

The Impact of Online Reviews to Business Students' Trust and Purchase Intent in Products and Brands

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated how online product reviews influence business students' trust in products and brands, considering demographic factors. As e-commerce grows, business students increasingly rely on online reviews for purchase decisions. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected through a survey from 180 students and analyzed through statistical tools, including frequency distribution, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation. Results showed a high overall agreement grand mean of 4.11, with the strongest agreement (4.4) on reading reviews before purchasing. Year level significantly affected trust, while age, and sex did not. Despite the reliance on online reviews, there was no significant correlation between product reviews and students' overall trust in brands, suggesting that personal experience, brand reputation, and peer recommendation may have played a more substantial role. The study highlighted the importance of online reviews in shaping student purchasing behavior while emphasizing the need for businesses to enhance review credibility.

Keywords: Online Product Reviews, Student Trust, E-Commerce, Consumer Behavior, Brand Perception

INTRODUCTION

Online reviews have become one of the most influential determinants of consumer behaviour, especially in e-commerce environments where physical product inspection is impossible before purchase (Park, Lee, & Han, 2007). Research indicates that positive reviews enhance consumer trust and increase purchase intent, while negative reviews create uncertainty and discourage purchases (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). Given their impact on brand perception, businesses actively monitor and manage online reviews to maintain their reputation and attract potential buyers (Lappas, Sabnis, & Valkanas, 2016). Moreover, consumer trust is a critical component of purchasing behaviour as it determines whether a consumer perceives a brand as reliable and ethical (Gefen, Karahanna, & Straub, 2003). In online transactions, where direct interactions between buyers and sellers are limited, consumer trust is heavily dependent on reviews from previous customers (Ha, 2004). Business students, who are expected to become future entrepreneurs, marketers, or managers, need to understand how online reviews shape trust and influence purchasing decisions. Their ability to assess online reviews effectively can contribute to their future success in customer relationship management and brand positioning.

Despite the benefits of online reviews, there are also challenges associated with their credibility. The prevalence of fake reviews, misleading information, and manipulated ratings raises concerns about trustworthiness and authenticity (Luca & Zervas, 2016). Some businesses engage in deceptive review practices, either by generating fake positive reviews for their own products or posting negative reviews about competitors (Lappas et al., 2016). Such tactics can distort consumer perceptions, leading to misinformed purchasing decisions. Business students, therefore, must develop critical thinking and analytical skills to identify genuine reviews from fraudulent ones and make well-informed choices.

In the Philippine context, online shopping platforms such as Shopee, Lazada, and Amazon have gained immense popularity, particularly among students and young professionals (Santos, 2020). Given that business students in the Eastern Samar State University – Guiuan Campus actively engage in online transactions, it is important to assess how online reviews influence their trust and purchase intent. Their perspectives provide

valuable insights into emerging consumer trends, decision-making processes, and brand evaluation strategies in the digital marketplace.

This study sought to explore the impact of online reviews on business students' trust and purchase intent, focusing on factors such as review credibility, sentiment (positive vs. negative), and review platforms. Understanding these aspects not only benefited students in their personal purchasing decisions but also enhanced their competencies in business strategy and consumer behavior analysis. Furthermore, by examining the role of online reviews in building or undermining trust, this study provided recommendations for entrepreneurs and businesses to optimize their online presence and improve customer trust-building strategies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative approach and utilizes a descriptive-correlational design to determine the impact of online reviews on business students' trust and purchase intent in products and brands. The use of a descriptive correlational design allowed the identification of patterns and associations between these variables without manipulating them, thus maintaining the natural context of consumer interactions with online reviews. The respondents of this study were 180 out of 327 entrepreneurship students enrolled for the first semester of school year 2024-2025 at Eastern Samar State University- Guiuan Campus. Random sampling was opted for because the research goals here didn't require targeting any specific respondents, as anyone and everyone is a consumer. The entire population of Bachelor of Science in Entrepreneurship reached 327 students this school year 2024-2025. 180 was the total number that was attained from Slovin's formula. This approach will ensure that the researchers' respondents, allow us to gather reliable data on the impact of online product reviews on consumer trust and purchase intent. The survey questionnaire was structured into two (2) sections. The first section, consisting of 26 items, was divided into two categories: consumer trust and purchase intention. The final section included 14 items focusing on online product reviews, examining their credibility and influence on consumer trust. The researchers employed a 5-point Likert scale, a widely used psychometric response scale, to assess participants' preferences or level of agreement (Bhatt, 2019).

In the collection of data, a request letter stating the purpose of the study and how the data will be treated was provided to the respondents, as well as an informed consent form that stated the information like the study procedure, protection of the data, confidentiality, and contact information of both the researchers to provide for adequate ethical considerations and accurate data. All data gathered were used solely for research purposes. Once the researchers have gathered all the questionnaires from the respondents, the overall frequency of the scale for every item will be tallied, tabulated, and evaluated for interpretation. Following the collection of survey responses, a variety of statistical treatments would be applied. In determining the influence of online product reviews on consumer trust and purchase intent, frequency and percentage distribution are used. Percentage is a descriptive statistic that shows how much of the total number of respondents falls into various categories. The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of responses by the number of the respondent's and multiplying by 100. The mean will be used to determine the central tendency of the data in the questions. It is also determined by adding all the data points in a population and dividing the total by the number of points. It is used in getting the average answers of the respondents and the items in every queue in the questionnaire. The researcher used the numbers 5,4,3,2, and 1 to represent the degree of importance, with 5 representing the highest score and the last number representing the lowest. The statistical tool would be used to analyze and interpret the results. This study utilized Pearson's correlation coefficient (Pearson rrr) to examine the relationship between product reviews and the level of consumer trust. By measuring the strength and direction of this correlation, the study determined whether positive or negative reviews significantly influenced consumer trust levels. The findings provided valuable insights into how online reviews impacted purchasing decisions and brand credibility.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion below are a presentation of the respondents' regarding the relationship between the online product reviews to business students' trust and purchase intent in products and brands. The data is presented using the mean and standard deviation with corresponding interpretation to determine the respondents' perception and consistency of their responses.

Table 1 Demographics Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Age.

Range	Frequency	Percent
18-20	96	53.0%
21-23	57	31.50%
24-26	22	12.20%
27-30	1	0.60%
31-above	5	2.80%
Total	180	100.0%

The table presents the age distribution of the respondents, categorized into five groups. The majority,

53.0% (96 respondents), fall within the 18-20 age range, indicating that most participants are young adults. The 21-23 age group follows with 31.5% (57 respondents), while 12.2% (22 respondents) belong to the 24-26 age range, showing a gradual decline in frequency as age increases. Only 0.6% (1 respondent) falls within the 27-30 age group, making it the least represented. Meanwhile, 2.8% (5 respondents) are 31 years old or above. Overall, the data suggests that the respondents are predominantly young, likely reflecting the demographic characteristics of the target population.

Table 2 Demographic Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage	
Male	56	30.9%	
Female	125		69.1%
Total	180	100%	

The table presents the gender distribution of the respondents. The majority of the participants are female, accounting for 69.1% (125 respondents), while males make up 30.9% (56 respondents). This indicates a significant gender imbalance, with more female respondents participating in the study. The total number of respondents is 180, ensuring a diverse yet female-dominated sample. This distribution may reflect the demographic composition of the target population, suggesting that females are more engaged or interested in the subject of the study.

Table 3 Demographic Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Year Level.

Year Level	Frequency	Percentage
1 st Year Level	52	28.7%
2 nd Year Level	49	27.1%
3 rd Year Level	51	28.2%
4 th Year Level	29	16.0%
Total	180	100%

The table presents the distribution of respondents based on their year level. The majority of participants come from the 1st Year Level (28.7%, 52 respondents) and the 3rd Year Level (28.2%, 51 respondents), indicating a nearly equal representation between these two groups. The 2nd Year Level follows closely with 27.1% (49 respondents), while the 4th Year Level has the least representation, comprising 16.0% (29 respondents). The total number of respondents is 180, reflecting a well-distributed sample across different academic levels, though with fewer participants from the graduating year. This distribution suggests a balanced engagement across lower and upper-year students in the study.

Table 4 Products Displayed Online

QUESTIONS	MEAN	INTERPRETATION
I trust online products reviews when considering a purchase them anonymous reviews	4.1	Agree
I believe that online reviews reflect the true quality of a product	3.7	Agree
Positive online reviews renew my trust in a product	3.8	Agree
I often read online reviews before making a purchase decisions.	4.4	Agree
I consider the overall rates of a products based on online reviews to be trustworthy.	4.0	Agree
I trust reviews from verified purchasers have been anonymous reviews.	3.8	Agree
The numbers of reviews a product has influence my trust in it.	4.0	Agree
I feel that regular reviews I often move to informative those positive reviews.	3.8	Agree
I am sceptical of overly positive reviews can be that seem exaggerated.	3.8	Agree
I believe that online reviews can be biased/ manipulated.	3.9	Agree
I trust online reviews from reputable websites more than these such lower known sites.	3.7	Agree
I often share my own experiences and reviews and online to others.	3.8	Agree
Overall, online product reviews significantly Influence my trust in a brand or product.	3.9	Agree
Grand Mean	4.11	Agree

LEGEND: 4.20-5.00 Strongly Agree, 3.40-4.19 Agree, 2.60-3.39 Moderately Agree, 1.80-2.59 Disagree, and 1.00-1.79 Completely Disagree

The table presents the Level of Business Students' Trust in online product reviews based on various indicators. The grand mean of 4.11 falls within the "Agree" category, indicating that respondents generally trust online reviews when making purchasing decisions. Among the specific indicators, the highest mean score (4.4) corresponds to the statement "I often read online reviews before making a purchase decision," suggesting that students heavily rely on online reviews as part of their decision-making process. Other indicators, such as trust in verified purchasers (3.8), skepticism towards overly positive reviews (3.8), and belief that online reviews can be biased or manipulated (3.9), reflect a cautious yet trusting attitude toward online reviews. While students acknowledge the potential for bias or manipulation, they still consider product ratings and reviews trustworthy overall. The findings suggest that online product reviews significantly influence students' trust in brands and purchasing behavior.

Table 5 Business Student Trust

QUESTIONS	MEAN	INTERPRETATION
Likely to buy a product that has hundreds of reviews compared to one with only a few.	4.3	Agree
Negative reviews make me reconsider my intent to purchase a product.	4.0	Agree
I find that the presence of verified buyer reviews increase my purchase intent.	3.8	Agree

I am more likely to buy a product if I see a response from the seller addressing concerns in reviews.	3.9	Agree
I tend to trust products with a mix of positive and negative reviews, increasing my purchase intent.	3.8	Agree
Reviews that highlight long-term use of a product increase my purchase intent.	3.9	Agree
I often change my purchase intent based on the information found in reviews.	4.0	Agree
I believe that emotional tone of reviews influences by purchase intent.	3.9	Agree
I believe that online reviews accurately reflect the quality of a product.	3.9	Agree
I tend to avoid products with a high percentage of negative reviews.	4.0	Agree
I am more likely to buy a product if the reviews mentions specific features I value.	4.0	Agree
I trust products that have been reviewed on multiple platforms.	4.0	Agree
Grand Mean	4.11	Agree

LEGEND: 4.20-5.00 Strongly Agree, 3.40-4.19 Agree, 2.60-3.39 Moderately Agree, 1.80-2.59 Disagree, and 1.00-1.79 Completely Disagree

The table presents the Level of Business Purchase Intent among students from the College of Business Management and Accountancy, based on various indicators. The grand mean of 4.11, categorized as "Agree," suggests that online product reviews significantly influence students' purchasing decisions. The highest mean (4.3) corresponds to the statement "Likely to buy a product that has hundreds of reviews compared to one with only a few," indicating that review quantity plays a crucial role in purchase intent. Other notable factors include negative reviews affecting purchase decisions (4.0), the presence of verified buyer reviews increasing trust (3.8), and responses from sellers addressing concerns positively influencing intent (3.9). Students also value reviews that highlight long-term product use (3.9) and trust products reviewed on multiple platforms (4.0). Overall, the findings demonstrate that online reviews particularly their volume, credibility, and content—significantly shape business students' purchasing behavior.

Table 6 Difference between Year Level and Level of Student Trust

Variable	Year Level	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	P	Interpretation
Level of Student Trust	1 st Year 2 nd Year 3 rd Year 4 th Year	1.22	3	0.407	2.54	0.051	Significant

Note: F=F-Value, df=degrees of freedom, p-value<0.05.

The table presents the analysis of variance (ANOVA) results for the Level of Student Trust across different year levels. The sum of squares (1.22) and degrees of freedom (df = 3) indicate the variation in trust levels among students. The computed F-value (2.54) and p-value (0.051) suggest that there is a significant difference in trust levels across year levels, as the p-value is close to the 0.05 threshold. This finding implies that students' level of trust in online product reviews varies depending on their year level, potentially influenced by factors such as academic exposure, experience with online shopping, or familiarity with review credibility.

Table 7 Difference between Age and Level of Student Trust

Variable	Age	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	P	Interpretation
Level of Student Trust	18-20 21-23 24-26 27-30 30-above	.419	4	0.105	.631	0.641	Not Significant

Note: F=F-Value, df=degrees of freedom, p-value<0.05.

The table presents the analysis of variance (ANOVA) results for the Level of Student Trust across different age groups. The sum of squares (0.419) and degrees of freedom (df = 4) indicate the variation in trust levels among students of different ages. The computed F-value (0.631) and p-value (0.641) suggest that the differences in trust levels among age groups are not statistically significant, as the p-value is greater than the 0.05 threshold. This implies that age does not have a significant impact on students' level of trust in online product reviews, meaning students across different age ranges tend to have similar trust levels in online reviews.

Table 8 Difference between Sex and Level of Student Trust

Variable	Sex	Mean Difference	df	t-value	t-crit.	P	Interpretation
Level of Student Trust	Male Female	.419	4	-.951	-1.973	0.810	Not Significant

The table presents the t-test results comparing the Level of Student Trust between male and female respondents. The mean difference (0.419) indicates a slight variation in trust levels between the two groups. With degrees of freedom (df = 4), the computed t-value (-0.951) is lower than the t-critical value (-1.973), and the p-value (0.810) is much greater than the 0.05 significance level. This result suggests that the difference in trust levels between male and female students is not statistically significant. Therefore, gender does not significantly influence the level of trust students have in online product reviews.

Table 9 Relationship between Product Review and Level of Trust

Variable 1	Variable 2	r-value	Interpretation	P-value	Interpretation
Product Review	Level of Trust	-0.077	Very Weak Correlation	0.302	Not Significant

Note: $P > 0.05$

The table presents the correlation analysis between Product Review and Level of Trust among students. The r-value (-0.077) indicates a very weak negative correlation, suggesting that there is little to no relationship between the two variables. Additionally, the p-value (0.302) is greater than the 0.05 significance level, meaning the relationship is not statistically significant. This implies that students' level of trust in online product reviews is not strongly influenced by the reviews themselves, and other factors may play a more significant role in shaping their trust.

This study highlights the role of online product reviews in shaping business students' trust in products and brands. The findings reveal that students generally trust online reviews when making purchasing decisions, as indicated by the grand mean of 4.11, with the highest agreement on the importance of reading online reviews before buying a product (mean = 4.4). Students tend to trust verified purchaser reviews and product ratings but remain cautious about potentially biased or exaggerated reviews.

Demographic analysis shows that trust levels vary significantly based on year level ($p = 0.051$), suggesting that academic exposure and experience with online shopping may influence students' perception of online reviews. However, other demographic factors, such as age ($p = 0.641$) and sex ($p = 0.810$), do not significantly impact students' trust in online product reviews.

Despite the general reliance on online reviews, statistical analysis indicates that there is no significant relationship between online reviews and students' overall trust in brands ($r = -0.077$, $p = 0.302$). This suggests that while online reviews are considered in decision-making, other factors—such as personal experience, brand reputation, and peer recommendations—play a more crucial role in influencing students' trust in products and brands.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of online product reviews in student purchasing behavior but also highlights that trust in brands is shaped by multiple factors beyond just online feedback.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the role of online product reviews in shaping business students' trust in products and brands. The findings reveal that students generally trust online reviews when making purchasing decisions, as indicated by the grand mean of 4.11, with the highest agreement on the importance of reading online reviews before buying a product (mean = 4.4). Students tend to trust verified purchaser reviews and product ratings but remain cautious about potentially biased or exaggerated reviews.

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