

# THE EFFECT OF SOURCE CREDIBLE ONLINE REVIEWS ON PURCHASE INTENTION THE MEDIATING ROLES OF BRAND AWARENESS

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to propose a research framework that can be used to investigate the impact of source credible online review on consumer purchase intentions. Conceptual research is compiled based on theoretical perspectives and marketing literature adapted to the conditions of the current marketing world which leads to digital to present a number of propositions. This study uses three variables including source credible online reviews as independent variables, purchase intention as the dependent variable, and brand awareness as a mediating variable. This paper is useful for the development of research models and provides opportunities for future research to make empirical contributions.

**Keywords:** online reviews, purchase intention, brand awareness, social media, source credible

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of social media, consumers are increasingly using their time to find information about a product and service to create their purchase intentions (Alalwan, 2018; Dwivedi *et al.*, 2015; Lee *et al.*, 2008; Shareef *et al.*, 2017; Shiau *et al.*, 2018). Social media has become the main media platform that connects a third of the world's population (Nelson-Field and Taylor, 2012). Social media is defined as "a group of internet-based applications that are built on the ideological and technical foundations of Web 2.0, and enable the creation and exchange of content between users" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 61).

The rapid growth of communication through social media makes it difficult for marketers to control brand management (Bruhn *et al.*, 2012). Among successful brands are those who are able to use social media to interact and retain consumers (Neirotti *et al.*, 2016). One way that can influence consumers in creating purchase intentions is a review of a product brand (Lin and Xu, 2017). Lee and Hong (2016) also mention the number of online product reviews will influence consumer purchasing decisions. This is a phenomenon that can be said to be very reasonable because consumers generally will look at reviews online before buying any product (Zhang *et al.*, 2014).

In fact, a number of product reviews are available on social media, but not all of these reviews can be trusted as reference material (Shin and Liao, 2017). While in terms of trust, consumers will look for sources of reviews that are considered to have credibility before accepting the review (Shan, 2016). Therefore, this study uses the Credibility Source Theory as a reference for identifying the factors that make a review credible. In the theory, it is explained that the expertise and trust in the source of the review makes it considered to be credible (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017).

This study argues that the existence of online reviews from credible sources can increase brand awareness of a product or service which in turn will direct consumers to purchase intentions. Brand awareness is an important thing that underlies the success of a brand (Aaker, 1992). In this study the effect of credible online review sources on purchase intentions will be tested through the role of mediating brand awareness.

## **2. THEORY DEVELOPMENT AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

### *Source credibility theory*

Source Credibility Theory was introduced by Hovland and Weiss (1951) where this study was based on the level of effectiveness of communication at Yale University. Furthermore, Hovland and Weiss (1951) observed that the source of communication is the most important factor in making information effective and reliable. The proliferation of review sources has increased enormously with the number of online product reviews which has finally become a challenge for consumers to choose which reviews are credible (Hlee *et al.*, 2018). People will evaluate the reliability of information sources. If people consider the source of information credible, they will follow that information. Reliable sources can be defined as communication media that provide information accurately (Visentin *et al.*, 2019). On various social media, many online reviews are available. This is a challenge for consumers to choose authentic reviews. Online reviews of a product are considered as ubiquitous channels and can be quite strong as information on a product (Shareef *et al.*, 2019). Consumers generally examine the credibility of source reviews in terms of expertise and source trust (Cheung and Thadani, 2012; Shan, 2016). Specifically, source credibility refers to the extent to which recipients rely on comments from certain sources (Visentin *et al.*, 2019). This research follows the Source Credibility Theory to test the credibility of online reviews. Source credibility can be defined as "the perception of the message source seen from the ability (expertise) or motivation to provide accurate and correct information (trust) (Cheung and Thadani, 2012, p. 466).

### *Online reviews*

Today, the online review system is growing so rapidly. Online reviews have become the most important part of marketing through social media (Dellarocas, 2003). The motivation of consumers to look for online reviews is their own choice in order to reduce the risk and time of searching for a product or service (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003). Reviews are considered as critical dimensions of social media when viewed from a marketing perspective (Shadkam and O'Hara, 2013). Online reviews of a brand or product can increase trust, reduce risk when making online purchases, and increase purchase intention (Ng, 2013; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010) and company earnings (Moe and Trusov, 2011).

### *Purchase intention*

Purchase intention is always a major concern in the marketing concept (Morisson, 1979). The purchase intention followed by other attitudes can be used to predict actual buying behavior (Axelrood, 1968). Purchase intention can be defined as the possibility of consumer purchasing decisions to buy a product (Dodds *et al.*, 1991; Grewal *et al.*, 1998) decisions that come from the value and benefits perceived by consumers (Zeithaml, 1988). In research that focuses on academics and marketing, purchase intention is always an important variable as a description of consumer behavior towards purchasing decisions (Chandon *et al.*, 2005; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000).

### *Brand awareness*

Brand awareness is a knot or brand track record in memory as reflected by consumers' ability to identify brands under different conditions (Rossiter and Percy, 1987). In particular, brand awareness is related to the possibility that brand names will appear in the minds of consumers. Brand awareness plays an important role in consumer decision making, arguing that they will think of brands when they are thinking about product categories (Keller, 1993). Brand awareness is needed to bring out top-of-the-mind awareness (Macdonald and Sharp, 2003; Netemeyer *et al.*, 2004). Consumers receive brand awareness through effective marketing communication channels such as television, mobile phones and online advertising that provide guaranteed product quality and credibility that helps reduce risks in product evaluation and selection when buying a product (Aaker, 1996; Buil *et al.*, 2013; Keller and Lehmann, 2003; Rubio *et al.*, 2014).

*Effect of source credible online review on brand awareness*

Source credible online review on a brand will facilitate consumers to gain awareness about brands which ultimately increases their confidence in reviews (O'Neil and Eisenmann, 2017; Wu and Wang, 2011). Based on the above reasons, we make the following proposition:

P1. Source credible online review has a positive effect on brand awareness.

*Effect of brand awareness on purchase intentions*

Brand awareness is how consumers associate brands with certain products they want. Brand awareness is very necessary in the process of communicating the products offered so that they can influence prospective customers (Macdonald and Sharp, 2003; Netemeyer *et al.*, 2004). Consumers receive brand awareness through effective marketing communication channels such as social media as a reference that provides an overview of the quality and credibility of products that help reduce risk when finally choosing and buying products (Aaker, 1996; Buil *et al.*, 2013; Keller and Lehmann, 2003 ; Rubio *et al.*, 2014). Huang and Sarigöllü (2012) state that brand awareness influences consumer purchasing decisions. Creating brand awareness is the first step to ensuring that a product is taken into consideration by determining potential consumers because brand awareness further influences their decisions. Brand awareness will significantly have an impact on consumer decision making where consumers will generally have the intention to make purchases (Chung *et al.*, 2013; Huang and Sarigollu, 2011; Norazah, 2013). From the description above, this study postulates that:

P2. Brand awareness has a positive effect on purchase intention.

*Effect of source credible online review on purchase intentions*

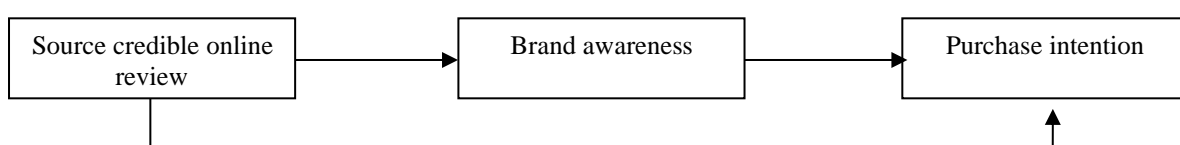
Sources that are considered credible will influence the positive perceptions of credibility of reviews by consumers, which in turn will increase product purchase intentions (Chih *et al.*, 2013). Thus we make the following proposition:

P3. Source credible online review has a positive effect on purchase intention.

*The mediating roles of brand awareness on source credible online review and purchase intentions*

Brand awareness is a very important component in the process of brand communication with customers (Homburg *et al.*, 2010). Brand awareness is seen as a means by which individuals get information and are familiar with brand names. A credible online review source on the brand facilitates consumers to gain brand awareness which ultimately increases the recipient's confidence in reviews (O'Neil and Eisenmann, 2017; Wu and Wang, 2011). The higher the credibility of the source of a review, the more consumers feel confident where it ultimately affects purchase intentions (Kim *et al.*, 2018). Consumers who buy certain products or brands must first be aware of the brand. Brand awareness sets a decisive role in choosing a brand rather than competing brands (Barreda *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, widely known brands tend to be bought more than unknown brands. High brand awareness is a positive effect that motivates consumers to buy a brand (Liu *et al.*, 2017). From the description above, this study postulates that:

P4. Brand awareness mediates the relationship between source credible online review and purchase intention.



### 3. DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

We utilize the source credibility theory to provide an overview and direction in determining the sources of review that can be selected and made more appropriate research material. In fact, not all reviews available in online media can be used as research material considering the number of reviews that are merely reviews of author opinions, without having good objectivity. In this case, the author of the review is very influential in the judgment of others, so it becomes an added value, as a credible presumption of sources.

The model that we propose can be useful in developing a research framework while providing direction in knowing the influence of source credible online review on consumer purchase intentions with brand awareness as an intermediary variable to explain the relationship between the two dependent and independent variables.

The analysis that the author considers appropriate in testing these variables is path analysis which can be tested using the help of the SPSS program (Statistical Package for the Social Science) or AMOS (Analysis Moment of Structural). In collecting data, the authors suggest using a questionnaire with a Likert Scale 7 where the range of answers ranges from strongly disagree and strongly agree, this is to facilitate the preparation of the results of the questionnaire scores. While the target of respondents can use followers or subscribers from various social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and e-commerce such as Tokopedia, BukaLapak, Shopee, and Zalora. This study can also use a pilot study if deemed necessary. The things related to the techniques and other data processing required in testing the model that we propose can be adjusted.

The proposal of a good research model does not mean without limitations, the development of further research models in the future will be very helpful in perfecting the model proposed previously, such as a more in-depth discussion of consumer behavior that is not only limited to purchase intention but more far up to purchasing decisions, even though consumer purchase intentions can be used as projections, but this will enrich the proposed research model in providing direction for future empirical research as a contribution to science in the marketing literature as well as for business people in making decisions.

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