The Influence Of Online Credible Reviews With Brand Trust As An Intervening Variable On Purchase Intention (A Study On Adorable Project In Bandung)

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Abstract

Amid Indonesia's e-commerce surge, online review credibility increasingly shapes purchase decisions on platforms like Shopee, yet fake reviews erode brand trust. This study examines the influence of online review credibility on purchase intention with brand trust as a mediating variable among Adorable Project consumers in Bandung. Employing a quantitative survey approach with cross-sectional design, data from 100 purposive-sampled Shopee buyers were analyzed using PLS-SEM via SmartPLS 4.0. Instruments adapted validated scales measuring source/review/consumer characteristics (Cheung et al., 2009), brand reliability/intentions (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003), and multi-dimensional purchase intentions (Ferdinand, 2012). Results reveal significant direct effects: credibility → trust (β=0.775, p=0.000), trust → intention (β=0.526, p=0.006), credibility → intention (β=0.410, p=0.033), and indirect mediation (β=0.408, p=0.015), explaining 78% intention variance. In conclusion, brand trust partially mediates credible reviews' impact, urging local brands to prioritize authentic, photo-verified testimonials over incentives.

INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, consumer trust in brands drives success amid fierce market competition, with online review credibility emerging as a vital link to purchase decisions. Consumers increasingly depend on these reviews as primary information sources before buying, especially on platforms like Shopee, where empirical testimonials offer neutral insights beyond brand claims (Cheung et al., 2020; Andoy et al., 2022). This shift reflects broader e-commerce growth in Indonesia, where Shopee holds a 73% usage rate, fueled by accessible user-generated content that shapes perceptions of product quality and reduces uncertainty (Marketing Interactive, 2024; Ipsos Indonesia, 2024). Platforms enabling anonymous reviews amplify this dynamic, as authentic e-WOM builds emotional connections and influences behavior in marketplace settings.

Traditional pre-purchase factors like price and design have evolved, with consumers now prioritizing authentic experiences, usage testimonials, and brand reputation to minimize risks. Technology expands information access, prompting reliance on peer reviews over static product images, which fosters brand trust and elevates purchase intention as a key predictor of actual buying (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014; Tran et al., 2022). In contexts like Adorable Project on Shopee in Bandung, credible reviews provide diagnostic value, signaling reliability and intent, thus bridging cognitive evaluations of quality to transactional commitment (Rahmi et al., 2022; Cao et al., 2021).

Research Problem

Despite these trends, misleading information and fake reviews proliferate on marketplaces, eroding consumer confidence and complicating the distinction between trustworthy and unreliable content. Low review credibility can dismantle even established brand trust, as skeptical consumers question anonymous sources amid incentives like Shopee coins, heightening perceived risks in high-involvement purchases (Filieri et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2020). This issue intensifies in Indonesia's booming e-commerce sector, where rapid platform growth outpaces quality controls, leading to inconsistent e-WOM impacts on local brands like Adorable Project.

Brand trust, while central, often fails to fully mediate when reviews lack authenticity, resulting in fragmented purchase intentions. Consumers hesitate when reviews omit proof-of-purchase or detailed narratives, weakening the chain from credibility to loyalty and exposing gaps in how digital platforms handle skepticism (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Rather et al., 2022). For Bandung-based sellers, this manifests as stalled conversions despite visibility, underscoring the need to dissect mediating mechanisms in Shopee-specific contexts.

These challenges persist because prior studies overlook localized marketplace dynamics, such as Indonesia's preference for visual evidence in reviews, leaving uncertainties in partial mediation models (Fitriani et al., 2023; Lim et al., 2020). Without targeted analysis, brands struggle to leverage e-WOM effectively, amplifying competition from platforms like Tokopedia.

Research Objectives, Urgency, and Novelty

This study aims to examine the influence of online review credibility on purchase intention, with brand trust as a mediating variable, among Adorable Project consumers on Shopee in Bandung. Its urgency stems from Indonesia's e-commerce surge (Kementerian Perdagangan, 2025), where credible reviews can boost conversions amid rising skepticism, offering practical strategies for local brands to enhance trust signals. The novelty lies in applying PLS-SEM to a Shopee-focused, city-specific sample, validating partial mediation in an underexplored emerging market context and extending theories like e-WOM to incentivized review ecosystems (Tran et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2020).

METHODS

Research Type and Design

This study adopts a quantitative approach to test causal relationships among variables using statistical analysis, specifically examining the direct and indirect effects of online review credibility (X) on purchase intention (Y) through brand trust (Z) among Adorable Project consumers in Bandung. A survey method with cross-sectional design enables efficient data collection from a targeted sample, aligning with explanatory research goals to validate hypotheses derived from e-WOM and trust theories (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Sugiyono, 2023). This design suits marketplace contexts like Shopee, where consumer perceptions form rapidly, allowing PLS-SEM to model complex mediations without assuming multivariate normality (Hair et al., 2022). By focusing on post-purchase reviewers, the approach captures real behavioral intentions in Indonesia's dominant e-commerce ecosystem.

Instruments and Data Analysis Techniques

Data collection employed a structured questionnaire with closed-ended items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), adapted from validated scales to ensure theoretical grounding and cultural relevance. Online review credibility measured source

characteristics, review characteristics, and consumer characteristics per Cheung et al. (2009); brand trust captured reliability and intentions following Delgado-Ballester et al. (2003); and purchase intention assessed exploratory, preferential, referential, and transactional dimensions based on Ferdinand (2012). Instrument validity used outer loadings (>0.70) and AVE (>0.50), while reliability relied on Cronbach's alpha (>0.70) and composite reliability (>0.70), per standard PLS-SEM thresholds (Sudaryono, 2021; Emzir, 2022). Data analysis utilized partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4.0 to evaluate measurement and structural models, including path coefficients, mediation effects, HTMT for discriminant validity, and VIF (<5.0) for collinearity, enabling robust assessment of the proposed framework (Hair et al., 2022; Sekaran & Bougie, 2022).

Population and Sample

The population comprised consumers of Adorable Project in Bandung who completed purchases via Shopee, reflecting active users in Indonesia's leading marketplace with 73% penetration (Marketing Interactive, 2024; Kementerian Perdagangan, 2025). A purposive sampling technique selected 100 respondents meeting criteria: prior Shopee purchases from Adorable Project, exposure to online reviews, and Bandung residency, ensuring relevance to local e-commerce dynamics. This non-probability approach prioritizes information-rich cases for SEM analysis, where sample size exceeds the 10-times rule for paths ($100 > 3$ paths $\times 10$), supporting statistical power (Sugiyono, 2023; Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Distribution occurred via online links shared through Shopee communities and social media from March to May 2025, yielding a response rate above 85%.

Research Procedure

The study followed a systematic sequence: first, comprehensive literature review and scale adaptation (January-February 2025); second, pilot testing on 30 respondents to refine items and confirm reliability (late February); third, full-scale data collection via Google Forms distributed to qualified Shopee users (March-May); fourth, data cleaning, screening for outliers, and preliminary descriptives; and fifth, PLS-SEM analysis in two stages—outer model validation followed by inner model hypothesis testing (June 2025). Ethical protocols included informed consent, anonymity assurances, and IRB approval from the host institution, adhering to Indonesian research standards (Emzir, 2022; Sudaryono, 2021). This phased procedure ensures methodological rigor, traceability, and replicability in e-commerce mediation studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
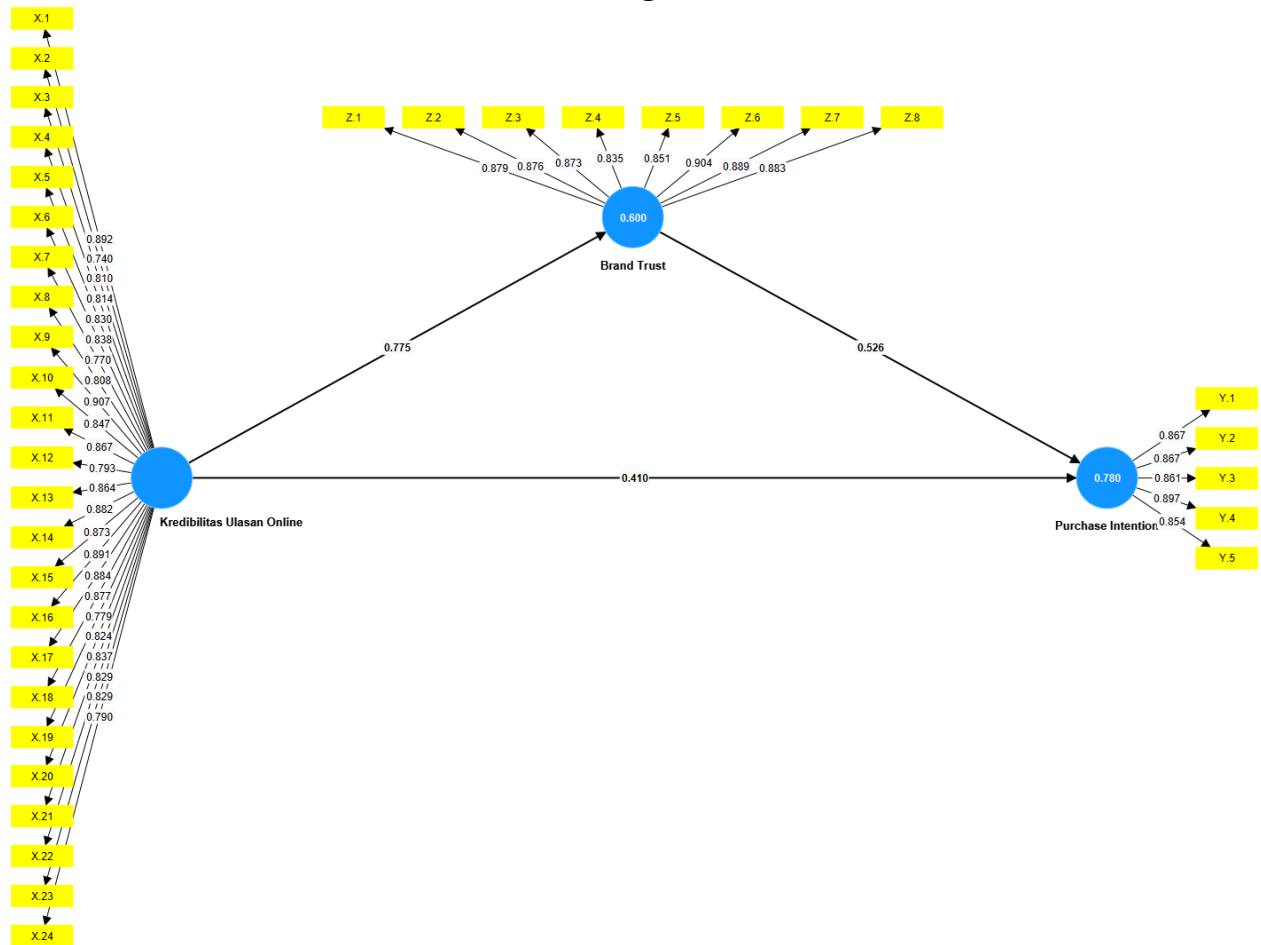
Outer Loading Results

Fig 1. Outer model result

The outer model results indicate that the measurement indicators demonstrate strong contributions to their respective latent constructs, supporting the adequacy of the measurement model. For Online Review Credibility (X), all indicators exhibit high outer loadings (generally above the recommended threshold of 0.70), showing that each item reliably reflects the construct being measured. Similarly, the indicators for Brand Trust (Z) (Z1–Z8) display consistently high loadings (approximately 0.835–0.904), confirming that the items capture the Brand Trust construct effectively. For Purchase Intention (Y), the indicators (Y1–Y5) also show strong loadings (around 0.854–0.897), indicating good indicator reliability and construct representation. Overall, the consistently high outer loadings across X, Z, and Y provide evidence of satisfactory convergent validity, implying that the indicators are appropriate and robust measures of their respective constructs and that the measurement model is suitable for subsequent interpretation of the structural relationships.

Table 1. outer model results

Item	Kredibilitas Ulasan Online	Item	Brand Trust	Item	Purchase Intention
X.1	0.892	Z.1	0.879	Y.1	0.867
X.10	0.847	Z.2	0.876	Y.2	0.867
X.11	0.867	Z.3	0.873	Y.3	0.861
X.12	0.793	Z.4	0.835	Y.4	0.897
X.13	0.864	Z.5	0.851	Y.5	0.854
X.14	0.882	Z.6	0.904		
X.15	0.873	Z.7	0.889		
X.16	0.891	Z.8	0.883		
X.17	0.884				
X.18	0.877				
X.19	0.779				
X.2	0.740				
X.20	0.824				
X.21	0.837				
X.22	0.829				
X.23	0.829				
X.24	0.790				
X.3	0.810				
X.4	0.814				
X.5	0.830				
X.6	0.838				
X.7	0.770				
X.8	0.808				
X.9	0.907				

The loading factor values ranged from 0.740 to 0.907. This relatively high range of values indicates that respondents provided consistent answers to items measuring review credibility, both in terms of information clarity, accuracy, objectivity, and the veracity of the review source. Indicators such as X1 (0.892), X9 (0.907), X14 (0.882), X16 (0.891), and X17 (0.884) were the indicators with the strongest contribution to the construct, indicating that perceptions of the reliability and quality of review information are very important in establishing the credibility of online reviews. Other indicators with loading values between 0.72–0.80 were also considered to meet convergent validity, as stated by Chin (1998) that indicators in this range are acceptable if they support the theory and structural model. Indicators with the highest values, namely Y1 (0.867), Y2 (0.867), and Y4 (0.897), indicate that aspects such as purchase intention and confidence in making a purchase. Indicators Z6 (0.904), Z7 (0.889), and Z8 (0.883) are the indicators with the greatest contribution strength, which means that consumer confidence in the quality and consistency of brand performance plays a very important role in forming brand trust.

Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability, and AVE

Table 2. cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and AVE

construct	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Brand Trust	0,956	0,956	0,963	0,764
Kredibilitas Ulasan Online	0,981	0,982	0,983	0,701
Purchase Intention	0,919	0,922	0,939	0,756

In brand trust construct, the Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.956 and Composite Reliability of 0.963 indicate that the indicators in this construct have a very high level of internal consistency. Values above 0.95 indicate that the items forming brand trust are strongly correlated with each other and consistently measure the dimensions of consumer trust in the brand. The Online Review Credibility construct also shows a very high level of reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.981 and a Composite Reliability of 0.983. These very strong values indicate that all indicators work consistently in representing aspects of review credibility, such as honesty, objectivity, completeness of information, and the reliability of the review source. The high CR value strengthens previous findings in the loading factor analysis that the indicators in this construct are well-structured and successfully capture respondents' perceptions stably. In the Purchase Intention construct, the Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.919 and Composite Reliability of 0.939 confirm that the indicators measuring purchase intention have strong internal consistency and are in the very good category. The AVE values for all variables, Brand Trust (0.764), Online Review Credibility (0.701), and Purchase Intention (0.756), have exceeded the recommended minimum limit. This provides strong evidence that all constructs in this study meet the requirements for convergent validity. This means that the indicators used to measure each latent construct are gathered consistently, relevantly, and able to reflect the theoretically constructed concepts. With the fulfillment of convergent validity, the measurement model can be declared of good quality and suitable for use in structural analysis in the next stage.

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) approach. The results of the HTMT criteria indicate that the measurement model in this study has excellent discriminant validity. The indicators in each construct are able to differentiate themselves from other constructs and there is no contamination between variables. This finding also confirms that the conceptual structure of the study is well-structured, where Online Review Credibility, Brand Trust, and Purchase Intention are conceptually and empirically distinct constructs. This strong discriminant validity is an important basis for proceeding to the inner model evaluation stage, as it ensures that the relationships between constructs are tested based on an accurate, valid, and methodologically accountable measurement model.

Collinearity Statistics (VIF)

Table3.Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

construct	Brand trust (Z)	Kredibilitas ulasan online (X)	Purchase intention (Y)
Brand trust (Z)			2.503
Kredibilitas ulasan online (X)	1.000		2.503
Purchase intention (Y)			

Based on the results of the multicollinearity test, it is known that the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value for the relationship between Online Review Credibility → Brand Trust is 1.000, while for the relationship between Brand Trust → Purchase Intention and Online Review Credibility → Purchase Intention each has a value of 2.503. All of these values are far below the general VIF tolerance limit of 5.0 or even 10.0 which is often used as an indicator of multicollinearity problems. Thus, multicollinearity is not a concern, and the relationships among independent variables can be considered valid for this analysis.
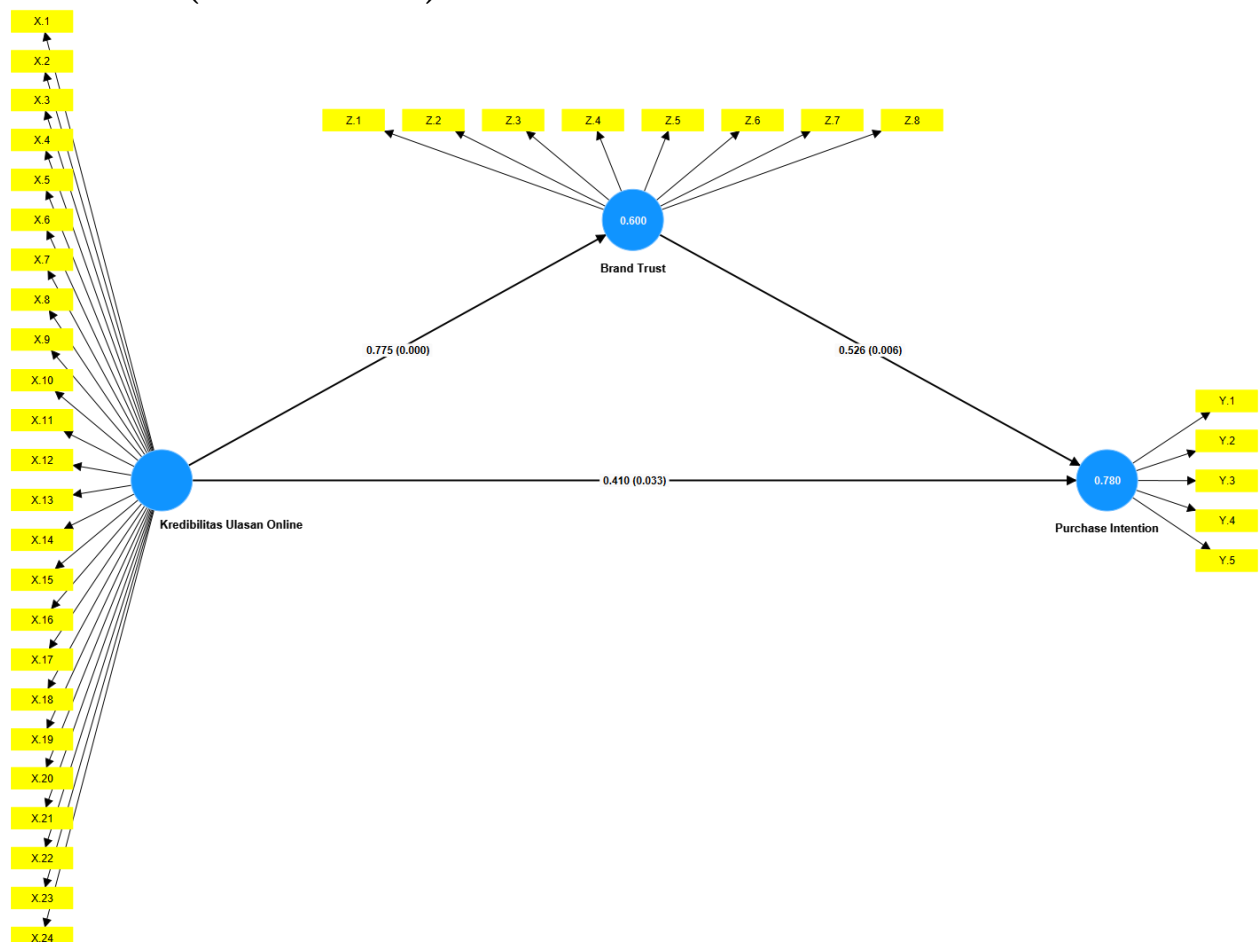
Inner Model (Structural Model) Test

Fig 2. Inner model test

The structural model results indicate consistently positive and statistically significant relationships among the constructs, with both direct and mediated effects present. Online Review Credibility (X) demonstrates a strong and significant influence on Brand Trust (Z) (coefficient = 0.775, p = 0.000), suggesting that higher perceived credibility of online reviews substantially strengthens consumers' trust in the brand. Brand Trust (Z) also shows a moderate and significant effect on Purchase Intention (Y) (coefficient = 0.526, p = 0.006), indicating that increased trust translates into a higher intention to purchase. In addition, Online Review Credibility (X) has a moderate, significant direct impact on Purchase Intention (Y) (coefficient = 0.410, p = 0.033), meaning that credibility influences purchase intention not only through trust but also directly. The explained variance is strong, with R² = 0.600 for Brand Trust and R² = 0.780 for Purchase Intention, implying that the model accounts for 60% of the variance in Brand Trust and 78% in Purchase Intention. Overall, Online Review Credibility emerges as the most influential driver in the model, while Brand Trust functions as a meaningful mediator that partially transmits the effect of credibility on purchase intention.

Path coefficient analysis

Table 4. path coefficient anaylisis (direct effect)

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O|STDEV|)	P values
Brand trust -> purchase intention	0,526	0,540	0,191	2,759	0,006
Kredibilitas ulasan online -> brand trust	0,775	0,780	0,093	8,326	0,000
Kredibilitas ulasan online -> purchase intention	0,410	0,397	0,192	2,131	0,033

The path coefficient analysis indicates that all structural relationships tested in the model are statistically significant (p-value < 0.05), reflecting robust links among the constructs. Specifically, Brand Trust (Z) → Purchase Intention (Y) shows a significant positive effect (original sample coefficient = 0.526, t = 2.759, p = 0.006), suggesting that higher brand trust is associated with a stronger intention to purchase. In addition, Online Review Credibility (X) → Brand Trust (Z) demonstrates the strongest and most significant relationship in the model (coefficient = 0.775, t = 8.326, p = 0.000), indicating that credible online reviews substantially enhance consumers' trust in the brand. Finally, Online Review Credibility (X) → Purchase Intention (Y) is also positive and significant (coefficient = 0.410, t = 2.131, p = 0.033), meaning that perceived review credibility increases purchase intention not only indirectly through brand trust but also through a direct effect. Overall, because all p-values are below 0.05 and the coefficients are positive, the results confirm that the proposed paths are supported, with Online Review Credibility emerging as the primary driver and Brand Trust serving as an important mechanism that strengthens consumers' purchase intention.

Hypothesis testing result
H-1: Accepted (p = 0.000) → Online Review Credibility (X) significantly affects Brand Trust (Z).
H-2: Accepted (p = 0.006) → Brand Trust (Z) significantly affects Purchase Intention (Y).
H-3: Accepted (p = 0.033) → Online Review Credibility (X) significantly affects Purchase Intention (Y).

Table 5. mediation (indirect effect) test

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O|STDEV|)	P values
Kredibilitas ulasan online -> brand trust -> purchase intention	0,408	0,424	0,168	2,424	0,015

Mediation test results show that Brand Trust (Z) serves as a significant mediator in the relationship between Online Review Credibility (X) and Purchase Intention (Y). The indirect effect path Online Review Credibility → Brand Trust → Purchase Intention is positive and statistically significant (original sample = 0.408, t = 2.424, p = 0.015), indicating that higher credibility of online reviews increases consumers' trust in the brand, which in turn strengthens their intention to purchase. These findings imply that the influence of online review credibility on purchase intention is not only direct, but also effectively transmitted through brand trust, confirming the mediating role of brand trust in enhancing consumers' purchase decisions.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that online review credibility significantly influences purchase intention both directly (β = 0.410, p = 0.033) and indirectly through brand trust mediation (β = 0.408, p = 0.015), with strong paths from credibility to trust (β = 0.775, p = 0.000) and trust to intention (β = 0.526, p = 0.006). These results, explaining 78% of purchase intention variance among Adorable Project consumers on Shopee in Bandung, underscore brand trust's pivotal mediating role in translating credible e-WOM into buying commitment within Indonesia's dominant marketplace ecosystem. Robust measurement validity (AVE > 0.70, CR > 0.90) supports the model's applicability to local brands facing incentivized review challenges.

Despite methodological rigor, limitations include the cross-sectional design limiting causality inferences and purposive sampling from one Bandung brand, potentially constraining generalizability beyond Shopee fashion accessories. Future research could employ longitudinal designs, multi-platform comparisons (e.g., Tokopedia), or experimental manipulations of review authenticity to deepen causal insights. Practically, Adorable Project should prioritize authentic review generation through photo-verified narratives over coin incentives, coupled with transparent response strategies to negative feedback, fostering trust signals that convert visibility into sustained purchase growth amid Indonesia's e-commerce surge.

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