iJETRM

International Journal of Engineering Technology Research & Management
(IJETRM)
https://ijetrm.com/

THE IMPACT OF TRUST IN ONLINE REVIEWS ON CUSTOMERS' PURCHASE INTENTIONS IN VIETNAM

Nguyen Thi Anh Tuyet

Banking University of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to assess the impact of trust in online reviews on customers' purchase intentions on e-commerce platforms in Vietnam. Using the SEM model and data from 443 customers, the study shows that trust in online reviews positively influences purchase intention, mediated by perceived quality, brand image, and initial trust. Furthermore, this impact is moderated by the level of online transaction-friendliness. The paper provides important managerial implications for e-commerce businesses.

Keywords:

Trust, reviews, online, purchase intention, customers, Vietnam.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology in the digital era has fundamentally changed the way consumers access information and make purchasing decisions. E-commerce is no longer just a product distribution channel but has evolved into an interactive platform where consumers can quickly and conveniently share, search, and evaluate product information. In this context, online reviews have emerged as a significant factor influencing consumer behavior. These reviews, shared by previous consumers, not only provide practical information about products but also help build trust in brands and online shopping platforms. However, not all reviews hold equal value. Some reviews may lack transparency, be unreliable, or even be manipulated by sellers or intermediaries. This raises an important question: Do consumers truly trust online reviews? And if so, to what extent does that trust influence their purchase intentions? In particular, within Vietnam's e-commerce market—where consumers increasingly rely on digital platforms to make decisions—the issue of trust in online reviews becomes even more pressing. Previous research has mostly focused on the overall impact of online reviews on consumer behavior, but has paid little attention to the specific role of trust in these reviews. Furthermore, there has been limited analysis of the mechanisms through which trust exerts its influence—such as perceived quality, brand image, and initial trust—as well as moderating factors like online transaction-friendliness. Therefore, this study was conducted to fill the aforementioned theoretical and practical gaps. By applying the SEM model, the research not only tests the direct relationship between trust in online reviews and purchase intention but also clarifies the indirect mechanisms and conditions that alter the strength of this relationship. Accordingly, the research results are expected to provide a solid scientific foundation for e-commerce businesses to improve their user review management strategies and enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The author distributed 500 survey forms in the form of QR codes to interview customers who had previously used online reviews to support their purchasing decisions on e-commerce platforms in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. These surveys were disseminated through the researcher's colleagues, friends, and business partners. Some customers were interviewed directly by the author, while others received QR codes sent via the author's acquaintances working at various organizations in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. A total of 443 valid responses were collected for the purpose of this study.

3. RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES
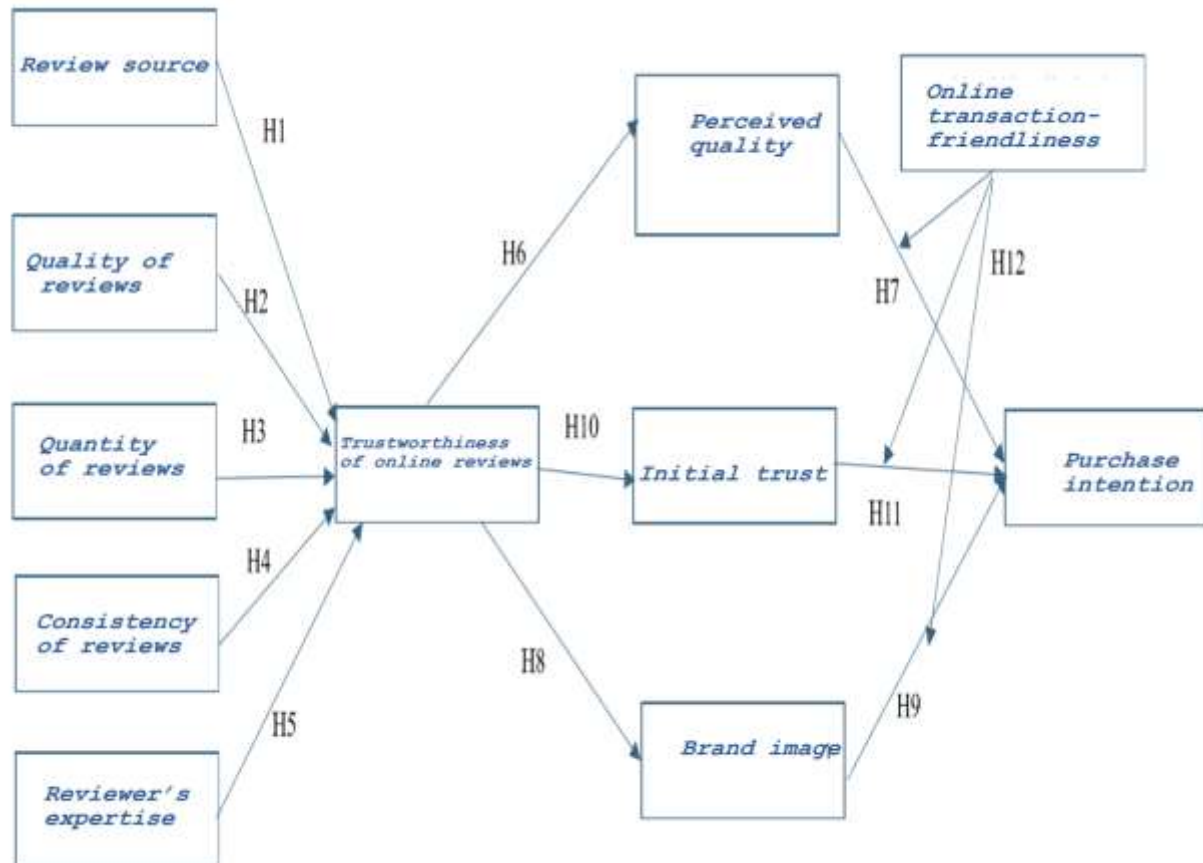
Figure 1: Proposed Research Model
Source: Author's Proposal

- Hypothesis H1: The review source has a positive impact on the trustworthiness of online reviews.
- Hypothesis H2: The quality of reviews has a positive impact on the trustworthiness of online reviews.
- Hypothesis H3: The quantity of reviews has a positive impact on the trustworthiness of online reviews.
- Hypothesis H4: The consistency of reviews has a positive impact on the trustworthiness of online reviews.
- Hypothesis H5: The reviewer's expertise positively influences the trustworthiness of online reviews.
- Hypothesis H6: The trustworthiness of online reviews positively affects perceived quality.
- Hypothesis H7: Perceived quality has a positive impact on purchase intention.
- Hypothesis H8: The trustworthiness of online reviews positively affects brand image.
- Hypothesis H9: Brand image has a positive impact on purchase intention.
- Hypothesis H10: The trustworthiness of online reviews positively affects initial trust.
- Hypothesis H11: Initial trust has a positive impact on purchase intention.
- Hypothesis H12: Online transaction-friendliness moderates the effects of perceived quality, initial trust, and brand image on purchase intention.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS
4.1. Reliability Testing of the Measurement Scales (Cronbach's Alpha)
Before conducting the SEM analysis, the measurement scales were tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The results show that all scales have Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.7, and the corrected item-

total correlation coefficients for all observed variables are greater than 0.3. This indicates that the measurement scales possess good reliability and are suitable for further analysis.

Table 1: Reliability Testing Results of the Measurement Scales (Cronbach's Alpha)

Scale	Number of Observed Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Review Source	3	0.797
Review Quality	3	0.788
Review Quantity	3	0.779
Review Consistency	3	0.808
Reviewer Expertise	3	0.749
Trust in Online Reviews	3	0.840
Customers' Purchase Intention	3	0.847
Perceived Quality	3	0.790
Brand Image	3	0.849
Initial Trust	3	0.818
Online Transaction-Friendliness	3	0.914

Source: Author's synthesis from the research findings

4.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Coefficient.		0.894
Bartlett's Test – Approx. Chi-Square	Approx. Chi-Square	4301.955
	Df	210
	Sig.	.000

Source: Author's synthesis from the research findings

The test results show that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient is 0.894, which falls within the range of 0.8 to 1.0—an indication of very good suitability. This demonstrates that the survey data is highly appropriate for conducting Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). In addition, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yields an Approx. Chi-Square value of 4301.955, with degrees of freedom (df) = 210 and a significance level (Sig.) of 0.000. Since the significance value is less than 0.05, it confirms that the observed variables are linearly correlated, satisfying the conditions for performing EFA.

4.3. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Analysis

The Structural Equation Model (SEM) was conducted to evaluate the effects of various factors on the trust in online reviews and customers' online purchase intentions. The SEM results include:

(i) An assessment of the impact of trust in online reviews on customers' purchase intentions on e-commerce platforms in Vietnam;

(ii) An evaluation of the mediating roles of perceived quality, initial trust, and brand image in the relationship between trust in online reviews and purchase intention;

(iii) An evaluation of the moderating role of online transaction-friendliness in the effects of perceived quality, initial trust, and brand image on customers' purchase intentions on e-commerce platforms in Vietnam.

Table 3: Hypothesis Testing Results Using SEM Model

			Regression Weight	S.E.	C.R.	P	Hypothesis
TC	<---	CL	.046	.034	1.360	.174	Reject H2
TC	<---	NG	.067	.032	2.086	.037	Accept H1

TC	<---	SL	.090	.034	2.645	.008	Accept H3
TC	<---	OD	.023	.037	.631	.528	Reject H4
TC	<---	CM	.543	.067	8.108	***	Accept H5
CN	<---	TC	1.439	.142	10.137	***	Accept H6
TH	<---	TC	1.554	.142	10.912	***	Accept H8
YD	<---	CN	.530	.059	8.919	***	Accept H7
YD	<---	TH	.267	.045	5.879	***	Accept H9
YD	<---	TT_CN	.043	.018	2.341	.019	Accept H12
YD	<---	TT_TH	.029	.017	1.717	.086	Reject H12

*** *Statistically significant at the 0.001 level*

Source: Author's synthesis from the research findings

The results of the SEM analysis indicate that most hypotheses are supported. Specifically, review source, review quantity, and reviewer expertise have statistically significant positive effects on trust in online reviews, while review quality does not show a significant impact. Additionally, trust in online reviews significantly influences perceived quality, brand image, and subsequently, purchase intention. The model also confirms the mediating roles of perceived quality and brand image, and highlights the moderating effect of online transaction-friendliness, which enhances the influence of these mediators on purchase intention. Overall, the findings validate the proposed research model and offer strong evidence for the importance of trust in shaping online consumer behavior.

5. CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS
5.1. Conclusion
The research findings indicate that review source, review quantity, and reviewer expertise have statistically significant positive effects on the trustworthiness of online reviews, while review quality does not show a notable impact. Trust in online reviews plays a key role, positively influencing perceived quality and brand image, which in turn affect customers' purchase intentions. Additionally, the study confirms the mediating roles of perceived quality and brand image, and identifies the moderating effect of online transaction-friendliness, which strengthens the influence of these mediators on purchase intention. Overall, the results support most of the proposed hypotheses and clarify the mechanism through which trust in online reviews impacts consumer behavior in the context of e-commerce in Vietnam.

5.2. Managerial Implications
Based on the research findings, the author proposes several managerial implications aimed at increasing the credibility of online reviews and enhancing customers' purchase intentions on e-commerce platforms in Vietnam. Specifically:

Building and Verifying Credible Review Sources
E-commerce platforms should encourage the participation of reputable individuals and organizations, such as KOLs, experts, or loyal customers. Reviews from these sources build stronger trust among consumers and help them make more confident purchasing decisions. To increase transparency, platforms should verify reviewer identities by requiring contact information or actual purchase accounts. Additionally, displaying a "verified buyer" badge next to reviews can further enhance their perceived trustworthiness.

Businesses can also collaborate with influencers or experts to provide in-depth and objective product reviews. This not only boosts the credibility of the product but also attracts more consumer attention. Furthermore, encouraging loyal and frequent customers to leave reviews fosters a positive user community and enriches platform content. A reward or incentive system for trusted reviewers can also be an effective way to motivate customer participation in the review process.

Improving Review Quality

iJETRM

International Journal of Engineering Technology Research & Management
(IJETRM)
https://ijetrm.com/

E-commerce sites should encourage users to write detailed product reviews covering aspects like quality, usage experience, and usefulness. The more specific and clear the reviews, the more helpful they become for other consumers in making informed purchasing decisions. To facilitate this, platforms can provide review templates with guiding questions to help users give structured feedback, thereby enhancing content quality and relevance.

Moreover, platforms should employ both automated and manual moderation systems to filter out misleading or inappropriate reviews. These tools ensure that review content meets standards of transparency and accuracy, increasing customer trust. Highlighting and categorizing helpful reviews—those rated highly by other users—makes them more accessible to new customers, creating a transparent and respectful review environment.

Establishing two-way feedback mechanisms between reviewers and businesses also improves review quality. When customers can communicate directly with businesses about concerns raised in their reviews, they feel heard and valued. This not only promotes more objective reviews but also helps businesses improve services based on real feedback. Furthermore, such interactions encourage more consumer engagement, creating a virtuous cycle in enhancing review quality.

Increasing Review Quantity to Reinforce Trust

E-commerce businesses should encourage customers to write reviews after purchase by offering promotions, reward points, or special deals. These incentives not only motivate customers to share their experiences but also increase review volume, thereby enhancing product credibility. Platforms can send gentle reminders to customers after purchase to prompt reviews, contributing to a steady flow of feedback.

E-commerce sites should also provide a user-friendly space that makes it easy and comfortable for consumers to share their comments. Additionally, running review campaigns during major shopping events can encourage wider participation. Platforms may incorporate community features such as leaderboards highlighting top reviewers to motivate others. A large volume of reviews gives new customers greater confidence when consulting product information, thus increasing their purchase intentions.

Maintaining Stability and Consistency of Reviews

E-commerce platforms should create filters and search tools that help customers easily compare similar reviews for a product. When consumers observe consistency in feedback across multiple reviews, they are more likely to trust the accuracy and transparency of the information. To maintain stability, platforms should remove or flag unusual reviews—such as contradictory or unfounded comments—to reduce customer skepticism and ensure a trustworthy review environment.

Businesses should also maintain clear standards for review content, encouraging users to share information based on actual experiences. This ensures high-quality feedback and consistent review tone, enhancing overall trust. Companies should regularly monitor and analyze feedback trends to understand customer needs and expectations. This allows platforms to continuously improve services and meet customer demands, thereby retaining users in the long term.

Emphasizing Reviewer Expertise

E-commerce platforms should encourage reviews from individuals with relevant expertise, such as industry professionals or long-time customers. These reviews hold greater value and build stronger trust due to their depth of knowledge and real-world experience. Platforms can label such reviews with tags like "Expert Review" or "Loyal Customer" to help other consumers identify and benefit from them. This enhances review credibility and fosters greater product trust.

Businesses should also establish reward systems for expert reviewers to motivate continued contributions. Hosting online events, such as product review webinars or expert livestreams, can further boost transparency and foster a sense of community. Additionally, platforms can categorize reviews by expertise level, helping customers find more useful insights. This approach increases trust and enables quicker, more informed purchase decisions.

Enhancing Trust to Drive Purchase Intent

To enhance trust, e-commerce platforms must commit to transparency in displaying reviews—ensuring that honest feedback is not edited or deleted. This builds a trustworthy environment where consumers feel more secure relying on reviews during decision-making. Platforms should also feature trusted reviews prominently in advertising campaigns and at purchase decision points, further encouraging trust and faster purchasing.

Establishing two-way interaction systems that allow businesses to respond directly to reviewers enhances consumer confidence. This not only addresses issues promptly but also creates a positive link between the business and its

IJETRM

International Journal of Engineering Technology Research & Management
(IJETRM)
https://ijetrm.com/

customers. When customers feel heard and satisfied with responses, they are more likely to leave positive feedback. Such systems also allow businesses to improve product and service quality based on real buyer input.

Companies should leverage technology to analyze reviews and predict buying behavior trends, thereby optimizing the customer experience. Using AI and big data helps businesses better understand customer needs and deliver personalized product recommendations. Personalized suggestions based on trusted reviews can significantly increase the likelihood of turning purchase intentions into actual sales. In doing so, e-commerce platforms can enhance customer loyalty and achieve sustainable long-term growth.

Enhancing Perceived Quality

Given that perceived quality plays a crucial mediating role, businesses should focus on improving both product and service quality. Ensuring product descriptions match reality and providing thoughtful after-sales service increases customer satisfaction. This not only encourages repeat purchases but also fosters positive online reviews. As a result, trust in online reviews is reinforced, supporting higher purchase intentions among potential customers.

Improving perceived quality also strengthens customer loyalty and builds a more connected consumer ecosystem. When products and services reflect real customer experiences, users are more likely to appreciate and share their feedback. Businesses should regularly conduct surveys to understand customer needs and expectations. Online reviews become trustworthy only when customers see consistency between product descriptions and actual use. Therefore, ongoing product quality checks and transparent fulfillment of commitments are essential. When customers feel they're getting value for their money, they're more inclined to share their experience and strengthen brand credibility.

After-sales service also plays a vital role. Flexible return policies, attentive customer support, and clear warranty commitments help customers feel secure in their purchases. Businesses can implement loyalty programs to encourage repeat purchases. Negative feedback should be handled professionally and swiftly, rather than ignored or deleted. A proactive approach to listening and resolving issues leaves a positive impression of dedication and professionalism. This not only builds long-term relationships but also establishes a trustworthy review ecosystem that drives future purchases.

Building and Developing a Strong Brand Image

As brand image acts as a mediator influencing purchase intention, businesses should invest in building a reputable and trustworthy brand. Through effective marketing strategies and a professional online presence, brands can create positive impressions. Timely and positive responses to customer reviews also enhance brand image. When customers trust the brand, their purchase intentions increase.

A strong brand is built not only on quality products but also on earning customer trust through online communication channels. Businesses must ensure consistent messaging across e-commerce platforms, social media, and websites to project professionalism and reliability. A well-executed communication strategy helps customers recognize and remember the brand's core values. Moreover, being present on credible media outlets reinforces consumer trust. Companies can collaborate with journalists, KOLs, or experts to produce insightful content that helps customers understand products and services better. Providing transparent information about product origin, production processes, and quality commitments further strengthens brand trust.

In addition to marketing strategies, businesses must prioritize customer experience when interacting with the brand. Prompt responses, attentive service, and effective complaint resolution encourage customers to share positive feedback. Companies can also use technology to personalize the customer journey, making customers feel valued. For example, sending personalized messages or greetings on special occasions strengthens emotional connections between brand and customer. These thoughtful touches make the brand feel more relatable and trustworthy, boosting customer retention and future sales.

Strengthening Trust in Online Reviews

To increase trust in online reviews, businesses should encourage genuine feedback from real buyers. Implementing verification systems to confirm purchases helps eliminate fake reviews. Businesses should also be transparent when handling negative feedback, demonstrating professionalism and accountability. Trust in reviews positively impacts both perceived quality and brand image. Transparency in how businesses manage customer feedback is key. When consumers see that reviews are not unfairly edited or removed, they feel more confident using them to guide decisions. Clear policies on reviewer identity verification can prevent fraudulent or misleading reviews. A transparent system that displays both positive and negative feedback gives customers a balanced view of products. When reviews reflect

IJETRM

International Journal of Engineering Technology Research & Management
(IJETRM)
https://ijetrm.com/

true usage experiences, customers can make informed decisions more easily. Moreover, businesses can implement multidimensional review systems allowing buyers to comment not only on product quality but also delivery time, customer support, and overall experience. This makes reviews more comprehensive and reflective of the full customer journey. Businesses should respond quickly to negative reviews, showing responsibility and professionalism. A willingness to listen and improve builds strong consumer trust.

Improving Online Transaction Friendliness

Since transaction friendliness moderates purchase intention, businesses should optimize the online shopping experience. User interfaces should be simple, intuitive, and compatible across devices. Ensuring secure and fast payment processes is also crucial. When customers feel comfortable and safe during transactions, they are more likely to make purchases.

A seamless shopping experience has a direct impact on customer purchase intentions. Businesses should ensure their platforms are user-friendly and optimized for all devices. A well-designed interface with clear purchase instructions and quick checkout options enhances convenience. Incorporating diverse payment methods—e-wallets, credit cards, and bank transfers—further improves the experience. When customers face no obstacles in the payment process, they are more likely to return. In addition to technical aspects, businesses must provide robust customer support throughout the buying journey. Online chatbots or hotlines help resolve issues quickly, reducing cart abandonment due to lack of information. Flexible and transparent return policies also reassure customers. When every transaction is smooth and professionally handled, customers are more inclined to remain loyal.

Focusing on Practical Value Strategies for Customers

As initial trust does not play a mediating role, businesses should focus on delivering practical value. This includes offering quality products at reasonable prices and reliable after-sales services. Promotions, discounts, or special offers can attract customer attention. When benefits are clear, purchase intentions increase significantly. In a competitive market, delivering practical value is key to long-term success. Products must meet quality standards and be priced appropriately for the target market. Businesses should study market conditions to find pricing strategies that balance profitability with customer value. Offering product options at various price points meets diverse customer needs. When customers perceive high value, they're more likely to return and support the brand. Promotions should be genuine and well-designed to avoid undermining trust. Attractive campaigns such as "Buy 1 Get 1," "Loyalty Discounts," or "Free Shipping over a Certain Amount" can effectively drive conversions. Bundle offers providing more value at optimized costs are also worth considering. When customers feel they are receiving more than they paid for, their motivation to purchase increases—boosting sales.

Enhancing Experience-Based Marketing

Since Vietnamese consumers highly value real experiences, businesses should create opportunities for them to share these experiences. Hosting online events, product livestreams, or free trials can increase customer interaction. These efforts not only improve perceived quality but also generate trustworthy review content. Through this, businesses can attract more customers with strong purchase intentions. Modern consumers care about more than product quality—they want meaningful shopping experiences. Businesses should offer opportunities for customers to try products firsthand. Livestreams on social platforms, where products are introduced, questions answered live, and special offers given, are an effective method. Free trials or in-store product sampling also increase trust. Such experiences help customers make accurate purchase decisions.

Encouraging customers to share their shopping experiences via reviews, photos, or videos on social media builds a trustworthy content ecosystem. Incentivizing honest sharing through reward points strengthens credibility. Loyal customers can be invited for interviews or video features to express why they trust the brand. This content not only builds trust but also strongly influences potential buyers. When customers see real feedback from others, they are more likely to trust and purchase.

REFERENCES

1. Aghakhani, N., Oh, O., Gregg, D. G., & Karimi, J. (2021). Online Review Consistency Matters: An Elaboration Likelihood Model Perspective. Information Systems Frontiers, 23(5), 1287–1301. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-020-10030-7

IJETRM

International Journal of Engineering Technology Research & Management
(IJETRM)
https://ijetrm.com/

2. Brand, B. M., Kopplin, C. S., & Rausch, T. M. (2022). Cultural differences in processing online customer reviews: Holistic versus analytic thinkers. Electronic Markets, 32(3), 1039–1060. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12525-022-00543-1

3. Cheng, Y.-H., & Ho, H.-Y. (2015). Social influence's impact on reader perceptions of online reviews. Journal of Business Research, 68(4), 883–887. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2014.11.046

4. Chih, W.-H., Hsu, L.-C., & Ortiz, J. (2020). The antecedents and consequences of the perceived positive eWOM review credibility. Industrial Management & Data Systems, 120(6), 1217–1243. https://doi.org/10.1108/IMDS-10-2019-0573

5. Fang, Y.-H. (2014). Beyond the Credibility of Electronic Word of Mouth: Exploring eWOM Adoption on Social Networking Sites from Affective and Curiosity Perspectives. International Journal of Electronic Commerce, 18(3), 67–102. https://doi.org/10.2753/JEC1086-4415180303

6. Hong, S., & Pittman, M. (2020). eWOM anatomy of online product reviews: Interaction effects of review number, valence, and star ratings on perceived credibility. International Journal of Advertising, 39(7), 892–920. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1703386

7. Kotler, P. (2001). Principles of Marketing. Financial Times Prentice Hall.

8. Mo, Z., Li, Y.-F., & Fan, P. (2015). Effect of Online Reviews on Consumer Purchase Behavior. Journal of Service Science and Management, 8(3), Article 3. https://doi.org/10.4236/jssm.2015.83043

9. Morwitz, V. (2014). Consumers' Purchase Intentions and their Behavior. Foundations and Trends® in Marketing, 7(3), 181–230. https://doi.org/10.1561/1700000036

10. Prendergast, G., Ko, D., & Siu Yin, V. Y. (2010). Online word of mouth and consumer purchase intentions. International Journal of Advertising, 29(5), 687–708. https://doi.org/10.2501/S0265048710201427

11. Qiu, L., Pang, J., & Lim, K. H. (2012). Effects of conflicting aggregated rating on eWOM review credibility and diagnosticity: The moderating role of review valence. Decision Support Systems, 54(1), 631–643. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2012.08.020

12. Reimer, T., & Benkenstein, M. (2016). When good WOM hurts and bad WOM gains: The effect of untrustworthy online reviews. Journal of Business Research, 69(12), 5993–6001. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.05.014

13. Seric, M., Saura, I., & Mikulic, J. (2016). Exploring Integrated Marketing Communications, Brand Awareness, and Brand Image in Hospitality Marketing: A Cross-Cultural Approach. Market-Tržište, 28, 159–172. https://doi.org/10.22598/mt/2016.28.2.159

14. Tran, V. D., Nguyen, M. D., & Lương, L. A. (2022). The effects of online credible review on brand trust dimensions and willingness to buy: Evidence from Vietnam consumers. Cogent Business & Management, 9(1), 2038840. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2022.2038840

15. Tran, V.-D., & Vu, H. (2019). Inspecting the Relationship among E-service Quality, E-trust, E-customer Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions of Online Shopping Customers. GLOBAL BUSINESS FINANCE REVIEW, 24. https://doi.org/10.17549/gbfr.2019.24.3.29

16. Wang, H., & Wang, Y. (2020). A Review of Online Product Reviews. Journal of Service Science and Management, 13(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.4236/jssm.2020.131006

17. Wathen, C. N., & Burkell, J. (2002). Believe it or not: Factors influencing credibility on the Web. Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, 53(2), 134–144. https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.10016

18. Zaid, S. (2020). The Role of Familiarity in Increasing Repurchase Intentions in Online Shopping. Journal of Economics, Business, & Accountancy Ventura, 23. https://doi.org/10.14414/jebav.v23i1.2132.