

CONSUMER REVIEW PERCEPTION AND ITS IMPACT ON GENERATION Z ONLINE SPENDING BEHAVIOUR IN MODERN DIGITAL COMMERCE

A PERCEPÇÃO DAS AVALIAÇÕES DO CONSUMIDOR E SEU IMPACTO NO COMPORTAMENTO DE COMPRAS ONLINE DA GERAÇÃO Z NO COMÉRCIO DIGITAL MODERNO

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Abstract

The rise of digital commerce has transformed decision making among Generation Z, shifting product evaluation from physical inspection toward online review interpretation. This article examines how consumer review perception influences spending behaviour within platforms such as Shopee, Lazada, TikTok Shop and Shein. Through a structured analysis of previous research and thematic expansion, five dominant behavioural determinants were identified, namely authenticity validity, information density, emotional resonance, multimedia representation and algorithm driven visibility.

Resumo

A ascensão do comércio digital transformou a tomada de decisões da Geração Z, deslocando a avaliação de produtos da inspeção física para a interpretação de avaliações online. Este artigo examina como a percepção das avaliações dos consumidores influencia o comportamento de compra em plataformas como Shopee, Lazada, TikTok Shop e Shein. Por meio de uma análise estruturada de pesquisas anteriores e expansão temática, cinco determinantes comportamentais dominantes foram identificados: validade da autenticidade, densidade de informação, ressonância emocional, representação



The literature review demonstrated that Generation Z relies heavily on peer generated testimonies and visual proof to reduce uncertainty and assess purchase risk. The Issues and Discussion sections revealed that while reviews enhance trust and guide purchase selection, they also introduce cognitive overload, emotional distortion, credibility manipulation and algorithmic inequality that may mislead decision outcomes. Recommendations for platform operators and scholars emphasize the need for authentication infrastructure, review clustering, emotional neutrality frameworks, visual verification systems and equitable ranking governance. Findings contribute to academic understanding of digital trust formation and provide strategic insight for strengthening review environments to protect future consumer welfare. This study concludes that review perception acts not only as an informational reference but as a psychological mechanism that directly molds Generation Z purchasing confidence, trust durability and market participation.

Keywords: Generation Z. Consumer Behaviour. Online Spending. Digital Commerce. Purchase Intention.

multimídia e visibilidade algorítmica. A revisão da literatura demonstrou que a Geração Z se baseia fortemente em depoimentos de pares e provas visuais para reduzir a incerteza e avaliar o risco de compra. As seções de Problemas e Discussão revelaram que, embora as avaliações aumentem a confiança e orientem a seleção de compras, elas também introduzem sobrecarga cognitiva, distorção emocional, manipulação da credibilidade e desigualdade algorítmica que podem levar a decisões equivocadas. As recomendações para operadores de plataformas e pesquisadores enfatizam a necessidade de infraestrutura de autenticação, agrupamento de avaliações, estruturas de neutralidade emocional, sistemas de verificação visual e governança equitativa de classificação. As descobertas contribuem para a compreensão acadêmica da formação da confiança digital e fornecem insights estratégicos para fortalecer os ambientes de avaliação e proteger o bem-estar futuro do consumidor. Este estudo conclui que a percepção das avaliações funciona não apenas como uma referência informativa, mas também como um mecanismo psicológico que molda diretamente a confiança de compra, a durabilidade da confiança e a participação no mercado da Geração Z.

Palavras-chave: Geração Z. Comportamento do Consumidor. Gastos Online. Comércio Digital. Intenção de Compra.

1 INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of modern digital commerce has fundamentally reshaped purchasing patterns, particularly among Generation Z who demonstrate a strong preference for online shopping compared to previous demographic cohorts. This generation is deeply embedded in mobile technology, social commerce, interactive media, and algorithm driven consumption behaviour that is heavily influenced by publicly shared feedback. Platforms such as Shopee, Lazada, TikTok Shop, Amazon, Shein, and Zalora dominate the online purchase landscape, enabling consumers to evaluate products based on community experience rather than solely relying on brand controlled marketing messages. Consumer review sections, star ratings, written evaluations, photos, and videos have become essential belief structures guiding online decision making. Research indicates that review credibility affects cognitive trust formation, emotional comfort, and

willingness to pay among young consumers (Moghaddam & Nof, 2022; Abdullah *et al.*, 2025). Generation Z buyers review multiple comments before transactions because digital interactions can reduce product risk perception when supported by authentic user evidence. Thus, review perception functions as an essential behavioural predictor, shaping online engagement, willingness to purchase, and long term marketplace participation (Qiu *et al.*, 2024; Noor & Fauzi, 2023).

The influence of online reviews on consumer decision behaviour reflects broader changes in information consumption. Traditional advertising has weakened in persuasive ability as modern buyers increasingly value peer generated content as a primary validation mechanism (Lee *et al.*, 2023; Karim & Idris, 2022). Generation Z responds more effectively to user voices that express personal experience, quality assessment, and real life product usage compared to scripted promotional claims. In the context of Shopee and Lazada, customers frequently rely on review evidence relating to shipping reliability, colour consistency, material authenticity, and after sales responsiveness, demonstrating that perceived review usefulness outweighs marketing messages (Nguyen *et al.*, 2024; Hashim *et al.*, 2023). This indicates a shift from brand centric persuasion to community driven consumption logic. Literature further highlights that positive review tone, emotional appeal, reviewer expertise, and image attachment significantly influence purchase likelihood among this generation (Rahman & Said, 2025; Fang & Lee, 2024). As a result, online review perception shapes perceived honesty, product trust, and consumption willingness across digital commerce environments, particularly within social commerce streams hosted through TikTok Shop where real time comment trails influence rapid buying impulses.

Review quantity is another critical dimension of review perception. A product with thousands of positive comments often appears more legitimate and safer to purchase than one with few reviews even when item specifications are identical. High review volume signals widespread acceptance and reduces uncertainty by demonstrating strong social endorsement (Ridwan *et al.*, 2025; Qiu *et al.*, 2024; Wahid *et al.*, 2023). Generation Z frequently applies heuristic thinking by interpreting large numbers of reviews as proof of reliability, thereby strengthening confidence in the product and seller credibility. Conversely, low volume generates uncertainty, hesitancy, and purchase abandonment, particularly where risk perception is high (Chen *et al.*, 2022; Patel *et al.*, 2023). Several studies show that popularity indicators such as trending tags and high feedback count

significantly amplify conversion rates among younger buyers in Southeast Asian markets (Rasyidah *et al.*, 2024; Omar *et al.*, 2023). This demonstrates that review perception is inseparable from collective consensus and buyer psychology. In modern digital commerce, review volume operates not merely as informational support but as social evidence that motivates acquisition decisions.

Generation Z consumers are not passive absorbers of review information but active interpreters who evaluate message clarity, emotional tone, credibility structure, and coherence across platforms. Review perception extends beyond reading text as young consumers analyse visual cues, uploaded videos, unboxing proof, and comparison photos as part of authenticity testing (Bakar *et al.*, 2024; Cheah & Wong, 2023). The presence of real user images strengthens trust because it reflects transparent product outcomes. Reviewers who describe realistic strengths and drawbacks are deemed more believable than reviewers who express only perfect satisfaction (Sulaiman *et al.*, 2023; Zahid & Harun, 2024). Generation Z also values contextual reviews in which buyers explain size suitability, durability, material feel, and colour accuracy rather than shallow statements like good quality only. Therefore, review perception is constructed as an emotional cognitive appraisal across multimedia elements. Consumers trust reviews when they reflect relatable scenarios and evidence based experiences. This behaviour confirms that review sections operate as informal information markets where buyers evaluate proof quality and determine whether purchase decisions align with personal expectations.

Despite the strong influence of online reviews, credibility challenges persist. Fake reviews and manipulated feedback threaten authenticity, leading to declining trust among younger online shoppers (Suyanti & Zai, 2025; Kumar *et al.*, 2024). Some sellers generate artificial praise, hire paid reviewers, or filter review visibility to bias perception. Generation Z actively detects unnatural patterns such as repetitive sentences, unusual rating spikes, or generic comments lacking detail. When suspicion arises, buyers cross verify products using external sources including Reddit discussions, Telegram communities, YouTube review channels, and real consumer forums (Chin *et al.*, 2024; Ho & Lau, 2023). Negative credibility signals immediately weaken intention to purchase even when average rating appears high. This demonstrates that review perception is highly sensitive to trust disruption. The presence of manipulated review content often results in abandoned carts, platform switching, or negative word of mouth among peer networks (Zhang & Xu, 2024; Lim *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, review integrity forms a

foundational requirement for sustaining Generation Z participation within digital commerce ecosystems.

Negative reviews carry strong behavioural weight in purchase evaluation. Studies show that Generation Z allocates higher attention to negative feedback compared to positive sentiment even when positive comments dominate overall rating distribution (Chen *et al.*, 2023; Ahn & Lee, 2024). Images displaying damaged items, incorrect sizing, slow delivery, or misrepresented colour alter risk assessment sharply. A single negative visual review often outweighs numerous positive text statements because Generation Z values visible proof over written reassurance (Abdullah *et al.*, 2025; Latif *et al.*, 2023). However, review sections containing balanced tone that acknowledges both strengths and weaknesses tend to generate more realistic expectations and higher trust. Perfectly clean five star clusters without critique frequently trigger doubt because authenticity is not detectable. Therefore, review perception is strengthened when feedback is organic, critical, and balanced. This highlights the necessity of encouraging honest review practices within commerce ecosystems.

Multimedia formats increase persuasive power within review environments. Short form video reviews on TikTok Shop enable dynamic demonstration of product quality where motion visuals reflect authenticity more effectively than written text (Martiyanti *et al.*, 2024; Ibrahim & Noor, 2023). Zalora reviews featuring real outfit photos enhance decision clarity in fashion categories because physical representation aligns expectation accuracy. Similarly, Shopee reviews with measuring tape proof increase buyer trust regarding size accuracy (Rahman *et al.*, 2024; Natalia & Aprillia, 2025). As Generation Z prioritises visual authenticity, video integrated reviews and high resolution customer photos become critical decision drivers. Modern commerce platforms must therefore strengthen multimedia review inclusion to match sensory expectation standards. Furthermore, recency of review content also influences perception because newer feedback reflects updated product batches and current seller performance (Qin *et al.*, 2022; Rahim *et al.*, 2024). Review recency increases buyer confidence and shortens decision time, especially during flash sale events.

Consumer review perception plays an instrumental role in shaping online spending behaviour among Generation Z across modern digital commerce platforms such as Shopee, Lazada, TikTok Shop, Amazon, Shein, and Zalora. Review perception integrates credibility markers, emotional cues, review volume, multimedia authenticity,

and recency evaluation. The degree of influence grows stronger when information is detailed, realistic, and visually proven. Generation Z buyers do not make purchase decisions passively but critically assess review environment quality. This introduction establishes the need for deeper academic exploration into how review perception shapes consumer psychology. A structured investigation of review sentiment, content depth, visual cues, and perceived trust is required to understand how Generation Z constructs purchasing certainty. As online commerce continues expanding, clarity regarding review perception will guide platform development, business strategy formulation, and consumer education for sustainable digital marketplace engagement.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The introduction established that consumer review perception significantly shapes Generation Z online spending behaviour across modern digital commerce platforms such as Shopee, Lazada, TikTok Shop, Shein and Amazon. To strengthen theoretical grounding, a comprehensive literature review is necessary to trace how review perception has been conceptualised, how Generation Z responds to review stimuli, and which mechanisms within digital environments influence purchasing judgement. Review perception represents a synthesis of cognitive evaluation, emotional response and credibility judgement, meaning consumers do not react solely to text content but interpret review signals through imagery, volume, expression tone and reviewer authenticity. Recent research confirms that review systems function as decentralised information markets that substitute physical product inspection during online purchase decisions (Rahman & Said, 2025; Nguyen *et al.*, 2024). The following literature review is divided into five subthemes that align with the introduction and collectively support the conceptual foundation of review mediated spending behaviour among Generation Z.

2.1 Conceptual development of consumer review perception

Consumer review perception is defined as the cognitive and emotional interpretation of review content that shapes buyers' judgement during digital purchase decisions. It involves belief formation, risk reduction and expectation alignment when evaluating intangible product features online. Prior studies highlight that review

perception integrates message quality, numerical rating distribution, reviewer identity, emotional tone and media attachment into a holistic assessment pattern (Moghaddam & Nof, 2022; Abdullah *et al.*, 2025). Perception strength increases when review information reduces uncertainty and supports confirmation of purchase choice. Review perception has been classified into evaluative dimensions including information usefulness, diagnostic value, credibility intensity and perceived similarity with reviewer profile, which influence confidence development and purchase resolution (Chen *et al.*, 2022; Noor & Fauzi, 2023). In high involvement goods such as electronics, review perception becomes decisive because buyers rely heavily on peer information to compensate for absence of physical verification. Thus, review perception represents an interpretive mechanism that controls Generation Z purchase behaviour within e-commerce systems.

Theoretical development positions review perception as a mediator between public information and behavioural outcome. Online commerce involves probabilistic judgement where consumers estimate satisfaction likelihood before committing money. Reviews reduce uncertainty by supplying experiential evidence and comparative assessment that serves as cognitive support (Karim & Idris, 2022; Hashim *et al.*, 2023). Generation Z relies on crowd-based assessment because digital environments amplify social endorsement signals through visible rating scores and ranked review listings. Therefore, review perception converts collective experience into personal purchase confidence. The literature confirms that when perception is strong, purchase likelihood rises sharply, whereas doubtful perception leads to cart abandonment or platform exit (Lee *et al.*, 2023; Fang & Lee, 2024). Accordingly, review perception is a psychological filtration process that determines whether Generation Z proceeds from browsing to transaction.

2.2 Multimedia evidence and emotional processing in reviews

Generation Z consumers engage visually rather than text-dominant processing. Video reviews, images, unboxing clips and customer photography provide sensory simulation that increases authenticity and strengthens perceived trustworthiness. Social commerce platforms such as TikTok Shop and Shopee encourage multimedia submissions because visual content improves evaluation accuracy and reduces imagination gaps (Martiyanti *et al.*, 2024; Ibrahim & Noor, 2023). Emotional appraisal

theory suggests that visual stimuli trigger affective resonance faster than textual cues; therefore review photos showing real product features activate validation processes more effectively. Image framing, lighting quality, demonstration clarity and verbal narration in video reviews contribute to affective trust, resulting in quick decision making especially in fast-moving product categories (Rahman *et al.*, 2024; Natalia & Aprillia, 2025). Multimedia review perception is thus a multi sensory interpretation model, where Generation Z recognises realness through visibility, movement and authenticity cues.

Furthermore, emotional weight in multimedia content influences purchase intention. Studies reveal that emotionally expressive reviews with personal storytelling increase connection and perceived sincerity among Generation Z digital shoppers (Abdullah *et al.*, 2025; Latif *et al.*, 2023). Negative visual evidence generates stronger avoidance response than positive praise generates attraction, confirming loss-based asymmetry in review evaluation. A single image displaying product defect can outweigh numerous text-based compliments (Chen *et al.*, 2023; Ahn & Lee, 2024). Therefore, multimedia review perception carries high risk and high reward potential, shaping spending confidence based on visible proof. Review platforms must prioritise quality photo verification and video uploads to support transparent perception formation.

2.3 Review credibility mechanisms and trust formation

Review credibility determines whether Generation Z interprets review content positively or dismisses it as manipulation. Credibility arises from reviewer identity visibility, writing structure, emotional balance, product proof and alignment between claims and visuals (Cheah & Wong, 2023; Bakar *et al.*, 2024). When buyers detect repetitive language, identical posting patterns or suspicious rating inflation, credibility collapses and purchase intention declines. Evidence shows that credibility markers such as verified purchase badges and profile transparency significantly increase review acceptance (Nguyen *et al.*, 2024; Kumar *et al.*, 2024). Trust is therefore an emergent property dependent on system integrity rather than message volume alone.

Credibility failures weaken review perception even if sentiment appears positive. Generation Z identifies manipulation cues faster than older users because they possess digital literacy from early adolescence (Suyanti & Zai, 2025; Ho & Lau, 2023). When credibility is damaged, consumers seek validation through cross-platform triangulation

such as Reddit, Telegram or YouTube review searches. Credibility therefore distinguishes persuasive review perception from rejected discourse. Without credibility reinforcement structures, commerce platforms cannot sustain influence over purchase outcomes. Thus, review credibility is foundational to long-term digital commerce resilience.

2.4 Review volume, consensus and social endorsement

Review volume operates as a popularity metric reflecting mass acceptance and social safety. Generation Z interprets high volume as proof of reliability and low volume as uncertainty, especially for unfamiliar brands (Ridwan *et al.*, 2025; Qiu *et al.*, 2024). Volume perception correlates with purchase acceleration because numerical validation reduces decision fatigue and increases confidence. During flash sales in Shopee or Lazada, high review count triggers impulse buying within seconds. Volume-perception literature confirms that social consensus is a shortcut for quality inference (Rasyidah *et al.*, 2024; Wahid *et al.*, 2023). Products with thousands of reviews outperform those with few regardless of intrinsic quality. Review volume therefore functions as heuristic credibility reinforcement.

However, review volume effectiveness depends on temporal distribution. Recency of reviews strengthens perception because recent feedback reflects present quality rather than historical variation (Qin *et al.*, 2022; Rahim *et al.*, 2024). Outdated reviews lose relevance in fast-changing market cycles. Generation Z prefers latest reviews within ninety days because they indicate real-time reliability. Volume perception combined with recency thus produces a dual-stage trust accelerator, positioning review systems as predictive purchase engines. The literature suggests that high volume plus high recency equals high conversion probability. This demonstrates strong harmony with introduction arguments regarding social endorsement effects.

2.5 Review perception as a determinant of spending behaviour

Studies unanimously conclude that review perception is a decisive antecedent of Generation Z online spending behaviour. Cognitive evaluation, emotional trust and visual confirmation interact to induce purchase intention, thus demonstrating multi-layer causal influence (Sari *et al.*, 2024; Huwaida, 2024). Review perception determines spending

amount, product selection and repeat-purchase loyalty. When perception is strong, buyers engage confidently, share feedback and sustain marketplace growth. When weak, abandonment occurs even under price discount. This behavioural pattern validates introduction claims regarding review power in digital commerce.

Furthermore, review perception extends beyond transaction finalisation by influencing post-purchase satisfaction. Positive perception correlates with favourable product expectation alignment and advocacy behaviour through social sharing (Zhang & Xu, 2024; Lim *et al.*, 2023). Negative perception correlates with refund requests, seller switching and negative e-WOM. Therefore, review perception is not merely informational but economic. It regulates transaction frequency, brand health and platform competitiveness. As Generation Z dominates global ecommerce demand, understanding review-perception architecture is vital for sustaining digital market ecosystems.

3 ISSUES IN CONSUMER REVIEW PERCEPTION AND GENERATION Z ONLINE SPENDING BEHAVIOUR

Understanding consumer review perception among Generation Z requires more than identifying behavioural influences, as it also demands examination of the complications that arise within online review ecosystems. Modern digital commerce platforms such as Shopee, Lazada, TikTok Shop, Shein and Amazon provide accessibility and transparency through review streams, yet these same mechanisms introduce structural weaknesses that can distort decision quality. Issues emerge from credibility uncertainty, emotional dominance, multimedia over-reliance, information overload and algorithmic filtering that shapes visibility outcomes. While reviews strengthen buyer confidence, they simultaneously create vulnerability when authenticity is compromised or feedback volume becomes unmanageable. These issues are closely connected to the findings presented in the literature review, reinforcing the need to evaluate how review perception can both empower and mislead Generation Z. The following subtopics discuss five core issues that require academic focus and platform level intervention.

3.1 Credibility vulnerability and review manipulation risk

The most visible issue within review perception environments is authenticity vulnerability. As consumer spending increasingly depends on user reviews rather than product inspection, review credibility becomes fragile. Fake ratings, bot-driven commentary and incentivised praise threaten trust stability by distorting buyer judgement. Generation Z detects suspicious patterns but remains susceptible when manipulation is subtle or distributed across multiple reviewers (Nguyen *et al.*, 2024; Chin *et al.*, 2024). Fake positivity also increases purchasing regret due to expectation mismatch after delivery. Platforms often lack adequate screening to distinguish genuine feedback from incentivised endorsement, especially during flash promotions and discount events (Norazmi & Halim, 2023; Faizal *et al.*, 2022). This creates decision noise, misleading product perception and sales inflation without true value alignment (Khoo *et al.*, 2023; Ali *et al.*, 2024). If credibility risk escalates further, review ecosystems may collapse under distrust. This demands system-level verification strategies.

Fake-review industries are now commercially organised, selling prepackaged five-star feedback to thousands of product listings, resulting in artificially inflated ratings that deceive uncritical shoppers. Generation Z often conducts cross-platform verification, yet rapid shopping patterns limit time for long comparison sessions (Hamzah & Idris, 2023; Liew *et al.*, 2024). Once trust is broken, perception damage extends to platform reliability, not solely to sellers. Studies also indicate that fake-negative attacks occur when competing brands downgrade ratings to suppress rivals, causing additional marketplace distortion (Fernando & Shah, 2023; Siti & Rahman, 2024). These issues reinforce the necessity for machine-driven credibility filtering systems capable of detecting manipulation through semantic anomalies. Without structural correction, perception-based shopping cannot remain sustainable.

3.2 Information overload and cognitive decision strain

Another issue synchronised with review perception theory is information saturation. Generation Z processes multiple reviews, multimedia uploads, bar charts and summary ratings simultaneously. Although data variety supports evaluation, excessive review density produces cognitive fatigue and choice paralysis (Sulaiman *et al.*, 2023;

Rahim *et al.*, 2024). When too many reviews appear conflicting, shoppers struggle to identify signal from noise. Cognitive load increases further when review length escalates or when mixed sentiment clusters coexist under similar star ratings (Chee & Tan, 2023; Hasan & Firdaus, 2024). Review scrolling consumes time, delaying purchase completion and prompting abandonment. High-volume commercial ecosystems, such as Shopee fashion racks or Shein catalogue streams, intensify overload through continuous review contribution from thousands of customers (Hassan *et al.*, 2025; Karim & Salleh, 2023).

Decision strain influences spending behaviour because overwhelmed buyers depend on heuristic shortcuts rather than structured evaluation. They may select the top-listed product not due to careful assessment but due to mental relief patterns (Yap *et al.*, 2025; Firdaus & Aynuddin, 2023). This behaviour weakens rational market participation because purchase quality becomes dependent on efficiency preference rather than accuracy alignment. Overload also reduces review reading depth, causing misinterpretation of product realism. Although information in abundance is considered strength in digital commerce, without structural filtering it converts into disadvantage. Systems must support review grouping, sentiment clustering and multi-criteria filtering to reduce cognitive strain.

Repeated exposure to overloaded review streams also develops desensitisation where buyers stop reading thoroughly and rely solely on star counts. This leads to superficial perception, missing critical defect reviews placed down thread order (Ridzuan *et al.*, 2024; Paulsen & Nordin, 2023). Generation Z shopping rhythm prefers speed, thus overload conflicts with behavioural preference. Without intervention, review richness becomes counterproductive, diminishing perception quality. Moderated review segmentation is required to maintain decision precision.

3.3 Emotional overshadowing and sentiment bias distortion

Emotional dominance within review interpretation presents the third issue. Generation Z demonstrates high emotional susceptibility to negative imagery, complaint tone and dissatisfaction storytelling. Studies confirm that negative stimuli exert greater influence than positive reinforcement, causing heightened risk aversion (Chow *et al.*, 2023; Izzati & Haris, 2024). A single complaint featuring broken quality proof may outweigh multiple praise entries lacking photographs. Emotional review processing

therefore distorts product evaluation logic. Sentiment-driven behaviour is amplified by visuals, especially TikTok review videos that dramatise defects for audience attention (Nadia & Yusuf, 2025; Lau *et al.*, 2023). Negative viral content spreads faster than balanced feedback, shaping perception at population scale, not individual scale.

Emotional overshadowing leads to reactionary spending decisions. Consumers sometimes avoid products based on isolated negative cases even when broader sentiment is positive. This contradicts rational evaluation where decision should reflect statistical majority. Because Generation Z values relatability, emotional language within reviews influences empathy activation and subsequent purchase hesitation (Marina *et al.*, 2024; Daud & Mahmud, 2023). Some reviewers intentionally dramatise faults for social engagement, triggering wider product rejection beyond proportion. Emotional bias therefore transforms review perception into affective judgement rather than analytical response. Academic work highlights the need to distinguish emotive exaggeration from realistic critique (Jasmine & Qadir, 2023; Lim & Farez, 2024).

Positive emotional bias also causes impulsive buying, particularly on TikTok live sessions where real-time persuasion encourages excitement-driven decision cycles (Kamal *et al.*, 2025; Sari & Purnama, 2024). Emotional influence can benefit or harm depending on review intent. Balanced regulatory moderation is required to neutralise distortion.

3.4 Visual review dependence and sensory trust misalignment

A rising issue in literature concerns sensory reliance within review environments. Generation Z depends heavily on photographs, videos, unboxing scenes and before-after comparisons. While this builds authenticity, visuals can also mislead through staged lighting, filter enhancement, lens distortion and camera angle manipulation (Naim *et al.*, 2023; Hilmi & Johan, 2025). Some sellers provide staged positive visuals to overshadow neutral or negative feedback, resulting in aesthetic-based perception rather than performance-based evaluation. TikTok product showcases often feature scripted demonstration clips that exaggerate benefits compared to real user outcome (Rafiq *et al.*, 2024; Chong & Low, 2023). When visual representation misaligns with delivered product, expectation conflict triggers dissatisfaction even if product quality is reasonable.

Visual mimicry is another concern. Review factories reuse identical media across products, fabricating false authenticity (Yeoh *et al.*, 2024; Subramaniam & Kali, 2025). Buyers may accept manufactured proof because it matches visual expectation despite lacking originality. This visual trust misalignment reduces accuracy of purchase decisions. Because Generation Z strongly favours multimedia review credibility, misleading stimuli leads to perception distortion. The literature reports increasing occurrences of review filtering where platforms highlight top media items and suppress ordinary feedback, reinforcing skewed interpretation rather than balanced realism (Jamal & Roslan, 2023; Safuan *et al.*, 2024).

Visual sensitivity accelerates decision speed without proportional depth of analysis. Photographic appeal outweighs substance review, especially among lifestyle buyers prioritising aesthetic resonance. Without media authenticity protocols, visual dominance becomes reliability threat. Transparency is required through reverse-image scanning, watermark tagging and media-origin verification.

3.5 Algorithmic bias, engagement weighting and visibility inequity

The final issue relates to algorithmic filtering within digital review platforms. Review ranking systems use engagement weighting such as likes, helpful votes and reply interactions to surface top reviews. While efficient, this introduces visibility inequity because early reviews gain more exposure and influence regardless of quality (Zawawi *et al.*, 2023; Farid & Ghani, 2025). Late but more accurate reviews remain unseen. Algorithmic reinforcement strengthens dominant sentiments even when minority feedback is more informative. This leads to amplification of trending perception rather than balanced representation.

Algorithms also prioritise products with high conversion and high review volume, creating winner-take-market dynamics. New sellers struggle to compete even with superior product quality because review scarcity lowers visibility (Tong & Ariff, 2024; Pertiwi & Hanafi, 2025). Review perception therefore becomes output of algorithmic structure rather than actual product performance. Reviewer demographics also bias perception because reviewers representing minority categories receive less attention, weakening inclusiveness of review-driven commerce. Generation Z is therefore

influenced by structural design of review mechanisms rather than pure content evaluation (Hazim *et al.*, 2024; Foong & Wong, 2023).

Algorithmic transparency is needed to prevent perception consolidation errors. Platforms must disclose ranking logic, sentiment weighting and data prioritisation to preserve information equity. Without algorithmic fairness, review perception continues reflecting systemic preference rather than total consumer experience. This threatens competitive integrity and biases economic outcomes.

4 INTERPRETING THE CONSEQUENCES OF REVIEW PERCEPTION ON GENERATION Z ONLINE SPENDING BEHAVIOUR

This discussion section expands the analytical implications of review perception among Generation Z within the context of digital marketplace behaviour presented earlier. The previous issues section identified structural weaknesses in credibility, information overload, emotional bias, multimedia dominance and algorithmic visibility. Discussion must therefore explore how these weaknesses translate into purchase outcomes, marketplace psychology, platform sustainability and consumer welfare. As Generation Z continues to dominate online market participation, understanding behavioural consequences becomes critical for academic, commercial and regulatory actors. Review perception forms not only a behavioural trigger but a behavioural amplifier that molds spending rhythm and brand relationships. The following five sub-discussions provide structured interpretive analysis aligned with the previously identified issues.

4.1 Review authenticity as a determinant of market trust and behavioural continuity

Discussion of credibility vulnerability suggests that perceived authenticity remains the strongest predictor of purchase continuity among Generation Z. When reviews appear genuine, visual proof aligns with expectation, and narrative content reflects reality, buyers trust the product and platform. This trust accelerates conversion decisions and reduces evaluation hesitation (Nguyen *et al.*, 2024; Chin *et al.*, 2024). However, when manipulation indicators emerge such as repeated wording, unexplained rating spikes or stock-photo imagery, consumers disengage rapidly. Trust collapse leads

to cart abandonment, external verification searching and competing platform shift. In the long term, sustained credibility loss deteriorates marketplace loyalty and compresses spending volume (Khoo *et al.*, 2023; Ali *et al.*, 2024). This aligns with observations that consumers anchor purchase confidence not to advertisement but to social proof stability (Hamzah & Idris, 2023; Norazmi & Halim, 2023).

Furthermore, review authenticity influences perception of brand ethics. Generation Z often associates truthful review space with responsible seller identity. Brands benefiting from artificially inflated reviews risk reputation damage when consumers discover misrepresentation (Fernando & Shah, 2023; Siti & Rahman, 2024). Academic scholarship agrees that market trust is not restored easily after deception is detected. Trust breach triggers negative electronic word of mouth escalation, causing long-term consumer avoidance even after quality correction is attempted (Rahman & Said, 2025; Abdullah *et al.*, 2025). Trust therefore behaves as a fragile currency in review-driven commerce. Mechanisms that strengthen authenticity such as verified buyer tagging, AI screening and semantic anomaly detection contribute to market resilience. Platforms that implement authentication protocols may experience lower misinformation impact and more stable digital consumption cycles (Faizal *et al.*, 2022; Liew *et al.*, 2024).

4.2 Cognitive overload and decision fatigue as spending suppressors

The issue of information overload directly influences how Generation Z arrives at purchase closure. Excessive review volume extends decision time, intensifies comparison loops and increases uncertainty. Studies indicate that when cognitive burden becomes high, consumers rely on simplified cues such as star average rather than content interpretation (Sulaiman *et al.*, 2023; Hasan & Firdaus, 2024). This selective attention reduces analytical evaluation quality, increasing risk of misalignment between expectation and product reality. Consumers may choose popular options not due to suitability but due to mental exhaustion. This behaviour aligns with decision avoidance theory, suggesting buyers prefer processing relief over accuracy when burden threshold is exceeded (Ridzuan *et al.*, 2024; Paulsen & Nordin, 2023).

Overload suppresses spending frequency. When evaluation becomes tiring, consumers postpone purchase or exit the platform entirely. In marketplaces like Shopee and Shein where thousands of reviews accumulate rapidly, cognitive saturation leads to

shallow interpretation where buyers read only top visible entries and ignore deeper insight including warnings (Chee & Tan, 2023; Karim & Salleh, 2023). Marketplace design therefore shapes consumption psychology. If review structure remains unfiltered, buyers shift from high-analysis to instinctive shortcuts. This pattern mirrors behavioural economics that links mental energy with decision efficiency (Rahim *et al.*, 2024; Yap *et al.*, 2025). A balanced review environment supports clarity. Platform architecture such as sentiment segmentation, highlight indexing and keyword grouping would reduce overload risk.

Cognitive fatigue also increases reliance on external influencers such as popular TikTok reviewers. When platform review space overwhelms, buyers seek simplified summary judgement elsewhere. While efficient, this transfers critical thinking to third parties, creating new vulnerability concerning accuracy and bias (Hassan *et al.*, 2025; Firdaus & Aynuddin, 2023). Therefore, overload not only delays purchase but reshapes information authority distribution.

4.3 Emotional bias and the distortion of rational purchase behaviour

Emotional dominance is an expected pattern among Generation Z due to high media consumption and visual immersion. Negative reviews exert more persuasive weight than positive approval due to loss aversion. A single defect picture can psychologically outweigh numerous satisfactory remarks, shaping risk perception disproportionately (Chow *et al.*, 2023; Izzati & Haris, 2024). While protective against fraud, emotional bias also reduces rationality. Buyers may reject good products due to isolated incidents lacking statistical relevance. This results in market inefficiency where quality items remain undervalued due to emotional contagion (Nadia & Yusuf, 2025; Lau *et al.*, 2023).

Emotional amplification increases under real-time environments such as TikTok Shop live sessions where reactions spread instantly through comment streams. Excitement-based impulse purchasing emerges when positive emotional momentum is high, yet panic-based withdrawal occurs when negative evidence circulates visually (Marina *et al.*, 2024; Daud & Mahmud, 2023). The discussion shows that emotional energy becomes a market driver that competes with rational product evaluation. When emotion surpasses cognition, review perception no longer reflects quality but amplified

sentiment. This confirms earlier findings that emotional encoding shapes spending behaviour (Jasmine & Qadir, 2023; Lim & Farez, 2024).

Additionally, emotional approach shapes brand loyalty among Gen Z. Affective authenticity increases attachment and brand recall, leading to long-term purchasing relationships. However, negative emotional imprint produces reverse loyalty where consumers avoid not only product but entire platform (Kamal *et al.*, 2025; Sari & Purnama, 2024). Emotional bias therefore plays dual roles: empowering decision safety and distorting market fairness.

4.4 Visual dependency and sensory overshadowing in E-commerce evaluation

Visual review dependence supports fast trust formation yet introduces perception imprecision. Generation Z favours photographic and video-based confirmation because visual detail provides near-sensory evaluation. However, staged lighting, selective framing and edited media can present misleading representation (Naim *et al.*, 2023; Hilmi & Johan, 2025). When visual appeal replaces content critique, decision quality reduces. Consumers may approve product due to aesthetic attractiveness rather than function-based review depth. Visual dominance thus introduces sensory oversimplification of review comprehension.

Visual-first judgement is particularly strong in fashion, accessories and beauty categories. Zalora users prioritise customer outfit photos to judge texture and fit. Shopee buyers examine hand-held measurement proof and TikTok users observe on-screen colour accuracy. While beneficial, this creates vulnerability because visual similarity does not guarantee durability or material integrity (Rafiq *et al.*, 2024; Chong & Low, 2023). When actual product arrives inferior to visual portrayal, dissatisfaction emerges despite strong pre-purchase perception. This gap supports prior argument that visual misalignment escalates expectation shock (Yeoh *et al.*, 2024; Subramaniam & Kali, 2025).

Visual exaggeration also spreads virally because short-format content rewards dramatic impact. Content creators seeking visibility often magnify flaws or elevate beauty artificially, making visual trust unstable (Jamal & Roslan, 2023; Safuan *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, platforms must regulate visual authenticity using watermark verification,

duplicate detection and original-media validation. Sensory dependence should complement but not replace multi-dimensional review appraisal.

4.5 Algorithmic reinforcement and marketplace equity distortion

Algorithmic filtering presents deep influence within review perception environments. When reviews with high engagement are prioritised, top comments influence population-level purchase direction disproportionately. This marginalises later reviews that might hold more accurate or detailed insight (Zawawi *et al.*, 2023; Farid & Ghani, 2025). Algorithmic weight therefore constructs perception order, shaping what Generation Z believes rather than reflecting actual consumer distribution. Visibility inequity deepens when products with high review volume continually dominate, suppressing newly entered sellers with equal or better quality (Tong & Ariff, 2024; Pertiwi & Hanafi, 2025).

Marketplace fairness depends on algorithmic transparency. If ranking logic remains undisclosed, buyers cannot distinguish popularity from algorithmic privilege. This reduces marketplace diversity, reinforcing dominant brands and weakening competition (Hazim *et al.*, 2024; Foong & Wong, 2023). In extreme cases, review perception becomes system-engineered rather than user-created, violating authenticity of consumer autonomy. Algorithmic systems require balanced weighting metrics involving recency, credibility validation, image proof quality and contextual relevance, not merely helpfulness votes (Yusof *et al.*, 2025; McKinnon & Jamin, 2018).

Algorithmic reinforcement also influences psychological priming. Generation Z is more likely to believe what appears first, not what is most accurate. This links interface arrangement with cognitive framing, aligning digital commerce with behavioural psychology. Fair review equalisation strategies would protect marketplace inclusivity and reduce reinforcement of partial truth streams. Therefore, system transparency is not optional but ethically necessary.

5 SUGGESTIONS AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING REVIEW PERCEPTION AND GENERATION Z TRUST IN DIGITAL COMMERCE

Understanding the implications of consumer review perception on Generation Z online spending behaviour highlights a need for proactive intervention rather than passive observation. The Discussion section indicated that credibility vulnerability, decision fatigue, emotional distortion, multimedia dependency and algorithmic favouritism are active threats within review ecosystems. Therefore, strategic advancement must support ethical, analytical and cognitive strengthening of review environments. Suggestions provided in this section integrate practical policy actions with theoretical development pathways to ensure academic and industrial relevance. The objective is to equip commerce platforms, governance bodies and research communities with structured enhancement measures that reinforce authenticity, balance emotional stimulus, reduce processing burden and ensure visibility equity for all reviewers and products. Five strategic suggestion clusters are proposed, providing a scalable improvement framework for digital marketplace sustainability.

5.1 Strengthening review authentication and trust infrastructure

Review credibility determines the foundation of future digital purchasing behaviour. Platforms should enforce verified-buyer identification, fraud-detection analytics and traceable feedback histories. Advanced filtering using linguistic forensic models and pattern anomaly detection would reduce review manipulation, including paid reviews and sabotage-downrating among competitors (Nguyen *et al.*, 2024; Chin *et al.*, 2024; Faizal *et al.*, 2022). Blockchain-anchored identity validation could ensure that each review is traceable to a real transaction; this prevents duplication or review exports across unrelated product listings (Kamal *et al.*, 2025; Khoo *et al.*, 2023). Stronger trust architecture enhances confidence for Generation Z, who equate authenticity with digital safety. Research indicates that trust-driven review systems increase conversion rate, reduce return rate and promote long-term loyalty (Rahman & Said, 2025; Abdullah *et al.*, 2025).

Platforms must establish review-reporting mechanisms where consumers can flag suspicious content for manual or automated investigation (Ali *et al.*, 2024; Liew *et al.*, 2024). Reviewer profile transparency including purchase timeline and usage duration improves interpretive reliability. Ethical labelling must distinguish sponsored endorsements from organic testimonials as required by marketplace integrity laws (Fernando & Shah, 2023; Siti & Rahman, 2024). This aligns with previous Issues findings that authenticity instability weakens marketplace stability. Strengthening authentication safeguards the review environment and elevates quality of decision-making.

Academic scholars should contribute by modelling trust predictors such as linguistic honesty markers, reviewer-identity entropy and visual authenticity signatures. These models will assist commerce platforms in developing credibility-weighted recommendation engines that serve trustworthy review sequences first. Sustainability depends not only on technical detection but also cultural expectation-building among consumers where truthful reviewing is rewarded socially and structurally.

5.2 Reducing cognitive overload through intelligent review structuring and filtering

Information overload suppresses purchase clarity and diverts consumers toward impulse shortcuts. To resolve this, platforms must restructure review layout to support cognitive indexing rather than random accumulation. Sentiment clustering, keyword highlighting, summary extraction and AI-driven topic grouping would reduce reading volume while increasing informational density (Sulaiman *et al.*, 2023; Hasan & Firdaus, 2024). Sorted segments such as “material quality”, “delivery accuracy”, “size fit”, “durability results” help Generation Z scan efficiently. This reduces fatigue-driven abandonment and supports rational evaluation patterns (Ridzuan *et al.*, 2024; Paulsen & Nordin, 2023).

E-commerce systems should introduce filter buttons allowing users to select review subsets such as only photo reviews, only newbies’ reviews, only critical feedback or only same-size profile reviews. Visual dashboards summarising sentiment progression over time could reflect product consistency and batch variation (Chee & Tan, 2023; Karim & Salleh, 2023). Research confirms that cognitive load drops significantly when complex review streams are transformed into structured information blocks (Rahim *et al.*,

2024; Yap *et al.*, 2025). This supports our previous Discussion conclusion that overload pushes consumers into shallow reading.

Future scholarship must model cognitive-threshold indicators to determine the optimal review-to-evaluation ratio. Studies may test how Generation Z attention span interacts with review length, screen layout and multimedia sequencing. A knowledge-based design reinforces psychological comfort and encourages informed spending behaviour.

5.3 Emotional regulation measures for balanced visual and narrative review environments

Emotional dominance in review perception leads to exaggerated influence of single negative cases and extreme persuasion by positive viral content. Commerce systems require emotional moderation policies to reduce sentiment distortion. One approach involves layered presentation where neutral summary appears before emotional testimonies, allowing rational framing prior to emotive engagement (Chow *et al.*, 2023; Izzati & Haris, 2024). Review heat-maps can visually indicate sentiment distribution to prevent overreaction to isolated dramatic content (Nadia & Yusuf, 2025; Lau *et al.*, 2023). Emotional indicators such as anger-tone classifiers or sarcasm-intensity scales could guide viewers on interpretive caution.

Platforms should promote balanced reviews by rewarding critical but fair evaluations rather than only positive praise. Gamified credibility points given to objective evaluators encourage honesty and reduce emotional exaggeration culture. Community moderation groups can review extreme posts and classify them into evidence-backed problem categories or emotional-rant categories (Marina *et al.*, 2024; Daud & Mahmud, 2023). This protects consumers from bias-based withdrawal and fosters accountable feedback discourse. Discussion previously showed emotional contagion drives irrational market rejection and panic-shared refusal. These intervention strategies counteract such escalation.

Academically, behavioural modelling may investigate emotional-weight thresholds and identify the point at which sentiment begins distorting reason. Findings could guide designers toward emotionally-neutral interface anchoring such as truth-first, feeling-second narrative order.

5.4 Enhancing multimedia authenticity to align sensory expectation with product reality

Visual trust remains double-edged: it speeds decision-making yet risks deceptive imagery. To strengthen authenticity, platforms should enforce original-photo verification, anti-filter recognition and reverse-image search engines to detect duplicated visuals from external sources (Naim *et al.*, 2023; Hilmi & Johan, 2025). Review submission tools may require multi-angle imaging, timestamp imprinting and context-in-frame shots for accepted visibility. This maintains truth fidelity and prevents glamourised advertising masquerading as customer proof. When visual representation reflects real-world attributes, expectation clashes reduce and satisfaction increases (Rafiq *et al.*, 2024; Chong & Low, 2023).

Review videos should include disclaimers regarding lighting conditions, device resolution and demonstration context. TikTok Shop review panels must differentiate between creator-marketed features and average-user outcomes (Yeoh *et al.*, 2024; Subramaniam & Kali, 2025). This responds to Discussion findings that visual exaggeration spreads faster than neutral information, producing perception skew. Equity in multimedia authenticity will stabilise trust cycles and protect marketplace reputation.

Researchers are encouraged to measure visual-trust elasticity through eye-tracking based assessment to quantify how much deviation between visual expectation and product truth consumers tolerate before dissatisfaction triggers. These insights may lead to new perceptual authenticity metrics that strengthen multimedia evaluation systems.

5.5 Reforming algorithmic weighting to ensure visibility equity and balanced influence

Algorithm-controlled visibility strongly shapes review influence and spending outcomes. A fair suggestion strategy must include transparent ranking frameworks where recent, credible and context-rich reviews receive appropriate positioning regardless of early engagement bias (Zawawi *et al.*, 2023; Farid & Ghani, 2025). Review-rotation systems could ensure visibility diversity, preventing algorithmic monopoly of early-comment anchors. Inclusion metrics should elevate underrepresented reviewer

demographics to avoid opinion dominance by a narrow segment of consumers (Tong & Ariff, 2024; Pertiwi & Hanafi, 2025).

Platforms can adopt fairness algorithms that calculate credibility index, recency score, media authenticity weight and linguistic detail to produce dynamic review exposure. Such multi-attribute aggregation would weaken star-count dictatorship and encourage deeper reading. Aligning with the Issues and Discussion sections, algorithm bias must be understood as structural not accidental. Increasing transparency requires that commerce systems publish ranking logic and allow user adjustment preferences (Hazim *et al.*, 2024; Foong & Wong, 2023). This expands user agency and prevents perception construction by platform default.

Future academic direction should involve simulating ranking outcomes under different weight parameters. Scholars might test how visibility ratios influence revenue allocation, brand survival and consumer welfare. Marketplace fairness ultimately depends on algorithmic equality.

6 CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that consumer review perception plays an integral role in shaping Generation Z online spending behaviour across modern digital commerce environments. The analysis has shown that this demographic segment interprets review information through lenses of credibility, multimedia support, emotional tonality, review volume and recency, all of which influence purchase certainty. As transactional decisions now occur without physical product interaction, reviews function as both evidence substitutes and cognitive anchors that reduce perceived risk. The findings indicate that Generation Z does not behave passively when interacting with review systems but actively analyses authenticity signals, verifies content through visual and narrative cues and interprets review environments as truth filters for digital product reality. This confirms that consumer review ecosystems operate as informal knowledge markets that regulate spending intention and trust development.

The Issues section revealed that while review perception empowers decision making, it simultaneously carries structural weaknesses that may distort judgement. Key challenges identified include credibility manipulation, information overload, emotional amplification, visual exaggeration and algorithmic influence. These weaknesses

demonstrate that the review ecosystem is not neutral but requires governance, structural refinement and technological oversight. The Discussion section further expanded these implications by highlighting how trust instability, cognitive fatigue, sentiment bias, sensory imbalance and ranking inequality influence market outcomes. Generation Z spending patterns shift in response to the integrity of review systems, meaning perception quality determines transactional confidence, repurchase potential and marketplace growth sustainability.

Following these findings, the Suggestion section outlined practical and theoretical improvement pathways. Strengthening authentication systems, preventing overload through cognitive structuring, moderating emotional content, validating multimedia authenticity and reforming algorithmic weighting form the foundation for a more reliable and equitable review environment. These recommendations emphasize that review platforms must evolve from passive repositories of user opinion into actively governed information structures. Future studies should build on these models by applying experimental and cross demographic comparisons to examine perception sensitivity variations across cultural and product contexts. Scholars may also expand this work through longitudinal tracking of review trust and spending trends, particularly as artificial intelligence and video based evaluation formats continue to rise.

The significance of review perception in Generation Z online spending is clear and deeply embedded within digital consumption culture. Reviews shape confidence, risk interpretation, emotional resonance and purchase momentum, thereby functioning as behavioural catalysts rather than supplementary information. For commerce platforms to maintain long term engagement, authenticity assurance, balanced visibility, visual accuracy and truth consistency must be prioritised. Strong review governance not only protects consumer welfare but reinforces economic integrity across digital markets. As Generation Z advances toward majority buying power, the sustainability of digital commerce will depend on review environments that are credible, structured and emotionally stable. This research therefore contributes academically, methodologically and practically to the ongoing understanding of digital consumption psychology and will benefit future research, platform policy development and industry adaptation.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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