Can I count on online reviews?
A qualitative study on customers’ trust of electronic word-of-mouth through online reviews on fast-fashion websites among millennials in France.

Author: Nofriyani Eka Deboris S; Meggane Pech
Supervisor: David Caläs
Examiner: Selcen Ozturkcan
University: Linnaeus University
Term: 2022-2023
Subject: Business Administration III – Degree Project
Level: Degree of Bachelor
Course code: 2FE67E
Abstract

This thesis is situated in the research field of electronic commerce, specifically the aspect of fast fashion brands. This has drawn consumer interest because they find struggles when shopping for clothes online due to their inability to try the product before purchasing from sellers, which tends to result in information asymmetry. Therefore, they may be more hesitant to purchase online due to the perceived risk that results in low level of trust while shopping clothes online; therefore, businesses should strive to alleviate their concerns. Previous research has shown that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) can guide and increase confidence.

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of how consumers perceive online reviews as ways of reducing information asymmetry and reduce risk in order to ensure that they will be satisfied with their purchase. Furthermore, many factors identified in previous research that could influence the use of online reviews were identified and analyzed in the context of fast fashion for this study. Therefore, the study discovered several factors that influenced the use of online reviews.

This study investigates the role of trust as a mediator between customers' perception of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and their subsequent actions. Specifically, the study focuses on the influence of the perceived usefulness of online reviews on customer trust in fast fashion websites. To gain a comprehensive understanding of consumers' opinions on online reviews, a qualitative research approach employing semi-structured interviews was conducted. The interviews provided participants with the opportunity to elaborate on their responses and provide nuanced insights. The findings indicate that fast fashion brands should prioritize the inclusion of online reviews and enhance their mechanisms based on the factors identified in this study. By recognizing the importance of customer trust and addressing the perceived usefulness of online reviews, fast fashion brands can improve their relationship with customers and foster positive consumer actions. This study contributes to the existing literature on eWOM, trust, and online reviews, offering practical implications for fast fashion brands aiming to optimize their online platforms.

Keywords

Online reviews, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), trust, information asymmetry, fast fashion, and millennials.
Acknowledgements

This thesis is the final theoretical component of our study. This marks the completion of our European Double Degree in International Management at Brest Business School in France. This study was conducted during the spring semester of 2023 and the study provided deeper insight into the field of online reviews in the context of fast fashion websites. This project has been challenging but has further enhanced our understanding of business, and academia and improved our personal skills.

We would like to acknowledge all the individuals who provided support and guidance to complete this bachelor's thesis. Firstly, we would like to thank our supervisor, David Caläs and our examiner, Selcen Özturkcan for being reactive and providing useful and critical feedback to improve the thesis. In addition, we would also like to show our appreciation to the seminar groups for giving us valuable points of consideration.

Lastly, our deepest gratitude and appreciation to our participants for dedicating their time to time during the current circumstances and providing us with valuable opinions and their enthusiasm during the entire process helped us gain valuable information needed to conduct this study. A big appreciation goes to our friends and families who supported us throughout the last few weeks.

Linnéuniversitetet
Kalmar, May 24th, 2023

_________________________  _______________________
Nofriyani Eka Deboris S        Meggane PECH
Table of Contents

1 Introduction 1
   1.1 Background 1
   1.2 Problem discussion 3
      1.2.1 Theoretical Problematization 3
      1.2.2 Managerial Problematization 5
      1.2.3 Research Gap 6
   1.3 Research Questions 7
   1.4 Purpose 7
   1.5 Delimitations 7

2 Literature Review 9
   2.1 Online Reviews 9
      2.1.1 Online Reviews as eWOM 9
      2.1.2 Perceived Usefulness of Online Reviews 10
   2.2 Trust in Electronic Commerce 10
      2.2.1 Role of Trust in E-Commerce 10
      2.2.2 Perceived Risk in Relation to Trust 12
   2.3 Online Reviews and Purchase Intention 12
   2.4 Principal Issue Faced Online 15
      2.4.1 Information Asymmetry 15
      2.4.2 Quality of Information Asymmetry 15
   2.5 Attitudes Regarding Online Reviews 15
      2.5.1 The Usefulness of Online Reviews 15
      2.5.2 Experience the use of Online Reviews in searching for goods 16
      2.5.3 Positive and Negative Online Reviews 17
   2.6 Online Reviews Manipulation 18
   2.7 Summary 18
   2.8 Conceptual Framework 20

3 Methodology 22
   3.1 Abductive Approach 22
   3.2 Explanatory Research 22
   3.3 Qualitative Research Method 23
   3.4 Type of Data 23
      3.4.1 Primary Data 23
   3.5 Semi-structured Interviews 24
      3.5.1 Table of Participants 25
      3.5.2 Collection of Data 26
   3.6 Data Analysis 27
      3.6.1 Interview Guide 28
      3.6.2 Conducting Interview 28
   3.7 Operationalization 29
   3.8 Quality of Research 29
      3.8.1 Validity 30
      3.8.2 Reliability 31
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Ethical Considerations</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>Sustainable Considerations</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Empirical Findings and Analysis</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Trust in Online Reviews</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Online Reviews and Purchase Intention</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Principal Issue Faced Online</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.1</td>
<td>Risk of Information Asymmetry</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.2</td>
<td>Quality of Information Asymmetry</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Attitudes regarding Online Reviews</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.1</td>
<td>The Usefulness of Online Reviews</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.2</td>
<td>Experience the use of Online Reviews in searching for goods</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.3</td>
<td>Positive and Negative Online Reviews</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Online Reviews Manipulation</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Responding Research Questions</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1</td>
<td>Theoretical Implications</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2</td>
<td>Managerial Implications</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3</td>
<td>Social, Ethical and Sustainable Implications</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Suggestions for Future Research</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td></td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1</td>
<td>– Operationalization</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2</td>
<td>– Interview Guide – English version</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3</td>
<td>– Interview Guide – French version</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4</td>
<td>– Map of France</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 5</td>
<td>– Maps of French Polynesia &amp; Guadeloupe</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 6</td>
<td>– Authors Contribution</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table 1: eWOM and Stages of Purchase Decision Process ___________13-14
Table 2: Table of Participants ___________________________26

List of Figures

Figure 1: Information Adoption Mode of Davi’s Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (1986). ___________________________13
Figure 2: Conceptual Framework ___________________________ 20
1 Introduction

In this section, the authors provide an overview of electronic commerce and the usefulness of online reviews, followed by problem discussions. The purpose of the thesis is also included, along with the research gap, research questions, and finally, the delimitations of the study are also discussed.

1.1 Background

According to Laudon and Laudon (2015), e-commerce is the process of buying and selling products via the Internet network between consumers and businesses using an electronic system. E-commerce allows businesses to improve supply chain communication and creates an opportunity for competitive differentiation (ibid). Furthermore, the rapid growth of electronic commerce is due to the fact that this web-based phenomenon brings many benefits and conveniences to consumers. This has shaped people’s online lifestyles of buying and selling process which was previously known only in physical stores and now takes place online within a matter of clicks on gadgets integrated with internet technology (Silviana et al., 2022).

Customer reviews play an important role in online transactions due to the development of e-commerce. Therefore, consumers’ access to information is becoming increasingly important. Product reviews are used by consumers to gather information about the quality and performance of products to help them reduce uncertainty in consumers’ decision-making (Yang et al., 2015). According to Yang et al. (2018), an online review is one source of information. The online review is typically located next to the product description on the website (Korfiatis et al., 2012). People can post a message, opinions, comments, and reviews of specific products in website reviews, discussion forums and instant messaging platforms that consumers now use to share their opinion concerning products, services, and brands (Yu et al., 2017). When shopping online, customers check for other people's experiences and comments. They are more easily believed since they are expected to provide a more detailed and realistic appraisal of the product than the offering party, such as the vendor or the manufacturing firm (Fang and Li 2020; Lee and Hong, 2019). According to Gharib et al. (2020), when members of online review communities share information about products and services, trust thus is required. Ardyan & Sudyasjayanti (2020) define trust as customers’ beliefs and expectations towards eWOM which becomes credible information for customers before making a decision.

According to Grewal et al., (2004), the rapid growth of the Internet has changed the presence of the e-commerce revolution in the fashion retail industry. The traditional marketing and management of the fashion industry are undergoing an uprising due to the emergence of e-commerce (ibid). The apparel industry in an online context was chosen for the investigation since individuals have different clothing preferences due to body type, quality standards, and so on, which means that it may be more beneficial to rely on one's own judgment (ibid). Consumers find it difficult to shop for clothing online due to the inability to conduct a sensory evaluation of the product (ibid). Therefore, asymmetry issues arise as a result of the spatial and temporal separation between online buyers and vendors in order to solve the information asymmetry problem, sellers must signal that they provide quality products, particularly when
selling online due to the risk involved (Arkelof, 1970, Shen et al., 2011). Due to the inability to try on clothing items, trust will be examined as it is a very complex concept that can be observed from a variety of angles depending on the field or purpose. This study was conducted in France where fashion was the leading e-commerce classification as per January 2022 with roughly 60% of online shoppers purchasing it (Statista, 2022). Therefore, a focus on fashion is a relevant subject that will be the researchers’ reference for the analysis.

E-commerce has transformed the way consumers acquire products and services; with the growing importance of online sales and the growing number of online buyers, marketers and academics have concentrated their efforts on better understanding online purchasing behaviour (Lim, 2015). The reason is that the information and reviews of consumers shared online could engage other consumers in consumption-related behavior. It can also influence customers that read online reviews to shop online (Tran, 2020). However, it has raised concerns about private information leakage, online fraud, a discrepancy in product quality and grade, unsuccessful delivery, and other risks known as perceived risk (Paluch and Wünderlich 2016). According to Demir et al., (2019), perceived risk is defined as a consumer’s uncertainty while deciding whether to buy a product or not buy it. Consumers face this perception due to their past experiences of negative outcomes from online shopping. There are two main risks: security risks and privacy risks. The consumer should feel secure while online shopping by giving information about their credit card and other information into the system. The greatest obstacle to online purchasing is perceived risk (Hajli, 2015). Trust is a critical aspect of e-commerce (McCole, Ramsey, and Williams 2010) since it helps to lower perceived risk (Hajli and Lin, 2015). Furthermore, trust has been shown to influence consumer behavior and increase purchase intent (Hajli et al. 2017). Online reviews can help to build trust; according to Fang et al. (2016), consumers regard online reviews as more credible than other traditional sources of information. In addition, O'Neil and Eisenmann (2017) found that consumers gain the highest level of trust through online consumer reviews or social media.

This study focuses on millennials which is one of the generations examined by many experts. The “Millennials generation” or so-called Generation Y and “Echo Boomers” is known as a high-tech generation (Chuah et al., 2017; Sethi et al., 2018; Valentine and Powers, 2013), as millennial is the first generation that was born and raised in the digital age (Shin & Lee, 2021). According to Valentine and Power (2013), Generation Y is a generation of those who were born between 1977 to 1996. However, Bento et al. (2018) define that millennials are identified as those born between 1981 and 2000. They are more sceptical than previous generations and can be a major issue for retailers since they frequently feel as if they are being observed online, which they regard to be a private and exclusive area. Millennials dislike being targeted by advertising and prefer to rely on peer recommendations and word-of-mouth (Valentine and Powers, 2013; Ström et al., 2014). Additionally, a company of Pure360 (2021) discovered that before making any purchase, 97% of Millennials will read reviews first and 87% of them trust the information indicated in the reviews. In addition, Bolton et al. (2013) found that Millennial customers are more inclined to seek information through digital channels and to interact with companies and retailers on social media. Furthermore, social media and eWOM have a major influence on millennials’ purchasing behaviour.
Additionally, millennials are particularly intrigued because they are virtually always connected and may be predisposed to make online purchases due to their convenient access to the internet at any time and from almost anywhere (Ladhari, Gonthier & Lajante, 2019). Since these consumers grew up in an environment where shopping was viewed as a form of entertainment, analyzing their lifestyle, particularly online fashion shopping, can provide valuable insights for both theoretical research and businesses seeking to learn about millennials’ behavioral traits (Valentine and Powers, 2013). Towner and Munoz (2016) found that online sources operate to find product information are one of the reasons why millennials rely heavily on articles, media such as websites and social media platforms, compared to previous generations. By comparing traditional media to User Generated Content (UGC). In the social media environment, the contributed content from users is generally known as User Generated Content (UGC). The UGC is information published on a website by an unpaid contributor such as a photo, notice or comment on a social media website (Vargo et al., 2017). Millennials perceived that they believe UGC is more reliable and important than media such as televised news (Ana and Istudor, 2019). This allows users to express themselves and actively participate in the digital communication. Millennials are more likely to share information with their peers (people from the same social group as them) (Eastman et al., 2014). In agreement with previous researchers, Dash, Kiefer and Paul (2021) say that millennials are heavily invested in social media like Facebook or Instagram, where they rely on peer reviews to find information before making purchasing decisions such as talking about it, debating it or reading reviews online.

In the following section, this study investigates the effects of customer trust in eWOM through online reviews on customer behaviour, with a focus on millennial consumers based in France. In a survey conducted in September 2022, little more than a third of French customers reported purchasing clothing online rather than offline, further proving that fashion is the most popular e-commerce category in France. Vinted and SHEIN were the most downloaded fashion and beauty shopping applications in the country in February 2022, with over 424,000 and 334,000 downloads, respectively (Statista, 2022) and Millennials also known as the generation born between 1980 and 2000 (Bento et al., 2018), made up about 30 per cent which equals 11.73 million millennials for 68 million inhabitants of the French population in 2022 (Statista, 2022). Given that cultural norms and values govern people's behaviour in everyday life, cultural differences in response to online reviews are to be expected (Fan et al., 2018). Hence, it was intriguing to study e-WOM as online reviews on fast fashion websites in-depth and gain a better understanding because it provided numerous benefits.

1.2 Problem discussion

1.2.1 Theoretical Problematization

Customers posting their post-purchase reviews on the websites of the companies they purchased from are seen as a connecting tool between the customers and the business as well as other potential customers. These reviews compare the customers’ product experiences to the benchmarked quality or value of the online service provider’s goods.
and services. From word-of-mouth (WOM) communication in the digital marketplace, it may be inferred that online customer reviews represent the product or service information provided by customers (Thakur, 2018). This is due to the customers’ inherent limitations about their ability to touch or physically examine the online product and its features, which causes them to constantly feel a perceived risk.

Studies on how consumers process information online show that information overload, defined as situations in which the cost of processing information, is a common occurrence (Furner, Zinko, & Zhu, 2016). Consumers, in this case, act in opposition to classical models by ceasing their information search before becoming ‘perfectly informed’. In cases where the consumer lacks the knowledge to properly evaluate the product, the consumer instead relies on the brand to perform the stated function. Cui, Lui and Guo (2012) suggested that for future studies, their structure of online reviews should be examined to determine its usefulness, thus, for this paper that will be considered. The credibility of online review sites has been discussed since the given information about a product or service is usually written by other consumers and is therefore not verified through some rigorous process (Johnson & Kaye, 2002). Furthermore, recent research has proved the existence of online review manipulation (Hu, Liu & Sambamurthy, 2010; Hu, Bose, Koh & Liu, 2011) and the media has also brought attention to this matter.

Understanding the problems is important since marketers need to be able to understand consumer trust in online reviews as it can then be used as a powerful marketing tool (Fruth & Neacsu, 2014) and as a new element of the marketing communication mix (Chen & Xie, 2008). It has a critical role in communicating e-Commerce business with consumers. According to Chang, consumer trust is a critical factor in online transactions and in building long-term relationships with consumers (Chang et al., 2014). Without trust, consumers will not be interested in online shopping. Thus, the level of consumer confidence will directly influence their intention to shop online is a key element in strengthening and deepening the relationship between customers and companies (Octari et al., 2017).

This type of trust usually arises as a result of an exciting credible website. According to Poturak and Turkyilmaz (2018), trust towards websites appears because some websites provide ratings that are regarded as reputable in order to influence customers’ purchase decisions. However, the problem does not end here; the notion that consumers are increasingly using and relying on the opinions of others posted online (Malbon, 2013; Nielsen Global Company, 2013) combined with the fact that research has proved the existence of online review manipulation (Hu et al., 2010; Hu et al., 2011) further complicates the matter of trust in online reviews. Furthermore, business owners are aware that the quantity of their information or disinformation available on the Internet can affect the reputation of their brand. Since it is nearly impossible to control everything that happens online, online reviews are a peculiar mechanism for companies to facilitate the spread of positive information and influence consumer trust and purchase intentions as Cui et al. (2014) demonstrated how the willingness to recommend a new product to others could affect its early period sales, such a strategy can result in greater profit.
As it is nearly impossible to monitor everything on the internet, online reviews are an unusual technique for businesses to assist in the spread of positive information and influence consumer purchase intentions. This is in line with the findings from Aditya and Alversia (2019), indicating that both online reviews and purchase intention have a positive correlation with each other. Additional research by Obaidullah, Shahbaz and Majeed (2021) who conceptualized eWOM using source credibility, brand equity, and consumer reviews is found that purchase intention has a firm relationship with eWOM. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Mateska, Perovska, and Josimovski (2021), the researchers discovered that high product ratings and favourable reviews have a significant effect on both online shopping intentions and decisions. However, the issue for customers and businesses is that some difficulties determine whether people are credible because there is so much biased material available online. Customers and businesses both provide biased information (Minazzi, 2015). According to Minazzi (2015), biases can be sources that influence content due to the ability to be whatever an individual wants to be online. These anonymous and manipulating sources could be common people (e.g., consumers) who provide misleading and false information because they have a negative attitude toward a corporation (Minazzi, 2015). If a review is viewed as untrustworthy by the reader, it is promptly dismissed and so does not have the intended impact (O’Reilly et al., 2016). Customers may consider organizations that disseminate eWOM that are not honest and authentic unfavourably as they appear to be manufactured for financial advantage rather than from genuine opinions (Moran & Muzellec, 2017). In other words, the company’s dishonest strategy may not be useful to help customers to gather information. Manes and Tchetchik (2018) would also agree because the authors pointed out that eWOM is not a ‘monolithic’ phenomenon which its definition that the influence varies depending on elements such as product qualities, and so the type of product should be considered.

1.2.2 Managerial Problematization

According to online observations, several electronic commerce still does not include online reviews on their websites. Therefore, it leads to questioning whether online reviews hold value or if it is possible for companies to function with other mechanisms to increase sales. It is possible that consumers may be gaining information through other resources or relying on their own experiences (Hu et al., 2014). Additionally, it can be argued that the option of returning the product could be one way to test quality, therefore eliminating the need for online reviews. However, consumers may be reluctant to purchase if it is likely that the product will be returned as Grewal et al. (2004) have discussed that the return process could be considered a hassle. The aim could be to keep the product, therefore, attitudes towards the use of online reviews as a mechanism to assure the trustworthiness is going to be satisfactory will be studied.

There is some agreement that eWOM can foster trust and thus reduce uncertainty in the process (Prasad et al., 2017). However, based on observations online, the existence of electronic commerce websites without online reviews still exists. Therefore, it leads to the issue of whether online reviews have any value or whether companies can work with other mechanisms to increase sales. While previous literature has emphasized the benefits of online reviews, it is possible that they are not as valuable as claimed, based on observations that some businesses do not include them. It’s possible that consumers
are getting their information from other sources or relying on their own experiences. Thus, online reviews will be investigated to acquire an understanding based on consumers’ experiences and opinions.

Some researchers have found that online reviews may be losing credibility due to the unfair actions made by companies and there has been little research done about how consumers respond to that (Lee & Jin Ma, 2014). Lee & Jin Ma (2014) discuss the motivations of consumers to share their opinions on the internet, including on consumer-opinion platforms like online review sites. The authors identify several factors that influence consumers’ willingness to share their opinions, such as a desire for self-expression and a sense of community involvement. Customers who trust eWOM communications make confident purchases. Hence, online stores display positive reviews alongside their product advertisements (Korfiatis et al., 2012). Ku et al. (2012) demonstrated that eWOM allows customers to spend more time on such websites, increasing their likelihood of purchasing the products. Furthermore, Chen et al. (2016) discovered that customers perceive product usefulness based on available online information. Although online review is a useful tool and an emerging phenomenon, there are still some limitations to how and where online review research is mostly conducted, which we discuss in detail in the following section.

Manes & Tchetchik (2018) would agree because the authors recognized that eWOM is not ‘monolithic’, which means that the impact varies depending on factors such as product characteristics, and thus the type of product should be considered. This problem poses a dilemma in 21st-century marketing which is dominated by the internet and social media platforms that have become the primary sources of information and increase awareness throughout the world. With continuous studies regarding the effect online reviews have on consumers' purchase intentions when shopping for fashion products, markets are benefited by obtaining the knowledge on how to further optimize the way to include UGC to further persuade customers’ purchase decisions. Further optimization is possible with the knowledge of how specific age groups of consumers are influenced by reviews, knowing that marketers are able to adapt to their target group. With eWOM arguably being the driving factor for certain consumers and the majority of all marketers and companies' goal to generate sales studies regarding this topic are a necessity (Kim, Naylor, Sivdas & Sugumaran, 2016). Finally, there is still a need for research in this field, thus, as previously discussed, the fast fashion industry will be chosen. The impact of online reviews on fast fashion products will be studied to determine their impact on customers’ trust.

1.2.3 Research Gap

The aim is to study consumers’ experiences with drawing information from online reviews, to understand its usefulness in gaining trust among millennials, thereby reducing risk for consumers before making further decisions in making purchases. While some studies have examined the relationship between online reviews and decision-making and recognized the impact of online reviews on purchase intention (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Luo & Ye, 2019), there is less research on how customer characteristics (such as age, gender, or cultural background) moderate this relationship. Moreover, there are only a few studies on millennial online shopping behaviour for fashion have been conducted (e.g., Bento et al., 2018; Sethi et al., 2018).
For instance, while there is increasing literature on the impact of online assessments on consumer confidence, there is a lack of research specifically focused on fast fashion among millennial consumers. Existing studies tend to be generalizable to a wide range of consumers, without entering into the unique characteristics and preferences of this demographic group. In addition, while some studies have explored factors that contribute to the credibility of online assessments, there is a gap in the literature regarding the specific factors that are most important to Millennial consumers to build trust in online reviews. In addition, some studies have examined the relationship between online reviews and decision-making and recognized the impact of online reviews on purchase intention (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Luo & Ye, 2019), there is less research on how customer characteristics (such as age or cultural background) moderate this relationship. Therefore, it is interesting to study such a specific group along with the gap in the literature review which needs for further research into the impact of online assessments on confidence among millennials, to better understand how businesses can effectively use this powerful tool to build trust and credibility with this chosen group.

1.3 Research Questions
After identifying the problem, we finally concluded and summarized the content into the following research questions:

RQ1: How do interactions with user-generated online reviews by millennials earn trust within the context of fast fashion e-commerce websites?

RQ2: What factors influence millennial consumers’ use of online reviews on fast fashion websites to increase trust?

1.4 Purpose
The purpose of this study is to study and explore consumers’ experiences with e-WOM through online reviews on fast fashion websites among millennials in order to better understand its usefulness in gaining trust and understand the factors that contribute to the trust of online reviews and how these factors affect the decision-making process of millennial consumers. This research uses an abductive approach coupled with a qualitative research strategy. The main method of data collection was gathered by semi-interviews to achieve a holistic understanding of the interviewee’s point of view or situation, then data will be analyzed.

1.5 Delimitations
Some aspects will be avoided on purpose in order to complete the purpose of this thesis. The authors chose to focus on direct online reviews presented on fast fashion websites and not include other sources of online reviews such as YouTube, social medias, or blogs because each has a wealth of literature on it. If all the fields were covered, the thesis would not have a narrow focus. Moreover, this study is limited only to millennials. The reason is, from an early age, generation Y is more intense with the
internet than other generations (Prasad et al., 2019). Selecting the country of France which is one of the authors’ nationalities was a necessity for gaining data to avoid language barrier and to collect exact and relevant information during data research. Furthermore, this research paper does not take the different characteristics of the product because the emphasis will be solely on fast fashion products sold by particularly fast fashion companies (i.e. SHEIN, HnM, Zara, Uniqlo, or Bershka).
2 Literature Review

This section thoroughly examines online trust and the risk that consumers face to understand the nature of electronic commerce due to information asymmetry. In addition, research on the use of online reviews and consumer opinions has been included. Furthermore, the factors influencing the use of online reviews have been identified and discussed. Finally, a model summarizing previous research findings has been developed and discussed.

2.1 Online Reviews

2.1.1 Online Reviews as eWOM

The traditional WOM evolved into an electronic mouth word (eWOM), a new form of communication, during the IT transformation. EWOM is not the same as traditional WOM (Cheung & Lee, 2012). EWOM arose as a result of the internet's transformation of traditional word-of-mouth to fit the novel electronic paradigm (Mishra & Satish, 2016). In a study by Fruth and Neacsu (2014), several classifications of various online consumer reviews are proposed, one of which is based on the place of publication. The previous authors differentiate between direct and indirect reviews submitted directly on the product's page. This type of online consumer review allows users to submit a review immediately on the product page and is available from practically all leading online stores. It is not only the fastest way for customers to leave a review, but it is also the most probable location where other consumers will look for them. The second form of review is one seen on specialized sites and blogs, which are personal blogs. As the author's claimed authority in the industry, these kinds of reviews are usually seen as objective and thoroughly researched. The third form of review is one that is shared on social media. Social networks are Internet-based connections between people. People can use the Internet to communicate with friends and/or strangers by creating a profile.

As more people use the internet, the prevalence of eWOM has increased (Chen et al., 2016). It has also seen the rise of new digital platforms like blogs, rating and comparison websites, and even online retail stores. These channels provide new ways to interact and are rich in textual and visual information (Mishra & Satish, 2016). In this context, eWOM refers to the exchange of information between a buyer, a former buyer, or a potential buyer (Ismagilova et al., 2017). Tan and Chang (2015) argue that eWOM is an important source of information, particularly for customers. The customer thinks that searching for information on the internet is more accessible than face-to-face since multi-way information exchanges take place. Nowadays, eWOM is a critical activity in social media (Gvili & Levy, 2018). As social networking becomes more prevalent, so does EWOM (Mortazavi et al., 2014).

With the ease with which technology is available and used, people freely and actively express their opinions around the world and have an impact on issues that are important to them (Kucukemiroglu & Kara, 2015). Customers write about products, services, brands, or experiences and share their thoughts with other customers (Kim et al.,
Online commercial sites encourage users to generate reviews by providing special tools to make this task easier (Lin & Xu, 2017). Consumers can not only seek information, but they can also make recommendations. The aforementioned user-generated content reflects the active role that customers now play in their purchasing decisions. Online reviews aid individuals in their decision-making process while also increasing sales (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). These reviews trustworthiness influenced approximately 50% of in-store purchase decisions by establishing social relationships evaluation from customer reviewers (Lin & Xu, 2017). As a result, they serve as "consumer-generated sales assistants," assisting consumers in finding products that meet their needs and forecasting sales (Lin & Xu, 2017). Finally, consumer reviews have evolved into an important tool for eWOM communication (Kucukemiroglu & Kara, 2015).

The study investigates at how people feel about trusting internet reviews from a communication perspective. Since an online review is clearly a form of communication between consumers, using a communication model to describe the various elements of a review can help gain an understanding of the impact these elements of communication have on consumer trust.

### 2.1.2 Perceived Usefulness of Online Reviews

The customer experience is seen as distinct and contextual. Some researchers explain eWOM behaviour as searching for opinions, giving opinions, and passing opinions (Chu & Choi, 2011). Customers will have unique experiences as a result of this behaviour, particularly when they participate interactive environment that allows consumers to easily find and share their opinions about various products and user experiences; the environment has as significant impact on the sales of goods and services to consumers (Rosario et al., 2016). Furthermore, online reviews provide a source of information as well as recommendation (Kusumasondjaja et al., 2012).

In order to commercialize a product or service, marketers must be able to integrate various message characteristics so that consumers receive the benefits of the message (Liu & Park, 2015). Marketers are expected to pack eWOM with interesting content and to use eWOM as a communication tool for the sold product. Customers’ pre- and post-purchase behavior is influenced by EWOM (Kuo & Nakhata, 2019), so marketers must make it an appealing mode of communication. According to Mauri and Minazzi (2013), explaining both the positive and negative aspects of eWOM at the same time will increase readers’ trust. The attractiveness of eWOM is defined as the distinctness, value and superiority of electronic word of mouth, whether done formally or informally.

### 2.2 Trust in Electronic Commerce

#### 2.2.1 Role of Trust in E-Commerce

Trust is essential in the online environment, particularly in eWOM (Zainal et al., 2017). A reliable eWOM source will compel someone to make a decision (López & Sicilia, 2014). Trust in eWOM sources provides credibility to the eWOM (Hussain et
When someone wants to buy, trusting eWOM reduces one's risk. Someone who believes in online reviews will immediately take action by purchasing products or services. Consumers trust information submitted by others online. This knowledge has the potential to improve attitudes, subjective norms, and consumer confidence (Hussain et al., 2020). Customer trust toward eWOM is defined in this study as customers' beliefs and expectations of eWOM (Ardyan & Sudyasjayanti, 2020). Furthermore, eWOM becomes a credible source of information for customers to make a decision (ibid). According to Chang et al. (2013), building trust is the key to attract customers to an online store. Furthermore, Saleem et al. (2017) discovered as well that trust is critical in driving repurchase intention for all service businesses.

Customers' trust and confidence in an online business have been found to be both a prerequisite for online purchases (and, consequently, an indicator of the quality of online services) and a component of the overall package of online services. Both of these components are included when online service quality is viewed as the process from pre- to post-purchase. A variety of cues the customer receives from the business are the foundation of trust (Ray et al., 2011). Such cues may be influenced by website content, advertisements, suggestions, and reviews (Loiacono, Watson, & Goodhue, 2002). Early research identified a lack of trust in e-commerce as a barrier to adoption. However, it is still an important aspect of service quality today (Tsang et al., 2010). Online trust is a multifaceted and intricate issue.

Zhang et al. (2014) define trust as having three core components: affective, cognitive, and conative. The cognitive component of trust refers to rational characteristics (e.g., dependability, competence), the affective component to emotional and social skills, and the conative component to behavioural intentions to rely on others (Zhang et al., 2014). This demonstrates that trust is a very complex concept that can be observed from a variety of angles depending on the field or purpose. Because research has discovered a positive relationship between trust and satisfaction with a sharing option (Möhlmann, 2015), it is critical to include it in this theoretical framework.

Many marketing publications have addressed the issue of trust in online settings (Shukla, 2014). According to Shankar et al. (2002), trust has become extremely important in an online context because customers and stakeholders have more information and alternatives on the Web, which thus means that firms must generate and build trust with their current or prospective customers. Building online trust can also result in improved websites, profits, and shareholder value (Shankar et al., 2002). Similarly, website quality is an important factor in fostering trust through product information (Chen & Dibb, 2010). Following that, it can be argued that the online world provides consumers with a wealth of information and options, necessitating a greater need for trust building. When trust-building efforts are successful, they can result in a variety of benefits that affect profits and website performance. Nevertheless, trust is also a relatively risky concept, as one major failure or negative experience could destroy it altogether.

The concept of trust is relevant in answering the research question because it is important in the acceptance of sharing user satisfaction (Möhlmann, 2015). Furthermore, the incorporation of Web 2.0 tools such as review systems and safety hotlines on sharing economy websites demonstrates that firms take it very seriously and understand that it is one of the key factors that either hinder or motivate users to
participate in the sharing economy. According to the literature review, trust is not only an outcome of the sharing of the economy, but it may also be a driver.

2.2.2 Perceived Risk in Relation to Trust

Trust is defined as customers’ confidence in a service seller’s reliability and integrity according to Morgan and Hunt, 1994 and the expectation that it can be relied upon to deliver its promises (Sirdeshmukh, Singh, & Sabol 2002). Perceived risk is a concept that Raymond Bauer (1960) was introduced in the literature. The author explained that when consumers purchase, there is risk involved (Taylor, 1974). It was also observed by Bauer that consumers have a disadvantage due to their limited information, unlike sellers who are aware of all the characteristics of the product or service (Mitchell, 1999).

Perceived trust is best defined as having certainty about an online store, having absolute certainty that the quality they advertise is the quality the consumer gets while purchasing (Budur et al., 2019; Torlak et al., 2021). The promises given on the website are fully and completely fulfilled without taking advantage of the users consuming them (Grabner-Kraeuter, 2000). Most consumers throughout the world, regardless of their identification, are skeptical of electronic commerce since the processes and impacts of ecommerce are unclear, and the attributes presented on the website are not tangible and accessible before purchase (Ahmed et al., 2021). That is why all consumers have some levels of distrust in their minds about buying online (Winand & Pohl, 2000).

Trust has a key role in commercial transactions between customers and sellers, particularly in online environments with no face-to-face encounters (Shin et al., 2013). Prior research has emphasized the relevance of online trust in e-commerce since it can positively leverage electronic commercial transactions, reduce perceived risk, and enhance repurchase intentions (Sullivan & Kim, 2018). A website with a large number of reviews may assist consumers in rationalizing their purchasing decisions and lowering their perceived risk because of other users have already purchased the same product or service before (Chatterjee, 2001; Park & Lee, 2008). Therefore, the more users who recommend a product, the greater level of trust and the lower the perceived risk in the transaction (Park & Lee, 2008). The spread of high-quality online reviews helps customers reduce uncertainty in online transactions (Kim et al., 2008; Kim and Park, 2013).

2.3 Online Reviews and Purchase Intention

According to Leong, Loi, and Woon (2021), “purchase intention is determined by information adoption, in which information usefulness is the predictor of information adoption” (p.145). This implies that information adaptation plays an important role for purchase intention (Leong, Loi, & Woon, 2021) which is consistent with Cheung and Thadani (2012), who concur that one of the most important attributes connected with the influence of purchase intention. Sussman and Siegal (2003) developed the Information Adoption Model (IAM) (Figure 1) by merging Davis’ (1986) Technology

According to the ELM model, humans are affected by the information they receive in two ways: the central or the peripheral. The central route addresses arguments, whereas the peripheral route covers issues that are inappropriately related to the message’s attribute (Cacioppo & Petty’s, 2986, referenced in Secondary Shu & Scott, 2014, p. 297). ELM has been dedicated to studying in a range of online environments as a result (Shi, Hu, Lai & Chen, 2018; Yang, 2015; Park, Lee & Han, 2007; Park & Kim, 2008). Park and Kim (2008), for example, evaluated how the ELM was used to identify how the amount and type of reviews influenced purchase intention, whereas Park, Lee and Han (2007) investigated how online reviews effect purchase intention. Furthermore, by evaluating people’s intentions, the TAM-model may be used to analyze the elements that influence user acceptability of information systems and technology (Wang, 2016).

It has already been established that eWOM influences the majority of consumers when making a purchase decision (Mishra & Satish, 2016), whereas decision aid refers to how consumers use eWOM to help them make decisions (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). Table 2-1 depicts the various stages of the Purchase Decision Process and how online reviews as eWOM affect the customer at each stage.

### Table 1: eWOM and Stages of Purchase Decision Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Example of eWOM Touch Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem/Need Recognition</td>
<td>External stimuli-ads on websites, personalization, and recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Search</td>
<td>Search engines, social media, product websites, e-retailers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Online reviews usage can be influenced by the product quality or buyer personality, and in the Information Search stage of the purchasing process, if consumers are eager to seek and adapt to new information, they are more likely to search digital platforms for such material (Fishbein & Azjen, 1975). However, not all types of information are considered valuable, as eWOM quality is also important. Other factors, such as perceived influence from others, opportunity costs, and the availability of substitutes, can all influence purchase decisions (Nguyen, 2017; Ulrike et al. 2016).

The use of online reviews is determined by the characteristics of both the product and the consumer (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). Additionally, the buying intention is defined as the implied promise to buy the product when the opportunity arises. The use of purchase intent is justified by online reviews, which provide information and suggestions and have a major impact on buying intention and actual purchase (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). The individual’s motivation and ability to process information determine their likelihood of engaging in thoughtful and effortful argument processing (Park & Lee, 2008). According to Park & Lee (2008), if motivation or ability are lacking the individual will rely on methods such as counting the number of arguments or other shortcuts to process the information. When people are highly involved, argument strength is the most influential factor, whereas the review quantity has been shown to have a greater influence on those who are less involved.

Mishra & Satish (2016) discuss the Information Adoption Model in their paper, which proposes that just as individuals “form intentions towards adopting a behavior or a technology, they similarly form intentions towards adopting particular advocated ideas and behaviours” (p.224). The Information Adoption Model helps to understand how different messages affect people on how their attitudes toward eWOM are formed (Mishra & Satish, 2016). As illustrated in Figure 2-1, the perceived usefulness of the information is determined by the quality of the argument and the credibility of the source. For instance, Cheung et al. (2009) point out that quality and clarity of information published by other consumers has an impact on the purchasing decision, since people tend to have objective and clear opinions (Shao et al., 2014).
2.4 Principal Issue Faced Online

2.4.1 Information Asymmetry

Trust in the seller is a vital key to building customer loyalty and maintaining continuity in buyer-seller relationships (Anderson & Weitz, 1989). The spatial and temporal separation between online buyers and sellers leads to asymmetry problems. A typical type of asymmetry is information asymmetry, which refers to a situation where one party to a transaction has more or better information than the other party (Akerlof, 1970).

Many researchers have argued that trust is a crucial enabling factor in relations where there is uncertainty, information asymmetry, and fear of opportunism (Pavlou et al., 2007). Accordingly, the first objective of this research is to integrate success model variables with trust and examine their relative influences on customers’ satisfaction and repurchase intentions toward online shopping. When consumers shop online, there is a lack of trust due to the separation between the products and buyers. Since there is incomplete information on the quality of the product, there is a risk with online businesses. Additionally, consumers acquire product quality from direct contact with offline businesses, but this is not achievable with e-commerce sites (Kawaf & Tagg, 2012). Customers struggle with fashion players since they cannot inspect the product in advance (Ashman & Vasquez, 2012). When shopping online, customers cannot physically analyze fashion products, therefore consumers rely heavily on visual and ambience information offered by e-commerce sites (Lee and Lee, 2019).

2.4.2 Quality of Information Asymmetry

Shen et al. (2011) indicated that in order to solve the information asymmetry problem, sellers must signal that they provide high-quality products, particularly when selling online due to the risk involved. When consumers are unaware of the quality of a product, they rely on signals (Akerlof, 1970). Li, Fang, Wang, Lim, and Liang (2015) have added support to the signalling theory by stating that understanding the effectiveness of signals is critical. Biswas, Dutta, and Biswas (2009) would agree that quality signals are important, especially in an online context. Brick and mortar stores do not need to invest in developing quality signals because the quality is evident in physical store investments such as layout, location, and staff for example. On the other hand, consumers in an online environment have limited information on the types of investments made. Furthermore, Li et al. (2015) suggested that e-WOM could be one of these signals. Therefore, e-WOM will be examined as a type of quality signal to determine whether it is beneficial to consumers in the fast fashion context.

2.5 Attitudes Regarding Online Reviews

2.5.1 The Usefulness of Online Reviews

Writing consumer reviews online demonstrates how to warn potential customers of a product or service or how to recommend to their peers to purchase a product or service (Sen & Lerman, 2007). Online reviews are of different characters, depending on the examiner’s experience. Doh and Hwang (2009) highlight the importance of providing
consumers with negative and positive online reviews to expand reliability and credibility, while positive online reviews increase sales. It is indicated that there is a mix of positive and negative comments online is essential for this study to better understand the risk. To avoid risk, online stores must demonstrate reliability in order to attract customers (Riegelsberger, Sasse & McCarthy, 2005). Comegys, Hannula and Väisäinen (2009) found a link between confidence in a company and purchasing intentions. When shopping online, customers may prefer to read reviews online. According to Jamil and Hasnu (2013), 70% of consumers rated online comments as trustworthy in a 2012 survey. The authors acknowledged that consumers use and practice online reviews to learn more about a product and look beyond the product description. In addition, Utz, Kerkhof and Van den Bos (2012) found that online reviews have a significant impact on the perceived reliability of the online store as a whole. Their research also revealed that online feedback from other customers was a more important concept for building trust than the store’s reputation. In the context of online stores, factors that contribute to the reputation of stores can include prompt delivery and an effective and responsive complaint-handling system. Based on their findings, they highlight the importance of online reviews.

### 2.5.2 Experience the use of Online Reviews in searching for goods

Customer purchase intentions refer to a consumer's willingness to purchase a particular service or product. It is a dependent variable that is determined by both internal and external factors (Morwitz, 2014). It has been discussed how experience goods can benefit more than search goods using e-WOM (Park & Lee, 2009). According to Hao et al. (2010), with experience goods, there is not enough information; therefore, there might be a need for online reviews. Other researchers such as Hu, Liu and Zhang (2008) agreed as they noticed that with research products, information on the return policy and product warranty may be suitable to reduce uncertainty as they are already aware of the value of the property. For search goods, the characteristics of the product could be outsized before the purchase with the information in density on the product as with electronics for example (Xia & Bechwati, 2008).

Besides acting as a form of catharsis, online WOM communications are very helpful to potential consumers who use online reviews to make a decision. Indeed, one of the purposes of writing a review (and a way to achieve catharsis) is to influence future buyers who are looking for information about the product. Consumers read reviews to reduce their purchase risk and for advice on whether or not to buy the product. In other words, online comments can also be a source of information and descriptions on the use of products. Therefore, ratings are particularly significant for experience goods, which are goods dominated by characteristics that can only be evaluated after consumption, as opposed to search goods, whose dominant attributes can be evaluated before consumption. Since consumers cannot properly assess their experience with goods before purchase, they tend to rely on the past experience of others, which is expressed in the form of online reviews. We expect that as reviews accumulate and consumers gain access to more and more past consumption experiences of others, experience goods may be valued more like search goods, in that their dominant attributes can now be assessed prior to purchase and consumption. In the same vein, it is expected that the schema deviation (predicted versus reality)
experienced by these latter consumers will be less, which will lead to less emotional criticism (Ullah et al., 2016).

2.5.3 Positive and Negative Online Reviews

According to Chatterjee (2001), online reviews can be either negative or positive. Consumers perceive positive and negative online reviews as being perceived as more credible and trustworthy (Sen & Lerman, 2007). As a result, the presence of negative online reviews on a website is critical (ibid). Although it comes as no surprise that negative online reviews have a negative impact on consumers’ purchase intentions, e.g., they do not go through with the purchase (Berger, Sorensen, & Rasmussen, 2010). However, the same study found that in the right circumstances, negative publicity can have the opposite effect (Berger et al., 2010). It is said that “all publicity is good publicity”, which means that regardless of the character of the content of a review, it raises awareness and attention. Although studies have shown that negative online reviews are more credible and trustworthy, it has been suggested that customers will pay significantly more, up to 20% more, for the same product or service simply because it has a high rating and an excellent favourable review (Lipsman, 2007). Furthermore, the majority of online reviews are positive, and researchers have found that they have a positive impact on conversion rates (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006).

Lee and Youn (2009) found that negative e-WOM had a greater impact on consumer purchase decisions, which can be explained by the information being more descriptive. Cui et al. (2012) discovered that a higher proportion of negative than positive online reviews have a stronger effect. These findings are consistent with the concept of negativity bias, which states that even in the presence of positive or neutral information, negative information is psychologically perceived to be more illuminating (Herr, Karder & Kim, 1991). Tsao and Hsieh (2015) contend that eWOM credibility serves as a partial mediator between eWOM quality and purchase intentions. The authors also observed that very detailed online reviews with photos and specific descriptions increase trust and purchase intent. In support of this, online reviews are regarded as a guide to customer choice and improve the likelihood of an online transaction (Fagerström et al., 2016), emphasizing their significance for online businesses.

Products associated with promotion consumption goals have a positivity bias, which means that consumers rate positive reviews as more persuasive than negative reviews, whereas products associated with prevention consumption goals have a negativity bias, in which negative reviews are perceived as more persuasive (Zhang et al., 2010). Low-quality eWOM on independent platforms (as opposed to corporate platforms) can significantly reduce eWOM credibility and purchase intentions (Tsao & Hsieh, 2015). Thus, low-quality eWOM published on independent platforms such as online forums or social media (Tsao & Hsieh, 2015) can reduce credibility and purchase intentions. High-quality and positive eWOM, on the other hand, positively influences eWOM credibility and purchase intentions (Tsao & Hsieh, 2015). To support this, Casaló et al. (2015) explain that high-risk-averse travellers find positive expert reviews and travel product images useful, while negative online reviews are more useful than positive online reviews overall. As a result, it is increasingly important for the business to consider and encourage positive word of mouth (Stein & Ramashesan, 2015).
Online product reviews are regarded as one of the most influential types of eWOM in the current online landscape, as they have the ability to shape consumer attitudes and facilitate purchase decisions (Shan, 2016). Product reviews are regarded as the second most trusted source of product information on the internet, with recommendations from friends and family ranking third (Shan, 2016). In fact, Smith et al. (2005) have revealed that consumers may believe that recommendations are more trustworthy than advertisements that may appear during their shopping task.

2.6 Online Reviews Manipulation

Potential buyers typically browse product reviews first and are more likely to purchase the item with the most favourable evaluations. Unfortunately, there is a tremendous motivation for the use of spam opinions because favourable opinions can lead to substantial benefits. There are several actions, particularly in developing nations, aimed at enhancing the reputations of specific products. One such activity is the creation of fake reviews that purposefully mislead users. One of the four categories of social spam, along with harmful links, false profiles, and bulk uploads (Chakraborty et al., 2016). It refers to reviews declaring a product to be of high quality or criticising a product, even when the reviewer may not have purchased or used it. According to Thomas et al. (2019), online reviews credibility is presented by a comprehensive causal model that includes potential determinants based on argument quality (i.e. accuracy, completeness and timeliness of online reviews) and peripheral cues (i.e. review consistency, review quantity, reviewer expertise, product or service rating and website reputation).

Companies may also provide false information. For instance, marketers may promote businesses by encouraging favourable eWOM about them, or they may even pay consumers to do so (Moran & Muzellec, 2017). People significantly respect reputable sources because of the unreliability of online review sources, which is why it is so important (Minazzi, 2015). Fake reviews have a significant impact on stakeholders and the growth of online product reviews. Numerous vendors, retailers, and platforms frequently manipulate online reviews because they can have a significant impact on how consumers perceive a product (Lee et al., 2018). For financial benefit, online vendors frequently post fictitious reviews of their own items that are either favourable or critical of those of their rivals (Wang et al., 2018). To boost traffic and user engagement, platforms are prone to accepting review manipulations and adding fraudulent reviews (Lee et al., 2018). One reason these people publish false reviews is opportunity seeking (Salehi-Esfahani et al., 2018). However, since the information provided about a product or service is typically written by other consumers and is not verified through a rigorous process, the credibility of online review sites has been questioned (Johnson & Kaye 2002).

2.7 Summary

As our review of previous research related to online reviews, trust, purchase intention, quality of information asymmetry and attitudes towards online reviews demonstrate as an essential part of the business. It has been discussed by Shen et al. (2011) that
consumers look for quality indications in an effort to reduce the risks connected with online purchases. According to Gharib et al. (2020), higher trust is required because it is seen in online review communities where members are competent to share information about goods and services. Trust towards the website is referred to as website trust. This kind of trust typically manifests as a result of an engaging and reliable website. Moreover, Poturatk and Turkyilmaz (2018) explain that customers’ trust in websites arises as a result of the fact that some websites provide ratings that are thought to be genuine and can therefore affect their purchase decision. The availability of information on various products and user experiences is made simple by the interactive environment, which has a substantial impact on customers’ purchases of goods and services (Rosario et al., 2016).

Although there has been a great amount of research on each of the relevant topics separately, there is a knowledge gap regarding the importance of customer trust towards online reviews as eWOM to mediate the influence between customer experience towards online reviews from fast fashion websites that lead to purchase decisions. Additionally, online reviews will act as a signal in this study to determine whether it provides guidance to consumers before a decision making. This research is focusing on millennials and as a result, further research on determining the effects of customer trust towards online reviews on fast fashion websites.
2.8 Conceptual Framework

The authors of this thesis have created a conceptual framework as a ground for the research questions.

Explanation:

This framework suggests that the future study of this area is useful as evidence of the relationship between online reviews and millennials attitudes towards online reviews. It would therefore be interesting for future researchers to study how millennials perceive online reviews in terms of gaining trust to purchase decisions. The authors of this thesis developed this conceptual framework model (Figure 2.2) as a way to measure the characteristics of online reviews and their influence on the generations' effect on purchase intention combined with an existing study by Davis (1986) of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as trust is a variable which will affect a person’s trust toward online reviews while shopping clothes online.

Numbers in this framework correspond to the types of questions (see Appendix 1) that the authors ask during semi-structured interviews, which elaborate upon in the methodology chapter that are related to the theoretical framework for the authors to be able to identify the alliance from the areas that produce trust from online reviews along with findings that have gathered. Furthermore, this model was designed to serve as a summary and a point of comparison for contrasting findings identified in earlier research with the data gathered in this study. The model shows that an essential component of online shopping is belief in electronic commerce specifically in fast fashion which could be affected by the participants’ attitudes toward online reviews, in turn, impact millennials' level of trust in the information provided. The level of faith, along with the presence of information asymmetry, influences millennials’ online purchase intention. Information asymmetry can directly affect the level of trust, as it may lead to scepticism or uncertainty regarding the accuracy and reliability of online reviews. Overall, this framework suggests that millennials’ attitudes, trust, and
perceptions of information play a crucial role in shaping their online purchase intentions, with online reviews acting as a mediator between attitudes and trust. Information asymmetry serves as an additional factor that can influence trust and subsequently affect purchase intentions. As Shen et al. (2011) have examined how consumers seek quality claims to reduce the risks associated with online shopping, in this study, online assessments will serve as a signal to determine if they offer advice to consumers.
3 Methodology

This section consists of the research philosophy, various approaches, strategies, and methodologies used, to provide the reader with an understanding of how the research was carried out followed by a presentation of the interview procedure. Finally, this chapter concludes by discussing the quality of the research, followed by ethical and sustainable considerations.

3.1 Abductive Approach

According to Bryman and Bell (2015), there are two approaches to research that describe how theory and research interact with one another: inductive and deductive. When using an inductive approach, research begins with data collection and then builds theory on the basis of what is discovered in empirical findings (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Furthermore, rather than generalizing the findings, the goal of using an inductive approach is to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of a specific context (Saunders et al., 2019). The use of an inductive approach is frequently associated with a qualitative research strategy, but the distinction between the approaches is not always clear because it depends on how the researcher approaches the research (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

The objective of this study is to understand how online reviews influence perceptions of fast fashion products to gain trust that leads to buying decisions, thus, an abduction approach is used for the study. The intention of abduction is to view current literature in a new context (Kovács & Spens, 2005) as earlier research found it difficult to find information on customers’ experiences and thoughts on online word-of-mouth in creating trust in terms of fast fashion industry. The empirical findings will almost certainly contribute new information to the literature regarding direct online reviews on fast fashion websites. As a result, the logical approach to research is not used. Furthermore, it is likely that alternative explanations to the study issue that are not consistent with the theory will be gathered, such deduction would not have been permitted. As a result of using an abductive approach, there is a chance to create new insights into online reviews.

3.2 Explanatory Research

As the purpose of the study is to obtain the perspective of Millennials on online reviews in order to understand their ways of acting in gathering information from asymmetric information, interviews were chosen as a method of data collection. Saunders et al. (2019) discussed several benefits of interviews as a method of data collection. One of the benefits explained is that this method can help to better understand people’s opinions on the subject in question, as it gives them the opportunity to further explain their reasoning. Although it was possible to focus on 25 people for this research study as one can also gather various opinions on the subject.

Explanatory research, in the context of a thesis about online reviews on millennials, aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the factors and mechanisms that influence millennials’ behaviour and attitudes toward online reviews. It goes beyond
describing and exploring the phenomenon by seeking to explain the underlying reasons and relationships that drive millennials' engagement with online reviews on millennials provides a deeper understanding of the motivations, perceptions, and decision-making processes that shape millennials' engagement with online reviews. It helps researchers and practitioners gain insights into the underlying factors driving millennials' behaviour and enables the development of effective strategies to engage and cater to this influential consumer segment.

3.3 Qualitative Research Method

Bryman and Bell (2015) define research design as a framework intended for collecting and analyzing data obtained with the aim of providing coherent justification regarding the method and particular analysis. According to Saunders et al. (2019), a research design is the overall plan for the research, while Gray (2019) claims that research design is situated between the research question and the method of data collection and outlines how the research will be answered.

The choice of a qualitative research approach when using a qualitative research design is determined by the research topic. This indicates that the researcher selects the best technique for collecting data and analysis (Tomaszeweski, Zaretsky, ad Gonzalez, 2020). A qualitative research technique can help a researcher better comprehend a specific phenomenon (Aspers and Corte, 2019). The qualitative research technique allows the researchers to obtain a rich insight into people’s lives without influencing them (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The authors of this study used an explanatory research design and an inductive approach for this study as the authors aim for a thorough understanding of the topic under consideration.

3.4 Type of Data

3.4.1 Primary Data

To answer the research questions, the primary is chosen by the authors of this study. Determining whether the data are primary or secondary is based on the relationship between the researcher and the data collected (Gray, 2019). Primary data is the collection of data that researchers themselves collect for their particular research to answer research questions (Saunders et al., 2019). Primary data can be acquired through observations, focus groups, interviews, and surveys among others and the method used depends on the study, as well as the abilities and resources available for the research.

For the purpose of this research, primary data was gathered through a qualitative research approach of semi-structured interviews due to the lack of knowledge from research previously done particularly direct reviews on fast fashion websites and this specific data gathering assists the researcher understand and solve the study topic at hand. The interviews are conducted to obtain an overview and an in-depth discussion about how customers experience online reviews on fast fashion websites in obtaining trust before purchasing decision by considering the usefulness and quality of
information asymmetry as consumers lack the knowledge to examine the product to avoid the risk of ending up for bad selection of products.

3.5 Semi-structured Interviews

As the study aims to learn about consumers’ views on direct online reviews to develop trust for customers in the aspect of fast fashion brands and the factors that impact online reviews’ utility, interviews were chosen as the method to collect data. Saunders et al. (2019) discussed several benefits of interviews as a data collection method. This method will give us an overview of the opinions of others, although it has been possible to hold focus groups for this research study since it can also gather various opinions on a topic. In addition, in the case of interviews, the type chosen was semi-structured, with a certain set of questions governing the interview, but not all questions could be used in the interviews. Semi-structured interviews are beneficial because they provide new perspectives, as the discussion is not limited to a structured set of questions. They offer the opportunity to explore and ask additional questions in response to the participant’s answers. This may lead participants to further explain their answers and, therefore, to better understand the interviewees.

Furthermore, the type of interview chosen was semi-structured, in which the interview is governed by a specific set of questions, but not all of the questions are used in the interviews. Semi-structured interviews provide an opportunity to gain novel perspectives since the discussion is not restricted to a structured set of questions. They allow you to ‘probe’ which is the practice of asking additional questions in response to the answers of the participants. Semi-structured interviews are beneficial as there is an opportunity to obtain new views, as they do not ask the same questions or reactions according to the people whom the author interviewed. Perspectives may be acquired (Saunders et al., 2019). The structured interview was not possible because it was a discussion-friendly and unstructured topic; group interviews were not appropriate for this study for several reasons such as free time and hours of work. This can lead to a significant amount of information. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were the method chosen for this study.

Moreover, semi-structured interviews may prompt participants to elaborate on their comments, resulting in greater comprehension of the interviewees’ perspectives (Saunders et al., 2019). For numerous reasons, structured and unstructured interviews were not suited for this investigation. Structured interviews are used for quantitative rather than qualitative objectives because they are questionnaires with standardized questions for all individuals. Furthermore, unstructured interviews are informal because the purpose is to collect the individual’s thoughts without the use of a predetermined list of questions. This could result in valuable but overwhelming information that would take a long time to analyze. As a result, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the research approach for this study. However, one of the limitations of less structured interviewer bias occurs when the interviewer influences the responses based on how the questions are phrased. Therefore, it was decided prior to the interviewers should be attentive to how questions are posed and keep them open-minded.
Many research manuals simply propose continuing to collect qualitative data, such as through additional interviews, until data saturation is reached: in other words, until the additional data acquired adds little if any, new information or indicates new themes. 12 in-depth interviews should serve for research aimed at understanding commonalities within a fairly homogeneous sample (Guest et al. 2006). However, Guest et al. (2006) point out that 12 interviews are unlikely to be sufficient when the sample is derived from a diverse community if the study issue is broad in scope. Given this, it would estimate that a broad study would require between 25 and 30 interviews (Creswell 2007).

The authors’ choice went to the millennial generation with a time frame between 1980-2000 as Bento et al. (2018) have stated because they used to buy online to relieve themselves of moving after work and it is also a simpler reason to save time and have time for themselves. Furthermore, the authors of this study came to an agreement to have a convenience sample which is a non-probability (not random) sampling technique with individuals who are accessible and available for interviews (Saunders et al., 2019). The only requirement for the selection of interviewees was that they were within the age group agreed on, therefore the authors made certain of that before including them in the study. Therefore, a sample size of twenty-five participants was recruited to represent the members of millennials. The interviews were held mostly by phone interviews or by Zoom as the participants are located in France, from 5th to 13th May, 2023. All semi-structured interviews were conducted anonymously and were audio recorded and transcribed in order to correctly interpret interviewees' responses. Additional information is that the participants gathered mostly represent the youngest millennials although they are still in the range of millennial ages, hence, a potential error of margin is present with median age is 1998. Furthermore, a table of participants for the study is presented below.

### Table of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age (median)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, a table of participants for the study is presented below.
3.5.2 Collection of Data

The next step was to gather empirical data after the research strategy has been selected. Primary data and secondary data are two distinct forms of information. In contrast to secondary data, which have already been collected for another purpose, primary data are newly collected data for a specific purpose. The latter, raw data or published summaries are examined once more from a different angle (Saunders et al., 2019). This study incorporated secondary data from several journal articles and other works of literature. Furthermore, primary data is collected to answer the research questions in order to obtain more knowledge about the field of interest and to better understand existing theories and models. The primary data is gathered through interviews with millennials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT NO.</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>YEAR OF BIRTH</th>
<th>CITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>BREST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>BREST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>CRETEIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>GRENOBLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>CRETEIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>PLOUZENEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>PARIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>RENNES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>SAINT-BRIEUC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>TREMAOUZEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>SAINT-NAZAIRE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>PAPEETE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>ANNECY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>LYON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>RENNES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>RENNES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>LES ABYMES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>BREST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>MARSEILLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>PARIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>PARIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>LORIENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>TOULOUSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>TOULOUSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>LYON</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Table of Participants
Interviews are arranged conversations in which certain questions are asked and replies are carefully listened to in order to further explore the topics. There are various interview formats. They range from extremely organized and formal to relaxed and unstructured interviews are conducted in between. Questionnaires with predetermined standardized questions and normally pre-coded answers are used in a structured interview. These are referred to as interviewer-administered questionnaires and are beneficial for a quantitative study. Semi-structured or in-depth (unstructured) interviews should be employed for more qualitative research.

Interviewees from France were chosen before conducting videoconferencing interviews. The decision to employ this method was made due to its logistical convenience, which suggests a reduction in geographical limits connected with in-person interviews, as we are offered a greater opportunity to reach geographically dispersed in our study (Irani, 2019). Additionally, the authors decided to contact people who are born between 1981 to 2000 or between the ages of 23 to 42 as this study is focusing the millennials. The authors of this study agreed to use a convenience sample, a non-probability (not random) sampling method that chooses participants who are the easiest to reach (Saunders et al., 2019).

This was brought on by the scarce resources and the constraints on travel times to different parts of France, therefore, the authors contacted their personal contacts on social media. The researchers also gathered participants based on the authors’ acquaintances and recommendations from those who had experienced online shopping through fast fashion websites. This strategy was useful because it made it relatively simple to organize the interviews since every participant live in France. Furthermore, the authors verified if the potential interviewees were in the group age required before adding the interviewees to the study because the only prerequisite for their selection was that they were within the predetermined age group.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

The process of analyzing qualitative data begins with data collection. As a result, it is important to plan the data analysis before beginning data gathering. This is mostly due to qualitative data being subjective and dependent on factors such as when and where the data was collected (Saunders et al., 2019). Thus, when gathering empirical data, field notes about elements around the interview such as thoughts or observations, were taken in order to aid in data analysis later on by adding another level of knowledge to why or how the respondents replied.

According to Yin (2014), there are few recognized frameworks or criteria for analysing qualitative data, and the conclusion is heavily dependent on the researcher’s empirical reasoning. However, the data had to be prepared before it could be analysed. The first step in this process was to digitally transcribe the interview audio recordings. The transcribing method used in this study was data sampling, which meant that only the parts of the interview that were deemed relevant for the study, as well as alternatively discussed themes and sub-topics were transcribed. To aid in the analysis, documents were generated in which the key components and themes of each interview were summarized on their own, in what is known as a transcript summary (Saunders et al., 2019). The interviews may be easily observed this way, and the data could be linked.
to notes taken during the interview. The empirical data was analysed using the conceptual framework’s theory and models and further in the conceptual framework followed by an examination of their relationship to trust that led to the purchase intention.

3.6.1 Interview Guide

The interviews were held mostly via Zoom, but other platforms were also used (i.e. FaceTime). A timetable listing the dates and rooms was created to ensure that the authors did not forget a session. The interviewees were also contacted a day prior to ensure that all participants were present. This led to effective time management because it eliminated the potential of rescheduling; as a result, the group was able to collect data quickly and focus on data analysis. As mentioned before, all the interviewees were selected through convenience sampling. The interviews were recorded as Zoom is provided with a recording option and afterwards transcribed which provided a good database for analysis (Saunders et al., 2019).

In the beginning of each interview, a few personal questions were asked such as “name”, “age”, “occupation”, and “level of education” and then an open question was posed if the interviewee has purchased clothes in fast-fashion websites for the last three months and read reviews or not. The control question is important since it determined whether or not the interviewees read reviews. People who do not read online reviews are unlikely to have an opinion on the issue. Furthermore, we came up with additional questions to discuss where the interviewees could elaborate their answers in their own way. We used follow-up questions and we tried to avoid asking leading questions to allow respondents to share their thoughts and feelings without bias from us the researchers. Interpretation questions were used to confirm what the interviewees meant.

The authors of this study conducted all interview guides prepared in French as all the interviewees’ mother tongue is French, except those who wish to do it in English, which is also feasible. This was done so that the language itself would not be an impediment to the interviewees’ ability to express themselves naturally. Following that, we translated the interview guide into English which is the version that can be found in its entirety as Appendix 2 and the French version as Appendix 3. Additional information on cities was produced as well into maps of France to indicate where the interviewees are living (see appendix 4).

3.6.2 Conducting Interview

The opening few minutes of an interview are crucial in terms of the interview’s potential outcome (Saunders et al., 2019). According to Saunders et al., 2019, it is critical to guide the discourse and explain to the participants the research questions, purpose, and topic. The interviewers followed this guidance and clearly informed the interviewees before the interview begin about the subject matter, purpose, and research question of our study. Gaining the trust and confidence of interviewees and establishing yourself as a credible interviewer is important, as participants frequently have challenges and uncertainties about revealing information and how it will be used (Saunders et al., 2019). Therefore, the interviewers described the nature of the study ad ensured that interviewees were at ease. Furthermore, to increase the reliability of the data, it is important to avoid any type of bias during the interview (Saunders et al.,
As a result, our questions were framed simply and openly, we did not propose possible replies to the respondents.

The interviewers clearly guaranteed anonymity, which boosts credibility and minimizes response bias (Saunders et al., 2019). In order to ensure anonymity, the interviewers informed the interviewees that their names would not be published and that their privacy would be respected. The authors divided the questions between the two of us, and any follow-up questions were free to ask regardless. Follow-up questions were used to return to the topic at hand or to expand on intriguing answers.

### 3.7 Operationalization

An interview guide carried out by the authors seems to easily guide the interviewees through the concepts related to the research. The interview questions in the interview guide were designed along the most prominent areas that the study intends to investigate and to support the research questions asked and consisted mainly of open-ended questions to allow participants to develop and deepen their answers. The authors of the selected semi-structured interview form had several unscripted follow-up questions if necessary. The operation continues to follow the structure of the thesis, but the authors decided to emphasize more transparency and customer awareness in the interview guide because these are considered the most important aspects of the interviews to elicit deeper answers. Appendix 1 shows how the authors ended up with the selected questions and their relationship to the concepts and literature review. The interview guide in Appendix 2 and 3 was also presented in both English and French as the authors chose to conduct interviews in French. The authors justify this approach because it helped the data collection process to produce more complex and comprehensive answers and a more open discussion, where the interviewees were able to express themselves without any hindrance by language issues. As the interviews were conducted in multilinguals, the authors were aware of the exposure of error and therefore being prudent in the translation and the transcription of all answers from the registered audio recordings of the interviewees.

### 3.8 Quality of Research

There are two primary components employed to provide a measure of quality to the research that acts as central evaluations of the research's quality (Saunders et al., 2019). Table 3 shows four tests typically employed by Yin (2014) to assess the quality of empirical social research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Phase of Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construct Validity</td>
<td>Primarily Data Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Validity</td>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Validity</td>
<td>Research Design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29 (82)
Reliability | Data Collection

Source: Adapted from Yin (2014, p.45)

The construct validity aims to identify the measurements of the concept being studied, internal validity seeks to establish a causal relationship and was thus not applicable for this descriptive or exploratory study, external validity considers in what domain the findings can be generalized, and reliability demonstrates that the study's procedures and results can be replicated (Yin, 2014).

3.8.1 Validity

Validity represents how well what is being measured is being measured. Which indicators were chosen, how successfully the data analysis was performed, and what the findings indicate (Saunders et al., 2019). It was critical that the operational measurements utilized in this investigation have previously been established by prior research. This implies that others have observed and established the same connections (Yin, 2014), which is true for the theoretical framework, albeit not in the same context.

The source of evidence employed in this study had a direct impact on the study's validity. The use of interviews revealed strengths such as the ability to directly focus on the case and gain insightful remarks from the correspondents via personal explanations and personal viewpoints (Yin, 2014). As mentioned by Saunders et al. (2019), it is possible to secure a higher degree of authenticity by debating around the questions, asking for clarifications, and building on the interviewees' previous responses.

To avoid replies being distorted by previous information or biased perception, all interviewees were given a pre-determined definition of a review at the beginning of each interview. In addition, open questions are used to guide the dialogue, followed by probing questions to comprehend the logic. To eliminate external influences such as call platforms, time, or our appearance from influencing the interviewers, locations and times were chosen based on the interviewees' preferences, and a suitable appearance in connection to the interview setting was chosen.

As Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019) have eloquently stated, it is imperative to conduct interviews in a language that participants feel both confident and fluent in speaking and comprehending. This approach not only enhances the accuracy and validity of the data collected but also demonstrates a deep respect for the individual's linguistic and cultural background. Conducting the interview in the correspondents' native language posed a double-edged sword against the research's authenticity. While this allowed participants to express themselves more freely, it also created a problem because interviews conducted in French had to be translated into English before any data analysis could take place. Although the authors of this study are from France and Indonesia, which is good for data collecting, the validity of the translation and interpretation of the replies in English may have suffered because neither author speaks English as their mother tongue. However, to strengthen the validity of the data sampling transcription, field notes were recorded of each interview alongside the recordings and back translation was applied, simply because it was the most commonly
used method to “ensure” equivalency between the source and target texts (Chidlow, Plakoyiannaki, & Welch, 2014).

### 3.8.2 Reliability

The consistency of the research and the ability to replicate the research with consistent results determine its reliability (Yin, 2014). Semi-structured interviews, as mentioned by Saunders et al. (2019), are used to explore difficult topics due to their flexibility, and the data is dependent on aspects such as when and where it was obtained. It is extremely unlikely that the research could be replicated to provide the same results. The sample selection, although non-probability, increases the credibility because the interviewees were all millennials requirement and had experience in purchasing goods on fast fashion websites. The availability of the interview guide in English and France (see Appendices) allows for the possibility of conducting additional interviews. Despite being a guide, all questions were addressed unless an answer could not be provided.

The interviewees were thanked for taking the time to participate in the interview and were all given a brief explanation of the study in which they would be taking part. Before beginning the recordings, interviewees were asked if they had any concerns, and it was made clear that no personal information would be collected, and that the data would be provided anonymously. All interviews diverged with the introduction of the situation of online shopping through fast fashion websites with brands example given.

This is a well-known issue when conducting semi-structured interviews. Even characteristics such as the interviewer's gender and educational background may have influenced the participants' responses. However, such unstructured flexibility was required to discover how the components of online reviews affect customers differently.

### 3.9 Ethical Considerations

According to Saunders et al. (2019), to conduct research in an effective manner, there are different ethical considerations to be extended either in data collection or in analysing findings. It covers and hence provides a guideline for, how to address the various stages of a research project (Saunders et al., 2019). As our research involves human participants, Saunders et al. (2019) as well mentioned various ethical concerns and provides ethical guidelines for them.

First, the authors will inform the respondents participating in advance of the purpose of the interview, the use of collected material, and the manner in which it will be collected. We will address those ethical issues by obtaining personal agreement from participants who are willing to take part in the survey. Before, during, and after conducting this study, both authors carefully followed and paid considerable attention to the aforementioned ethical steps as participant consent was requested for recording the interview. Second, informed consent is coordinated among all respondents. The
participants will be fully informed with written information about us as researchers, the purpose of the survey and the study. This means that respondents must participate voluntarily in the study and make it clear that the information provided during this project can be withdrawn at any time. If they choose to, participants have the right to leave the research at any stage if they wish to do so. Moreover, the anonymity of individuals and organisations participating in the research must be ensured. From the beginning to the end of the data collection process, participants' privacy will be respected; personal biases or inaccuracies should not be part of the reporting and the subjects should be given a chance to issue feedback about the findings. Respondents will be respected, and no harm will be done to them in either online or face-to-face environments. Third, the authors assure their respondents that all information provided in the study and subsequent is for research purposes only. Fourth, it means that the data provided in the study and subsequent analysis are true and accurate and will not be manipulated to give different results and to avoid research misconduct to accurately represent our results. Finally, interview questions are presented in a way that does not offend and is kept to an absolute minimum of physical, social, psychological and all other types of harm towards the individual being interviewed.

As this study collected data by interview, audio recording has been used in order to allow the interviewer re-listen to the interview and allow direct quotes to be used, if necessary. Before conducting the interview, the interviewers required the participants’ permission to respect the interviewees’ rights. Any stored and collected contextual or audio data from the carried-out research will be permanently deleted from each researcher's device once the study has been completed and the results have been accomplished.

3.10 Sustainable Considerations

The authors are aiming to address today’s global challenge which is sustainable actions throughout our degree project. Sustainable development is a principle that governs human activity without causing irreversible harm to the earth's natural system. It also seeks to preserve resources so that future generations can benefit from them in the same way that current generations do. The authors would like to take action and contribute to gaining a better understanding of the environmental impact of research activities and how to make them more sustainable. According to TBL (UNIDO, 2020), the authors would like to implement these three aspects from the social, environmental, and economic outlooks. Social is primarily described under ethical considerations, but it is also part of sustainable considerations because it is critical that we remain socially sustainable when working with people. With working conditions and good communication between us conducting the study, the social perspective will be considered. The work environment will be appropriate for us and having an open dialogue about issues and other circumstances and contribute equally to the content with the aim to produce a study that both can stand behind. The environmental perspective will be taken into consideration, if necessary, as some interviews might occur. If the targets are close to us, public transportation or bikes will be our first option to reduce carbon footprints. Besides, with a long-distance interview, as our focus target
is the millennial population, either in France or Sweden, the appliance of online platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet or other platforms options will be our preference. In order to minimize waste, we will avoid using physical materials such as paper during this study and instead use digital materials. The economic perspective will be considered as well, and no unnecessary spending will be done, and all spending related to the project involving both parties, the researchers, and the respondents of our conducted data. No bribes or payments will be made in order for respondents to participate in the study; all participants should be voluntary. Travel expenses will be incurred on an individual basis as needed.
4 Empirical Findings and Analysis

In this section, the empirical findings are presented and analysed in relation to the theoretical framework. The analysis follows the research questions formulated for this study, splitting the findings into two sections. To begin, the attitudes of consumers toward online reviews on fast-fashion websites are presented and analyzed. Furthermore, an examination of the identified factors influencing the use of online reviews by fast fashion is included.

4.1 Introduction

This study, online reviews as e-WOM were considered as a signal quality mechanism and its application was examined. There has been debate in the research on whether reviews are taken into account during the purchasing process. Several elements were identified in previous studies that could influence the use of online reviews. The purpose of this study is to study and explore consumers’ experiences with eWOM through online reviews on fast fashion websites among Millennials in order to better understand the factors that affect the decision-making process of millennial consumers.

This part aims to explore the perceptions and behaviours of millennials regarding online reviews through a series of semi-structured interviews. By examining the experiences and perspectives of 25 participants does not perform a majority of the French millennials population that existed. From semi-interviews conducted, it was discovered that all participants had previously purchased from fast fashion websites, thus they were all familiar with the notion of millennial generations, those are born and raised in digital (Shin & Lee, 2021) and are growing up in an environment where online fashion shopping is viewed as entertainment which is supported by a study of Valentine and Powers (2013), we seek to uncover valuable insights into the factors that influence millennials’ trust, engagement, and decision-making process when interacting with online reviews. The interview data were transcribed and analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. Initially, a process of familiarization with the data was undertaken by repeatedly reading and re-reading the transcripts to gain an in-depth understanding of participants’ responses. Following this, initial codes were generated, identifying key ideas, concepts, and patterns within the data.

These initial codes were then organized into broader themes and sub-themes, capturing commonalities and variations in participants’ perspectives. The process involved iterative discussions among the research team to ensure the validity and reliability of the identified themes. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the factors that influence millennials’ engagement with online reviews. Initial analysis suggests several emerging themes, including the role of social influence, the credibility of reviewers, the impact of review platforms and algorithms, and the importance of transparency and authenticity in online reviews. Moreover, the study sheds light on the motivations behind millennials' active participation in online review platforms, their trust-building mechanisms, and the impact of online reviews on their purchasing decisions. By understanding these underlying factors, businesses and marketers can
effectively target and engage with millennials, harnessing the power of online reviews to build trust, enhance brand reputation, and drive consumer loyalty.

4.2 Trust in Online Reviews

During the interviews, a question regarding whether they trust online reviews or not, the participants responded that they do believe, at least to some extent, and they are aware that online reviews on fast fashion websites themselves are a useful tool as word-of-mouth positively affects the consumer's perception of trust towards e-commerce. In general, trust in online reviews has a significant impact on consumer behaviour while shopping online. A higher level of trust indicates also more purchase intent. Trust in online reviews is distinguished by several aspects that the authors required the participants to rank from the most important to less one. The results show that the number of reviews and ratings is the most determined option followed by rating in general and quality of information those both aspects have the same number of voting that the participant considers the most important and the last is the date of the review posted.

The participants would answer questions about how they significantly measure the trustworthiness of individual reviews with the number of reviews as the participants put trust not in people but in the fact the number of reviews will give them trustworthy information. This was present in the study of Park & Lee (2008) that individuals will rely on a method of counting the number of information whereas the review quantity has been shown to have a greater influence of gaining trust. However, Poturak and Turkyilmaz (2018) found that trust towards the website appears due to websites providing ratings considered sufficient to be trustworthy while shopping online. The majority of participants agreed about the choice of the number of reviews and ratings is important as the more reviews or ratings, the more believable it is.

“The number of reviews represented gives me trust in that website.” – Participant 21, Paris.

Additionally, Participant 2 and Participant 16 highlighted that they can rely on and can trust reviews to the highest level of trust into 90%. This finding is supported by her experiences which are always satisfying due to online reviews providing her information as Mishra & Satish (2016) stated that online retail stores provide new ways of gathering information. Thus, online reviews are a variable that contributes to the perception of trust. However, there is a participant that has a different opinion. She does still trust but with a medium level of it as the reason behind it that the level of need that she has is dominant, thus this is connected more to her purchase intention, and this is how she cited it:

“50% I rely on online reviews and the rest is, do I really need to buy this.” – Participant 2, Creteil.
A possible reason to see if trust is really justified because of online reviews is that the interviewee’s trusting behaviour is that they make up strategies of their overall evaluation of online reviews' trustworthiness as trustworthy as possible. Although some considerations appear and some value of the product is considered such as in the case of Participant 2, still, online reviews are the objects that they read and still have trust in them.

Additionally, during the discussion with the interviewees the authors get informed about trust in online fast fashion, and the participants shared their thoughts and opinions on various aspects related to this topic. Firstly, the participants likely discussed the importance of brand reputation when it comes to trusting online fast fashion retailers. They might have shared their experiences with different brands and discussed how well-established and trusted brands tend to instill more confidence in customers compared to lesser-known or new brands. Secondly, they talk about return and exchange policies, participants might have addressed the significance of fair and convenient return and exchange policies. Trust in online fast fashion is closely tied to the ease with which customers can return or exchange items that don't meet their expectations. A discussion on this topic could have covered aspects such as return shipping costs, the timeframe for returns, and the overall customer experience during the return process. Thirdly, transparency and ethical practices like trustworthiness in the fast fashion industry often involve transparency regarding the sourcing, production, and labour practices associated with the garments. Participants might have expressed concerns about the environmental impact, worker conditions, and overall sustainability of fast fashion brands. Trust has a key role in commercial transactions between customers and sellers, particularly in online environments with no face-to-face encounters (Shin et al., 2013).

“For me, it is important for fast fashion websites to have online reviews which make the websites be transparent as consumers are able to leave such reviews of products that they purchased.” - Participant 16, Rennes.

A website with a large number of reviews may assist consumers in rationalizing their purchasing decisions and lowering their perceived risk because of other users have already purchased the same product or service before (Chatterjee, 2001; Park & Lee, 2008). They might have discussed the need for more transparency in these areas and how it influences their trust in online fast fashion companies. Furthermore, to add some user reviews and social proof, participants might have highlighted the role of user reviews and social proof in establishing trust. They might have discussed how positive reviews and testimonials from other customers can help build confidence in online fast fashion purchases. Therefore, the more users who recommend a product, the greater level of trust and the lower the perceived risk in the transaction as said Park & Lee (2008). They may have also touched upon the importance of reliable review systems and the potential for manipulated or fake reviews affecting trust levels.

Participants 2 and 4 argue about the choice of the number of reviews and ratings is important as the more reviews or ratings, the more believable it is. This statement is also admitted by Participant 21 as a number of reviews is regarded as a trust facilitator.
The article may have the highest ratings but only one or two persons who gave those ratings, it does not mean anything. This could mean when an article lacks reviews, this thus means asymmetric information has no interaction with other consumers that can give the signal of information to potential consumers. This was confirmed as the majority of participants have trust despite different elements that they took into consideration.

“Not really worth it when an article has the highest rating but only two people give reviews, that really doesn't convince me, as a buyer.” – Participant 4, Grenoble.

Moreover, customer supports the trust in online fast fashion retailers is often influenced by the quality of customer support provided. Participants may have shared their experiences with customer service, discussing factors such as response time, problem resolution, and overall helpfulness. They might have emphasized the need for responsive and reliable customer support to enhance trust in online fast fashion companies. Overall, the participants likely explored various dimensions of trust in online fast fashion, encompassing brand reputation, product quality, return policies, transparency, user reviews, and customer support. Their insights and perspectives would have shed light on the factors that influence trust and the challenges faced by consumers in the online fast fashion industry. Perceived trust is best defined as having certainty about an online store, having absolute certainty that the quality they advertise is the quality the consumer gets while purchasing (Budur et al., 2019; Torlak et al., 2021).

“I will read the reviews, especially the positives and if they are constructive as some reviews or they are just there to destroy the site or the product without actually being necessary.” - Participant 11, Brest.

4.3 Online Reviews and Purchase Intention
The interview results were diversified, and the researchers discovered different factors that affected their purchase decision of shopping online. Most of the interviewees’ decision-making is influenced thanks to online reviews from other consumers. Cui (2012) also stated that online reviews attract customers and assist them in online decision-making. The majority of the respondents acknowledged their purchase intentions are influenced by how other people give information and could control this behavior. They get influenced because the attitude toward the ease of use of online reviews as a tool of gathering information is perceived by its usefulness to behavioral intention that affect an individual’s approval. This finding is associated with TAM model of assessing trust which has the strongest influence on consumer attitudes. Moreover, the characteristic of both products and the customers of seeking information from online reviews have a major impact on buying intent (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017).

“I get influenced by their reviews which affects my purchase decision-making.” – Participant 6, Plouzéne.
“I’m very influenced by other people, especially in the context of fashion online shopping.” – Participant 14, Lyon.

When participants discuss online reviews and purchase intention on fast fashion websites, they are highlighting the significance of customer feedback and its influence on their decision-making process. Online reviews are written assessments or ratings provided by customers who have previously purchased and used the products or services offered on a website. Purchase intention refers to the likelihood or inclination of participants to make a purchase based on various factors, including the information they gather from online reviews. According to Leong, Loi, & Woon (2021), “purchase intention is determined by information adoption, in which information usefulness is the predictor of information adoption” (p.145). This implies that information adaptation plays an important role for purchase intention (Leong, Loi, & Woon, 2021) which is consistent with Cheung and Thadani (2012), who concur that one of the most important attributes connected with the influence of purchase intention.

In the context of fast fashion websites, participants recognize the importance of online reviews as a source of information and guidance. Furthermore, by evaluating people’s intentions, the TAM model may be used to analyze the elements that influence user acceptability of information systems and technology (Wang, 2016).

“Then, I will read the reviews, especially the positives and if they are constructive as some reviews are just there to disintegrate the site or the product without actually being necessary. So, I read the online reviews seriously to not have any unpleasant surprises, or a package other than the one I ordered, to avoid fraud at best.” – Participant 11, Saint-Nazaire.

The first things we can find are authenticity and trust, participants value authentic and genuine reviews from real customers. They rely on these reviews to assess the credibility and reliability of the fast fashion website and the products it offers. Positive reviews can instill trust and confidence in potential buyers, while negative reviews may raise concerns or deter purchase intention. The individual’s motivation and ability to process information determine their likelihood of engaging in thoughtful and effortful argument processing (Park & Lee, 2008). According to Park & Lee (2008), if motivation or ability are lacking the individual will rely on methods such as counting the number of arguments or other shortcuts to process the information. When people are highly involved, argument strength is the most influential factor, whereas the review quantity has been shown to have a greater influence on those who are less involved.

“I am very influential on the comments especially if they are provided by photos, it is important to have the photos to see if the description is consistent with the photo and vice versa.” – Participant 18, Brest.

Then the product quality and the descriptions who’s come with online reviews provide insights into the quality of materials, fit or sizing, and overall satisfaction of previous
customers with fast fashion products. Participants may pay particular attention to reviews that discuss the durability of the garments, the accuracy of sizing, and the general feel or appearance of the items. Positive reviews regarding product quality and having actual sizing can positively impact purchase intention.

Additionally, user experience and customer service Participants may consider online reviews that mention the user experience on the fast fashion website and the level of customer service provided. Positive reviews highlighting smooth navigation, prompt delivery, helpful customer support, and hassle-free returns can enhance purchase intention, as they indicate a positive overall shopping experience. Online reviews usage can be influenced by the product quality or buyer personality, and in the Information Search stage of the purchasing process, if consumers are eager to seek and adapt to new information, they are more likely to search digital platforms for such material (Fishbein & Azjen, 1975). However, not all types of information are considered valuable, as eWOM quality is also important. Other factors, such as perceived influence from others, opportunity costs, and the availability of substitutes, can all influence purchase decisions (Nguyen, 2017; Ulrike et al. 2016).

After all of these participants may appreciate reviews that provide a balanced assessment of the products, mentioning both positive and negative aspects. Such reviews demonstrate transparency and help participants be more informed before making decisions by considering a range of perspectives. Online reviews help them to make a making decision properly after the information.

“In my opinion, fast fashion websites should have online reviews space as it helps to make decisions before buying.” – Participant 1, Brest.

“Yes, online reviews do affect my purchase decision-making.” – Participant 20, Paris.

Overall, participants consider online reviews as a valuable source of information when it comes to fast fashion websites. Positive reviews can enhance purchase intention by building trust, validating product quality and size, and assuring a positive shopping experience. Negative reviews, on the other hand, can raise concerns and potentially reduce purchase intention. By considering a variety of online reviews, participants aim to make informed decisions and increase the likelihood of a satisfactory purchase. The use of online reviews is determined by the characteristics of both the product and the consumer (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). Additionally, the buying intention is defined as the implied promise to buy the product when the opportunity arises. The use of purchase intent is justified by online reviews, which provide information and suggestions and have a major impact on buying intention and actual purchase (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017).
4.4 Principal Issue Faced Online

4.4.1 Risk of Information Asymmetry

According to a study by Kim et al. (2012), consumers perceive risk when shopping online, which may undermine their ability to trust sellers and prevent them from making a purchase. The majority of the interviewees who participated in this study said they would only proceed with a transaction if they had trust. Otherwise, brand credibility could also affect their level of trust as Participant 5 and 20 interpreted here.

“However, in some cases, if I see a product in Salomon, and it has bad reviews, but Salomon is a brand that I trust,...” – Participant 5, Créteil.

“I always buy from websites that are known for their credibility such as Zara or HnM.” – Participant 20, Paris.

Additionally, when participants talked about their trust in fashion products, they all linked it to their incapacity to thoroughly examine the item. This was evident in the study conducted by Ashman & Vasquez (2012) since there is more risk associated with purchasing clothing because its qualities are difficult to perceive.

“Another reason, I have a really big size, thus, I preferably check first on the physical store.” – Participant 7, Paris.

In the case of online fast fashion, participants are expressing concerns about the lack of transparency and limited information provided by sellers or fashion retailers on their websites. Fast fashion refers to the rapid production and turnover of inexpensive clothing items, often characterized by low-quality materials and unethical labor practices. Participants are highlighting that due to the fast-paced nature of this industry, consumers may not have access to comprehensive information about the products they are purchasing. According to Customers struggle with fashion players since they cannot inspect the product in advance (Ashman & Vasquez, 2012). When shopping online, customers cannot physically analyze fashion products, therefore consumers rely heavily on visual and ambience information offered by e-commerce sites (Lee and Lee, 2019).

“Every time I want to buy something I always try to read reviews, and not just on the website itself, I go also to other platforms, like YouTube to double check. Because I often hear that people are paid to give good reviews, then that person is paid by the company” – Participant 4, Grenoble.

The risk of information asymmetry in online fast fashion can manifest in several ways: Material Quality: Participants may be concerned that the quality of the clothing items advertised on fast fashion websites is not accurately represented. Without detailed
information about the materials used, consumers may end up with products that do not meet their expectations in terms of durability, comfort, or overall quality.

“I look most often before the comments, the size descriptions, and the material since my skin is sensitive, further on I will look to see if the materials are correct.” – Participant 23, Toulouse.

Sizing and Fit: Participants may also express concerns about the accuracy of sizing information provided on fast fashion websites. Inconsistent sizing or incomplete measurements can lead to a mismatch between the advertised size and the actual fit of the garment, causing frustration and inconvenience for consumers.

“Another reason is I have a really big size, thus, I preferably check first on the physical store. Even though I don’t really read many online reviews, it is might important for fast fashion websites to provide online reviews page on it as it is probably useful to know in detail the quality of the product.” – Participant 7, Paris.

“I first look at the description to be able to estimate my needs, and the good quality of the products then read the comments, especially on sizing since I am small, also have a small chest, before buying on the Internet. Then I’ll question people for the testimonies of their experiences on the products they have bought and received them home to see if this is really worth the advertising or photos made on the site.” – Participant 10, Brest.

Addressing these concerns and mitigating the risk of information asymmetry in online fast fashion requires greater transparency from sellers. It involves providing detailed and accurate information about product quality, manufacturing processes, sizing, and return policies. As asymmetry in the information will lead to undesirable outcomes and end up with a bad choice of products, hence, offering comprehensive and transparent information, retailers can establish trust with consumers and reduce the negative impacts of information asymmetry.

4.4.2 Quality of Information Asymmetry

“These days, there are a lot of fast fashion websites have AI measurements that can help consumers to choose which size that might fit them. So that’s why online reviews are more helpful with that to examine rather AI measurement is right or not.” – Participant 4, Grenoble.

When 65% of participants express a preference for having all the pieces of information about a product signposted on websites, it means that a majority of those surveyed or involved in the study find it beneficial and convenient to have clear indications or
markers directing them to relevant information about a particular product. This indicates that participants prefer websites that provide comprehensive and easily accessible details about the product they are interested in. According to Li et al. (2015) suggested that e-WOM could be one of these signals. Therefore, e-WOM will be examined as a type of quality signal to determine whether it is beneficial to consumers in the fast fashion context.

“First things first I look for the description box as specific information is usually presented there such as sizing, type of material etc...” – Participant 14, Rennes.

“I try to identify my needs in terms of clothes in terms of the product that I’m going to need, and I start browsing and I use reviews to find information about these clothes or the items that I am going to purchase.” – Participant 20, Rennes.

Otherwise, Biswas, Dutta, and Biswas (2009) would agree that quality signals are important, especially in an online context. Thus, the findings of our participants are related to the theory of Biswas, Dutta and Biswas (2009) as those aspects are considered essentials when buying apparels online. By having all the necessary information readily available and clearly marked, users can quickly locate and access the details they need, making their browsing experience more efficient and enjoyable.

“I first look at the description to distinguish the quality of the products before buying on the Internet then if it is able to be delivered to Guadeloupe for safety reasons. I usually first see the products on social media ads or by the recommendation of my daughter’s friend's mother.” – Participant 17, Les Abymes.

Secondly, signposting helps users make informed decisions. When all the pieces of information about a product are easily accessible, users can gather a comprehensive understanding of its features, specifications, pricing, availability, reviews, and any other relevant details. This enables them to evaluate the product more effectively and make informed purchasing decisions. Furthermore, signposting enhances transparency and trust. When websites clearly indicate where users can find information, it conveys a sense of openness and honesty. Users appreciate organizations that provide easy access to details and perceive them as being more trustworthy. By openly providing information, companies can foster positive customer relationships and build credibility.

4.5 Attitudes regarding Online Reviews

4.5.1 The Usefulness of Online Reviews

To further comprehend the concept of information asymmetry and the use of online reviews as an indicator of quality in the online context, participants were asked how
they interpret online reviews for information acquisition. Moreover, when participants were asked about their attitudes toward online reviews in relation to fashion products, most of them related it to the inability to examine the product. The respondents also stated that the most significant consideration for them when shopping for clothes online is the product’s online reviews which help them to provide qualified information not only about the articles, but the service provided by the companies. Online reviews do significantly help participants to have insight into the size and the materials. These are some compelling responses through the utility of online reviews:

“Once I bought a T-shirt and I did not read online reviews, then after twice of utilization, it got ripped. Mostly my purchases are affected by online reviews to avoid such things happening again.” – Participant 13, Annecy.

“All comments play an important role in the influence of goods and services” – Participant 11, Saint-Nazaire.

“Some feedbacks play an important role in influencing goods and services...” – Participant 9, Saint-Brieuc.

Online reviews are subjective when it comes to fashion as they are necessary when the sizing of the product is difficult to grasp by the information provided in the description. Therefore, the findings from Participant 7 slightly differ as he mentioned that for sizing, he never depended on online reviews regarding his plus size, thus his preference always goes to physical stores. Furthermore, Participant 5 thus did not value online reviews since he did not consider them useful. Participant 5 was not supportive of online reviews on fast fashion and how online reviews play different roles due to subjectivism. He argued that individuals differ in their preferences, therefore, an individual’s opinion could not be applied to everyone. The findings from participants 5 and 7 do not fully support the literature by Biswas et al. (2009) on the need for a signal of quality for online fashion vendors.

“Online reviews do not help me since what people think the product is good, it does not mean that it is good for me. If the product I bought seems not as I expected, either return it or resell it to a second-hand store like LeBoncoin or Vinted.” – Participant 5, Créteil.

Additionally, Participant 5 has mentioned that fashion websites’ online reviews do not involve strong ties in giving additional information as he believed that consumers’ opinions are more useful in the aspect of cosmetics, skincare, and accessories. He cited his argument as below:

“I preferably read online reviews in terms of cosmetics, skincare, and accessories, and not really for fast fashion.” – Participant 7, Paris.
While most of the participants, apart from Participant 5 and Participant 7, did consult online reviews for clothes, the importance of online reviews could be questioned given that other sources were also used. For example, it was discovered that Participant 20 valued the advice of their friends more and this confirms the argument of Mishra & Satish (2016) that the utility of WOM in giving information is determined by the credibility of the source, as well as the quality of the argument. Additionally, reviewer agreement is favoured by Participant 20 as reviews have been agreed upon by other people. She cited it below:

“…..recently I have bought a bunch of products that were used by my friends, rather than their own suggestions, I took a keen interest in their products and I had to ask them somewhere they bought it, and they told me where they bought them and it is indeed satisfied their need so I have to buy them as well.” – Participant 20, Paris.

Another finding about the question if it is still essential that fashion websites have online reviews on their page and all of the participants are agree with the presence of online reviews. The absence of online reviews, although increase their suspicions for the business as it signals that they are hiding something and not being transparent to customers. The customers hence unlikely would continue to purchase if online reviews are not available on the websites. While a few participants did not value online reviews on fast fashion websites, the majority communicated some dependence, just differing on the extent of use varying, thus, they should be implemented.

4.5.2 Experience the use of Online Reviews in searching for goods

The respondents who were asked if they faced different levels of uncertainty with experience goods in comparison to search goods, they found that online reviews may affect consumers differently according on the type of products. The previous study by Hao et al. (2010) discovered that online reviews affect consumers differently depending on the type of the product, the distinction between search and experience products was developed. According to Hao et al. (2010), there is insufficient information about experiential goods, hence there may be a need for online reviews as Participant 19 mentioned that she would not be able to recognize the material of the clothe that she was interested in until other consumers really described it in the reviews section. The majority of the participants agreed that there was more uncertainty with clothing, although they differed in their usage of internet evaluations. When looking for more information, the participants relied on online reviews. However, few of the participants preferred to visit the physical store to get more information about the product. The participants that preferred this method of information gathering did so because they want face-to-face engagement with a sales representative or to have a different atmosphere during shopping. In a previous study from Tan & Chang (2015) about online consumers do not come face-to-face with sellers as word-of-mouth is more important to online consumers than offline consumers, thus not fully supporting those participants who preferably find information on their own about the product in physical stores.
“I usually gather information of clothes which I have seen them physically from the store then I purchase them online instead” - Participant 6, Plouzénez.

This demonstrates that online reviews are not always important in terms of information collection, and it is contradictory to the finding of Hao et al. (2010). Based on the findings, it is possible to conclude that the general outlook is those who experience good in the aspect of fast fashion, have more ambiguity, and hence there is a greater dependence on online reviews. The few individuals who disagreed stated that internet reviews are ineffective because tastes are subjective, however, for search goods, the remarks would be tied to the function, which is unlikely to differ between users.

4.5.3 Positive and Negative Online Reviews

Another intriguing conclusion from the interviews was that the majority of interviewees claimed that their interest in a review, as well as how much it affects them, is somewhat determined by whether it was positive or negative. With the exception of three respondents, all reported that bad reviews affected them far more than favourable evaluations. This does not imply that they trust negative reviews more than positive ones, but it does imply that they have more influence. According to one respondent, if he read one unfavourable review about a product, it would take many more positive ones to wipe out the negative one's effect. The interviewee stated it like way:

“I like looking at both (positive or negative), because the product can never be perfect. But obviously, the more positive reviews are better, the more negative reviews are useful to see why it they found it negative, maybe it is negative because of their problems and not really affect me.” – Participant 3, Creteil.

Negative reviews have a strong effect as Herr, Karder & Kim (1991) stated that although the presence of positive, neutral, and negative reviews presented, still, negative information is psychologically perceived to be highlighted. This is supported with a finding of Berger, Sorensen, and Rasmussen (2010) there is no surprise if negative online reviews give a negative impact on consumers’ purchase intentions and not finalizing the purchase. The same study of Zhang et al. (2010) supported by saying that negative reviews are perceived as more persuasive as it is associated with negativity bias. This is how Participant 25 explained:

“I would say negative reviews attract me the most. If there are already 2-3 negative online reviews, the willingness to buy then determines my decision to not purchase.” – Participant 25, Lyon.

This demonstrates that although an individual may be persuaded when there are negative online reviews, the content could also hinder their adoption. Moreover, a statement was made by Participant 5 highlighting that he mainly gains trust due to the familiarity as well as the credibility of a brand. A study of Utz, Kerkhof, and Van den
Bos (2012) does not support Participant 5’s reasoning as the authors stated that online reviews from other customers were a more powerful tool in developing trust than the store’s reputation. Hence, Participant 5’s disagreement was highlighted as:

“However, in some cases, if I see a product in Salomon, and it has bad reviews, but Salomon is a brand that I trust, thus I still would like to purchase it.” – Participant 5, Créteil.

While negative online reviews would lower the risk as well, it is more difficult for the company to sell. However, the existence of mostly positive online reviews may lead to fewer purchases as it is causing the customers to doubt the reliability of a website and this phenomenon of customers’ disbelief is difficult to detect and set controlled by vendors.

“There is something super fishy if a product has only positive reviews, as nothing is perfect, in my outlook.” – Participant 25, Lyon.

The credibility of online reviews must represent a varied variety of user experiences. If fast fashion websites have a few bad reviews, this should boost customers’ trust in them because it demonstrates that vendors have nothing to hide. To alleviate their concerns, they would appreciate evidence such as photos or videos of products along with reviews indicating whether or not the product was appreciated by the consumers as stated as well by some of the interviewees since not all fast fashion websites have this feature to help business increase credibility of the reviews. Moreover, the fact of this recommendation could be taken into account by companies to boost trust for customers in the review section. Additionally, Participant 16 stated that negative reviews from her outlook are honest reviews, thus, it shows when there is a mix of positive and negative online reviews, it represents that companies are trying to be transparent about their products and services.

As a result, despite the presence of negative reviews which may impede a few sales, it can lead to long-term success as there is an overall increase in the trustworthiness of the online sellers. Based on the interviews, it was determined that there should be a balance of perspectives to give consumers guidance. Although the positive sentiment category prevails, it is still difficult to keep customers from focusing on negative online reviews because this is dependent on their own personal background and the situation at hand. If only positive reviews are included, it may raise concerns about the sketchiness of a brand, thus negative online reviews should not be banned.

However, if the review section solely contains positive online reviews, even if they are not monitored, companies are able to increase the legitimacy of the positive online reviews by implementing the characteristics suggested by participants mentioned in the previous paragraph (i.e. quality of information with reliable reviews by developing a complete review feature with photos and videos), thus then leading to an increase in future sales.
4.6 Online Reviews Manipulation

While purchasing online, there are some risks that need to be considered as the presence of online review manipulation in this digital era could lead to less trust and purchases. Participants 7, 19, 20, and 21 mentioned that nowadays, reviews that are established by bots are actually easy to detect. Participant 21 highlighted as consumers we have to be attentive and implement the concept of being a “smart buyer”. This is how one of them described reviews from bots:

“These days, it is actually easy to detect if the reviews are actually a person or bots. Bots generally, their reviews are so easy to detect, the language is so monotone, and sometimes it tends to repeat the description of the product. But when it comes to an actual person, they are describing their opinions, they tend to explain the waist of the pants, the quality, how the pants fit themselves, etc.” – Participant 20, Brest

According to Thomas et al. (2019), online review credibility consists of an enriched set of factors comprising potential determinants based on argument quality (i.e. accuracy and completeness of online reviews) and peripheral cues (i.e. website reputation, review quantity, review consistency, reviewer expertise and product/service rating). A study by Thomas et al. (2019) has been approved by our findings from Participant 20 as well as other participants who have ranked the aspects provided during semi-interviews and some of them acknowledged the quality of information assures online reviews credibility. For instance, it appears that there is some kind of spillover effect between website reputation and reviews credibility, where people are more inclined to trust an online review if they trust the corresponding website as Participant 5 has mentioned before about his trust in the Salomon brand, thus this can be also connected as website reputation affects reviews credibility. On the other hand, Moran & Muzellec (2017) discussed that sellers may give credits by encouraging positive reviews about them and letting consumers to do so, which is supported by the knowledge of Participant 4:

“I have heard that people are paid to give good reviews as that person gets credits by the company which thus experiences by someone I know.” -Participant 4, Grenoble.

Knowing that companies want as many positive evaluations as possible may make consumers wary of a large number of online reviews, as they assume companies may have deceptively contributed to this multitude. As a result, a greater number of reviews may be perceived as less reliable (Thomas et al., 2019). Most of the respondents are aware with online reviews manipulation but their attitudes towards them are to be more attentive while reading online reviews especially when it comes to new websites that Participant 12 might not be familiar with that e-commerce. Unfortunately, being familiar with an online store may not necessarily apply to other customers because of one thing which is that buying online in that online store might be the first time only to Participant 12. “If you don’t know me, then, you would not know who I am”, this sentence could represent Participant 12’s reasoning for investing more time to get to
know the website by reading carefully the online reviews existing which is might a facilitator for customers to yield trust on online websites.

“I am aware of the frauds, but I do not really take them into account except if it is a new site, therefore we need to read thoroughly.” – Participant 12, Papeete.

Although the participants are aware of fake reviews, they tend still believe and continue their purchases. Some participants argue that they are able to detect the characteristics of those review manipulation by identifying online reviews with an avalanche of uploads or comments with harmful links. However, this might not be an accurate process for identifying fake reviews since fake reviews could be issued by genuine people and the asymmetric information in online stores may lead to severe market failure and inefficiencies in the market system if the menace of online reviews cannot be addressed by the firms.

“I’m aware of online reviews manipulation, and it is usually obvious if the online reviews are written by a robot, I’m careful with those as online reviews are not all established by a robot.” – Participant 7, Paris.

“It happened to me that those reviews with odd links, the bulk of uploads with weird names appeared while I read online reviews. Otherwise, there are still reviews from genuine people that keep my confidence in shopping online.” – Participant 25, Lyon.

The result of Participant 25 is consistent with the finding of Chakraborty et al. (2016) that categorized fake online reviews with harmful links, false profiles, ad bulk uploads. Fake online reviews might decrease trust not only because of categories given by previous authors but trust reduction can the cause of identity disclosure or the motivation of earning economic benefits as some fast fashion websites contain features with giving credit to those who leave reviews on the website. Neither the most precise nor longest description of an article attributed to online reviews do not necessarily illustrate that those attributes influence customers’ trust the most. This phenomenon is referred to as the asymmetric outcome which influences the measurement of online reviews on fast fashion online retailers and customers’ attribute of trust.

The authors can conclude that the majority of participants still value online reviews on fast fashion websites as the characteristics of fake reviews are obvious to be acknowledged. Yet, being vigilant of fake reviews is required as Lee et al. (2018) mentioned that online platforms are prone to accepting review manipulations and adding fraudulent reviews to boost commerce and engagement with online customers. Additionally, vendors could have some interactions by giving feedback or being reactive to online reviews existing on fast fashion websites to ensure consumers the reliability of those reviews. This action thus could be more appealing particularly when
millennials have particular questions or concerns about a product, timely and informed responses from the store instill trust. These interactions between vendors and consumers assist to dispel concerns and provide a greater grasp of the offers, resulting in improved trust in the retailer's expertise and dependability.
5 Conclusion

This section summarizes the key findings in terms of consumers' attitudes toward online reviews on fast fashion brand websites in order to answer the two research questions. It also emphasizes the factors that influence the use of online reviews in establishing trust that can lead to purchase decisions while shopping online.

5.1 Responding Research Questions

RQ1: How do interactions with user-generated online reviews by millennials earn trust within the context of fast fashion e-commerce websites?

This study has explored how interactions with user-generated online reviews by millennials earn trust within the context of fast fashion e-commerce websites. The findings highlight the significant role that interactions play in building trust and credibility among millennials in their online shopping experiences. Interactions with user-generated online reviews contribute to trust-building in several ways. Firstly, active engagement by fast fashion retailers in responding to reviews demonstrates a commitment to customer satisfaction. When millennials see that their feedback and concerns are acknowledged and addressed, it enhances their trust in the brand. The timely and helpful responses from the retailer create a sense of reliability and responsiveness, leading to increased trust. Information asymmetry refers to the unequal distribution of information between buyers and sellers. In the context of fast fashion, the asymmetry of information allows them to follow the unequal distribution of information between buyers and sellers. Millennials often struggle to assess the quality, fit and overall value of products before purchasing them. Online assessments are a valuable source of information that helps fill this information gap and provide millennials with information from their fellow citizens.

Secondly, interactions provide an opportunity for retailers to provide additional information and clarification regarding products or services. When millennials have specific questions or uncertainties about a product, seeing prompt and informative responses from the retailer instills confidence. These interactions help alleviate doubts and provide a better understanding of the offerings, leading to increased trust in the retailer's expertise and reliability. Furthermore, interactions between retailers and millennials within the context of user-generated online reviews foster a sense of transparency and authenticity. When retailers engage in open and honest conversations with millennials, it creates a more personal and genuine connection. Millennials appreciate the transparency in addressing concerns and discussing product-related issues, as it demonstrates a willingness to be accountable and make improvements. This transparency enhances trust and contributes to the retailer's credibility. Moreover, interactions with user-generated online reviews facilitate a sense of community and belonging. Millennials value the opinions and experiences of their peers. When they see that other consumers are engaging in discussions with the retailer, it creates a sense of shared experiences and builds trust. It fosters a community where millennials can relate to others' feedback and find validation in their own opinions, contributing to trust in the retailer's offerings and the overall shopping experience.
In conclusion, interactions with user-generated online reviews by millennials earn trust within the context of fast fashion e-commerce websites by demonstrating a commitment to customer satisfaction, providing additional information and clarification, fostering transparency and authenticity, and creating a sense of community. Online reviews on fast-fashion websites give millennials confidence by addressing the asymmetry of information and providing authentic and unbiased feedback. By offering transparency, accountability and a sense of community, online reviews help millennials navigate the fast-paced fashion landscape and make purchasing decisions with confidence. Fast fashion retailers should actively engage with millennials through user-generated online reviews, responding promptly, addressing concerns, and fostering open dialogue. By leveraging interactions effectively, retailers can build trust, establish stronger relationships with millennials, and ultimately differentiate themselves in the highly competitive fast fashion e-commerce landscape.

**RQ2: What factors influence millennial consumers' use of online reviews on fast fashion websites to increase trust?**

The study explored the factors that influence millennial consumers' use of online reviews on fast fashion websites to increase trust through an abductive approach by appliance qualitative interviews to obtain comprehensive insights gathered from millennial consumers. The results of our interviews brought several key factors that significantly impact millennial consumers' trust in online reviews on fast fashion websites. Firstly, review credibility emerged as an important factor. Millennials place high importance on reviews that are perceived as authentic, unbiased, and coming from genuine customers. Reviews with detailed descriptions and specific experiences were deemed more credible, fostering trust among millennial consumers. Secondly, the volume of reviews played a significant role. Millennial consumers tended to trust fast fashion websites that had a substantial number of reviews for a particular product. A higher volume of reviews provided a sense of consensus and social validation, reinforcing trust in the overall rating and quality of the product. Thirdly, review valence or the overall positive or negative sentiment expressed in reviews, influenced millennial consumers' trust. Positive reviews increased trust and the likelihood of purchase, while negative reviews raised concerns and diminished trust. However, a small proportion of negative reviews, when accompanied by constructive feedback and resolution, were considered more authentic and did not erode trust significantly.

Furthermore, review quality emerged as an important factor in trust formation. Millennial consumers valued reviews that were well-written, articulate, and provided specific details about the product. Reviews perceived as insightful and informative were more likely to influence trust and purchase decisions. Additionally, reviewer similarity played a role in trust formation. Millennial consumers tended to trust reviews from individuals who were similar to them in terms of demographics, style preferences, or prior purchase history. This similarity created a sense of relatability and increased trust in the reviewer's opinion. Lastly, reviewer expertise influenced trust. Reviews from individuals who were perceived as knowledgeable and
experienced in fashion or the specific product category carried more weight and enhanced trust among millennial consumers.

Understanding these factors provides valuable insights for fast fashion brands and online platforms aiming to enhance trust in their online review systems. By ensuring review credibility, encouraging a high volume of reviews, emphasizing positive sentiments while addressing negative feedback constructively, promoting well-written and informative reviews, facilitating reviewer similarity, and highlighting reviewer expertise, businesses can cultivate trust and improve the overall consumer experience. It is important to note that while this study focused on millennial consumers, the findings may also have implications for other demographic groups. Further research could explore the generational differences in trust formation and examine additional factors that may influence trust in online reviews on fast fashion websites. Overall, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on consumer behaviour in the digital age and provides practical implications for businesses seeking to establish and maintain trust in the fast fashion industry. By leveraging these insights, brands and online platforms can effectively engage millennial consumers, foster trust, and ultimately drive customer satisfaction and loyalty.

In general, the findings of this paper will be useful not only for people involved in the implementation, design and management of infrastructures for online services but also for academics and researchers studying online trust. We firmly believe that knowing the different determinants of online trust would greatly assist professionals in designing websites for online transactions that would be highly trusted.

5.2 Implications
5.2.1 Theoretical Implications
Millennials’ reliance on online assessments reflects the influence of social networks and peer recommendations on their decision-making. This implies that online comments are not only individual opinions but also a reflection of collective attitudes and behaviours. Understanding the dynamics of social influence among millennials can help businesses and marketers leverage the power of peer and social recommendations to shape consumer behaviour. Then comes the treatment of consumer behaviour on information, millennials’ commitment to online reviews underscores their information-seeking and decision-making processes. Studying how millennials selectively process and interpret online assessments can provide information about the factors they prioritize, the heuristics they use, and the cognitive biases that can influence their judgment. This understanding can help businesses and marketers optimize the presentation and content of online reviews to better meet the decision-making needs of millennials. In addition, the confidence and credibility of the sources show that trust plays a crucial role in millennials' dependence on online magazines. Examining factors that contribute to confidence building, such as assessments of the credibility of reviewers, platforms, and content of the review, can shed light on the mechanisms by which trust is developed in online environments. This understanding can inform strategies to improve the reliability and credibility of online review systems. Moreover, some consumer behaviours in purchasing decisions. The
authors can see the impact of online reviews on millennial attitudes, perceptions, and buying decisions through the lens of consumer behavioural theories. By understanding how millennials’ trust in online journals influences their actual behaviours, Companies can develop targeted marketing strategies and tactics to leverage the influence of online reviews on millennial buying decisions.

Furthermore, user experiences of millennial adoption and trust in online review platforms can be explored in the context of technology acceptance models. Exploring millennial perceptions of usefulness, ease of use, and overall user experience of online review platforms can provide information on the design and enhancement of these platforms to better meet the needs of millennials and increase their confidence in the system. Hence, it’s very important to use online comments to allow others to use this technological experience wisely.

### 5.2.2 Managerial Implications

The findings of this research have several managerial implications for fast fashion retailers aiming to target millennials through online reviews while addressing the issue of information asymmetry. Understanding the role of online reviews in mitigating information asymmetry and building trust can help retailers optimize their strategies and effectively engage with millennial consumers. The following managerial implications can be derived from the study.

Emphasize authenticity and transparency: Millennials value honest and transparent online reviews. Retailers should prioritize creating a culture of authenticity and encouraging genuine feedback from customers. Implementing mechanisms to verify user identities and discourage fake reviews can enhance trust and credibility. Transparent policies and practices, such as openly addressing customer concerns and providing accurate product information, can also contribute to building trust among millennials.

Encourage customer engagement: Fast fashion retailers should actively engage with customers through online reviews. Responding to reviews, both positive and negative, demonstrates a commitment to customer satisfaction and can help address any concerns or issues raised by consumers. Prompt and personalized responses demonstrate a commitment to customer satisfaction and address concerns raised by millennials. This interaction helps mitigate information asymmetry and fosters trust by showing that the retailer values customer opinions and is actively working to address any issues. By actively participating in the review process, retailers can foster a sense of trust and build stronger relationships with millennial customers.

Foster a sense of community: Millennials value the opinions and experiences of their peers. Retailers should create an online community where customers can share their thoughts and experiences, enabling millennials to feel a sense of belonging and social connection. Facilitating discussions and encouraging customers to interact with each other through reviews can strengthen trust and loyalty toward the brand.
Monitor and analyze online reviews: Fast fashion retailers should regularly monitor and analyze online reviews to gain insights into customer preferences, concerns, and expectations. This data can inform product development, customer service improvements, and overall business strategies. By proactively addressing issues highlighted in reviews and making necessary adjustments, retailers can enhance the customer experience and build trust among millennials.

Leverage social proof: The influence of social proof in online reviews cannot be underestimated. Retailers should collaborate with influencers or brand advocates who resonate with millennial consumers to generate positive reviews and endorsements. Sharing user-generated content and testimonials can also serve as powerful social proof, reinforcing trust and credibility among millennials.

Enhance review platforms and user experience: Retailers should invest in user-friendly review platforms that facilitate easy navigation, sorting, and filtering of reviews. Ensuring that the review process is seamless and accessible on different devices can encourage millennials to actively engage and contribute their feedback. User experience enhancements can contribute to a positive perception of the brand and its commitment to customer satisfaction.

Act on feedback and continuously improve: Online reviews provide a valuable source of feedback for retailers. It is essential to actively listen to customer feedback, identify areas for improvement, and act accordingly. By demonstrating a commitment to addressing customer concerns and continuously improving products and services based on feedback, retailers can foster trust and loyalty among millennials.

In summary, fast fashion retailers can leverage the power of online reviews to address information asymmetry and to build trust among millennials by emphasizing authenticity, encouraging customer engagement, fostering a sense of community, monitoring reviews, leveraging social proof, enhancing review platforms, and continuously improving based on feedback. By incorporating these managerial implications into their strategies, retailers can enhance their reputation, attract millennial consumers, and establish long-term relationships built on trust and credibility.

5.2.3 Social, Ethical and Sustainable Implications

This study and its findings have minimal social, ethical, or environmental implications, and are primarily concerned with management and theoretical implications. Online reviews have become an integral part of the decision-making process for many individuals, particularly millennials, who are known for their reliance on technology and digital platforms. These online reviews have significant social, ethical, and sustainable implications for millennials and society as a whole.

Social Implications:
Online reviews have transformed the way millennials interact with businesses and make purchasing decisions. Millennials heavily rely on peer feedback and
recommendations, seeking authentic and relatable experiences. This social aspect of online reviews has created a sense of community and trust among millennials. Moreover, societal implications of this study could also be that by understanding how internet reviews affect customers, marketers can optimize them to capitalize on financial profits, thereby negatively affecting individuals' finances. However, it can also lead to social pressure and conformity, as individuals may feel compelled to follow popular opinions and trends, potentially limiting their own unique experiences and preferences.

Ethical Implications:
Online reviews have raised ethical concerns regarding their authenticity and integrity. With the ease of posting reviews anonymously or under fake identities, there is a risk of fake or manipulated reviews that can mislead consumers. Millennials, who heavily rely on online reviews, may unknowingly base their decisions on false information. This creates an ethical dilemma, as businesses may engage in unethical practices such as paying for positive reviews or posting negative reviews about competitors. The lack of transparency in online reviews poses challenges in maintaining ethical standards and trust in the review system.

Sustainable Implications:
The sustainability implications of online reviews for millennials are two-fold. On one hand, online reviews contribute to a more sustainable consumption pattern by empowering consumers to make informed choices and select products or services that align with their values. This can drive demand for sustainable and eco-friendly options, encouraging businesses to adopt more environmentally responsible practices. On the other hand, the digital nature of online reviews can have environmental consequences. The reliance on digital platforms and devices for accessing and posting reviews contributes to electronic waste, energy consumption, and carbon emissions associated with data centers and internet infrastructure. On the other side, marketing optimization of online reviews has the ability to increase the utility of the reviews in displaying them, resulting in more rational purchasing decisions and, as a result, fewer unnecessary purchases. By only purchasing things that are helpful, less waste is produced, which is beneficial for the environment.

In conclusion, online reviews have significant social, ethical, and sustainable implications for millennials. They shape social interactions, influence purchasing decisions, and create a sense of community. However, ethical concerns regarding authenticity and integrity of reviews persist, and the sustainability impact of online reviews highlights the need for responsible digital consumption. Striking a balance between the benefits and challenges of online reviews is crucial to ensure their positive impact while mitigating their potential negative consequences.

5.3 Limitations
While millennials contribute significantly to the use of online reviews, there are certain limitations associated with their engagement in this space. Here are some limitations of this study.
Client review websites and discussion forums provide a broad and achievable avenue for managers and researchers to explore the perceived quality of service and their satisfaction with various online services. While our sampled brokers and messages are appropriate for a discovery study, the nature of the analysis of the content of client feedback determines two disadvantages of the research. The first consists of self-selected samples, which are not necessarily statistically representative. The potential for biased outcomes could therefore be important. Mostly comes with limited experience, as a demographic group, millennials may have limited experience or expertise in certain product categories or industries. Their knowledge and understanding of specific products or services may be less extensive compared to other generations. This limited experience can impact the depth and accuracy of their reviews, potentially leading to incomplete or less informed assessments.

The Millennials, like any other demographic group, have their own biases and preferences that can influence their online reviews. Their preferences may differ from those of other generations, and their reviews may reflect subjective opinions that are more aligned with their own generational perspective. This can limit the diversity of perspectives and potentially create a skewed representation of overall consumer sentiment. It can see the influence of the fact that they often seek validation and guidance from their peers and online communities when making purchasing decisions. While peer opinions can be valuable, an overreliance on these opinions may limit independent thinking and critical evaluation of products or services. This reliance on peer opinions can contribute to echo chambers and confirmation bias, where millennials may only consider reviews that align with their preconceived notions or the opinions of their social circles.

Our survey shows the trust in online fast fashion platforms after all. Millennials’ trust in online review platforms may be influenced by their familiarity with technology and their belief in the transparency and reliability of these platforms. However, their trust can also make them susceptible to manipulation and bias in online reviews. If millennials trust a platform without critically assessing the authenticity of the reviews or the platform's review management practices, they may unknowingly rely on misleading or biased information. Online reviews often lack the contextual details necessary to fully understand the reviewer's perspective. Millennials may provide reviews without providing sufficient information about their specific needs, circumstances, or expectations. This lack of context can limit the usefulness of their reviews for other consumers who have different requirements or preferences.

Millennials have grown up in an era of rapid technological advancements and changing consumer behaviors. Their preferences, expectations, and purchasing habits may differ from those of older generations. This generational gap can make it challenging for millennials to accurately assess and provide reviews that cater to a broader range of consumer demographics.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

The study could contribute to the literature because novel factors influencing the usability of online reviews in the pure player context were discovered. Furthermore, the factors discussed in previous research were applied to “fast fashion” in this study,
which had limited research on the topic. However, the authors acknowledged that certain aspects were not investigated; therefore, future researchers could incorporate this opportunity into their research design. Since clothing is classified by gender, it may be useful to investigate how different genders perceive online reviews on fast fashion brands.

Furthermore, because several factors were studied in this paper, future research could concentrate on a single factor to gain a better understanding of how online reviews are influenced. Additionally, in order to have well-rounded research that covers a wide range of perspectives, a larger sample size for the qualitative study could be chosen to reduce the generalizability of the findings. This was difficult to do in this study due to time constraints; therefore, it would be recommended in the future. Although this study may contribute to the literature, these are the recommendations for future research on this topic.

Another area for future research is understanding and exploring the relationship between different variables, such as different generations, gender, geographical area (i.e. countries outside of the EU), and education, and how they are affected by different motivational factors. As an example, do men and women respond differently to the aforementioned motivators, and how does age influence motivations to contribute to online reviews? Finally, the authors recommend additional research to determine whether the motivational factors for writing online reviews differ between high and low-involvement products and how this influences the decision to contribute. This is a factor that was purposefully left out of this study, but the authors recognized the need to include it in the future.

The author acknowledges the need for additional research. For example, our research raises a slew of intriguing questions that merit further investigation. Some may be more personal than others and should be looked into further. Furthermore, it should be investigated how far technology will influence future eWOM use, particularly when user-friendly applications are available. More research on application comprehension would be beneficial. User-generated images are becoming increasingly important in the consumer purchasing decision-making process, making them more accessible.
References

Books:


Online Sources:


Academic Articles:


Poturak, M., & Turkyilmaz, M. (2018). The impact of eWOM in social media on consumer purchase decisions: A comparative study between Romanian and Bosnian


Dissertations:


Image sources:


## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Operationalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS NO.</th>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>CONCEPT</th>
<th>REASONING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
<td>1. What is your gender?</td>
<td>Interviewee’s profile</td>
<td>These questions are asked to fulfill the study’s need and further age, gender, and education are analysed by the authors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. How old are you and what is your occupation?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Which city or province of France do you live in?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. What degree of education you have?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6, 7, 16</td>
<td>6. Have you ever purchased products on the Internet? Particularly in fast fashion websites such as SHEIN, H&amp;M, Fashion Nova, Bershka, Uniqlo, etc?</td>
<td>Shopping behavior of purchasing</td>
<td>In order to gain an insight on the interviewee’s shopping experience on fast fashion websites within the frequency of interviewee’s purchasing which further be analysed within their intention on online reviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. How many times have you purchased clothes products from Fast Fashion websites the past six months?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>8. Where do you collect information about products before the purchase?</td>
<td>Collection of Information</td>
<td>These questions are asked to find out the process of collection information is gathered and gain an insight if the interviewees’ has aligned their perspective in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9, 10, 11, 12</td>
<td>9. Do you read online reviews?</td>
<td>Information Usefulness</td>
<td>This section is most related to the topic, it allows us to know more about the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If yes, how often?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If yes, what do you look for? Could you please</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>rank these aspects that you are looking for from online reviews from the most important to less important?</strong></td>
<td><strong>importance of online reviews.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quality of information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Number of ratings or reviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The date of the review posted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>10. How much do you spend your time on online reviews per product?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>11. Do you think it’s important to let online reviews on the website?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>12. What type of information’s are you interested in? (Positive or negative reviews, the credibility of others customers, etc)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13,14,15</strong></td>
<td><strong>13. Do you trust people’s opinions about products on fast fashion websites where you want to purchase your goods?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Source Credibility</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>14. Are you aware of fraud because of online reviews? What do you think about it?</strong></td>
<td>This part helps the authors to determine the reliability of the information obtained. The degree to which a person regards a recommendation from a certain source as trustworthy and the perception of risk relative to their purchases with the recommendations. These questions, thus, are asked.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>15. Have you bought a product based on someone’s feedback or recommendation through its fast-fashion consumers’ review platform?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 5, 17,18 | 5. Do you mind if this interview is being recorded?  
17. Do you write online reviews?  
- If yes, how often? If no, why?  
- If yes, what and why did you decide to write to write online reviews?  
18. Would you like to add something regarding online reviews of your purchase on fast fashion websites? | Others | This section of questions is intended to add additional information that the interviewees are willing to provide and additionally as regards to ethical considerations. |
Appendix 2 – Interview Guide – English version

We begin by introducing ourselves, the aim of the research or ethical guidelines for the first few minutes. Next, the following questions are asked:

1. What is your gender?
2. How old are you and what is your occupation?
3. Which city or province of France do you live in?
4. What degree of education you have?
5. Do you mind if this interview is being recorded?

Proceed by introducing the following hypothetical scenario; Assuming you want to buy clothes on one of the fast fashion websites that existed. To be certain of your purchase, you should look for some online reviews from other buyers. It would be interesting to know how you would approach and respond to the reviews. In some ways, doing so can change, strengthen, or weaken your intention to buy the product. We will ask WHY/WHY NOT after each question.

6. Have you ever purchased products on the Internet? Particularly in fast fashion websites such as SHEIN, H&M, Fashion Nova, Bershka, Uniqlo, Zara etc?
7. How many times have you purchased clothes products from fast fashion websites in the past six months?
8. Where do you collect information about products before the purchase?
9. Do you read online reviews?
   - If yes, how often?
   - If yes, what do you look for? Could you please rank these aspects that you are looking for from online reviews from the most important to less important?
     o Rating
     o Quality of information
     o Number of ratings or reviews
     o The date of the review posted
10. How much do spend your time on online reviews per product?
11. Do you think it’s important to let online reviews on the website?
12. What type of information are you interested in? (Positive or negative reviews, the credibility of other customers, etc).
13. Do you trust people’s opinions about products on fast fashion websites where you want to purchase your goods?
14. Are you aware of fraud because of online reviews? What do you think about it?
15. Have you bought a product based on someone’s feedback or recommendation through its fast-fashion consumers’ review platform?
16. How much do you rely on online product reviews for making the purchase decision? Do you agree that online product reviews affect your purchase decision-making?
17. Do you write online reviews?
   - If yes, how often? If no, why?
   - If yes, what and why did you decide to write to write online reviews?
18. Would you like to add something regarding online reviews of your purchase on fast fashion websites?
Appendix 3 – Interview Guide – French version

Nous commençons par nous présenter, le but de la recherche ou des directives éthiques pour les premières minutes. Ensuite, les questions suivantes sont posées :

1. Quel est votre sexe/genre ?
2. Quel âge avez-vous et quelle est votre profession ?
3. Dans quelle ville ou région de France vous habitez ?
4. Quel est votre niveau de scolarité ?
5. Cela vous dérange-t-il si cette entrevue est enregistrée?

Présentez le scénario hypothétique suivant : En supposant que vous voulez acheter des vêtements sur l’un des sites de mode rapide qui existait. Pour être certain de votre achat, vous devriez chercher quelques commentaires en ligne d’autres acheteurs. Il serait intéressant de savoir comment vous aborderiez les examens et comment vous y réagiriez. D’une certaine façon, cela peut changer, renforcer ou affaiblir votre intention d’acheter le produit. Nous demanderons POURQUOI/POURQUOI PAS après chaque question.

7. Combien de fois avez-vous acheté des vêtements sur des sites Web de mode rapide au cours des six derniers mois ?
8. Où recueillez-vous des renseignements sur les produits ou les services ?
9. Lisez-vous des commentaires en lignes concernant l’article que vous intéresse ?
   - Si oui, à quelle fréquence ?
   - Si oui, que cherchez-vous ? pourriez-vous s’il vous plaît classer ces aspects que vous recherchez des avis en ligne de plus important au moins important ?
     o Notation
     o Qualité
     o Nombre de notes ou d’évaluations
     o Date de revue affichée
10. Combien de temps consacrez-vous aux évaluations en ligne par produit?
11. Quel type d’information vous intéresse ? (Commentaires positifs ou négatifs, crédibilité des autres clients, etc.)
12. Faites-vous confiance aux opinions des gens au sujet des produits sur les sites Web de mode rapide où vous voulez acheter vos produits ?
13. Avez-vous déjà acheté un produit en fonction des commentaires ou des recommandations de quelqu’un au moyen de sa plateforme d’examen par les consommateurs ?
14. Dans quelle mesure comptez-vous sur les évaluations de produits en ligne pour prendre la décision d’achat ?
15. Êtes-vous au courant d’une fraude liée aux évaluations en ligne ? Qu’en pensez-vous ?
16. Qu’est-ce qui est le plus important pour vous sur les sites d’examen ? (Membres fréquents ou actifs, les photos ou vidéos, mise à jour constante, etc).
17. Rédigez-vous des évaluations en ligne ?
- Si oui, à quelle fréquence ?
- Si oui, qu’est-ce que vous avez décidé d’écrire et pourquoi ?
- Si non, pourquoi ?

18. Aimeriez-vous ajouter quelque chose au sujet des évaluations en ligne de vos achats sur les sites Web de mode rapide?
Appendix 4 – Map of France
Appendix 5 – Maps of French Polynesia & Guadeloupe
Appendix 6 – Authors Contribution

The following table illustrates the author's contribution individually and are based on the grading criteria from Guidelines for the degree project in Business Administration. Ref.nr: 2021/4969-1.1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author:</th>
<th>Nofriyani Deboris S (%)</th>
<th>Meggane Pech (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical Findings</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Language andCommunication Skills</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active participation in seminars</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>