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Research Article

The Relationship of Negative Fake Online Reviews with Customer Product Trust and Product Perception

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ABSTRACT

Consumer reviews are important sources of information for purchase decisions in online marketplaces. The increasing number of negative fake reviews – false or exaggerated comments that are intended to damage a product or business – raises questions regarding the relationship between them and customer product trust and product perception. The present study used a quantitative correlational design to examine these relationships among 337 university students in Cebu City, Philippines who purchased products online at least once a month. Perceptions of negative fake reviews, customer product trust and product perception was measured by a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics and simple linear regression were applied to analyze the data. Respondents generally concurred on the existence of negative fake reviews that can be harmful and difficult to differentiate from authentic reviews. Regression analysis revealed that negative fake review perception was a significant predictor of customer product trust ($R^2 = 0.26$) and product perception ($R^2 = 0.28$). The findings reveal that the perceptions of negative fake reviews are significantly linked to consumers' trust-based reactions and their assessments of product quality, dependability and worth. The findings emphasize the significance of review authentication, credibility indicators and consumer digital proficiency in reinforcing the integrity of online marketplaces.

Keywords: *Consumer behavior, Customer product trust, Negative fake reviews, Online consumer reviews, Online marketplace, Product perception, Quantitative correlational study*

Introduction

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Digital marketplaces have become important commercial environments where consumers can conveniently access a wide range of products. Consumer decisions are influenced by online reviews in that, in these digital environments, online reviews have become a primary source of information for consumers. Since customers won't be able to see products up close, they rely heavily on reviews to evaluate their quality, reliability, and value. Yet the use of reviews is growing, and with it the worry of deceptive or fake reviews — that is, content crafted intentionally to deceive potential buyers. According to Thilagavathi et al. (2024), such fake reviews weaken the credibility and fairness of the digital marketplace.

Fake negative reviews, which are described as false or exaggerated negative experiences created to harm a product or business, are, and have historically been, a very damaging type of manipulation (Huang et al., 2023; Lim et al., 2025). Such deceptive comments warp consumer view, generate uncertainty and can ruin a brand's reputation, especially for small businesses that are largely dependent on online presence. While platforms try to detect and remove manipulated reviews, many stay visible to consumers, causing purchase behavior. Also, it is found that competitors frequently upload negative fake reviews to undermine competitors' firms (Luca & Zervas, 2016; Zhuang et al., 2018).

Consumer trust and consumer perception of a product can be affected by fake negative reviews. Trust is needed in online transactions as people are more likely to buy a product if they trust the product or the platform selling it (McKnight et al., 2011). The problem is that manipulated reviews can cause consumers to doubt the trustworthiness of online reviews (Huang et al., 2023; Menfors & Fernstedt, 2015). Fake negative reviews are also a way of judging a product's quality. The presence of misleading information can lead to a negative perception of the product or even to a decision not to buy it (Xia et al., 2025). But consumers may not be responding solely to what they see online. Gonzales et al. (2026) likewise studied the university students in Cebu City and revealed that psychological triggers and content-related factors were more related to impulsive

buying than just exposure to social media advertising. Thus, exposure to online content is only part of the story. How consumers interpret what they see may also influence their response.

While there is a plethora of research on online reviews in general, little is known about the relationship between negative fake reviews, and customer product trust and product perception, both of which are strong predictors of consumer behavior (Sahut et al., 2024; Gandhi et al., 2025). This gap implies that greater awareness of the impact of harmful review manipulation in online marketplaces should be undertaken (Sahut et al., 2024; Yin et al., 2025). Therefore, this study investigates the association of negative fake reviews with customer product trust and product perception in online marketplaces. In exploring the relationship between fake, inaccurate criticism effects to consumer beliefs, loss of confidence in products or platforms, or even product quality judgments. Its findings will also help companies, Internet platforms and consumers to be able to notice the implications of deceptive reviews and thus work out ways in which people can trust and shop more in any online marketplace.

The research questions guiding this study were: (1) What is the level of respondents' agreement regarding negative fake review perception? (2) What is the level of respondents' agreement regarding customer product trust? (3) What is the level of respondents' agreement regarding product perception? (4) Is there a significant relationship between negative fake review perception and customer product trust? (5) Is there a significant relationship between negative fake review perception and product perception? In order to answer these questions, the null hypotheses of the study were tested: (1) There is no significant relationship between negative fake review perception and customer product trust. (2) There is no significant relationship between negative fake review perception and product perception.

Figure 1 presents Negative Fake Review Perception as the predictor variable and Customer Product Trust and Product Perception as the two outcome variables examined in the study. The directional arrows represent the predictive relationships tested

between Negative Fake Review Perception and each outcome variable.

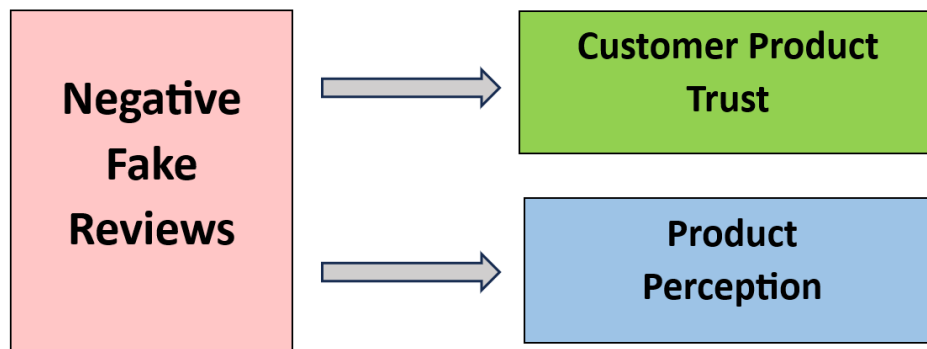


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Relationship Among Negative Fake Reviews, Customer Product Trust, and Product Perception

Customer Product Trust and Product Perception are treated as separate outcome variables in the model. Each is examined independently in relation to Negative Fake Review Perception through simple linear regression.

Material and Methods

Research Design and Respondents

In this study, the quantitative correlational design was used to find the relationship between negative fake online reviews, customer product trust and product perception. Data were collected through structured survey of 337 university students in Cebu City, Philippines who bought online at least once a month. College students were chosen as subjects as they are active consumers online and often use the digital channels for buying (Al Asheq et al., 2022). Students who were available and willing to participate were accessed by convenience sampling. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis to determine the relationships between the variables.

Instruments

The questionnaire in this study composed several sections with fake negative review experience of university students, customer product trust and product perception due to fake negative reviews (each one of five item question items), reflecting different aspects of these variables. The scales demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values of .8401 for Negative Fake

Reviews, .9218 for Customer Product Trust, and .9392 for Product Perception.

The items were included on the section of the survey "Fake Negative Reviews" to assess respondents' perceptions around deceptive or embellished negative feedback. This indicates some more common signs of fake reviews that were found in earlier researches, like the language being exaggerated or over-emotional, rumors like phrases and not being the same as a credible review (White, 2025; Duma et al., 2024; Salminen et al., 2025). We all know these characteristics as cues that shape consumers' abilities to detect manipulation and evaluate review credibility (Pooja & Upadhyaya, 2024; BBB, n.d.). These added components of the scale are in accordance with the body of literature regarding fake review detection and consumer trust.

The items used were for the section on "Customer Product Trust" of the survey that measures how customers' trust in a product is impacted by negative reviews that appear suspicious or fake. Such statements encapsulate critical features of trust erosion including skepticism regarding product quality, reduced confidence by more than one questionable review, hesitation owing to rumor-language, and reluctance to test a product for the first time. According to past research presented, perceived review credibility has a significant impact on consumers' trust and purchase intentions (Duma et al., 2024; Pedersen & Li, 2024), fake

or manipulative reviews are associated with increased perceived risk and lower confidence.

The items that formed part of the section on “Product Perception” of the survey examining the extent fake negative reviews can shape respondents’ perception of product quality, reliability, and value. These statements embody several core perception dimensions, such as skepticism regarding product performance, diminished willingness to endorse, and diminished belief in price-worthiness where fake reviews are the norm. Previous studies proved that ambiguous or deceptive product reviews cause consumers’ perception of product quality and reliability to be materially distorted which reduces their willingness to buy and their perception of its value (Duma et al., 2024; Pedersen & Li, 2024).

Data Collection

The data were collected through online survey using Google Forms. The survey was administered to college students from various universities in Cebu City. Informed consent form was given to participants to read before they answered the survey. The form explained the purpose of the study, stated that participation was voluntary and guarantyd that their answers would be kept confidential. The questionnaire was divided into three sections according to the variables of this study. A 5-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), was used. Once the survey was completed, the responses were ready for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data. Descriptive statistics

perceptions of respondents on negative fake reviews, customer product trust and product perception. We examined the predictive relationships between negative fake review perception and each of the two outcome variables, customer product trust and product perception, with simple linear regression. We conducted this analysis to assess the statistical significance of the relationships we observed.

Ethical Considerations

The purpose, scope and potential risks associated with the study were adequately conveyed to the participants and they were fully informed of the study prior to their involvement. Data were anonymized preventing collection of personally identifiable data. Participation was entirely voluntary and respondents could withdraw at any time without penalty. The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the APA Ethics Code (2017), including informed consent, confidentiality, and responsible handling of research data.

Results and Discussions

Negative Fake Review Perceptions

Table 1 shows students’ perceptions of negative fake reviews based on their mean scores and interpretation. The table includes answers to five statements that describe common attributes and experiences attached to negative reviews that are potentially misleading, exaggerated, or deliberately harmful. Each item is associated with its mean score and verbal interpretation on a five-point Likert scale. An overall average mean score is also provided to reflect the general level of agreement across all indicators.

(mean scores) were used to describe the

Table 1. Mean Scores and Interpretation of Negative Fake Reviews

Negative Fake Reviews Perceptions	Mean Scores	Interpretation
1. I often see negative reviews that look fake or exaggerated.	3.63	Agree
2. I think some negative reviews are posted just to harm a product’s reputation.	3.66	Agree
3. It can be hard to tell if a negative review is real or fake.	3.86	Agree
4. Some reviews sound like rumors meant to damage a product.	3.70	Agree
5. Fake negative reviews usually stand out from real ones.	3.65	Agree
Average	3.70	Agree

Legend:

Mean Scores	Interpretation
1.00–1.80	Strongly Disagree
1.81–2.60	Disagree
2.61–3.40	Neutral
3.41–4.20	Agree
4.21–5.00	Strongly Agree

As seen in Table 1, most respondents agree with all of the negative fake reviews statements, having a mean score of 3.70 across all items. They believe that they often see negative reviews being fake or exaggerated (3.63) and that certain reviews are posted intentionally to sully the reputation of a product (3.66). The highest mean score (3.86) represents very high agreement that it is difficult for one to tell the difference between fake and genuine negative reviews. They also consider that some of these reviews use rumor-like language to degrade a product (3.70), and fake negativity is more likely distinguishable than genuine ones (3.65). These findings overall indicate that students perceive fake negative reviews as a concern and visible situation.

Total consensus of this table (average mean=3.70) reflects that students are frequent readers of fake negative reviews, recognize the signs and symptoms of fake negative reviews, think they are difficult to tell the difference from real ones and believe that they affect the product's reputation, which in itself can adversely affect consumer confidence and the product decision-making process too. Research established earlier has shown that exposure to untruthful reviews diminishes trust and satisfaction with both platforms and products, highlighting the importance of stronger governance and authenticity safeguards within online review ecosystems.

Moreover, the difficulty in detecting the content is consistent with the findings that

humans are not reliably able to detect the deceptive review text. This further argues for the adoption of platform-level detection, quality control and transparency mechanisms (e.g. better moderation, verified-purchase badges, linguistic anomaly flags) to detect these (Mukherjee et al., 2013). Linguistic studies also provide evidence for the typical psycholinguistic signals of fraudulent reviews (e.g. emotional hyperbole, rumour-like language). Incorporating these signals into automated screening and consumer education can help mitigate any downstream effects on trust, perceived quality and purchase intention and reduce misperception (Yoo & Gretzel, 2009). These are used in combination to provide useful information for platforms, marketers and consumers to help mitigate the impact of fake negative reviews on trust and product perceptions (Mukherjee et al., 2013).

Customer Product Trust

Table 2 demonstrates the mean scores and interpretation of the level of respondents' customer product trust in response of fake negative reviews. The table contains five statements with various scales of trust, doubt, hesitation, and willingness to purchase when the suspicious or rumor-like reviews are encountered. The average score computed and verbal descriptors for each statement are on a five-point Likert scale. Also included is an average mean score that sums up the responses for all indicators.

Table 2. Mean Scores and Interpretation of Customer Product Trust

Customer Product Trust	Mean Scores	Interpretation
1. Fake negative reviews make me doubt the product.	3.88	Agree
2. Even if the product looks good, fake reviews lower my trust.	3.89	Agree
3. I lose confidence when there are many suspicious reviews.	4.04	Agree
4. Rumor-like reviews make me hesitate to buy.	3.95	Agree
5. Fake negative reviews make me less willing to try the product.	3.93	Agree
Average	3.94	Agree

Legend:

Mean Scores	Interpretation
1.00–1.80	Strongly Disagree
1.81–2.60	Disagree
2.61–3.40	Neutral
3.41–4.20	Agree
4.21–5.00	Strongly Agree

As shown in Table 2, the majority of respondents believe that negative fake reviews influence their trust and purchase decisions. They say that they have started to doubt the product due to fake reviews and lose confidence in the product even when the product looks good. And also, many doubtful reviews reduce the confidence of buying and rumors-like reviews make consumers feel hesitant to buy. They also agree that negative reviews make them less likely to try a product the first time. To summarize, the overall result of these findings shows that the false negative reviews strongly influence the consumer trust and also influence the intention to buy at first. But the perceived risk does not have the same effects on trust in digital environments. College students are very aware of the dangers of online fraud. Perceived fraud risk was not a predictor of college students' trust in digital financial services (Lauron et al., 2026). They found that trust can also be affected by other aspects of the digital experience such as platform reliability, usability and customer support.

The implications of the findings found are very important for online market and businesses. For example, consumers' trust in products and platforms also decreases when they think that reviews are fake, which can

negatively affect purchase intention. Deceptive evaluations result in uncertainty and lack of trust or confidence in decision making which suggests that systems of review verification and transparency must be installed (Mukherjee et al., 2013). Moreover, the use of rumor-like language and excessive negativity in reviews may increase skepticism and trust issues, which indicates that platforms should use sophisticated detection algorithms and teach consumers how to spot suspicious content (Yoo & Gretzel, 2009). Such practices may help to maintain trust and protect product reputation in digital marketplaces.

Product Perception

Table 3 shows the average scores and the corresponding interpretation of the respondents' product perception towards fake reviews. It consists of five statements that demonstrate how false or misleading reviews may impact the consumers in evaluating product quality, performance, reliability, price value, and recommendation behavior. Each item is then specified on a five-point Likert measure using its average score and verbal scale. An average overall mean score is also offered to summarize the responses across product perception indicators.

Table 3. Mean Scores and Interpretation of Product Perception

Product Perception	Mean Scores	Interpretation
1. Fake reviews make me think the product is low quality.	3.77	Agree
2. Seeing fake reviews makes me doubt the product's performance.	3.74	Agree
3. Fake reviews make me less likely to recommend the product.	3.86	Agree
4. A product with many fake reviews seems unreliable.	3.89	Agree
5. Fake reviews make me doubt the product is worth the price.	3.83	Agree
Average	3.82	Agree

Legend

Mean Scores	Interpretation
1.00–1.80	Strongly Disagree

1.81–2.60	Disagree
2.61–3.40	Neutral
3.41–4.20	Agree
4.21–5.00	Strongly Agree

Results from Table 3: A total of 3.82 agree the overall mean score of negative fake reviews negatively influence the perception of the product by the respondents. They agree that fake reviews cause them to think the product is low quality (3.77) and create doubt about its performance (3.74). And thirdly, respondents agree that fake reviews decrease their propensity to recommend the product (3.86) and that a product which has numerous fake reviews appears as unreliable (3.89). It would appear that fake reviews reduce trust in the product being worth its price, said, (3.83). Collectively, these results indicate that fake negative reviews seriously limit perceptions about product quality, reliability, and value.

The findings also have implications for business and online platforms. Consumers' perception of fake reviews could lead to the loss of trust in the quality and value of the product. This can affect their purchase intention and also generate negative word of mouth. Fake reviews can also lead to ambiguity and make it difficult for consumers to make informed decisions (Mukherjee et al., 2013).

This means that platforms should enhance the way they verify and showcase reviews to consumers. Reviews with exaggerated or misleading language may also create distrust (Yoo & Gretzel, 2009). Platforms therefore need better ways to spot suspicious reviews, and to help consumers identify them. Such measures may help to protect consumer trust and product reputation in online markets.

Negative Fake Review and Customer Product Trust

Model Summary. Table 4 Summary statistics of the simple linear regression analysis performed to investigate the predictive relationship between Negative Fake Review Perception and Customer Product Trust. The strength of association between variables is reported in terms of the multiple R value, R Square (R²) and Adjusted R Square which are important metrics that report on the regression. It also includes the Standard Error of the estimate (to show the accuracy of the model) plus the total number of observations analyzed.

Table 4. Regression Model Summary: Negative Fake Review Perception → Customer Product Trust (n = 337)

Statistic	Value
Multiple R	0.5144
R Square	0.2646
Adjusted R Square	0.2624
Standard Error	0.7494
Observations	337

The Multiple R of 0.5144 indicates a moderate relationship between negative fake review perception and customer product trust. The R² value of 0.2646 indicates that the negative fake review perception can explain about 26.46% of the variance in customer product trust. The adjusted R² was 0.2624 and the standard error was 0.7494. The analysis comprised 337 participants' responses.

The results demonstrate a correlation between fake negative reviews and customer

product trust. Fake or manipulated reviews also influence the consumer's perception of products and online information (Mukherjee et al., 2013; Xia et al., 2025). Fake reviews are a problem for companies and online platforms. The platforms require ways to identify potentially non-genuine reviews (Salminen et al., 2025). Some of the fake reviews may also use hyperbole or misleading language. Allowing consumers to identify such reviews

may improve their online shopping decision making (Zhang et al., 2023).

ANOVA. Table 5 provides the analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the simple linear regression model for the purpose of predicting the influence of Negative Fake Review Perception on Customer Product Trust. The

variance is further decomposed into regression and residual components and the corresponding degrees of freedom (df), sum of squares (SS), and mean squares (MS) are set out in the table. It also reports the F-statistic and significance value attached to it (Sig. F), as well as the total variation accounted for in the model.

Table 5. ANOVA Summary: Negative Fake Review Perception → Customer Product Trust (n = 337)

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Sig. F
Regression	1	67.68	67.68	120.53	3.69×10^{-24}
Residual	335	188.12	0.56		
Total	336	255.80			

The ANOVA results show that the model is significant $F(1, 335) = 120.53$, Sig. F = 3.69×10^{-24} . For total variance, the variance is split into regression SS (67.68) and residual (188.12), giving a total sum SS of 255.80, consistent with a R^2 of about 0.2646 from the model summary. The mean squares are 67.68 (regression) and 0.56 (residuals), indicating average explained and unexplained variance per degree of freedom.

The ANOVA results indicate a significant relationship between negative fake reviews and customer trust in the product. The results are in line with prior studies investigating the effects of fake or fictitious reviews on consumers' perceptions of products and online information (Mukherjee et al., 2013; Xia et al., 2025). Fake reviews need to be snuffed out and dealt with by companies and websites. Some signs can be found in the content and language

of the reviews to identify potentially non-genuine reviews (Ott et al., 2011; Salminen et al., 2025). Furthermore, consumers tend to be more cautious when reviews are inflated or deceptive (Zhang et al., 2023). It can help them to make a better choice when shopping online.

Coefficients. Table 6 shows result scores of the coefficient estimates for simple linear regression model analyzing Customer Product Trust as predicted by Negative Fake Reviews. The table shows the unstandardized regression coefficients: for intercept (constant) and predictor variable. The corresponding standard error (SE), t value, and p value are given for each of the coefficients. Furthermore, the table contains the lower and upper bounds of the 95% confidence interval (CI) for each of the estimated parameters with statistical details.

Table 6. Regression Coefficients: Negative Fake Review Perception → Customer Product Trust (n = 337)

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Intercept	1.848	0.195	9.50	<.001	1.465	2.231
Negative Fake Reviews	0.565	0.051	10.98	<.001	0.463	0.666

The intercept 1.848 (SE = 0.195) t-value 9.50, $p < .001$, 95% confidence interval 1.465 to 2.231. Negative Fake Reviews 0.565 (SE=0.051), $t=10.98$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.463, 0.666] The positive coefficient implies that higher Negative Fake Review Perception scores were associated with higher scores on the Customer Product Trust measure, suggesting greater reported doubt, less confidence, and

hesitation toward the product. This is likely to be an accurate estimate, as the confidence interval is small. Moreover, the large coefficient of Negative Fake Reviews also indicates that the perception of fake reviews is related to customer's trust in the product, and in fact supports previous studies that have shown that manipulation in review ecosystems can lead to loss of credibility, misstatements,

and distortion of evaluations (Mukherjee et al., 2013; Ott et al., 2011).

Negative Fake Review and Product Perception

Model summary statistics for the simple linear regression analysis conducted to find the

predictive relationship between Negative Fake Review Perception and Product Perception are summarized in Table 7. Furthermore, we provide the Standard Error of the estimate to show how much the predicting errors differ, and give the combined number of observations.

Table 7. Regression Model Summary: Negative Fake Review Perception → Product Perception (n = 337)

Statistic	Value
Multiple R	0.532
R Square	0.283
Adjusted R Square	0.281
Standard Error	0.778
Observations	337

Multiple R is 0.532 from the regression model which shows that perceived negative fake reviews and product perception are moderately correlated. Having an adjusted R^2 of 0.281, the R^2 value is 0.283 that indicates the negative fake reviews explain approximately 28.3% of the variance in product perception. The standard error of 0.778 indicates the average prediction error in the units of the product perception scale. This analysis is based on 337 observations.

The size of the association indicates that exposure to or perception of fake negative reviews is strongly associated with consumers' evaluations of product quality, reliability, and value, consistent with evidence that deceptive reviews distort product evaluations and erode confidence in marketplace information (Lim et al., 2025; Xia et al., 2025). Platforms should improve review authentication, the use of hybrid detection models (behavioral + linguistic), and more transparency to protect how consumers

see products since it is still difficult to detect deceit and psycholinguistic cues (e.g., emotional overstatement and rumor-like phrasing) exist (Ott et al., 2011; Salminen et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2023). Such measures can help preserve the perceived product quality and value compared to review manipulation (Mukherjee et al., 2013; Xia et al., 2024).

ANOVA. Table 8 displays the ANOVA analysis results for the simple linear regression with Product Perception predicted by Negative Fake Review Perception. The model total is distributed into regression and residual components and is indicated in the table. It presents the required degrees of freedom (df), sum of squares (SS), and mean squares (MS) associated with each source of variability. Also included in the table is the computed F-statistic and its associated significance value (Sig. F), along with the total variation in the model.

Table 8. ANOVA Summary: Negative Fake Review Perception → Product Perception (n = 337)

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	80.19	80.19	132.35	4.89×10^{-26}
Residual	335	202.97	0.606		
Total	336	283.16			

The results of the ANOVA indicate that the model is statistically significant, $F(1, 335) = 132.35$, Sig. F = 4.89×10^{-26} . The variance is categorized in SS for regression 80.19, residual 202.97, and total 283.16. So R^2 about 0.283

from model summary. The mean squares are 80.19 and 0.606 for regression and residuals respectively. These are the mean explained and unexplained deviations respectively in degree of freedom scores.

The result of ANOVA depicts a significant association of negative fake review with product perception. Fake reviews affect consumers' assessment of product quality and value (Lim et al., 2025; Xia et al., 2025). This is a problem because consumers may not be able to tell if a review is fake or real. This has resulted in a need for improved methods for detecting fake reviews in online platforms (Ott et al., 2011; Salminen et al., 2025). Furthermore, exaggerate or suspicious language in reviews may also make the consumers more cautious (Zhang et al., 2023). This enables them to better judge the products they see online.

Coefficients. Table 9 gives the corresponding regression coefficients for the relationship between Negative Fake Reviews and Product Perception. The table presents the unstandardized regression coefficients (B) for the intercept and predictor variable along with their corresponding standard errors (SE). There are also t/p-values to evaluate the statistical effect of each of the coefficient. You are given the lower and upper bounds of the 95% confidence interval to illustrate what is the range that the actual parameter estimates are expected to fall.

Table 9. Regression Coefficients: Negative Fake Review Perception → Product Perception (n = 337)

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Intercept	1.546	0.202	7.65	< .001	1.148	1.943
Negative Fake Reviews	0.615	0.053	11.50	< .001	0.509	0.720

Regression analyzes indicated that Negative Fake Review Perception was a statistically significant predictor of Product Perception. The coefficient was positive and statistically significant (B = 0.615, SE = 0.053, t = 11.50, p < .001, 95% CI [0.509, 0.720]) indicating that the higher the scores of Negative Fake Review Perception, the higher the scores of Product Perception. This pattern is more reflective of reported concerns about product quality, reliability and value due to the negative wording of the product perception items. This result is consistent with prior research showing that deceptive reviews can influence consumers' perceptions of products (Gandhi et al., 2025; Pedersen & Li, 2024).

The study is important to e-commerce platforms and companies. Negative fake reviews can poison the trust with consumers, mislead their buying decisions and undermine the credibility of online reputation systems. Fake reviews can mislead consumers into purchasing lower quality products and simultaneously damage the reputation of rating systems, which can be detrimental to sellers and platforms in the long run (Gandhi et al., 2025). Further, manipulated reviews could influence consumer perceptions of risk and quality of products and thus lower purchase intentions (Pedersen & Li, 2024).

Fake reviews continue to plague businesses and online platforms to this day. They shape the consumers' perception of a product and the consumers' trust in the online information they are confronted with. Hence, companies should consider the reviews posted on their products. A way to do this is to see if the reviews are from real customers. Technology can also assist in the detection of suspicious reviews (Gandhi et al., 2025). These efforts can help increase consumer trust in the information they use to make purchasing decisions.

Summary of Findings

The results indicate that most participants agree that negative fake reviews are a prevalent problem in online markets. Students indicated they are frequently encountering false reviews that seem sensational, rumor-like, or are purposely crafted in an effort to smear the name of a product. They also observed that it can be hard to tell the real (good quality) from the fake reviews and reinforced the conclusion that fraudulent reviews are common and problematic. Moreover, the results showed that fake negative reviews significantly eroded customer confidence in the product. Respondents said reviews like these make them question product quality and make them less trusting of it, even

if the product seems fine, as well as reduce their openness to trying new things.

With respect to Product Perception, respondents generally agreed that negative fake reviews made them question a product's quality, reliability, and value. They were less likely to suggest products with dubious reviews and questioned whether these were worth the price. These fake reviews distort consumers' perceptions, decrease confidence in the performance of products, and therefore can affect consumer perception of products negatively.

Regression analysis revealed significant relationships between negative fake review perception and customer product trust, and negative fake review perception and product perception. Specifically, fake review perceptions explained approximately one-fourth of the variation in trust and nearly one-third of the variance in product perception. Thus, exposure to deceptive reviews has a significant impact on consumers' judgments of the products they purchase.

Implications of the Study

The study is relevant to on-line market places. Fake reviews can influence consumers' perceptions of the product and their trust in the information they read about the product (Gandhi et al., 2025). Therefore, online platforms must have ways to verify authenticity of reviews. Other checks on the reviews such as tags of verified purchase can help consumers know which reviews to trust (Gandhi et al., 2025). Consumers also need to learn to look more closely at online reviews. Being more digitally proficient can make them good at spotting potentially misleading information (Pedersen & Li, 2024).

Conclusion

The results showed that negative fake reviews were considered frequent in online marketplaces and these perceptions were significantly related to customer product trust and product perception. The respondents generally agree that negative fake reviews are likely to be exaggerated, difficult to differentiate from real reviews, and associated with less confidence in products. The results also showed that the stronger the perception of

negative fake reviews, the more doubt on the products, and the more unfavorable the evaluation of their quality, reliability and value. The findings support ongoing online platforms' efforts to improve review verification and help consumers in critical evaluation of potentially deceptive reviews. The study was conducted among university students in Cebu City through convenience sampling. Thus, the results should be generalized with caution to other consumer groups and geographic locations. This work can be used by future students and researchers to study fake positive reviews, cultural differences in perception of reviews and state of the art detection methods to protect consumer trust.

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