

Exploring the Role of Customer Reviews in Consumers Purchasing Decisions on Marketplace Platforms

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ARTICLE INFO

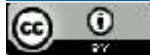
Keywords: Customer Reviews, Purchasing Decisions, Marketplace, Consumer Behavior, Qualitative Research

Received: 21 April

Revised: 23 May

Accepted: 23 June

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of customer reviews in consumers purchasing decisions on marketplace platforms. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, involving 12 informants selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. The findings consumers experiences in reading and evaluating reviews, their responses to positive and negative reviews, and the role of reviews in building trust and evaluating perceived value and risk. Customer reviews provide relevant information about products and sellers, influence consumer responses, and reduce uncertainty before purchasing. The findings provide practical implications for online sellers and marketplace businesses to improve information transparency, product quality, service, and customer experiences.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology and internet-based commerce has significantly transformed consumer purchasing behavior, particularly how consumers search for information, evaluate alternatives, and make purchasing decisions. The growth of e-commerce and marketplace platforms provides greater convenience, broader product choices, flexible transactions, and access to information from other consumers (Chen et al., 2022; Kotler & Keller, 2016; Schneider & Tezza, 2021). In contrast to traditional shopping, online purchasing limits consumers' ability to physically examine products, increasing uncertainty regarding product quality, seller reliability, and product expectations (Amirtha et al., 2020; Boyetey & Antwi, 2021; Huseynov & Özkan, 2014). As a result, consumers increasingly rely on marketplace information to reduce uncertainty and support purchasing decisions.

One important source of such information is the online customer review. Online reviews represent electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), through which previous consumers share experiences, evaluations, and opinions about products and sellers (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Handoyo, 2024). Reviews provide information about product quality, conformity, seller service, and delivery experience, enabling prospective buyers to compare alternatives and assess potential benefits and risks. Previous studies indicate that e-WOM and online reviews influence consumer perceptions, trust, purchase intention, and purchasing behavior (Beyari & Garamoun, 2024; Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Daud et al., 2024; Handranata et al., 2023; Kanimozhi & Sengottuvel, 2023). A meta-analysis of 156 studies and 69,006 observations also found a significant relationship between online reviews and purchase intention, with review valence being an important factor (Qiu & Zhang, 2024).

Customer reviews are particularly relevant because online purchasing involves perceived risks concerning product quality, seller reliability, service, payment, and delivery. Trust can reduce uncertainty and perceived risk during electronic transactions (Guo et al., 2017; Mou & Cohen, 2015; Pavlou, 2003; Pavlou et al., 2007). Thus, reviews may function not only as product information but also as a basis for assessing credibility, perceived value, trust, and purchase risk (Handoyo, 2024).

In Indonesia, previous studies have examined online reviews and purchasing decisions among marketplace users, including Tokopedia and Shopee users (Fajariyatusyarifah & Soebiantoro, 2023; Hidayansyah et al., 2023; Kusuma, 2023). Much of this research treats customer reviews as measurable variables and emphasizes statistical relationships with purchase intention or purchasing decisions. Limited attention has been given to how consumers actually interpret, evaluate, and prioritize review information during their purchasing process.

Based on this research gap, the study aims to explore the role of customer reviews in consumers' purchasing decisions on marketplace platforms. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study examines three aspects: consumers' experiences in reading and evaluating reviews, including

the information they consider important; their responses to positive and negative reviews; and the role of reviews in building trust and evaluating perceived value and risk. The study is expected to provide deeper insights into marketplace consumer decision-making and practical implications for online sellers and marketplace businesses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer Behavior and Online Purchasing Decisions

Consumer behavior involves how individuals recognize needs, search for information, evaluate alternatives, make purchasing decisions, and assess post-purchase experiences (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In online environments, these processes are shaped by greater uncertainty, as consumers cannot directly examine products and therefore rely on digital information to evaluate alternatives, benefits, credibility, and risks (Afwa et al., 2026; Handoyo, 2024; Phamthi et al., 2024; Singh & Basu, 2023). Customer reviews, ratings, and recommendations provide user-generated information that supports information evaluation and purchase intention (Qiu & Zhang, 2024; Verma et al., 2023). Consumer behavior theory provides a foundation for understanding how consumers read, evaluate, and use customer reviews in marketplace purchasing decisions.

The main determinants of consumer behavior in the online context involve a combination of digitally available information (including product reviews, ratings, and eWOM), trust in the platform, and promotional and price factors that influence the evaluation of alternatives to online purchasing decisions (Hardiyanto et al., 2021; Priyatin & Farisi, 2023; Richadinata & Astitiani, 2021; Sutisna et al., 2023). Research on online reviews and trust shows that online reviews play an important role in building consumer trust, which in turn influences purchase intentions and decisions in e-commerce (Choirunisa & Hanif, 2023; Oktavia & Fageh, 2022; Siregar, 2024). In addition, the role of promotions, discounts, and convenience of online transactions (e.g., ease of payment, free shipping) is consistently reported increasing purchasing tendencies in various platform and product contexts (Anesti & Hayati, 2022; Bukit et al., 2023; Faradiba & Indrayani, 2022; Stialanisa & Tobing, 2023; Yahya & Yuniarto, 2024).

Within the framework of digital culture, social media and viral marketing have also been shown to influence the evaluation process to purchase through the formation of brand perceptions, exposure to influencers/endorsers, and increased brand awareness which ultimately influences online purchasing decisions (Lukiyana & Simadewa, 2023; Richadinata & Astitiani, 2021; Setiawan & Rabuani, 2019; Siregar, 2024). The nuances of the COVID-19 pandemic have further strengthened the importance of convenience, transaction security, and access to information on online platforms and emphasized the role of information online in the evaluation and purchasing process (Faradiba & Indrayani, 2022; Hardiyanto et al., 2021; Sutisna et al., 2023). Various cross-regional studies also show that platform context (e.g., Shopee, Tokopedia, Blibli) and product type can moderate the strength of the

influence of online information on purchasing decisions, so a comparative approach and cross-platform studies are needed to understand the variation in findings (Mahmudah & Farida, 2022; Nabila & Ramadhan, 2024; Priyatin & Farisi, 2023; Siregar, 2024).

Theoretically, the five-stage model of purchasing decisions—need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation—remains relevant in the online context, with alternative evaluation and purchase decisions increasingly influenced by reviews and ratings, eWOM, and trust in the platform and transaction security (Asyifa & Rahayu, 2019; Kuspriyono, 2020; Yahya & Yuniarto, 2024). Online purchasing intentions and behavior are also shaped by psychological, cultural, personal, and social factors, including perceived benefits, risks, site ease of use, and potential moderation through digital marketing and personalization (Choirunisa & Hanif, 2023; Early et al., 2024; Lukiyana & Simadewa, 2023). The pandemic has further strengthened the shift towards online shopping and the role of social media, while trust and information quality influence purchasing decisions directly and through the mediation of purchase intentions and brand loyalty in the e-commerce ecosystem (Gunawan, 2013; Harsono et al., 2024; Rozi, 2017). Differences in regional context and instrument design that result in variations in the significance of effects indicate the importance of cross-platform and meta-analytic research to identify general patterns and contextual limits of these findings (Nabila & Ramadhan, 2024; Priyatin & Farisi, 2023; Radianti & Aslami, 2022; Ruhamak & Rahmadi, 2019).

Customer Reviews and Consumer Information Evaluation

Customer reviews provide user-generated information that helps consumers evaluate products and sellers before purchasing. The usefulness, credibility, and content of reviews influence how consumers process information and form purchase intentions (Borchers, 2023; Qiu & Zhang, 2024; Verma et al., 2023). Consumers may evaluate overall ratings and detailed review content differently, depending on the information needed to assess a product (Jin et al., 2023; Pham et al., 2023). The credibility of review content is also important because consumers may question information that appears inconsistent or potentially manipulated (Song et al., 2023). For this reason, customer reviews serve as an important information source through which consumers interpret, compare, and evaluate alternatives during the marketplace purchasing process.

Customers information assessments in online shopping are influenced by product reviews and eWOM as signals of information reliability, trust, and purchase intention, with information quality and the social presence of reviews in the S-O-R model contributing to trust and satisfaction that mediate purchase intention (Hwang & Yoo, 2021; Su & Zhu, 2023; Zhu et al., 2020). The number, quality, and sentiment of reviews also influence purchase intention through perceived benefits, risks, and site reliability, while consistently positive eWOM can increase purchase intention although its effect depends on the product category and platform context (Anastasiei & Dospinescu, 2019; Naim et al., 2025). Visual content such as images and visual quality in reviews can

strengthen trust and perceived benefits that drive online purchasing behavior (Anastasiei & Dospinescu, 2019; Su & Zhu, 2023).

In information evaluation, the literature emphasizes three main pathways: review quality, which shapes trust and satisfaction; user engagement, which influences site credibility and purchase intention; and after-sales feedback and responses to negative reviews, which can drive loyalty and repeat purchases (Hwang & Yoo, 2021; Y. J. Park et al., 2021). Negative responses that include an apology, explanation, and commitment to improvement can increase future purchase intentions, although their effectiveness depends on the completeness of the response (Ferraz et al., 2023). Personalization, reviews, and browsing also play a role in moderating the relationship between online shopping experience and purchase intention through review-based recommendations (Naim et al., 2025). Online reviews reduce uncertainty, increase trust, and strengthen purchase intentions when information is presented transparently, is consistent with product quality, and is supported by platform authenticity mechanisms.

Positive and Negative Customer Reviews

Positive and negative customer reviews provide different evaluative signals that consumers may consider when assessing products and making purchasing decisions. Positive reviews can strengthen favorable perceptions and purchase intention, while negative reviews can draw attention to potential product weaknesses and encourage consumers to reconsider their choices (H. H. Park & Jung, 2024; Qiu & Zhang, 2024). Recent research also indicates that the impact of review valence may depend on review characteristics and the consistency between textual content and numerical ratings (Sugathan et al., 2024). Reviews that appear exaggerated or inauthentic may reduce the persuasive value of positive or negative information and increase consumer uncertainty (Zifla et al., 2024). Consumers may respond differently to positive and negative reviews depending on the content, credibility, and relevance of the information to their purchasing considerations.

Online customer reviews are an important source of information for evaluating products, service quality, and purchasing decisions, as both positive and negative reviews provide signals regarding benefits, risks, quality, and customer satisfaction (Anastasiei & Dospinescu, 2019; Hwang & Yoo, 2021; Su & Zhu, 2023; Zhu et al., 2020). Information quality and eWOM can increase trust and purchase intentions, while positive reviews strengthen perceived benefits, brand reputation, and loyalty; conversely, negative reviews can provide input for operational improvements if handled responsively and transparently (Ferraz et al., 2023; Naim et al., 2025; Y. J. Park et al., 2021). In Indonesian e-commerce, sentiment analysis using Naive Bayes and SVM helps identify review sentiment with accuracy influenced by dataset, word patterns, and preprocessing, thus supporting feedback management and service improvement (Berliana & Mustikasari, 2024; Rohmat et al., 2024; Sanjaya et al., 2023). Positive and negative reviews not only reflect satisfaction but also serve as a source of feedback for improving processes, product quality, and customer service interactions (Milal et al., 2023; Munandar et al., 2023).

Customer review sentiment analysis typically uses TF-IDF for feature weighting, followed by Naïve Bayes (NB), SVM, or neural networks to classify positive, negative, and sometimes neutral polarities, with performance varying by domain, language, and dataset size (Apriliani et al., 2024; Aulia & Hermawan, 2023; Berliana & Mustikasari, 2024; Hartomo & Sembiring, 2023). E-commerce studies show that NB and SVM have distinct advantages depending on the dataset and platform context, such as Google Play and Shopee (Milal et al., 2023; Munandar et al., 2023; Sanjaya et al., 2023). The ABSA approach can deepen analysis by identifying sentiment based on product, service, and price aspects, while proactive responses to negative reviews support brand reputation and repeat purchases (Ferraz et al., 2023; Rohmat et al., 2024; Wardianto et al., 2023). Sentiment analysis enables mapping customer perceptions, identifying areas for improvement, and developing responses tailored to product and platform characteristics (Hwang & Yoo, 2021; Y. J. Park et al., 2021; Su & Zhu, 2023; Zhu et al., 2020).

Customer Reviews, Trust, Perceived Value, and Risk

Customer reviews can help consumers assess the credibility, value, and potential risks of products before making purchasing decisions. Reviews that are perceived as useful and credible can strengthen consumer trust, while information about product quality and previous experiences can help consumers assess whether a product offers sufficient value (Borchers, 2023; Sembiring & Nisa, 2024). Trust is particularly important in online purchasing because consumers face uncertainty regarding sellers, products, and transactions, while perceived risk may discourage purchasing when potential losses are considered high (Handoyo, 2024; Phamthi et al., 2024). Thus, customer reviews can support purchasing decisions by increasing trust, helping consumers evaluate perceived value, and reducing uncertainty and perceived risk.

Online customer reviews serve as a key source of information that increases consumer trust in a seller or brand, thereby increasing perceived value and decreasing perceived risk, with trust often acting as a mediator between online reviews/ratings and purchase intention or loyalty (Ali, 2021; Correa et al., 2021; Hayu et al., 2023; Tanuwijaya et al., 2023). Various SEM/PLS-SEM studies show that perceived value consistently predicts trust and purchase behavior/loyalty, although the strength of the direct effect of value on loyalty can vary depending on the industry context and model design (Abror et al., 2021; Hoang, 2019; Hride et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2021; Putri et al., 2021; Setyaningrum, 2021). The risk that perceived value generally suppresses perceived value and trust, but the effect can be mediated by brand identity, risk mitigation, and service quality/credible review utterances, so that the industry and cultural context greatly determine the significance of this relationship path (Alshibly, 2014; Chen & Chang, 2012; Torrão & Teixeira, 2023).

Practically, increasing review transparency, service quality, and programs that enhance perceived value are key strategies for strengthening trust and reducing perceived risk, thereby driving repurchase intentions and customer loyalty. Cross-contextual research shows that trust often mediates the relationship between perceived value and loyalty/repurchase, with moderation by culture/religiosity or platform characteristics that can strengthen or moderate this pathway (Ali, 2021; Lainamngern & Sawmong, 2019; Syah & Salim, 2024). Commonly used models and methodologies underscore the importance of product/service context, including Islamic banking, express logistics, e-commerce, and social-crowd services, in shaping the relationship between reviews, trust, perceived value, and risk and consumer behavior (Abror et al., 2021; Chanpariyavatevong et al., 2021; Correa et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021).

Research Focus

Based on the preceding literature, this study is guided by three research focuses that provide a framework for exploring how consumers use customer reviews in making purchasing decisions on marketplace platforms. These focuses are presented in the following research mind map.



Figure 1. Research Mind Map on Customer Reviews and Consumers' Purchasing Decisions

The research mind map provides the basis for exploring consumers' experiences in reading and evaluating customer reviews, their responses to positive and negative reviews, and the role of reviews in trust, perceived value, and risk evaluation during the purchasing process.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative descriptive design was adopted to examine consumers experiences with customer reviews during marketplace purchasing. The design was selected to capture how consumers interpret review information and consider it when deciding whether to purchase.

Twelve consumers participated in the study and were recruited purposively. Eligibility required participants to have marketplace purchasing experience, actively use marketplace platforms, and consult customer reviews before purchasing. Recruitment continued until the interviews produced no substantial new information related to the research focus.

Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to describe their experiences in detail while maintaining consistency across interviews. Questions addressed three areas: review reading and evaluation, responses to positive and negative reviews, and the contribution of reviews to trust, perceived value, and risk evaluation.

The interview transcripts were examined using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive analytical framework, which involves data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The credibility of the findings was strengthened through source triangulation by comparing responses across participants (Miles et al., 2014).

The methodology was designed to capture the ways consumers interpret customer reviews and incorporate them into marketplace purchasing considerations. The resulting analysis focuses on review evaluation, responses to review valence, and considerations of trust, perceived value, and risk.

RESEARCH RESULT

Characteristics of Informants

The study included 12 consumers who regularly use marketplace platforms and have prior experience purchasing products online. The informants were purposively selected according to predetermined participant criteria to capture diverse consumer backgrounds and purchasing experiences. Their demographic and behavioral characteristics are described based on age, gender, occupation, duration of marketplace use, and the frequency with which they consult customer reviews prior to making a purchase, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Informants

Informant	Age	Gender	Occupation	Marketplace Experience	Review Usage
I1	21	Female	University Student	3 years	Always
I2	24	Male	Employee	4 years	Often
I3	22	Female	University Student	2 years	Always
I4	27	Female	Entrepreneur	5 years	Often
I5	30	Male	Employee	6 years	Always
I6	25	Female	Employee	4 years	Often
I7	20	Male	University	2 years	Sometimes

			Student		
I8	29	Female	Entrepreneur	5 years	Always
I9	23	Female	University Student	3 years	Often
I10	32	Male	Employee	7 years	Often
I11	26	Female	Employee	4 years	Always
I12	28	Male	Entrepreneur	5 years	Often

Note: Review Usage indicates how frequently informants consult customer reviews before purchasing.

The informants varied in terms of age, gender, occupation, marketplace experience, and use of customer reviews before purchasing. Their marketplace experience ranged from two to seven years, while their frequency of using customer reviews varied from sometimes to always. This variation provides a range of consumer experiences relevant to understanding how customer reviews are considered in marketplace purchasing decisions.

Consumers Experiences in Reading and Evaluating Customer Reviews

The interviews suggest that consumers commonly consult customer reviews before purchasing, particularly when they need additional information about products they have not previously purchased. Participants primarily sought information concerning product quality, conformity with descriptions, actual usage experiences, seller service, and delivery. As stated by I3, "I usually check whether the product matches the photos and description and look at the quality based on other buyers' experiences".

Participants also described review evaluation as a comparative process rather than reliance on a single comment. Several informants reported reading multiple reviews, paying greater attention to detailed comments, and considering whether the information was relevant to their own needs. I8 explained, "I do not immediately trust one review. I usually read several reviews and see whether their experiences are more or less consistent." These responses indicate that consumers actively select, compare, and interpret review information before determining whether a product meets their expectations.

Consumers Responses to Positive and Negative Reviews

Interview results indicate that positive and negative customer reviews elicit different responses from consumers. Positive reviews generally boost participants' interest in and trust toward a product, although some noted that positive comments alone are insufficient to drive a purchase decision. As one participant explained, "Positive reviews spark my interest, but I still check other reviews" (I2).

Negative reviews, in contrast, tended to encourage greater caution and reconsideration. Participants paid particular attention when negative experiences were repeated across several reviews or concerned important product attributes. However, negative reviews were not always interpreted as a reason to reject a product. Participants also considered the relevance and cause of the negative experience. This was reflected by I4, who stated, "If the negative feedback is only about delayed delivery, I might still consider it".

Participants did not simply classify reviews as positive or negative but evaluated the information in relation to its relevance, consistency, and implications for their intended purchase. Positive reviews could strengthen initial interest, while negative reviews encouraged more careful consideration. The two types of reviews were therefore considered together when participants assessed whether to proceed with a purchase.

The Role of Customer Reviews in Trust, Perceived Value, and Risk Evaluation

The interviews indicate that customer reviews contribute to consumers' assessment of trust, perceived value, and purchasing risk. Regarding trust, participants tended to feel more confident when reviews contained detailed experiences and showed consistent information across different buyers. As I2 explained, "I find a review more convincing if it describes the experience of using the product, rather than just saying it's good". This suggests that experiential and detailed information can strengthen consumers' confidence in evaluating products and sellers.

Customer reviews also helped participants assess perceived value by comparing expected product quality and benefits with the price offered. Participants considered a product more valuable when review information indicated that its quality and performance were consistent with their expectations. As I8 stated, "If the reviews indicate that the product meets my needs, I feel the price is worth it". Review information was used to assess whether the expected benefits justified the purchase.

In terms of risk evaluation, participants used reviews to identify potential problems before completing a transaction. Negative experiences concerning product quality, conformity with descriptions, or seller performance encouraged consumers to become more cautious. I12 explained, "I read reviews to avoid making the wrong choice and being disappointed once the item arrives". These responses indicate that customer reviews provide information that helps consumers anticipate potential problems and consider whether the perceived risk is acceptable.

The findings suggest that customer reviews are considered not only as sources of product information but also as references for developing trust, assessing perceived value, and evaluating potential purchasing risks. These considerations become part of consumers' broader decision-making process before completing a marketplace transaction.

DISCUSSION

Customer Reviews as a Source of Consumer Information

Customer reviews were frequently consulted when participants needed additional information about products they had not previously used or experienced. The information most often sought concerned product quality, the accuracy of product descriptions, actual user experiences, seller service, and delivery. These aspects correspond with the role of online reviews in providing useful and credible information for consumer evaluation (Borchers, 2023; Qiu & Zhang, 2024; Verma et al., 2023). The type of information considered also varied according to what participants needed to know about a particular product,

supporting (Jin et al., 2023; Pham et al., 2023), who suggest that consumers attend to different forms of review information when evaluating products.

Participants also described a tendency to examine several reviews rather than rely on a single source of information. Detailed comments were given greater attention, particularly when they contained specific accounts of product use or purchasing experiences. Participants then considered whether the information corresponded with their own needs and expectations. Such behavior is consistent with previous research highlighting review quality, information reliability, and credibility in consumers' evaluation of online information (Hwang & Yoo, 2021; Su & Zhu, 2023; Zhu et al., 2020). Comparing experiences across reviews also enabled participants to identify whether similar information appeared consistently across different comments. This consideration of consistency becomes particularly relevant when consumers encounter reviews that differ substantially from one another or appear potentially manipulated, as discussed by (Song et al., 2023).

The interviews provide a more detailed account of how this evaluation takes place from the consumers' perspective. Review quality, credibility, and usefulness were not treated as fixed attributes that consumers simply accepted; instead, participants actively selected information that was relevant to their immediate purchasing concerns, compared accounts from different reviewers, and interpreted the information in relation to their own expectations. The statements from I3 and I8 illustrate this process, as both participants described seeking particular experiential information and comparing several reviews before considering the information sufficiently relevant and consistent. Customer reviews therefore served not merely as sources of opinions, but as evaluative information that consumers used to assess the extent to which a product was likely to correspond with their expectations before proceeding with a purchase on a marketplace platform.

Consumers Responses to Positive and Negative Reviews

Positive reviews primarily served as an initial source of interest and confidence during the purchasing process, but they did not provide sufficient justification for making a purchase decision. As I2 explained, "Positive reviews spark my interest, but I still check other reviews." This observation is consistent with (H. H. Park & Jung, 2024; Qiu & Zhang, 2024), who demonstrate that review valence can shape consumers' purchase-related evaluations and responses. It also supports the argument of (Sugathan et al., 2024) that the influence of review valence is shaped by the characteristics and consistency of the information presented. The response from I2 indicates that favorable reviews can create an initial positive impression, while consumers continue to seek and assess additional information before deciding whether to purchase.

Negative reviews prompted participants to exercise greater caution and reconsider their potential purchases. Such information, however, did not necessarily lead to immediate product rejection. I4 stated, "If the negative feedback is only about delayed delivery, I might still consider it." This response is in line with previous research suggesting that negative reviews can convey information about product weaknesses, perceived risks, quality, and service

experiences (Anastasiei & Dospinescu, 2019; Hwang & Yoo, 2021; Su & Zhu, 2023; Zhu et al., 2020). The statement from I4 illustrates that the influence of negative reviews is not determined solely by their unfavorable orientation. Consumers also examine the substance and relevance of the information before assessing its implications for their purchasing decisions.

Positive and negative reviews were generally considered in combination when participants evaluated a product. Rather than relying on the overall valence of reviews, participants compared different consumer experiences and examined whether the information was consistent, credible, and relevant to their own purchasing needs. Such behavior corresponds with (Sugathan et al., 2024), who emphasize the importance of consistency in review information, and (Zifla et al., 2024), who draw attention to the credibility and authenticity of review content. The comparison of multiple reviews suggests that consumers engage with review information as an evaluative resource, using the content and quality of individual reviews to assess potential benefits, risks, and product-related experiences. Consequently, the number of positive or negative reviews alone does not adequately explain how consumers form their evaluations.

Taken together, positive reviews tended to reinforce consumers' initial interest and confidence, whereas negative reviews encouraged greater caution and additional consideration. Neither form of review, however, was treated as a sufficient basis for making a purchase decision. Participants instead compared information across different reviews and assessed its credibility, consistency, and relevance before determining whether it was sufficiently informative for their purchasing needs. This pattern provides a qualitative explanation of how review valence operates within consumers' decision-making processes: its influence depends not only on whether information is positive or negative, but also on how consumers interpret the meaning and relevance of that information in relation to their own purchasing circumstances.

Customer Reviews, Trust, Perceived Value, and Risk Evaluation

Customer reviews contributed to participants' confidence when assessing both products and sellers. Reviews were perceived as more convincing when they provided detailed accounts of actual purchasing or product-use experiences and when similar information appeared across reviews from different buyers. As I2 explained, "I find a review more convincing if it describes the experience of using the product, rather than just saying it's good." This observation is consistent with (Borchers, 2023; Sembiring & Nisa, 2024), who emphasize the role of review credibility and perceived value in online consumer evaluations. It also corresponds with (Handoyo, 2024), who identifies trust as an important consideration in e-commerce purchasing. The account from I2 suggests that trust is not derived simply from positive evaluations; rather, it is strengthened when reviews provide specific, experience-based, and credible information that consumers can use to assess a product.

Review information was also used to assess whether the benefits expected from a product were proportionate to its price. Participants associated greater value with products whose reported quality and performance were considered consistent with their individual needs and expectations. As I8 stated, "If the reviews indicate that the product meets my needs, I feel the price is worth it." This perspective is consistent with studies linking perceived value with consumer trust and purchasing behaviour (Abror et al., 2021; Hride et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2021; Putri et al., 2021). The statement from I8 illustrates how previous buyers' experiences become a reference point in the consumer's assessment of value. Information obtained from reviews allows consumers to compare the benefits they expect to receive with the financial cost of the product before deciding whether the purchase is worthwhile.

Concerns about potential problems after purchase also shaped how participants used review information. Negative accounts concerning product quality, discrepancies between product descriptions and received items, or poor seller performance were treated as indications of possible purchasing risks. I12 explained, "I read reviews to avoid making the wrong choice and being disappointed once the item arrives." This response is consistent with (Handoyo, 2024; Phamthi et al., 2024), who emphasize the role of perceived risk and uncertainty in online purchasing. It also reflects previous research suggesting that credible information can reduce uncertainty associated with online transactions (Chen & Chang, 2012; Torrão & Teixeira, 2023). The experience described by I12 demonstrates that consumers use reviews prospectively: information about previous buyers' experiences is examined not only to understand what has happened to others but also to anticipate possible outcomes of their own purchase.

Trust, perceived value, and risk consequently emerged as closely related considerations in participants' evaluation of customer reviews. Consumers used review information to determine whether the information itself was credible, whether the expected benefits were sufficient to justify the price, and whether the possibility of an unfavorable outcome was acceptable. The interview accounts indicate that these considerations were not evaluated independently. Instead, consumers interpreted concrete experiences reported by previous buyers and used those experiences to form judgments about the credibility, value, and potential risks associated with a marketplace purchase. Customer reviews therefore functioned as an evaluative resource through which consumers reduced uncertainty and assessed whether a prospective purchase was sufficiently trustworthy, worthwhile, and acceptable in terms of potential risk.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that customer reviews serve as an important source of information in marketplace purchasing decisions. Consumers evaluate reviews by considering product quality, conformity, usage experiences, seller service, and delivery, while positive and negative reviews generate different responses. Reviews also support consumers in developing trust, assessing perceived value, and evaluating potential purchasing risks.

For marketplace sellers, maintaining product quality, accurate product information, and reliable service is essential for generating credible and positive consumer experiences. Marketplace platforms should support transparent review systems that facilitate credible information evaluation. Consumers are also encouraged to compare multiple reviews and consider their relevance and consistency rather than relying on a single review or rating.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

The research is limited by its qualitative descriptive design and the small number of informants, which may constrain the transferability of the findings. Future research should examine more diverse consumers, marketplace platforms, and product categories, and may adopt quantitative or mixed-method approaches to validate the patterns identified.

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