

The Impact of Online Reviews on Trust and Purchase Intention of Agribusiness Students 2022 Medan Area University

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Abstract

The development of the internet is transforming traditional shopping into e-commerce. This study aims to analyse the impact of online reviews on trust and purchase intention of Agribusiness students of Medan Area University in 2022. Using a quantitative descriptive survey method with 36 respondents, this study examines consumer behaviour in considering online reviews before buying. Results show 52.8% of respondents always read reviews, especially on Tokopedia and Shopee. The main credibility factors are supporting photos/videos (66.7%), consumer comments (50%), and product ratings (50%). As many as 63.9% trust regular consumer reviews more than influencers. The most sought-after information is product quality (86.1%), with a preference for video (61.1%) and photo (47.2%) review media. The findings confirm that online reviews play an important role in building trust and influencing the purchasing decisions of digital consumers

INTRODUCTION

Along with the times, the role of the internet in human life is increasingly important (F. Porubay et al., 2023; Khanna and Sharma, 2019; Meidita, 2018). Technological advances have triggered changes in social norms and people's lifestyle. In an effort to fulfil daily needs, the desire to achieve convenience in various aspects of life is increasing. In today's digital era, the way people shop has shifted from traditional methods to online, or better known as online shopping (Andrews and Currim, 2004; Degeratu et al., 2001; Gupta et al., 2018). , 2001; Gupta et al. 2001; Kennedy and Coughlan, 2006; Nurhayati, 2017). This phenomenon is also seen among university students. According to Nurhayati and Hasugian's research, the results of a survey conducted by Kompas showed that in 2012, 19.9% of students were interested in shopping online (Nurhayati, 2017). The Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) noted that students are the group with the most internet access, followed by office workers, housewives, and other groups.

Thanks to technological advances, economic actors from various regions of the world can now conduct transactions with extraordinary speed and ease. Today, goods can be sold online, in what is referred to as electronic commerce or e-Commerce, this development has profoundly affected people's lives and way of life, even creating new economic prospects for individuals to launch their own businesses. itself independently. A report titled 'E-commerce in Southeast Asia 2023' has been released by Momentum Works, a research firm, which details, the findings of their study. This report outlines the six largest marketplaces in Indonesia.

Based on information from 'E-commerce in Southeast Asia 2023,' Indonesia reached a Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) figure of 51.9 billion US dollars, equivalent to approximately 773.7 trillion rupiah in 2022. Of the total e-commerce GMV in Indonesia, Tokopedia contributes around 35 per cent, or approximately IDR 270.8 trillion. Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) is the total value of purchases made by Indonesians through various marketplaces. In other words, this is the marketplace's revenue derived from total user spending.

In the context of the digital ecosystem, online reviews and consumer trust emerge as crucial variables that influence the purchasing decision process. Sobandi and Sobantri's (2020) study

underlines that trust in a digital environment is a complex psychological construct formed through continuous validation and verification mechanisms. Customer reviews have transformed from simple testimonials into a mechanism of sophistication for product evaluation, service quality assessment, and digital reputation building.

Under these circumstances, customer reviews and trust can be an important element to drive purchasing choices. Customer reviews are data provided by consumers to companies about the assessment of products that have been purchased, and serve as recommendations for other potential buyers to consider before making a purchase decision. Customer reviews can shape the company's image regarding the quality of the products and services they offer and how they overcome any weaknesses.

overcome any existing weaknesses. Meanwhile, trust in this context is the buyer's confidence in a situation where they are limited to directly seeing the physical condition of the goods being sold as well as the inability to meet the seller in person. (Sobandi and Sobantri, 2020).

Practically, this research is expected to provide managerial implications for e-commerce platforms, manufacturers, and digital business actors to design more effective communication and review validation strategies, and build a more transparent and credible trust mechanism in the e-commerce ecosystem. Based on this background, the author is interested in compiling scientific work to examine whether the influence of reviews and consumer confidence on purchasing decisions has significant relevance with the title 'The Impact of Online Reviews on Trust and Purchase Intention of Agribusiness Students 2022, University of Medan Area

METHODS

This study uses a quantitative descriptive survey research method. This research aims to explore the impact of online reviews on consumer trust and purchase intention through data collection by questionnaire. The research method is designed to analyse consumers' behaviour in reading online reviews, assess the factors that influence their trust, and understand the extent to which online reviews influence purchasing decisions. The research population is students of the Agribusiness Study Programme of Medan Area University class of 2022, with the consideration that this group is a representation of the digital generation that has adaptive characteristics to technology and online transactions, with a sample of 35 respondents. The data used is primary data where questionnaires are distributed to respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on the data obtained from 36 respondents, the gender distribution shows a balanced proportion between men and women. Each group has the same number of respondents, namely 18 people or equivalent to 50% of the total respondents. This equality reflects a fair representation between the two genders in this study, allowing for a more in-depth analysis of the influence of online reviews on trust and purchase intention without the dominance of either group. This also supports the validity of the research results regarding differences in perceptions based on gender.



Figure 1. Characteristics of Respondents Based on Gender

Based on data obtained from 36 respondents, the majority of respondents were in the age range of 18-26 years, with a total of 30 people or equivalent to 83.3%. Meanwhile, respondents under 18 years of age totalled 7 people or 19.4%. There were no respondents aged more than 26 years. This distribution reflects that respondents are dominated by individuals in the young adult age category, which is a productive age group and tends to be active in utilising online reviews for purchasing decisions. This is relevant to the research objectives which focus on the trust and purchase intention of university students, given that this age group is the most influential segment in digital-based consumer behaviour.

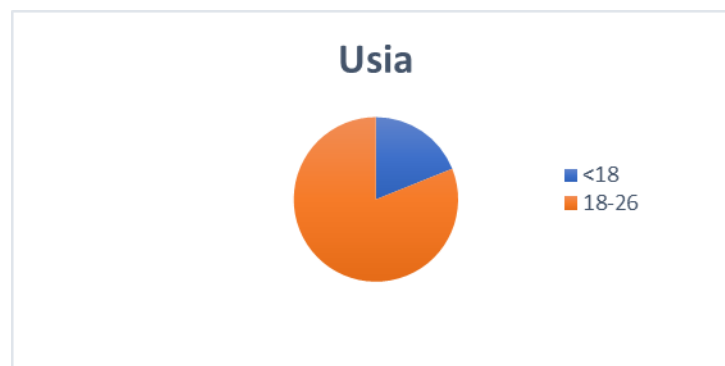


Figure 2. Characteristics of Respondents Based on Age

Based on data obtained from 36 respondents, the majority of respondents stated that they often read online reviews before making a purchase. A total of 19 people (52.8%) claimed to 'Always' read online reviews, while 9 people (25%) stated 'Very Always' read the reviews. A small number of respondents, namely 6 people (16.7%), claimed to 'Rarely' read reviews, and only 2 people (5.6%) stated 'Never'. No respondents chose the 'Never' category. These results show that online reviews have a significant role in influencing purchasing decisions, with most respondents making online reviews one of the main considerations before buying a product

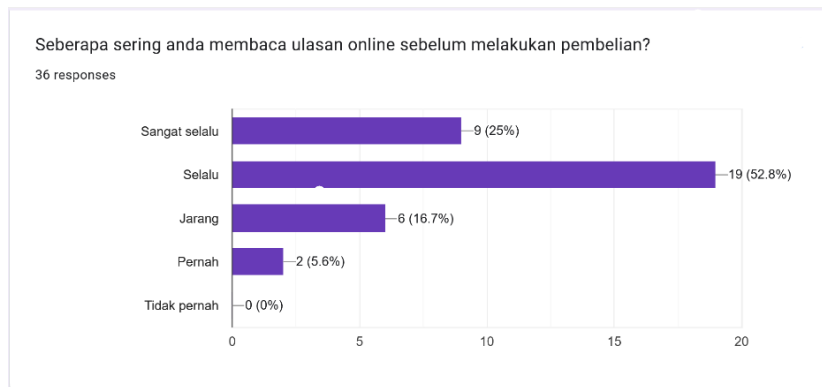


Figure 3. How Often to Read Online Reviews Before a Purchase

Based on the data obtained, it can be seen that e-commerce platforms such as Tokopedia and Shopee are the platforms most frequently used by respondents to read online reviews, with a percentage of 77.8%. Furthermore, social media is also quite popular among respondents, with a percentage of 33.3%. Meanwhile, marketplace platforms such as Lazada and Bukalapak are only used by 2.8% of respondents, while discussion forums are not used at all.

This shows that e-commerce and social media are the main channels for consumers to search and read online product and service reviews. This can be explained by several factors, such as ease of use, wide reach, and abundant availability of information on these platforms. On the other hand, the low usage of marketplaces and discussion forums may be due to the lack of visibility or consumer trust in the reviews available on these platforms.

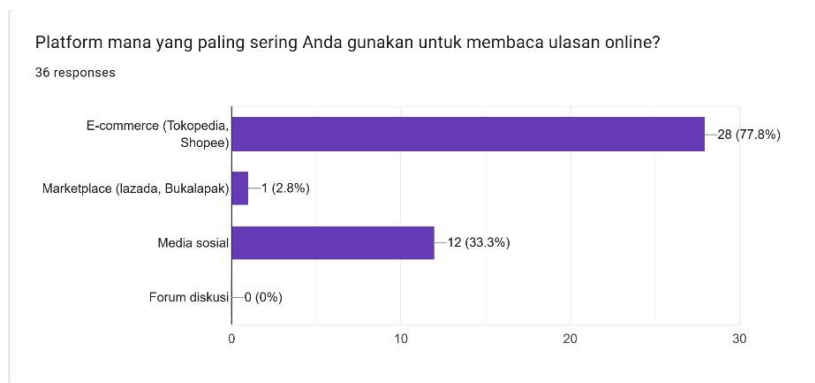


Figure 4. Frequently Used Platforms For Reading Online Reviews

Based on the data obtained, it can be seen that the product category most often searched by respondents before making a purchase is clothing with a percentage of 61.1%. Furthermore, the most popular product categories are shoes (47.2%) and skincare (33.3%). Other categories such as cosmetics (25%), accessories (22.2%), and all categories (2.8%) were also considered by respondents. This shows that clothing is the product category that consumers seek the most information about before making a purchase decision. This can be explained by several factors, such as the importance of size suitability, material quality, and appearance of the clothes to be purchased. In addition, the shoes and skincare categories are also quite important to consumers, which can be attributed to the need for products related to appearance and self-care.



Figure 5. Types of Products Most Frequently Viewed Before Purchase

Based on the data obtained, it can be seen that the factor that most influences consumer confidence in online reviews is the presence of supporting photos or videos, with a percentage of 66.7%. This shows that consumers consider visuals as an important component in evaluating the reliability of reviews. In addition, detailed descriptions (27.8%) and consumer comments (50%) are also considered quite significant in shaping consumer trust. This implies that the online platform providers should pay attention to features that can enhance the credibility of reviews such as easy upload of multimedia content, provision of comprehensive description templates, and space for consumer feedback. This can help fulfil consumer expectations and ultimately drive more informed purchasing decisions. In addition, the number of products sold (44.4%) and the number of likes (19.4%) also contributed, albeit at a lower percentage.

contribute, albeit at a lower percentage than visual and descriptive factors. This indicates that consumers still take social signals into account in evaluating the credibility of reviews.

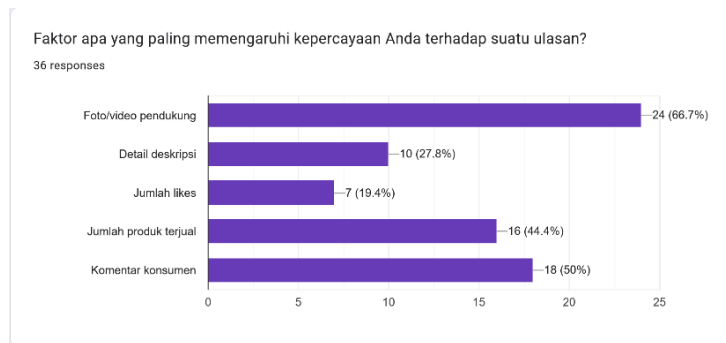


Figure 6. Factors that influence trust in a review

Based on the diagram above, it can be seen that the number of reviews most seen by respondents before making a purchase decision is 4-6 reviews, with a percentage of 38.9%. Furthermore, the number of reviews 1-3 and more than 10 is also a significant consideration, each with a percentage of 27.8%. This indicates that consumers tend to look for information that is representative enough but not too overwhelming when evaluating a product or service. The number of reviews that are too few (1-3) or too many (more than 10) are considered less informative or even confusing. This can be attributed to the psychological principles of consumers, where they try to strike a balance between adequate information seeking and cognitive efficiency in decision-making. In addition, the high percentage of 1-3 and more than 10 reviews also indicates heterogeneity in consumer behaviour. Some consumers may be more comfortable with limited reviews, while others need more comprehensive information before deciding.



Figure 7: Number of reviews read before purchase

Based on the diagram above, it can be seen that the main factor influencing the credibility of online reviews according to respondents is looking at the rating or review stars, with a percentage of 50%. This indicates that the rating or assessment of a product or service is the credibility indicator most relied upon by consumers.

Furthermore, the specific details of the review (38.9%) and the availability of photos or evidence (55.6%) are also considered important in building consumer trust in online reviews. Consumers tend to need detailed information supported by visual evidence to be able to evaluate the reliability of reviews. On the other hand, factors such as comparing reviews (25%) were considered less significant compared to the other elements. This may indicate that consumers focus more on the quality and clarity of individual review information rather than comparative evaluation.



Figure 8. How to judge the credibility of online reviews

Based on the diagram above, it can be seen that the number of online reviews that most influence consumer purchasing decisions is 5 reviews, with a percentage of 58.3%. This shows that consumers tend to need a fairly representative but not excessive number of reviews to be able to make informed purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, the number of reviews 4 is also considered quite significant in influencing consumer decisions, with a percentage of 19.4%. Meanwhile, the number of reviews 1, 2, and 3 were only considered important by 2.8%, 2.8%, and 16.7% of respondents respectively. The data indicates that consumers avoid making decisions based on too few reviews, as they are not considered representative enough of many users' experiences and preferences. On the other hand, too many reviews can also make the evaluation process more complicated and confusing

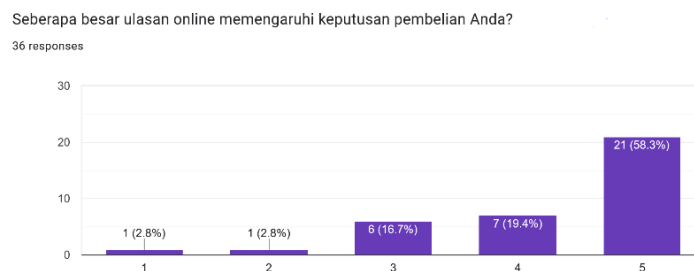


Figure 9: How much online reviews influence purchasing decisions

Based on the data obtained, it can be seen that most respondents, 80.6%, answered 'Yes' when asked if they had ever cancelled a purchase due to negative reviews. Meanwhile, 19.4% of respondents answered 'No'. These results show that negative reviews have a significant influence on consumer purchasing behaviour. The majority of consumers tend to undo their purchase intentions if they find negative reviews about a product or service. This can be due to various factors, such as distrust of product quality, risk concerns, or aversion to bad experiences conveyed in negative reviews.

This data confirms the importance of online reviews and reputation management for product or service providers. They must proactively monitor and manage outstanding reviews,

and endeavour to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty to avoid negative reviews that can have a significant impact on business performance.

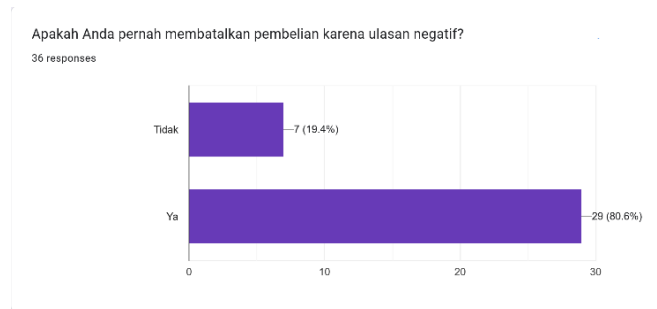


Figure 10. Purchase Cancellations for Negative Reviews

Based on the data obtained, it can be seen that the majority of respondents, amounting to 63.9%, stated that they trust reviews from ordinary consumers more than reviews from influencers or professional reviewers, which only accounted for 47.2% of respondents. Only 2.8% of respondents trusted reviews from influencers or professional reviewers more.

This data indicates that consumers tend to be more skeptical of reviews given by parties considered to have commercial interests, such as influencers or professional reviewers. They place more trust in reviews from ordinary consumers, who are perceived as more objective and not influenced by certain interests. These results imply that marketing strategies relying on reviews and recommendations from influencers or professional reviewers may not be effective in influencing consumers' purchasing decisions. Instead, companies should focus more on improving customer satisfaction and encouraging positive reviews from ordinary consumers, which can be more influential in the consumer decision-making process.

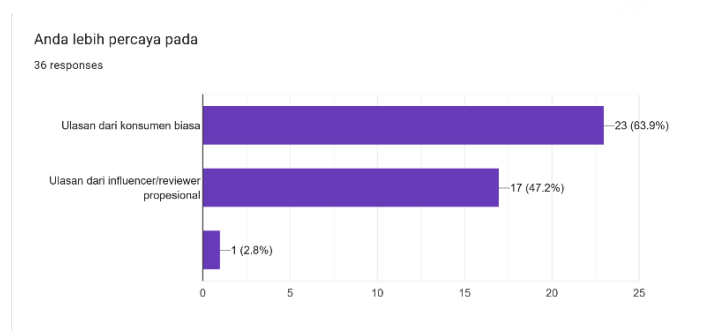


Figure 11. Assessment of Reviews

Based on the data obtained, it can be identified what information consumers most frequently seek in a review. The survey results show that the majority of respondents, namely 86.1%, look for information about product quality in reviews. Furthermore, information regarding price (22.2%) and ease of use (16.7%) are also important considerations for consumers.

This data indicates that consumers tend to prioritize the functional and technical aspects of a product over other aspects. Product quality appears to be the dominant factor determining consumer preferences and purchasing decisions. In addition, price and ease of use are also

important considerations for consumers when evaluating a product. This suggests that companies must pay close attention to the quality of their products and ensure that the products offered are reasonably priced and easy for consumers to use. An effective marketing strategy should be able to convey information that addresses consumer needs related to these aspects.

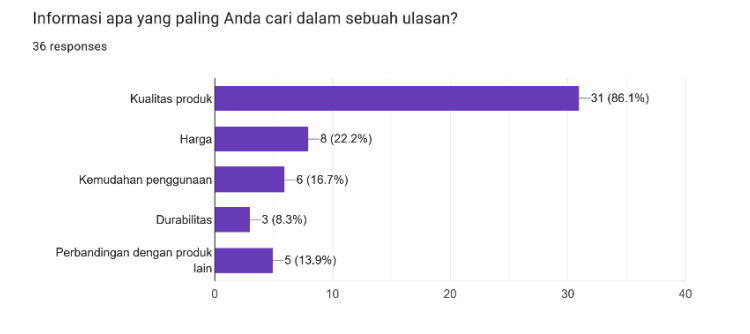


Figure 12: Frequently searched information in reviews

Based on the data obtained, the data shows what types of content consumers prefer in product reviews. The most preferred type of review is video, with 61.1% of respondents stating that they prefer video reviews. This indicates that consumers value the ability to visually evaluate products through demonstrations and video presentations. The next most preferred types are photos (47.2%) and a combination of various content formats (19.4%). This suggests that visual aids, whether in the form of static images or dynamic videos, are important components of effective product reviews.

On the other hand, only 13.9% of respondents preferred purely text-based reviews. This shows that consumers tend to be less interested in relying solely on written descriptions and seek a reviewing experience that engages multiple senses. These insights emphasize the importance of multimedia content in the digital commerce landscape. Businesses should prioritize creating and collecting product reviews that utilize videos, images, and mixed media to better meet consumer expectations and assist their purchasing decisions.

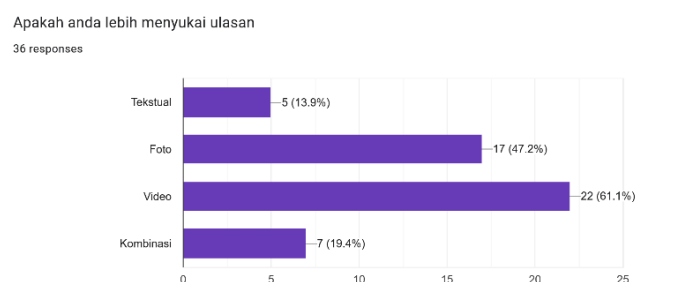


Figure 13. Assessment of liking the review

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that 52.8% of respondents always read online reviews before making a purchase, confirming the crucial role of reviews in consumer decision-making. In today's digital era, where information is easily accessible, online reviews have become a primary source of information for consumers, especially among students who are part of the digital generation. This reflects a shift from traditional shopping behavior to a more information-based approach, where consumers are more likely to conduct research before buying a product

(Nugraha & Supriyadi, 2022).

The credibility of online reviews is greatly influenced by visual elements. The finding that 66.7% of respondents consider supporting photos or videos as a key factor in assessing trust, indicates that consumers are more likely to trust information they can see and evaluate directly. Visual elements not only provide physical evidence of the product but also help create a deeper experience for consumers (Sari & Putra, 2020). In this context, companies need to ensure that the reviews they display are accompanied by attractive and informative visual content.

Furthermore, the study shows that 63.9% of respondents trust reviews from ordinary consumers more than those from influencers or professional reviewers. This reflects a shift in consumer trust dynamics, where consumers today are more skeptical of reviews coming from parties perceived to have commercial interests (Rovio & Vainio, 2021). Reviews from ordinary consumers are considered more objective and transparent, so companies need to focus more on building authentic relationships with customers and encouraging positive reviews from them.

The impact of negative reviews on purchasing decisions is also very significant. As many as 80.6% of respondents admitted to canceling a purchase due to negative reviews. This finding highlights the importance of online reputation management for businesses. They must proactively monitor and respond to negative reviews to mitigate the adverse effects that may influence consumer purchasing decisions (Fatimah & Hasibuan, 2021). Effective strategies in handling negative reviews can help companies maintain consumer trust and increase customer loyalty.

Review content preferences are also an important focus of this study. With 61.1% of respondents preferring video reviews and 47.2% preferring photo reviews, it is clear that multimedia content is more appealing to consumers compared to pure text. This indicates that companies should invest in creating engaging and informative content that not only conveys product information but also provides an attractive visual experience for consumers (Prasetyo & Mulyadi, 2019). Engaging content can increase consumer involvement and encourage them to share positive experiences with others.

Product quality is the dominant factor sought in reviews, with 86.1% of respondents emphasizing the importance of information about quality. This underscores the importance for manufacturers to ensure that the products they offer meet consumer expectations. Good product quality will not only increase customer satisfaction but also encourage positive reviews that can attract more consumers (Sobandi & Sobantri, 2020). In this context, companies should focus on improving the quality of their products and services to meet consumer expectations.

CONCLUSION

Based on research conducted on Agribusiness students at Universitas Medan Area in 2022, it can be concluded that online reviews play a significant role in influencing digital consumer behavior, particularly in the purchasing decision-making process. The majority of respondents (52.8%) always read online reviews before making a purchase, with e-commerce platforms such as Tokopedia and Shopee being the primary sources of information. The credibility of reviews heavily depends on several key factors, including the availability of supporting photos or videos (66.7%), consumer comments (50%), and ratings or star evaluations (50%).

Another interesting finding is consumers' preference for reviews from ordinary consumers compared to those from influencers or professional reviewers. As many as 63.9% of respondents trust reviews from ordinary consumers more, considering them to be more objective and transparent. This indicates a significant shift in consumer trust dynamics in the digital era.

Regarding review content, the study identified that product quality (86.1%) is the most critical information sought by consumers. Furthermore, media preferences for reviews are dominated by video content (61.1%) and photos (47.2%), indicating the importance of visual representation in building consumer trust.

The methodological aspect of this study used a quantitative descriptive survey approach with 36 student respondents, providing comprehensive insights into digital consumer behavior. This study confirms that online reviews are not merely an information mechanism but have transformed into an important instrument in building trust and consumer decision-making. The practical implications of this research are highly significant for digital business actors. E-commerce platforms, manufacturers, and marketers need to design more transparent communication strategies, encourage authentic reviews from consumers, and prioritize informative and credible multimedia content. The final conclusion shows that in the contemporary e-commerce ecosystem, online reviews have become a sophisticated mechanism that not only influences but fundamentally shapes consumer purchasing decisions, especially among the young digital generation.

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