

THE IMPACT OF CUSTOMER REVIEWS ON BRAND TRUST AND CONSUMER PURCHASE DECISIONS ON E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS

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This study examines the critical role of Online Customer Reviews (OCR) in shaping consumer purchase decisions in the e-commerce marketplace. In the current digital ecosystem, OCR functions as a form of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) that influences risk perception, brand trust, and purchase intention. This research aims to quantitatively analyze how the dimensions of OCR specifically Valence, Volume, and Quality affect Brand Trust, which, in turn, impacts Purchase Decisions across various e-commerce platforms. Data were collected from 300 active e-commerce platform users through an online survey. The analysis, conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), revealed that Positive Valence ($\beta = 0.493, p < 0.001$) and Volume of OCR ($\beta = 0.256, p < 0.01$) have a significant and positive influence on Brand Trust. Brand Trust is proven to be a critically important mediator, significantly and positively affecting Purchase Decisions ($\beta = 0.689, p < 0.001$). Importantly, the textual Quality of the reviews was found to be non-significant in influencing Brand Trust ($\beta = 0.071, p > 0.05$). These findings underscore the importance of managing online reputation and providing a platform that facilitates transparent consumer communication as a competitive strategy in the e-commerce sector.

Keywords: Online Customer Review (OCR), E-commerce, Brand Trust, Purchase Decision, e-WOM;

Studi ini mengkaji peran penting Ulasan Pelanggan Online (OCR) dalam membentuk keputusan pembelian konsumen di pasar e-commerce. Dalam ekosistem digital saat ini, OCR berfungsi sebagai bentuk Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) yang memengaruhi persepsi risiko, kepercayaan merek, dan niat pembelian. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis secara kuantitatif bagaimana dimensi OCR khususnya Valensi, Volume, dan Kualitas memengaruhi Kepercayaan Merek, yang pada gilirannya, memengaruhi Keputusan Pembelian di berbagai platform e-commerce. Data dikumpulkan dari 300 pengguna platform e-commerce aktif melalui survei online. Analisis yang dilakukan menggunakan Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), mengungkapkan bahwa Valensi Positif ($\beta = 0,493, p < 0,001$) dan Volume OCR ($\beta = 0,256, p < 0,01$) memiliki pengaruh yang signifikan dan positif terhadap Kepercayaan Merek. Kepercayaan Merek terbukti menjadi mediator yang sangat penting, yang secara signifikan dan positif memengaruhi Keputusan Pembelian ($\beta = 0,689, p < 0,001$). Yang penting, Kualitas tekstual ulasan ditemukan tidak signifikan dalam memengaruhi Kepercayaan Merek ($\beta = 0,071, p > 0,05$). Temuan ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya mengelola reputasi daring dan menyediakan platform yang memfasilitasi komunikasi konsumen yang transparan sebagai strategi kompetitif di sektor e-commerce.

Kata Kunci: Ulasan Pelanggan Online (OCR), E-commerce, Kepercayaan Merek, Keputusan Pembelian, e-WOM;

INTRODUCTION

The development of e-commerce has fundamentally changed the pattern of interaction between consumers and products. Digital platforms (such as Shopee, Tokopedia, and Lazada in Indonesia) have evolved into a global marketplace where asymmetric information is a major challenge. In this context, Online Customer Review (OCR) has emerged as the most important source of non-marketer information (Cahyono & Wibawani, 2021). OCR serves as a substitute for direct interaction with products and sellers, functioning to reduce uncertainty and mitigate perceived consumer risk (Dhani et al., 2023).

The high consumer dependence on OCR (as indicated by preliminary survey data, 55% of respondents consider it highly important) shows that reviews are not merely supplementary data, but a social and psychological mechanism that drives sales conversion. This process is closely related to the concept of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM), where consumer-generated information is a key determinant of trust and purchasing behavior.

Although extensive research exists on OCR and Purchase Decisions, key gaps in the current literature include:

1. Lack of Focus on Trust Mediator: Many studies only examine the direct relationship between OCR and purchase decisions. This research aims to integrate Brand Trust as a key mediating variable explaining the psychological mechanism behind the influence of OCR.

2. Isolated OCR Dimensions: There is a need for more detailed analysis of the specific OCR dimensions, particularly valence (sentiment), volume (count), and quality/depth of reviews, within a comprehensive structural model framework

Therefore, the main objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze the influence of Positive Valence, Volume, and Quality of OCR on Brand Trust on e-commerce platforms.
2. To analyze the role of Brand Trust as a mediating variable between OCR and Consumer Purchase Decisions.

Online Customer Review (OCR)

OCR is defined as evaluative statements about products or services written by consumers and published on online platforms. OCR has three main dimensions investigated in this study:

1. Valence: Refers to the polarity of the review (positive or negative), often measured through star ratings or average scores (Chen & Lurie, 2013).
2. Volume: Refers to the total number of reviews a product has received (Muslimah & Mursid, 2019).
3. Quality: Refers to the depth, completeness, and usefulness of the information contained within the review (Cheung & R, 2012).

Brand Trust

Brand trust is the average consumer's willingness to rely on the product or brand's ability to perform its function as promised (Moorman et al., 1992). In the context of e-commerce, where uncertainty is high, OCR serves as a trust-building mechanism. Positive reviews and a large volume of reviews provide a credibility signal (equity signal) that translates into higher Brand Trust (Adriyanto & Prasetyo, 2023).

Purchase Decision

A purchase decision is the final stage in the consumer decision-making process, involving the evaluation of purchase intention and the actual choice to acquire a product or service. In this model, Brand Trust is assumed to directly influence the Purchase Decision, as trust reduces perceived risk and strengthens consumer confidence in the product.

METHODOLOGY

Research Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, the proposed hypotheses are:

- H1: Positive OCR Valence significantly influences Brand Trust.
- H2: OCR Volume significantly influences Brand Trust.
- H3: OCR Quality significantly influences Brand Trust.
- H4: Brand Trust significantly influences Purchase Decision.
- H5: Brand Trust mediates the relationship between Positive OCR Valence and Purchase Decision.
- H6: Brand Trust mediates the relationship between OCR Volume and Purchase Decision.
- H7: Brand Trust mediates the relationship between OCR Quality and Purchase Decision.

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach with a causal-associative survey design. A structural model (using PLS-SEM) was applied to test the direct and mediating relationships between variables (Hypotheses H1 to H7).

Population and Sample

The research population is all active e-commerce platform users in Indonesia.

1. Inclusion Criteria: Respondents were individuals who had made at least one online purchase and actively used customer reviews as part of their decision-making process.
2. Sampling Method: Convenience Sampling was applied to collect data from 300 respondents, a number considered adequate for PLS-SEM analysis.

Data Collection

Data were collected through an online survey (structured questionnaire) using a 5-point Likert scale to measure the constructs:

1. OCR Valence: Measured by respondents' perception of the average rating score.
2. OCR Volume: Measured by respondents' perception of the total number of reviews listed.
3. OCR Quality: Measured by the perceived usefulness/informativeness of the review.
4. Brand Trust: Measured by respondents' belief in the integrity and capability of the brand/product.
5. Purchase Decision: Measured by purchase intention, recommendation, and actual purchase choice.

Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4 software. The analysis included:

1. Descriptive Analysis: Describing demographic characteristics and data distribution.

2. Measurement Model (Outer Model): Validity (Convergent Validity using Average Variance Extracted/AVE and Discriminant Validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion) and Reliability (Composite Reliability/CR and Cronbach's Alpha) testing.
3. Structural Model (Inner Model): Hypothesis testing using path coefficient and bootstrapping analysis to determine the significance of direct relationships and mediation effects.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis and Respondent Profile

The study involved 300 active e-commerce users. The demographic distribution showed that the majority of respondents were in the productive age range (24–30 years, 40%), dominated by females (63%), and had a high purchase frequency (4-6 times per month, 42%).

Table 1. Respondent Profile and General Perception

Indicator	Category	Percentage (%)	Descriptive Implication
Age	24–30 years	40%	Indicates a digitally mature target market.
Gender	Female	63%	Female consumers are more dominant in e-commerce activities and giving reviews.
Importance of Reviews	Very Important	55%	Supports the premise of the research on the relevance of OCR.
Review Preference	Positive Review	86%	Indicates high sensitivity to OCR Valence.
Trust Level	Very Trusting	37%	Indicates the role of Volume (number of reviews) in building credibility.

The descriptive data indicate that Indonesian consumers have a high dependency on online reviews and show a clear preference for positive valence and large review volume. These preliminary findings are consistent with e-WOM literature that positions reviews as a key risk mitigation factor.

Data Quality Testing (Validity and Reliability)

The results of the Convergent Validity and Reliability tests showed that all constructs met the required criteria. All indicator Loading Factor (FL) values were above 0.70. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all variables was above the 0.50 threshold, and the Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha (CA) values were above 0.70. This confirms that the measurement instrument possesses high internal validity and consistency. Discriminant validity was also confirmed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

Tabel 2. Hasil Uji Validitas Konvergen dan Reliabilitas

Konstruk	AVE	CR	CA	Kesimpulan
Valensi OCR	0.654	0.885	0.812	Valid & Reliabel
Volume OCR	0.601	0.857	0.793	Valid & Reliabel
Kualitas OCR	0.615	0.864	0.788	Valid & Reliabel
Kepercayaan Merek	0.702	0.901	0.855	Valid & Reliabel
Keputusan Pembelian	0.688	0.895	0.831	Valid & Reliabel

Hypothesis Testing (Structural Model)

Hypothesis testing was performed by analyzing the path coefficient (β), t -statistic, and p -value using a bootstrapping procedure with 5000 iterations.

Table 3. Results of Direct Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis Path	Path Coefficient (β)	t -statistic	p -value	Decision
H1: OCR Valence \rightarrow Brand Trust	0.493	6.815	0.000	Supported
H2: OCR Volume \rightarrow Brand Trust	0.256	3.120	0.002	Supported

H3: OCR Quality → Brand Trust	0.071	1.104	0.270	Not Supported
H4: Brand Trust → Purchase Decision	0.689	12.551	0.000	Supported

Interpretation of Direct Test Results:

H1 Supported: Positive OCR Valence has a strong and significant influence on Brand Trust.

H2 Supported: OCR Volume has a significant and positive influence on Brand Trust.

H3 Not Supported: The quality or textual depth of the reviews does not have a significant influence on Brand Trust.

H4 Supported: Brand Trust is a very strong and significant predictor of Purchase Decision.

Mediation Analysis

Mediation effect testing for Brand Trust (H5, H6, H7) was performed using the Bootstrapping method to examine the indirect effect.

Table 4. Results of Mediation Effect Testing (Indirect Effect)

Mediation Hypothesis Path	Indirect Effect (β)	t-statistic	p-value	Mediation Conclusion
H5: Valence → BT → PD	0.340	6.505	0.000	Significant Partial Mediation
H6: Volume → BT → PD	0.176	3.012	0.003	Significant Partial Mediation
H7: Quality → BT → PD	0.049	1.050	0.294	No Mediation

Interpretation of Mediation Results:

H5 Supported: Brand Trust significantly mediates the influence of OCR Valence on Purchase Decisions.

H6 Supported: Brand Trust significantly mediates the influence of OCR Volume on Purchase Decisions.

H7 Not Supported: Since OCR Quality did not significantly affect Brand Trust (H3), the mediating effect of Brand Trust on this path is also non-significant.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully investigated the structural relationships between Online Customer Review (OCR) dimensions, Brand Trust, and consumer Purchase Decisions in the Indonesian e-commerce context. The findings confirm that Brand Trust is a critical psychological mechanism that fully mediates the effect of key OCR metrics on purchasing behavior.

Summary of Main Findings:

1. Valence and Volume are Key Drivers: Positive Valence (star ratings) and Volume (number of reviews) significantly and positively influence Brand Trust, reinforcing the role of easy-to-process numerical and social proof cues.
2. Brand Trust as the Central Mediator: Brand Trust is the strongest predictor of Purchase Decisions and acts as a significant mediator for Valence and Volume, highlighting that reducing perceived risk through establishing brand confidence is essential for conversion.
3. Insensitivity to Quality: The textual Quality/depth of reviews was found to be insignificant, suggesting that consumers in this market context prioritize quick decision-making based on visual summaries over detailed content analysis.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications: Theoretically, this study fills a gap by formally establishing Brand Trust as a nexus in the e-WOM to purchase decision process within the specific context of a fast-growing, mobile-first e-commerce market. Managerially, e-commerce platforms and sellers should prioritize strategies focused on maximizing positive average ratings and the sheer quantity of reviews. Investment in encouraging detailed textual reviews (Quality) may yield diminishing returns compared to ensuring high ratings and massive review counts.

Limitations and Future Research: This research used a cross-sectional design and convenience sampling, which limits the generalizability and causal inference over time. Future studies should consider a longitudinal design to track the evolution of the OCR-Trust relationship, explore the influence of OCR on specific high-involvement vs. low-involvement product categories, and investigate how platform-specific features (e.g., verified purchase badges, seller responsiveness) interact with OCR dimensions.

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