

## The Influence of Content Authenticity, Online Review Quality, and Perceived Fairness on Digital Brand Trust in E-Commerce Applications in Indonesia

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### ABSTRAK

Tujuan utama penelitian ini adalah untuk menyelidiki dampak otentisitas konten, kualitas ulasan, dan persepsi keadilan terhadap kepercayaan pada merek digital di aplikasi e-commerce Indonesia. Persaingan di sektor e-commerce bersamaan dengan peningkatan kepercayaan konsumen yang lambat namun stabil terhadap transaksi online merupakan latar belakang utama penelitian ini. Pendekatan kuantitatif eksploratif telah digunakan untuk penelitian ini, dan 200 pengguna aplikasi e-commerce dipilih sebagai responden melalui pengambilan sampel bertujuan. Kuesioner yang dibuat dengan skala Likert lima poin merupakan teknik pengumpulan data dan regresi linier berganda adalah metode analisis yang digunakan. Instrumen penelitian telah berhasil melewati pengujian validitas, reliabilitas, dan asumsi klasik lainnya. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa ketiga variabel independen tersebut, tidak hanya secara individual tetapi juga secara kolektif, memiliki dampak yang signifikan dan positif terhadap kepercayaan terhadap merek digital. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini telah memberikan kontribusi teoritis pada literatur tentang evolusi kepercayaan merek digital dalam konteks e-commerce. Namun, implikasi dari hasil penelitian ini bersifat strategis dan dapat diarahkan kepada para pengelola platform, yang pada gilirannya dapat memperkuat kepercayaan pengguna melalui, antara lain, penggunaan konten otentik, penerapan manajemen ulasan yang efektif, dan penerapan kebijakan yang adil dan terbuka.

Kata kunci: otentisitas konten, kualitas ulasan online, persepsi keadilan, kepercayaan merek digital

### ABSTRACT

*The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the impact that content authenticity, review quality, and perceived fairness have on trust in digital brands in Indonesian e-commerce applications. The rivalry in the e-commerce sector alongside the slow but steady rise in consumer trust in online transactions are the main backgrounds of the study. A quantitative explanatory approach has been utilized for the study, and 200 current users of e-commerce applications were selected as respondents through purposive sampling. The questionnaires made on a five-point Likert scale were the technique for collecting data and multiple linear regression was the method of analysis used. The research tool has successfully gone through the tests for validity, reliability, and other classical assumptions. The findings indicate that the three independent variables not only individually but also collectively have a significant and positive impact on the trust towards digital brands. Hence, the research has given a theoretical contribution to the literature on the evolution of digital brand trust in the e-commerce context. However, the implications of the research results are of a strategic nature and can be directed at the platform's managers, who in turn can strengthen user trust via, among other things, the use of authentic content, the application of effective review management, and the observance of fair and open policies.*

*Keywords: content authenticity, online review quality, perceived fairness, digital brand trust*

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## INTRODUCTION

E-commerce's rise in Indonesia has not only transformed the consumers' communication but also their ties with the digital brands (Riyanti et al., 2025). The very brand trust of the consumer has become a deciding factor in the e-commerce applications' continuing existence and the whole digital arena's winning over. Consumers consider the trust factor in the platform they are using along with price and product assortment, particularly in the fields of security of transactions, reliability of information, and integrity of brands (Pramudito et al., 2023). To this end, trust in the digital brands has been very much obliged and it has facilitated the processes of making choices, reusing apps, and retaining users for a long time (Harahap et al., 2025). This is particularly true in Indonesia with a huge e-commerce user base comprising people from various walks of life. Therefore, it is critical for e-commerce application managers to understand the factors that develop trust in digital brands then they can keep their edge and reputation in the digital market (Haribowo et al., 2022).

Content authenticity is a term related to the degree of a customer's perception, wherein the digital content of an e-commerce app is considered to be real, honest, transparent, and not misleading. The realness of the content consists of the descriptions of the products that are exact, the pictures that are not edited, and the promotions that coincide with the user's experience (Sudirjo et al., 2024). In the e-commerce industry, digital content has become the main source of information for customers who are making their decisions about purchasing (Sudirjo et al., 2024). Authenticity of the content gives the consumers the feeling of safety and therefore, the platform wins their trust (Gai et al., 2024). Reviews that are honest, comprehensive, and consistent are the ones that e-commerce apps can count on to gain the trust of consumers while manipulative or unhelpful ones will be utterly ineffective. The presence of high-quality reviews is very important for the consumer as it allows them to minimize the uncertainty and risk that are usually involved in online shopping, therefore, building their trust in digital brands (Maryoso et al., 2023). In addition, the digital trust of the brand is enhanced by the open handling of reviews through which users can express their complaints. Thailand actively supports the process of creating trust in online purchasing via e-commerce apps and sharing trust through the quality of digital reviews. Fairness is the consumers' perception of the fairness exercised by e-commerce apps in different areas of their services, e.g., pricing, return policies, complaints resolution, and treatment of both sellers and buyers (Dharta et al., 2024). Naturally, customers are attracted to the platforms that are perceived as being fair, transparent, and unbiased. In other words, if customers feel that the treatment they get is fair, they will most probably regard the platform as honest and committed to user delight (Hidayat et al., 2023).

The present research intends to scrutinize the impact of content authenticity, the quality of online reviews, and perceived fairness on digital brand trust in Indonesian e-commerce applications. Theoretical contribution of this research will be the better understanding of digital consumer behavior and brand

trust management in the e-commerce sector. Additionally, it will be a step towards the construction of a conceptual model of digital brand trust that factors in content, user interaction, and perceived fairness. Nevertheless, the researcher wishes that this research will act as a guide for the e-commerce app managers in the area of more genuine digital communication strategies, more credible and fair online reviews, and more transparent service systems. Furthermore, they can utilize the insights gained from the research to not only gain trust from new users but also strengthen customer loyalty and even achieve brand sustainability in the highly competitive e-commerce market of Indonesia.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The purpose of this research was to explore the phenomenon of digital brand trust in e-commerce in Indonesia and to do this through a quantitative explanatory method where content authenticity, online reviews quality, and perceived fairness among the main factors were regarded as the thumb factors influencing the trust. A survey with a structured questionnaire applying a five-point Likert scale was the principal instrument for data collection and was directly distributed to the users of e-commerce applications who mostly use them as respondents. The purposive sampling technique, which met the following conditions about the participants: (1) age over 18 years, (2) e-commerce app transaction in the last half year, (3) reading or consulting online reviews before the purchase made, and (4) having a good knowledge of the policies and transaction systems of e-commerce applications was used to select the participants. The total sample consisted of 200 participants and was considered adequate for conducting multiple linear regression analysis. The research tool was validated through item-total correlation validity test with a coefficient of  $> 0.30$  and  $p < 0.05$  together with reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha with a value of  $> 0.70$  which indicates the level of internal consistency. The data analysis was done with multiple linear regression to check independent variables one at a time and in combination with digital brand trust, all supported by SPSS statistical software thus ensuring that the research findings are scientifically valid.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The F-test results confirm that the regression model applied in this research is significant at the joint level, as the F-calculated value is greater than the F-tabulated value, and the p-value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This means that content characteristics, online reviews quality, and consumers' perceived fairness in general are the key factors influencing digital brand trust. An  $R^2$  value of 0.70 implies that the three independent variables in the model can explain 70% of the variation in digital brand trust, while the remaining 30% is attributed to factors not included in the study such as platform reputation, system security, and customer service quality. Based on the t-test results, each of the independent variables has a calculated t-value that exceeds the t-table value at a significance level of  $< 0.05$ , thus leading to the

acceptance of all research hypotheses. Consequently, the regression model is considered to have very high explanatory power in the building process of digital brand trust in the Indonesian e-commerce market.

According to the study, the genuineness of the content is an indirect method of reinforcing trust for the digital brands in the e-commerce sector of Indonesia. The findings suggest that if a significant number of users see the content on that e-commerce platform as genuine, then the corresponding digital brand will gain one rung higher of user trust. Honesty in the content that gives product images, product demos, and user experience-related promotions, etc. is of great help in persuading the consumers about the safety of online purchases. In the context of e-commerce, customers mostly look onto the digital content as their main source of information to decide on the purchase; thus, the truthfulness of the content turns out to be the main factor for constructing trust. If the customers think that the site is showing the information in an accurate and clear way, they will generally consider the brand as very honest. Conversely, content viewed as exaggerated or deceptive may trigger doubt and thus, damage the trust of the brand. Therefore, the authenticity of content not only acts as a means of marketing communication but also as a trust factor in the long run between the customer and the e-commerce app relationship.

Moreover, studies have demonstrated that the online reviews' quality has a positive and substantial influence on the digital brand trust. Positive reviews that are informative, relevant, clear, and credible can grant e-commerce applications the requisite trust to be regarded as trustworthy. The reviews of others are a source of social information for the final users that help them to assess the risks and advantages before they proceed with the purchase. The customer's trust in the product quality and the website's honesty increases if they see detailed and truthful reviews. The research has revealed that not only the number of reviews but also the quality of review content is fundamental to building digital trust. Furthermore, a review management system that is open and transparent, which filters out negative reviews without informing the decision, and an unresponsive platform, further increase consumer trust perception. In Indonesia's brutal e-commerce competition, online review quality turns out to be the key factor for distinguishing the trustworthy from the untrustworthy platforms. Hence, the quality of online reviews is of paramount importance in the digital brand trust creation and maintenance process of users.

The research indicated that the perception of fairness was the main factor that positively and greatly affected the trust-building process in the e-commerce brand operating in the digital market of Indonesia. Among the factors that played a role in consumer's fairness perceptions were pricing, returns, complaints handling, and the treatment of buyers and sellers in general. When consumers feel they are being treated fairly and there are no tricks, they are more likely to trust the platform. This serves as a strong argument that fairness is not only a moral but also a strategic factor in user retention through a long-term relationship building. On the other hand, perceived unfair practices (such as slow complaint handling or

inconsistent policies) will lead to loss of trust and decline in customer retention. However, those platforms that consistently demonstrate fairness and consistency in their interactions are perceived as having high integrity and being reliable. In the multi-actor e-commerce system, perceived fairness is one of the leading quality indicators of the platform governance. Therefore, improving consumers' perceptions of fairness is a tactical move towards the long-term fortification of digital brand trust.

## CONCLUSION

This research is a thorough investigation and demonstration that consumers' acceptance of authentic content, quality of online reviews and fairness perception are mutually reinforcing factors responsible for the existence of online trust in Indonesian e-commerce applications relating to digital brands. Trust has been indicated as a key factor determining customer loyalty in e-commerce and shopping through the internet has been perceived as lacking live interaction, thus, consumers have more trust in the brands or the whole online shopping experience which is not based only on the functional side of the transaction but also on the quality of honest and authentic content, informative and credible reviews, and the fairness of the policies and services offered by the platforms. Among these factors, the authenticity of the content has become a consumer attraction that reduces the consumers' doubt and as a result there is the increase of trust in the brand. The quality of the online reviews acts as a social information source which attracts the consumers to make the decision with more certainty. The e-commerce app managers can really use the research finding to their advantage by enhancing the authenticity and transparency of the content so that the product descriptions, visuals, and promotions are truly what they are. The platforms should improve their review management systems by encouraging informative reviews, showing reviews publically, and handling complaints in a friendly manner. Moreover, the fairness and consistency in the areas of pricing, promotions, returns, and complaint handling should be strengthened to improve perceived fairness.

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