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DIGITAL INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION ETHICS IN PRODUCT REVIEW PRACTICES ON THE SHOPEE MARKETPLACE

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of digital marketplaces has turned product reviews into more than an evaluative feature; they have become a site where the ethics of digital interpersonal communication are enacted and negotiated between consumers and sellers. This study examines how honesty, civility, empathy, and authenticity are practiced when consumers write reviews and when sellers respond to them on the Shopee marketplace. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with Generation Z consumers and sellers, complemented by observation of review-and-response interactions on Shopee. The findings show that ethical communication underlies the credibility of reviews: honest, experience-based reviews are perceived as trustworthy, while manipulative or abusive language is regarded as a breach of communicative ethics. Sellers' ethical conduct in responding, marked by empathy, non-defensiveness, and solution orientation, further shapes perceived integrity and strengthens interpersonal trust. The study argues that ethics functions as the governing principle of digital interpersonal communication in marketplaces, with trust and two-way relational communication emerging as its outcomes rather than its foundation. These findings reframe product reviews from a transactional feature into an ethically grounded communicative practice in digital commerce.

Keywords *: digital communication ethics, interpersonal communication, product review*

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has triggered significant changes in the way people interact and communicate, including how ethical values are maintained when communication takes place without face-to-face contact. One tangible manifestation of this transformation is the emergence of digital marketplaces, which function not only as platforms for economic transactions but also as public spaces where honesty, civility, and communicative responsibility are tested every day. The growth of e-commerce in Indonesia is inseparable from

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the increasing internet penetration and the public's use of digital platforms, which indicates the strengthening of Indonesia's digital economy ecosystem (DataReportal, 2025). Marketplaces such as Shopee now do more than simply connect sellers and buyers; they provide a review feature that requires consumers and sellers to communicate ethically in a space that can be witnessed by the public.

One of the main features of a digital marketplace is the product review. Initially, product reviews were regarded as a means of conveying information about the quality of goods or services that had been purchased. However, as marketplace use has grown and the culture of digital participation has developed, product reviews have also become vulnerable to practices that disregard communication ethics, ranging from dishonest reviews and personally attacking language to defensive seller responses or responses that blame consumers. This issue makes product reviews an important space to be examined from the perspective of digital interpersonal communication ethics.

In practice, product reviews often include personal experiences, emotional expressions, subjective assessments, and consumers' expectations of sellers. Consumers not only give numerical or symbolic ratings but also share stories, complaints, or appreciation in narrative form, which demands honesty as a fundamental ethical principle. Sellers also have the opportunity to respond to these reviews through the reply feature, and the way they respond reflects the extent to which ethical values such as empathy and responsibility are upheld in digital communication.

The changing function of product reviews becomes even more relevant when linked to the characteristics of Generation Z. This generation has grown up in an environment closely tied to digital technology and online media, so the way they interpret honesty, linguistic civility, and message authenticity in communication helps shape new ethical norms in the digital space. For them, writing reviews, reading comments, and responding to sellers' replies are an integral part of everyday communication practices laden with ethical considerations, whether consciously or not. Interpersonal communication skills in the digital space have also become an important competence for young people in maintaining healthy and productive relationships with their interlocutors, including with sellers in the marketplace context (Farisma et al., 2024).

This study selected female consumers as informants because they constitute an active group of marketplace users considered relevant for exploring digital interpersonal communication practices through the product review feature (Kementerian Perdagangan RI, 2024). This high level of transactional activity causes women to interact more frequently with the product review feature, both as readers and as writers of reviews, and this was therefore considered relevant to the objectives of the study.

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that product reviews on the Shopee marketplace are not merely a tool for evaluating transactions, but a space in which digital interpersonal communication ethics are practiced, negotiated, and ultimately determine the quality of the relationship between consumers and sellers. This phenomenon merits further investigation from the perspective of communication science, particularly with digital communication ethics as the main lens.

Although much research has been conducted on product reviews, *electronic word of mouth* (eWOM), and consumer behavior in the digital world, most of these studies still focus on product reviews as a marketing tool, a determining factor in purchase decision-making, or a measure of customer satisfaction. Research that specifically views product reviews as an ethics-based form of digital interpersonal communication remains limited. Therefore, this study offers a new perspective by emphasizing the importance of honesty, message authenticity, linguistic politeness, and ethics in seller responses as key elements that build trust and reciprocal communicative relationships in the digital market. In this way, the study

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contributes to developing an understanding of digital communication ethics in the context of interactions between consumers and sellers on marketplace platforms.

Against this background, the focus of this study is: how is digital interpersonal communication ethics practiced by consumers and sellers in product reviews on the Shopee marketplace, and how do these ethical practices shape trust and two-way relationships between them?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication ethics is generally understood as a set of moral principles governing how messages are conveyed and received responsibly, honestly, and with respect for others (Rahayu, 2015). In the digital realm, these principles do not disappear but adapt to the characteristics of digital media, which allow messages to be delivered asynchronously, documented, easily disseminated, and accessed by a wider audience. Consequently, every message, including product reviews on marketplaces, carries more complex ethical consequences than face-to-face communication (Nasrullah, 2015).

Interpersonal communication is traditionally understood as a process of exchanging messages between individuals that involves feedback as well as emotional aspects and closeness (Mulyana, 2004). When this process takes place in a digital space that can be witnessed by the public, it simultaneously becomes a form of public communication that demands higher ethical standards, because an ethical violation by either party—whether consumer or seller—can potentially affect the wider audience's perception of the credibility of both parties (Nasrullah, 2015). Intensive use of social media and digital platforms has also been shown to shape users' interpersonal communication patterns and styles, including among students who are part of Generation Z (Al-Khaddam, 2013).

Digital communication ethics also encompasses the principles of honesty and responsibility of digital citizenship, including the obligation not to misuse the digital public space for manipulation or speech that harms others (Searson et al., 2015). In the context of product reviews, this principle is relevant for assessing the extent to which consumer reviews reflect real experiences (rather than manipulation) and the extent to which seller responses reflect good faith rather than mere image management. The message authenticity and trust that emerge from such interactions are closely related to the electronic word of mouth (eWOM) literature, in which message credibility depends heavily on perceptions of the authenticity and ethics of the communicator (Park & Lee, 2009; Filieri, 2015). Trust itself is conceptually understood as one party's willingness to rely on another party in online transactions, which is formed, among other things, through familiarity and repeated experience (Gefen, 2000), while the effectiveness of eWOM as a source of information is largely determined by the credibility and argument quality it contains (Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the practice of digital interpersonal communication ethics in product reviews on the Shopee marketplace platform. A qualitative approach was chosen because the focus of the study is on understanding the experiences, ethical norms, and communication processes that occur between consumers and sellers in relation to product reviews, rather than quantitatively testing relationships between variables. Through this method, the researchers sought to gain in-depth insight into how values such as honesty, message authenticity, linguistic politeness, empathy, and responsibility are expressed in digital communication practices within the marketplace environment. A qualitative approach allows researchers to explore the meanings constructed by participants based on their experiences and social contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018), particularly because this method emphasizes an in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon as it is directly

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interpreted by the research subjects, rather than merely testing relationships between variables (Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019).

This study was conducted on Shopee, one of the largest digital marketplaces in Indonesia, which offers a product review feature as a means of two-way communication between consumers and sellers. The study ran from January to March 2025 and involved informants residing in Bekasi City. Bekasi City was selected based on the characteristics of its urban population, which has a high level of digital technology adoption and marketplace transaction activity, thus providing a relevant context for examining the practice of digital interpersonal communication ethics in the product review feature. The review feature functions not only as a medium for product evaluation but also creates a communication space in which consumers can convey their experiences, assessments, and criticism of products, while sellers provide responses as a form of digital interpersonal interaction. Therefore, Shopee was chosen as the research site because it is able to represent the communication practices that are the focus of this study.

The informants involved in this study consisted of five people, namely three Generation Z consumers and two active sellers on the Shopee marketplace. Informants were selected using a *purposive sampling* technique, based on their experience and involvement in giving and responding to product reviews. This technique aims to ensure that the informants can provide relevant information in line with the research objectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The consumer informants were women aged between 19 and 28 years, belonging to Generation Z, who were either active university students or employed. They reside in Bekasi City and use Shopee accounts under their personal identities. All of these consumers are active Shopee users who have made at least 70 purchase transactions in the last six months, habitually read product reviews before buying, and write reviews based on their transaction experiences. Meanwhile, the seller informants are owners or managers of stores active on Shopee who sell legal products in accordance with platform regulations. They have received at least 100 reviews from consumers, actively respond to both positive and negative reviews, and have experience in handling consumer complaints through the product review feature. These criteria were chosen to ensure that the informants had sufficient experience in communication practices through the review feature so that they could provide rich data (*information-rich cases*) regarding digital interpersonal communication ethics between consumers and sellers on the Shopee marketplace.

Research data were obtained through in-depth interviews and non-participant observation. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach to explore the informants' experiences, views, and perceptions regarding digital interpersonal communication ethics in giving and responding to product reviews on Shopee. Meanwhile, observation focused on the content of product reviews and seller responses to identify forms of communication that demonstrate the application or violation of digital communication ethics principles. The use of these two techniques aims to obtain more comprehensive data by combining various sources of information, thereby providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis process began with transcribing the interviews, followed by repeated reading of the data to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the information collected. Next, the data were coded to identify emerging patterns and group them into main themes related to the dimensions of digital interpersonal communication ethics, such as honesty, message authenticity, linguistic politeness, empathy, responsibility, and trust formation. These themes were then further analyzed, refined, and interpreted to explain the relationships among the themes and the meanings contained within them. This analytical process refers to the thematic analysis procedure of Braun and Clarke (2021), and is supported by the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing in accordance with the method described by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020).

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Data validity was maintained through source triangulation by comparing information from consumer interviews, seller interviews, and observations of product review interactions on the Shopee platform. This triangulation aims to ensure the consistency of information from various sources, thereby increasing the credibility of the research findings. In addition, the analysis process was carried out iteratively by re-examining the data, coding results, and interpretation of findings so that the final conclusions reflect the empirical conditions found during the study (Miles et al., 2020).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Honesty and Message Authenticity as Ethical Principles in Product Reviews

The findings show that honesty and message authenticity are the foremost ethical principles in digital interpersonal communication, particularly through the product review feature on the Shopee marketplace. The consumer informants regard reviews not only as a means of expressing satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a product but also as a source of information that influences other consumers' purchasing decisions. Therefore, the credibility of a review depends heavily on how well the content of the message reflects the user's real experience, is supported by visual evidence, and is conveyed honestly without manipulation.

Informant K1 explained that before buying, she not only pays attention to the number of stars given but also evaluates the quality of the review content, the consistency of the information, and the presence of photos that serve as evidence of the experience of using the product.

> "*I don't just look at the rating. I pay more attention to what the review says, whether it makes sense or not, and whether there's photo proof or not. I also look for consistent patterns, for example if a lot of people say the item breaks quickly or the size doesn't fit, that becomes a warning for me.*" (K1)

This statement indicates that trust in reviews is formed through a combination of direct experience and supporting evidence. The informant does not passively accept information but evaluates the consistency of the review content before deciding to trust it. This shows that Generation Z applies an information verification process as part of communication ethics in the digital world.

A similar finding was also shown by Informant K1 when explaining how she identifies reviews that are considered inauthentic.

> *"Nowadays there are so many dishonest reviews. I usually click on the reviewer's profile, to see whether they review consistently or just give stars randomly." (K1)*

This statement shows that the authenticity of a message is assessed not only on the basis of the review content but also on the identity and behavioral consistency of the reviewer. In other words, trust in information is formed through an evaluation of both the source and the content of the message.

Informant K2 also emphasized that the most trusted reviews are those that come from the experiences of ordinary users, rather than commercial promotions.

> *"Sometimes the reviews there are more honest. Especially if the reviewer is a small influencer or an ordinary person, they're usually more transparent than the endorsed ones." (K2)*

In addition, Informant K2 revealed that photos and videos posted by buyers play a crucial role in assessing the authenticity of a review.

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"If it's just a rating, stars without a photo or text, I usually skip it. I prefer ones with photos, or even better if there's a video." (K2)

These results indicate that authenticity in digital communication is determined not only by the written narrative but also by visual elements that support the credibility of the message. Images and videos are regarded as depictions of actual experience, thereby increasing trust in the review being conveyed.

This statement is reinforced by Informant K3, who stated that photos are not always trusted if they do not reflect the characteristics of real use by consumers.

"I check first whether it's the buyer's own photo or just taken from Google or the store's catalog. If the photo looks natural and seems to have been taken by the person themselves, only then do I trust it." (K3)

This statement indicates that the informants not only look for visual evidence but also evaluate the authenticity of that evidence. Message authenticity is understood as the alignment between the user's experience, the narrative conveyed, and the accompanying visual evidence. Thus, honesty in reviews is not merely about expressing personal opinions but also concerns the integrity of the information provided to other users.

All three consumer informants indicated that they write reviews not only to express personal satisfaction or disappointment but also as a form of responsibility toward other prospective buyers. They see reviews as an informational contribution that can help others make more appropriate purchasing decisions.

This finding shows that communication practices in the product review feature have developed into a form of *electronic word of mouth* (eWOM) that functions not only as a medium for sharing experiences but also as a mechanism for building information credibility in the digital marketplace environment. In the context of digital interpersonal communication ethics, honesty and message authenticity become the main foundation that determines the quality of communication between users. The results of this study are in line with the view that eWOM credibility is influenced by the authenticity of experience, the quality of information, and the level of trust in the message source, so that reviews conveyed honestly and supported by real evidence have a more significant impact on consumer decisions than mere promotional information.

Linguistic Politeness and the Ethical Boundaries of Emotional Expression in Product Reviews

The findings show that politeness in language is one of the ethical principles that influences the quality of communication in the product review feature on the Shopee marketplace platform. Although reviews often reflect satisfaction or disappointment with products and services, the informants emphasized the importance of conveying criticism in language that is polite, clear, and focused on personal experience. Therefore, the assessment of a review depends not only on the content of the message but also on the way the message is delivered.

Informant K1 stated that when she receives a product that does not meet expectations, she still tries to give criticism in a polite manner accompanied by an objective explanation.

"If the item really isn't good, I still write it as it is. But I don't use insulting words. I usually explain what the shortcomings are so the seller also knows which part needs to be improved." (K1)

This statement indicates that criticism is regarded as a form of feedback, not as a way to attack the seller. According to the informant, the use of polite language can increase the

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likelihood that a review is received as constructive input and receives a positive response from the seller.

A similar view was expressed by Informant K1, who argued that the use of excessive language or language full of negative emotion actually reduces the credibility of a review.

> *"If the review is just ranting or the words are over the top, I actually become doubtful. I trust the ones that explain the problem clearly more." (K1)*

This finding shows that consumers not only assess informational content but also consider the communication style used by the review writer. The use of emotional language is acceptable as long as it remains balanced, is supported by real experience, and does not turn into insults or unfounded accusations.

This study also indicates that emotional expression is a normal element of digital communication, especially when consumers feel satisfied or disappointed with the products they receive. However, the informants clearly distinguished between sincere and destructive emotional expression. They believe that emotions can be expressed as long as the principles of communication ethics are still respected.

Informant K2 explained that she does not take issue with reviews that reflect disappointment as long as the reasons given are clear and consistent with the buyer's experience.

> *"If someone gives a bad review but actually explains the reason, I think that's still reasonable. What's not good is when they immediately insult or accuse without proof." (K2)*

This statement shows that the ethical boundary in expressing emotion does not depend on the presence of disappointment, but rather on how that emotion is conveyed. Criticism delivered with reasoning is regarded as a form of responsible communication, whereas comments that attack individuals are considered a violation of ethical norms in digital interpersonal communication.

The results of this study indicate that for Generation Z, the use of expressive language is an integral part of everyday digital communication culture. Nevertheless, spontaneity in communication does not mean setting politeness aside. On the contrary, the informants argued that language that is clear, honest, and still respectful of others is more effective in conveying a message than harsh or provocative words. Thus, linguistic politeness functions as a mechanism to ensure that emotional expression remains constructive, so that interaction between consumers and sellers can proceed productively. This finding is in line with the view that digital communication ethics does not require the elimination of emotion, but rather the ability to manage and express emotions responsibly so that the quality of interaction is not disrupted (Nasrullah, 2015; Rahayu, 2015).

Overall, the findings confirm that linguistic politeness is the ethical boundary that distinguishes constructive criticism from personal attacks in product reviews. Therefore, ethical communication is determined not only by the honesty of the message content but also by marketplace users' ability to convey their experiences and emotions proportionally, respect others, and remain focused on delivering information that is useful to the marketplace user community.

Ethics of Seller Responses: Empathy, Responsibility, and Solution Orientation

The findings show that ethics in interpersonal communication on marketplace platforms depends not only on the quality of consumer reviews but also on the way sellers respond to those reviews. The interviews revealed that the informants view seller responses as an important element in the two-way communication process that takes place through the review

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feature on Shopee. Responses that reflect empathy, responsibility, and a focus on problem solving are regarded as a form of respect for consumers and also reflect the seller's professionalism in building relationships with customers.

One theme that emerged from the interviews with sellers is the significance of empathy when dealing with various types of reviews, including those with a negative tone. Both seller informants stated that every complaint from consumers is viewed as input that needs to be understood thoroughly before responding. This approach is taken so that consumers feel heard and receive explanations relevant to the issues they face.

> *"But, well, we have to be open-minded. I see it as constructive criticism. I usually use reviews like that as material for evaluation..."(P1)*

This finding indicates that empathy is more than a friendly attitude in communication; it is an effort to understand the consumer's point of view before responding. In the context of digital interpersonal communication, empathy plays an important role in reducing the likelihood of conflict and creating a more open communication climate. Responses that begin with an understanding of the consumer's experience tend to produce more positive interactions than defensive responses or responses that blame others.

In addition, this study also highlights the importance of communicative responsibility as a key element in the ethics of seller responses. The seller informants stated that consumer reviews are not regarded as a threat to the store's reputation, but rather as an evaluation tool for improving the quality of service and products. Therefore, every review is given a balanced response, whether in the form of clarification, an apology, or an explanation of the possible steps toward resolution.

> *"I usually chat with the buyer, ask nicely. Sometimes I offer to replace the item."(P2)*

This finding indicates that responsibility in communication is not limited to providing answers to consumers but also involves the seller's willingness to acknowledge shortcomings and make improvements. Therefore, the review feature functions not only as a platform for public evaluation but also as a means of reflection for sellers in improving the quality of their relationships with customers.

The third aspect that consistently emerged is a focus on solutions. The informants mentioned that a response considered satisfactory is not merely one that provides an explanation, but one that also offers a solution to the problem faced by the consumer. The resolution can take the form of product replacement, the provision of additional information, or other actions that demonstrate a commitment to handling complaints fairly. This approach shows that ethical digital communication aims not only to maintain the store's image but also focuses on restoring consumer satisfaction through concrete steps.

> *"I never treat reviews as just numbers. I look at what they say. If there's a bad one, I don't immediately take it personally, but I follow it up." (P2)*

It is interesting to note that the interview results show that sellers are aware that every response they give is reviewed not only by the consumer who wrote the review but also by other prospective buyers. Therefore, responses to reviews have two functions: as direct communication with the consumer concerned and, at the same time, as public communication that can influence public views of the store's credibility. This awareness encourages sellers to be more selective in their choice of language, to show empathy, and to avoid emotional or defensive responses.

The findings of this study indicate that empathy, responsibility, and a focus on solutions are the three main dimensions that shape the ethics of seller responses in digital marketplaces.

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Responses delivered with empathy and oriented toward problem solving not only help address customer complaints but also strengthen the store's image as an entity that is responsible in its communication. These results are in line with the view that ethical digital communication requires respect for others, openness in receiving feedback, and a commitment to building mutually beneficial reciprocal relationships (Nasrullah, 2015; Rahayu, 2015). In the context of electronic word of mouth, seller responses also become part of the public information that contributes to the formation of consumer perceptions of and trust in the store (Park & Lee, 2009).

Based on the thematic analysis process, three main themes were found that describe the practice of digital interpersonal communication ethics between consumers and sellers, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Thematic Analysis Results

Theme	Subtheme	Key Findings	Informants
Honesty and Message Authenticity	Real experience	Reviews are trusted when consistent with experience	K1 K2 K3
	Visual evidence	Photos/videos increase credibility	K1 K2 K3
Linguistic Politeness	Constructive criticism	Criticism is conveyed without personal attacks	K1 K2 K3
	Emotion management	Emotions are acceptable as long as they are proportional	K1 K2
Seller Responses	Empathy	Understanding complaints before responding	P1 P2
	Responsibility	Reviews serve as material for evaluation	P1 P2
	Solution orientation	Offering resolutions	P1 P2

Source: Researchers' analysis

From Communication Ethics to Trust and Two-Way Relationships

The findings show that ethical practices in digital interpersonal communication, particularly through the product review feature, are not limited to sharing transaction experiences. These practices also develop into a mechanism that builds trust and two-way communicative relationships between consumers and sellers. The findings in the previous subsections indicate that elements such as honesty and message authenticity, politeness in language, and seller responses reflecting empathy, responsibility, and solutions mutually play an important role in creating credible communication on digital marketplace platforms. Thus, the process of building trust is not instantaneous; rather, it is the result of a series of communication practices carried out consistently by both parties.

For consumers, honest and authentic reviews provide a sense of security in making purchasing decisions. On the other hand, seller responses that are open to criticism and show a willingness to resolve problems can strengthen the belief that the seller is committed to customer satisfaction. In other words, trust is influenced not only by the quality of the product itself but also by the quality of the communication established through the review feature. The interviews revealed that consumers tend to trust sellers who respond politely, explain problems transparently, and offer solutions more than sellers who tend to ignore reviews or respond defensively.

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From the sellers' point of view, the review feature is regarded as more than a place for public evaluation; it also functions as a tool for building long-term relationships with consumers. Responses to reviews are interpreted as an opportunity to demonstrate professionalism, improve service quality, and maintain customer trust. The awareness that every response can be accessed by other prospective consumers encourages sellers to prioritize communication that is empathetic, responsible, and focused on problem solving. Thus, the review feature has two main functions: resolving the problems faced by consumers while simultaneously building a positive image of the store in the eyes of the public.

The findings show that interaction between consumers and sellers has developed from mere transactions into a two-way communicative relationship established through a process of exchanging information, feedback, and continuous responses. In this context, communication ethics acts as a social mechanism that unites the interests of both parties. Honesty in sharing experiences enables consumers to obtain trustworthy information, while empathy and responsibility on the part of sellers create a space for dialogue that facilitates constructive problem solving. This relationship ultimately strengthens mutual trust and facilitates the continuity of interaction between consumers and sellers.

This finding also shows that digital trust in marketplaces is influenced not only by the platform system, store reputation, or product quality, but also by digital interpersonal communication practices carried out ethically. This study broadens the understanding of *electronic word of mouth* (eWOM), which is often regarded as a source of information for consumers. In this study, product reviews are viewed as a space for digital interpersonal communication that enables the negotiation of meaning, the formation of trust, and the strengthening of relationships between consumers and sellers. Therefore, communication ethics functions not only as a guideline for individual behavior but also underlies the development of a credible and sustainable digital communication ecosystem.

Conceptually, this study indicates that the formation of trust in digital marketplaces begins with honesty and message authenticity, followed by politeness in delivering reviews. This process is reinforced by seller responses that demonstrate empathy and responsibility in a solution orientation, ultimately producing trust and a two-way communicative relationship between both parties. This sequence of processes confirms that digital interpersonal communication ethics is the connecting factor between product review activity and the creation of trust in digital marketplaces. This finding provides a conceptual contribution because it shows that the success of digital communication does not depend solely on the technological sophistication of the platform but also on the quality of interaction built through the application of communication ethics principles.



Figure 1. Model of Research Findings
Source: Researchers' Analysis

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Figure 1 presents a synthesis of the thematic analysis that illustrates how trust is formed through the practice of digital interpersonal communication ethics between consumers and sellers on the Shopee marketplace platform. The model shows that honesty and message authenticity are the main foundation of communication, which is then reinforced by linguistic politeness and seller responses that focus on empathy, responsibility, and problem solving. This process produces digital trust, which ultimately creates a two-way communicative relationship between consumers and sellers.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study reveals that ethics in digital interpersonal communication is a fundamental element in product review practices on the Shopee marketplace platform. Through an analysis of the experiences of Generation Z consumers and sellers, it was found that honesty and message authenticity are essential for building review credibility. In addition, linguistic politeness affects the reception of criticism and emotional expression as forms of constructive communication. Seller responses that demonstrate empathy, a sense of responsibility, and a focus on solutions also contribute significantly to the quality of interaction and the strengthening of relationships with consumers.

The findings further show that trust in digital marketplaces is not influenced solely by product quality, store reputation, or the existing platform system. This trust is built through digital interpersonal communication practices carried out ethically by both parties. Honesty in sharing experiences, politeness in language, and sellers' openness to criticism create an effective communication mechanism for building trust and strengthening two-way relationships between consumers and sellers. Thus, communication ethics becomes an important prerequisite for the creation of digital trust, while trust itself is the result of consistent ethical communication practices.

Conceptually, this study contributes by identifying product reviews not only as a form of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) or transaction evaluation, but also as a platform for digital interpersonal communication. In this context, there are opportunities for the negotiation of meaning, the formation of trust, and the development of sustainable relationships between consumers and sellers. These findings extend the study of digital communication ethics by showing that the quality of interaction between users plays an important role in determining the effectiveness of communication in the digital marketplace ecosystem.

However, this study has limitations because it was conducted on a single marketplace platform with a limited number of informants. As a result, its findings cannot yet be generalized to all digital commerce contexts. Therefore, it is recommended that future research compare the practice of digital interpersonal communication ethics across various marketplace platforms or commerce-based social media. Such research should involve more diverse informants and develop indicators of digital communication ethics that can be applied in quantitative or mixed-methods research. The findings of this study can also serve as a consideration for marketplace operators in formulating policies and features that support more ethical, responsive, and trust-oriented digital communication.

Thus, this study emphasizes that ethics in interpersonal communication in the digital world is not merely a behavioral norm in the market, but also the foundation for building trust and sustaining relationships between consumers and sellers in the digital realm.

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