its influence on consumer purchasing behavior.

The findings confirm that online review engagement has a significant and positive influence on consumer trust. Among the indicators, trust in product quality emerged as the most impactful, closely followed by perceived credibility and reviewer expertise. With an overall mean rating of 3.464, categorized as "Very High Impact," the results clearly demonstrate that online reviews are essential in shaping consumers' trust and confidence during the decision-making process in online purchases.

The results presented affirm that online review engagement plays a crucial role in influencing consumer purchasing decisions. The frequency of review engagement had the most substantial impact, with emotional response and depth of engagement also showing very high levels of influence. While review sentiment registered a slightly lower rating, it still contributed positively to purchase behavior. With an overall mean of 3.288, the findings underscore that consistent, emotional, and meaningful interaction with online reviews significantly shapes how consumers make buying decisions in digital marketplaces.

The results clearly demonstrate that online review engagement significantly reduces consumers' perceived risk in making purchase decisions. Experience-based feedback and product ratings emerged as the most influential factors, supported by the impact of review volume, diversity, and information adequacy. With an overall mean of 3.455, all indicators were rated as "Very Reduced Risk," confirming that comprehensive and varied online reviews enhance consumer confidence and provide a sense of security when navigating online shopping platforms.

The findings suggest that, overall, respondents across different demographic groups held similar perceptions regarding the impact of online reviews on trust and credibility. This consistency underscores the broad acceptance of online reviews as a reliable source of consumer guidance. However, significant differences were identified in specific areas: platform preference influenced how respondents perceived reviewer credibility, while educational attainment affected their assessment of review consistency. These results indicate that while general trust in online reviews is widespread, certain demographic factors still shape how individuals interpret the credibility and consistency of review content.

The results establish a strong positive correlation between online review engagement and consumer purchase intention. Frequent, emotional, and analytical interaction with reviews significantly shapes consumer trust, perceived credibility, and overall decision-making. Although review sentiment had a limited effect on trust in product quality, it played a meaningful role in reinforcing review credibility and consistency. These findings emphasize the influential role of review engagement in guiding consumer behavior, supporting the view of Alsheikh, Shaalan, and Meziane (2019) that emotionally balanced and informative content enhances consumer response and reduces negative perceptions.

The Online Review Engagement and Credibility Framework (ORECF) aims to strengthen consumer trust by promoting authentic, informative reviews. It features structured prompts and a tiered Reviewer Credibility Rating (RCR) to identify trustworthy feedback. Smart filters (relevance, recency, sentiment, and verification) and AI-powered sentiment tagging enhance user navigation. For sellers, an analytics dashboard tracks sentiment trends and review interactions.

The framework also includes enforcement and incentive systems to maintain review integrity and encourage quality contributions. Finally, the framework emphasizes the need for continuous monitoring and evaluation through audits, surveys, and key performance indicators (KPIs) to ensure sustained transparency and effectiveness. Together, these strategies aim to establish a more credible, user-friendly, and data-driven online review ecosystem within digital marketplaces.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This study's findings underscore the vital role of online review engagement in shaping consumer trust and purchase behavior, particularly in emerging digital markets. The recommendations outlined aim to guide key stakeholders—business owners, consumers, community advocates, policymakers, and researchers—in leveraging review systems to foster trust, reduce perceived risk, and improve decision-making. By addressing gaps in digital literacy, review authenticity, and consumer engagement, these proposals contribute to a more transparent, inclusive, and informed online marketplace for both businesses and consumers.

1. For Business Owners: Adopt proactive strategies to maximize the impact of online reviews by encouraging authentic, experience-based feedback through direct solicitation of genuine customer testimonials. Enhance trust and reduce perceived risks by presenting reviews with rich media—such as photos, videos, and storytelling. Highlight credible and expert reviewers to boost reliability, and ensure reviews are detailed, emotionally engaging, and consistent to better influence purchase decisions.
2. For Consumers: Implement educational programs to improve digital literacy, focusing on skills to evaluate the credibility and relevance of online reviews. Community-based awareness campaigns should provide practical guidance to help consumers identify authentic reviews and avoid misleading information, particularly targeting new or less experienced online shoppers.
3. For Community Organizations and Digital Literacy Advocates: Facilitate workshops and outreach initiatives that introduce members to online marketplaces, demonstrate how to navigate platforms, and use online reviews effectively for informed buying. These efforts can bridge the gap between traditional and digital commerce, building greater trust and participation in the online economy.
4. For Policymakers: Develop and enforce robust regulations to protect the integrity of online reviews, including mechanisms for verifying authenticity, penalizing fake or deceptive reviews, and holding businesses accountable for fraudulent practices. Strengthening consumer protection policies will enhance public trust in e-commerce environments and ensure a transparent digital marketplace.
5. For Platform Designers and Marketers: Customize review systems and marketing strategies based on consumer demographics and behaviors, especially considering variations in educational background and platform preferences like Shopee and TikTok Shop. Employ sentiment analysis tools to monitor review trends in real-time and foster interactive, personalized review experiences to engage consumers more effectively.
6. For Future Researchers: Expand research to explore consumer behavior and psychological factors influencing online review engagement in semi-urban and emerging markets. Investigate demographic-specific patterns to deepen academic knowledge and provide actionable insights for businesses and policymakers targeting diverse consumer segments.

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