

## Online customer reviews and ratings as key drivers of purchase intention: The mediating role of trust

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**Abstract:** Findings related to the relationship between the effect of online customer reviews and ratings, with trust as a mediating factor toward purchase intent are still different or inconsistent. Meanwhile, digital businesses utilize online customer reviews and ratings as factors in the process of determination decision buying consumer and marketing strategies. The goal of this research is to test the influence of online customer reviews and ratings mediated by trust on purchase intentions in smartphone consumers at the official store Shopee Indonesia. With a quantitative approach, the data involved 209 respondents who had shopped at Shopee. The non-probability sampling method and purposive sampling technique were applied to obtain the sample, with PLS-SEM utilized for data analysis in this study. The exploration found that there had appeared to be no significant direct effect online customer reviews toward purchase intent, in contrast to previous studies on positive and significant direct effects of such relationships. This research discovered that there was an indirect impact of online customer reviews toward purchase intent that was fully mediated by trust, and there was an indirect influence on online customer ratings toward purchase intent that was partially mediated by trust. This research emphasizes that reviews and ratings given by customers online are social influences that shape consumer perception of trustworthiness of products and vendors in online marketplaces, as stated by Social Influence Theory. Therefore, to develop consumer trust, digital commerce businesses are required to continuously observe and respond to customer reviews and ratings. Meanwhile, to maintain quality information, digital commerce platforms have responsibility to provide features that make the process more accessible to customers to offer truthful and relevant feedback, as well as filter out uncredible reviews.

**Keywords:** online customer ratings; online customer reviews; purchase intention; trust

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## **Ulasan dan rating pelanggan online sebagai pendorong utama niat pembelian: Peran mediasi kepercayaan**

**Abstrak:** Temuan terkait hubungan antara efek ulasan dan rating pelanggan online pada niat pembelian, dengan kepercayaan sebagai mediasi, masih berbeda atau terdapat inkonsistensi. Sementara itu, bisnis digital memanfaatkan ulasan dan rating pelanggan online sebagai faktor dalam penentuan keputusan pembelian konsumen dan taktik pemasaran. Studi ini berupaya untuk menguji dampak ulasan dan rating pelanggan online melalui mediasi kepercayaan terhadap niat pembelian pada konsumen smartphone di official store Shopee Indonesia. Dengan pendekatan kuantitatif, data melibatkan 209 orang responden yang pernah berbelanja di Shopee. Metode non-probability sampling dan teknik purposive sampling yang diterapkan untuk memperoleh sampel, dengan PLS-SEM yang diaplikasikan dalam analisis data. Studi ini mengidentifikasi bahwa tidak terdapat efek langsung yang signifikan dari ulasan pelanggan online pada niat pembelian, sehingga berbeda dengan penelitian-penelitian terdahulu terkait efek langsung positif dan signifikan dari hubungan tersebut. Studi ini mengungkap bahwa terdapat efek tidak langsung ulasan pelanggan online pada niat pembelian melalui mediasi kepercayaan secara penuh, dan terdapat efek tidak langsung rating pelanggan online pada niat pembelian melalui mediasi kepercayaan secara parsial. Studi ini menegaskan bahwasanya ulasan dan rating yang diberikan oleh pelanggan secara online, merupakan pengaruh sosial yang membentuk persepsi konsumen terhadap kepercayaan pada produk dan penjual di e-commerce, dengan berlandaskan pada Social Influence Theory. Oleh sebab itu, untuk membangun kepercayaan konsumen, bisnis digital perlu dengan aktif mengontrol dan menanggapi ulasan dan rating pelanggan. Selain itu, untuk menjaga informasi yang berkualitas, platform e-commerce perlu menyediakan fitur yang memudahkan pelanggan memberikan umpan balik yang jujur dan relevan, serta menyaring ulasan yang tidak kredibel.

**Kata kunci:** kepercayaan; niat pembelian; rating pelanggan online; ulasan pelanggan online

### **INTRODUCTION**

Consumers consider online customer reviews and ratings, that reflect buyer contentment rate regarding the quality of products and the retailer's services, as the basis for decision making in online purchases. Although consumers access online customer reviews and ratings, it does not directly encourage intention in making a purchase, as digital customer reviews and ratings are not convincing or trust in product and seller reliability has not been established, especially associated with nonexistence of physical or face to face transactions among the various parties involved, as well as consumer concerns about transactions on e-commerce platforms that threaten consumer trust (Soleimani, 2022). Online customer reviews and ratings were originally a collection of buyer evaluation on product quality and seller's services used to measure buyer satisfaction on online shopping activities, but now it has become an important strategic tool in establishing trust and impacting consumer purchase intent. Some previous studies have shown that trust acts as a mediator the influence of online customer reviews and ratings toward intention of purchase (Wibowo & Safitri, 2022; Ramadhan & Sanjaya, 2021; Sitorus & Siregar, 2025).

Digital word of mouth (e-WOM) directs consumers on making purchasing verdicts, so that influences purchase intent. This means that the reviews provided from customers come from trusted sources and effectively increase purchasing intent and encourage consumer buying behavior. Filieri et al. (2015) highlights that trust affects the formation of consumer purchase intent by motivating customers to give recommendations and encouraging positive personal recommendation spread. Online customer reviews and ratings gain credibility when they come from experienced buyers, thus increasing consumer trust in the information provided, which has a subsequent effect on purchase intent. Positive feedback and high ratings increase consumer trust in a brand, which in turn drives purchases, supported by the results of Ladhari & Michaud (2015). Similarly, research by Ismail et al. (2025) emphasize that information and advice derived from online reviews act as important cues for consumers.

It has been found by previous research studies that there are inconsistencies or vary regarding the contribution of trust mediates the influence of online customer reviews and ratings on purchase intent. Table 1 describes the research gap in results from previous research studies.

Table 1. Research gap

Research results	E-commerce platforms and locations	Researchers
Trust positively and significantly mediated the effect of online customer reviews and ratings on consumer purchase intention.	Shopee, Surakarta Shopee, Yogyakarta Shopee, Surakarta Tokopedia, Surabaya	Dinanti & Irmawati (2024) Purnama et al. (2024) Fahendri & Susila (2024) Darmawan & Laily (2022)
Online customer reviews do not have impact on purchase intention through trust, while online customer ratings have a positive and significant effect through trust on purchase intention.	E-commerce, Riau Shopee, Malang	Purwantoro et al. (2023) Firdaus et al. (2023)
Trust does not mediate the effect online customer reviews and ratings on consumer purchase intention.	Shopee, Indonesia	Hermawan & Astuti (2024)

Source: Secondary data processed (2025)

These differences can be caused by variations in types of products, demographic data of consumers, and research methodologies used in previous research. Previous studies have produced conflicting findings regarding the effect of online customer reviews and ratings on trust acts as a mediator toward purchase intent (Rahman & Khasanah, 2024). Therefore, there is a need for further investigations aimed at clarifying trust's function as a mediating factor in this correlation.

In digital shopping, Social Influence Theory (SIT) is a strong conceptual analytical framework for studying the dynamics of online reviews and ratings shaping consumer purchase intent mediated by trust. SIT, introduced by Kelman (1958), describing that individuals are driven by societal perception by means of three workflows, including compliance, identification, and internalization. This mechanism is reflected in the way consumers interpret and react to reviews and ratings sourced out of customers in the online purchase decision process.

Social influence categorizes into two variations, including normative influence and information influence. Normative influence occurs when individuals align with online reviews and ratings to obtain social acceptance or refrain from becoming perceived differently. Meanwhile, in conditions of uncertainty, the influence of information is present when consumers consider reviews and ratings as a reliable information source (Cialdini, 2022). This perspective draws attention to the essential position of social proof in forming consumer perception. While, when many customers provide favorable evaluations, consumers tend to trust the product and mimic purchasing behavior (Xu et al., 2017).

In interpreting consumer habits in the quickly developing digital landscape, this research aims to offer conceptual and applicable contributions regarding the marketing knowledge of e-commerce platforms and enrich marketing communication strategies regarding digital shopping. In addition, the findings of this research are considered likely to offer applicable recommendations for business stakeholders to improve marketing strategies and competitiveness in an increasingly competitive business, as well as for consumers to assist in making the right and safe buying decisions.

In online shopping, online customer reviews serve as a crucial factor in persuading consumer buying choices. These reviews refer to the evaluation and experience sourced from customers regarding the products and seller's services that have been purchased before and can be accessed by potential buyers as a reference before making a purchase. The reviews reflect the valuable insights and assessments provided by customers related to various product attributes, including quality, authenticity, and consistency with product descriptions, as well as related to seller aspects, including responsiveness, reliability, quality of service, and efficiency and safety of the delivery process (Mo et al., 2015).

The perspective that argues that online customer reviews are a factor in consumer intention to buy, agrees with the results of Ichsan et al. (2018). Positive reviews tend to grow the trust of potential

buyers and stimulate the willingness to purchase a product. Conversely, negative reviews can deter consumers due to growing doubts regarding product quality and seller credibility. Meanwhile, purchase intent arises when consumers develop interest and confidence in a product, which is impacted by the source of information from customer reviews (Hadi, 2021). Furthermore, on digital platforms, digital word of mouth plays a substantial contribution to forming consumer behavior, with many individuals relying on online reviews in the process determining buying decisions (Amin, 2019). While, anonymous e-WOM messages in the form of online reviews have been shown to affect consumer purchase intent (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Online reviews, sourced from the customer's experience, depict a more persuasive form of e-WOM than traditional advertising (Elwalda et al., 2016). Feedback, provided by previous shoppers, serves as a reference that assists potential buyers in assessing products and making informed decisions on online shopping (Nisa & Dwijayanti, 2022). Meanwhile, previous research has verified that online customer reviews have a positive significant effect on consumers' purchase intent. This is supported by Augustine & Adnan (2020), Rohmatulloh & Sari (2021), and Farki et al. (2016). According to this presentation, hypothesis was formulated belows.

H<sub>1</sub>: Online customer reviews have positive impact on purchase intention.

Online customer ratings are an important element in a product evaluation system in e-commerce. Online customer ratings are customer evaluations or assessments that are represented by stars, using a scale of one to five stars. The number of stars given is higher, the better consumer's perception of quality received. A high rating indicates that the product complies with requirements in terms of products quality, authenticity, and functionality. This assessment can influence potential buyers in making online purchase decisions. Ramadhani & Sanjaya (2021) supporting this with the finding that customer ratings significantly impact on consumer purchase intent. Good judgment not only builds the credibility of the store but also increases the positive perception of the product. Farki et al. (2016) proves that ratings significantly impact to purchase intention, while Gabriela et al. (2022) showing that ratings significantly effect to purchase intention. The contribution of online customer ratings is higher, the more substantial the influence on consumer's intention to purchase. Ichsan et al. (2018) explains that online customer ratings significantly impact consumer purchase intention. Online ratings positively significantly impact on sales (Lee et al., 2019). Therefore, the rating given by customers is higher, the greater the chance it is that potential buyers will have an intention of purchasing. As described above, the subsequent hypothesis was formulated.

H<sub>2</sub>: Online customer ratings have positive impact on purchase intention.

Online customer reviews are a source of information in online shopping. Online customer reviews are customer opinions that contain information and product evaluations from various aspects based on real experiences after making an online purchase (Mo et al., 2015). This review is an honest and unbiased source of information because it comes directly from the customer, not from the seller. Therefore, positive reviews show a rising tendency prospective buyers' trust in the goods and the seller. Research Priyatn & Farisi (2023), Darmawan & Laily (2022), and Kamisa et al. (2022) show that online customer reviews positively significantly impact consumer trust. Confidence in goods suitability can enhance online suggestions from anonymous customers (Orús et al., 2019). If reviews available are more positive, thus consumer trust in the trustworthiness of the seller and the excellence of the products presented is getting higher. An information source presented as online customer reviews is reliable since they are provided by customers who have no incentive to manipulate perceptions. Consumers provide honest feedback examining the product's benefits and disadvantages, which then becomes a primary concern for interested buyers. Mulyati & Gesitera (2020) emphasizes that online customer reviews positively significantly influence consumer confidence within the online marketplace, as it simplifies for consumers to discover relevant insights without feeling confused. Indra et al. (2022) supporting this by showing that positive reviews from customers can encourage trust in the goods to be purchased, e-reviews positively and significantly influence e-trust. Considering this description, the proposed hypothesis was formulated.

H<sub>3</sub>: Online customer reviews have positive impact on trust.

In digital shopping, online customer ratings serve as a determinant of consumer trust in goods and sellers. These ratings reflect customer satisfaction and seller performance assessments, which consumers rely on as a reference in making purchasing decisions. Potential buyers' confidence in product quality tends to increase if ratings are higher. A study by Hariyanto & Trisunarno (2020) exposed the positive and significant impact of ratings on trust. These findings are supported by Fahendri & Susila (2024) showing significantly positive influence of online ratings on consumer trust. A high rating tends to

increase buyer confidence, while a lower rating can reduce purchase intent due to concerns about product quality and seller service. Similar results were reported by Nurhayati et al. (2023) and Wahyudi et al. (2019), confirming the substantial effect of online ratings toward consumer trust. Considering these findings, the suggested hypothesis has been developed.

H<sub>4</sub>: Online customer ratings have positive impact on trust.

Trust serves an essential function in forming consumer purchasing decisions in digital transactions. Such decisions largely depend on the consumer's perspective of the seller's honesty and the quality of the products available through digital platforms. Trust means that consumers have confidence in digital sellers to fulfill his or her transactional obligations honestly and consistently (Agag & El-Masry, 2016). Based on findings of Bulsara & Vaghela (2023), trust is an essential element that influences consumers' intent to shop online. Trust in websites and digital merchants have positive influence on initial buying intent and repurchase intent. Trust within goods and merchants on e-commerce sites can reduce risk perceptions and encourage consumers to have an intent in buying. As declared by Nilashi et al. (2022), consumers with high trust had low risk perception and high purchasing intent. Instead, low consumer trust has a high perception of risk and low purchasing intent. Trust is an essential key to consumers' intent to buy online. Trust in online retailers substantially influences consumer purchasing behavior. As a result, businesses that aim to increase consumer purchase intent and sales must prioritize on time delivery and ensure products meet customer expectations (Ashraf & Iqbal, 2023). Supporting this view, prior study has found that trust creates a beneficial effect on purchase intent (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016). Increased trust levels correlate with increased purchase intent on consumers (Gong et al., 2019). Consumers tend to make purchases when they trust products and sellers (Ventre & Kolbe, 2020). Furthermore, Ramadhani & Sanjaya (2021) affirm the significant positive influence of consumer trust on purchase intentions. If consumer's trust in the product and the retailer is stronger, thus the greater their intention to purchase. In view of these results, the study hypothesis was formulated as follows.

H<sub>5</sub>: Trust has positive impact on purchase intention.

Consumer trust acts as a significantly positive mediator factor. Mahmud et al. (2024) emphasized that the influence of e-WOM on consumer purchase intent conducts entirely by way of trust. This conclusion is further supported by Bhandari & Rodgers (2018) that show e-WOM positively effect consumer purchase intent through trust. Similarly, Kamalasena & Sirisena (2021) concluded that online reviews positively expand consumer purchase intent if they are accompanied by a considerable level of trust. This research confirms that online customer reviews significantly positive impact on trust and purchase intent, with trust representing as a mediator. The study highlights that consumer's perspective of the credibility of online reviews fosters trust, thereby increasing purchase intent. The role of trust mediation is likewise emphasized by Ezzat & El Salam (2022), which the mediation of trust significantly influences e-WOM on purchase intent. Furthermore, Ilhamalimy & Ali (2021) determined that trust substantially mediates the impact among e-WOM and purchase intent in the digital buying goods environment. Reflecting on this clarity, the subsequent hypothesis was proposed.

H<sub>6</sub>: Trust mediates positively the impact of online customer reviews toward purchase intention.

In the realm of digital marketing, consumer trust functions as an essential mediating variable that bridges the effect of online customer ratings with purchase intent. Online customer ratings have proven to have significantly influence on trust, which in change impact purchase intent. Research by Gemilang & Laily (2023) found that ratings positively and significantly influence purchasing intent through trust. Darmawan & Laily (2022) found that the indirect effect of online customer ratings on purchasing intent by means of trust intervening variable had a positive and significant effect. Furthermore, Ramadhani & Sanjaya (2021) proving that trust mediates the influence among ratings and purchase intent. Considering this presentation, the formulated hypothesis was developed.

H<sub>7</sub>: Trust mediates positively the impact of online customer ratings on purchase intention.

The model in this research is as follows in Figure 1.

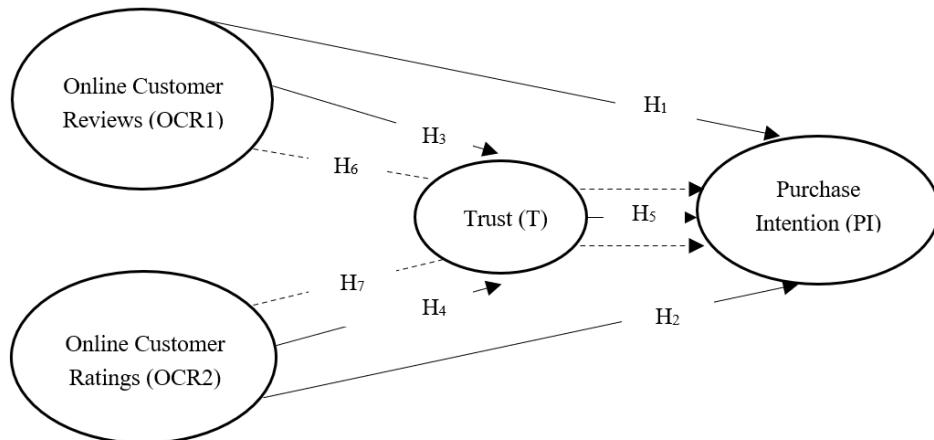


Figure 1. Research model

Source: Data processed (2025)

## METHOD

This research applies causal research design and a quantitative approach. The method of survey was applied in this investigation with a cross-sectional approach, that explicitly data gathering was carried out at a certain point in time (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Respondents were chosen depending on the non-probability sampling method with purposive sampling technique. The questionnaire was allocated online through the google form, with the purpose respondents being Shopee users in Indonesia who have made transactions, aged 14-65 years, have visited the official smartphone store at Shopee Indonesia, have read reviews, and have seen customer ratings online. Data collection was carried out in the period from July 2, 2025, to July 8, 2025, and 209 respondents were obtained as primary data to assessment the hypotheses. The instrument used in this research was in the format of a closed questionnaire to collect primary data. Closed-ended questionnaires are an effective tool for collecting quantitative data in surveys (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The measurement instrument used is the Likert scale which consists of 5 answer options containing a score of one (entirely disagree) to five (entirely agree) (Joshi et al., 2015).

The measurement scale of this study was embraced from the research Mulyati & Gesitera (2020), Kamalasena & Sirisena (2021), and Fahendri & Susila (2024) developed according to the research context. Sample size is determined according to the approach Hair et al. (2019) i.e. the determination of a representative minimum sample size depending on the number of indicators used, which is then multiplied five to ten times in the PLS-SEM research model. This study uses 37 indicators, namely 9 OCR1 indicators, 9 OCR2 indicators, 11 PI indicators, and 8 T indicators, multiplied by 5, so that the sample size implemented in this study is minimal 185 respondents. The analysis of data method uses quantitative statistics, with the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach, with SmartPLS v.4.1.1.2 software. The subsequent variables and dimensions utilized in this research are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. Operational definition of variables and dimensions

Variable	Operational definition	Dimension definition
Online customer reviews	Voluntarily provided by customers on an e-commerce platform after making a purchase and use of a product, which contains information regarding personal experience,	1. Perceived usefulness pertains to the level of individuals believing that the use of online customer reviews can increase the effectiveness of search and decision-making process results in product purchases, reflecting the functional value

	<p>product quality, and satisfaction with transactions (Mo et al., 2015).</p> <p>Quantitative appraisals provided by customers of a product after completing a purchase on an e-commerce, in the form of a scale of 1-5 stars, with 5 means best, which reflects the extent of customer satisfaction directly and is an essential factor in shaping consumer trust and decision making in buying (Engler et al., 2015).</p> <p>The tendency or intention of consumers to buy goods, through the evaluation process carried out on the product, and describes the goals and desires of consumers who are influenced by various kinds of stimuli including external factors, including advertisements, product reviews, and product ratings (Setiadi, 2019).</p>	<p>of online information in helping consumers obtain products that meet their needs (Ismagilova et al., 2020).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Perceived enjoyment pertains to the level of pleasure either emotional satisfaction that consumers feel when reading or browsing customer reviews online, reflecting the intrinsic motivation in using review features as an enjoyable experience (Ichsan et al., 2018).</li> <li>3. Perceived control pertains to the intensity to which consumers feel they hold control in choosing and evaluating products derived from information available from online customer reviews, which is related to confidence in making decisions because they are supported by complete and transparent information (Farki et al., 2016).</li> </ol> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Perceived usefulness is associated with the level at which consumers are confident that looking at online customer ratings will help in making purchasing decisions more effectively and efficiently.</li> <li>2. Perceived ease of use is associated with the level consumers feel that the online customer rating mechanism is simple to operate, access, and apprehend.</li> <li>3. Customer satisfaction expression is associated with the form of rating or reaction received by customers to the product after purchase, which reflects the level of satisfaction based on the user experience, through the awarding of a star rating (1 to 5), as a direct representation of customer satisfaction on the product performance quality and the overall transaction involvement (Engler et al., 2015).</li> </ol> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Transactional intention relates to the tendency to make a purchase after seeing a product, which is influenced by factors that drive a quick purchase, such as discounts, promotions, or limited offers.</li> <li>2. Referential intention relates to the consumer's intention to purchase a product based on other people's recommendations or references, which reflects the sway of others on the consumer's purchase decision, thereby increasing confidence in a particular product.</li> <li>3. Preferential intention relates to a consumer's desire to select and purchase</li> </ol>
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E-trust	<p>The consumer's conviction that the products displayed on the digital commerce platforms and the retailers who offer them can be trusted regarding the accuracy of the information, product quality, and the conformity of the product with the description, the accuracy of delivery, and the security &amp; privacy during the transaction process (Al-kfairy et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2023).</p>	<p>a certain product derived from personal preferences, which the consumer relies on and likes, even if there are cheaper or more accessible alternatives.</p>
	<p>4. Exploratory intention relates to consumer's desire to explore or search for information about products online, even if they do not intend to buy the product soon, focusing on searching for information or exploring the wide selection of products available on e-commerce platforms without pressure to decide right away purchase (Priansa, 2017; Manzoor et al., 2020).</p> <p>1. Credibility refers to the belief that consumers have the necessary competencies to provide the promised products reliably.</p> <p>2. Benevolence refers to the perception of sellers on e-commerce platforms not only pursuing profits but also caring about consumer needs.</p> <p>3. Integrity refers to trust in sellers on e-commerce platforms to act honestly, keep promises, and maintain the security and privacy of personal information &amp; consumer transactions (Al-kfairy et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2023).</p>	

Source: Authors (2025)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **Results**

The test of the research model consists of two stages, namely the outer model (convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability) and the inner model ( $R^2$  and significance/hypothesis). Convergent validity, the assessment evaluated is in the form of an average variance extracted (AVE) value (Hair et al., 2019), with variable criteria it is said to be valid if it has an AVE value of  $\geq 0.5$ . Table 3 is the result of AVE.

Table 3. AVE convergent validity test outcomes

Variable	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Status ( $AVE \geq 0.5$ )
Online customer reviews	0.641	Valid
Online customer ratings	0.645	Valid
Purchase intention	0.698	Valid
Trust	0.715	Valid

Source: Primary data treated (2025)

The AVE value of the OCR1 is 0.641, the OCR2 is 0.645, the PI is 0.698, and the T is 0.715. All these variables have the value  $\geq 0.5$ , which suggests that all variables are valid. Thus, all indicators used in the assessment model encounter the criterion for convergent validity, making the model worthy of further analysis. The outcomes derived from the PLS-SEM algorithm are displayed in Figure 2.

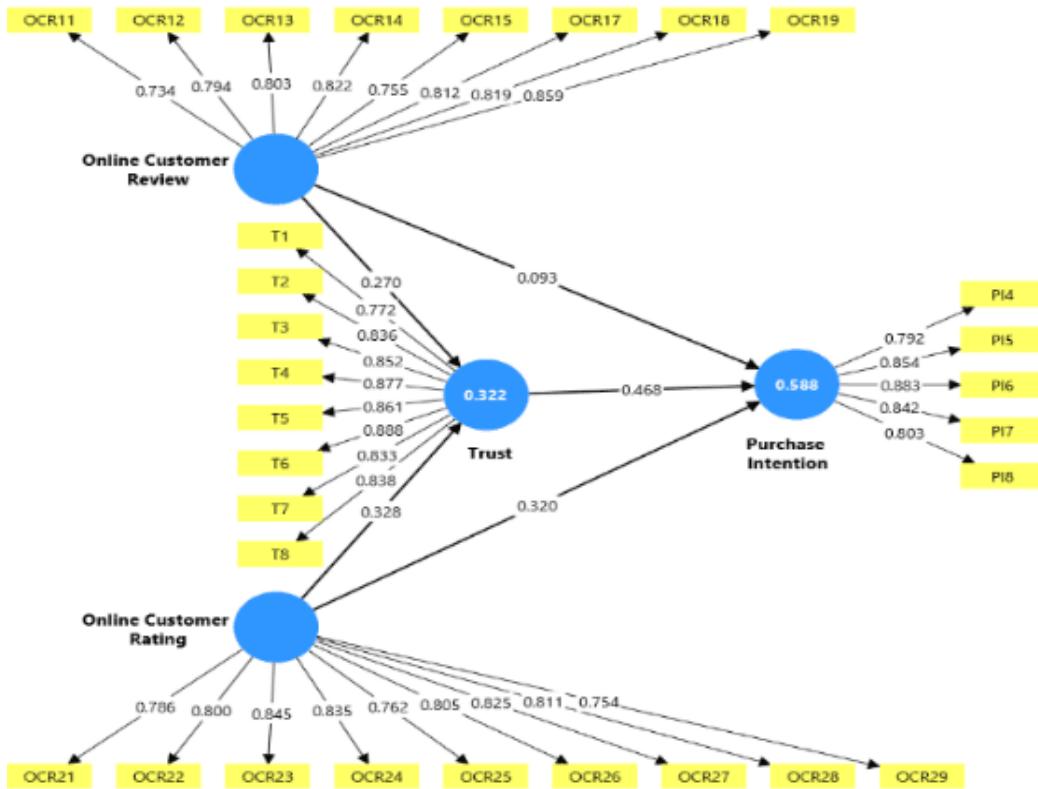


Figure 2. PLS-SEM algorithm outcome diagram

Source: Primary data processed (2025)

The appraisal of discriminant validity uses Fornell-Larcker, with the requirement that if the  $\sqrt{AVE}$  is greater than the correlation value in an identical column, then the measurement model is valid in distinguishing between different constructs. Table 4 is the value of the Fornell-Larcker.

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker values

Variable	Online customer ratings	Online customer reviews	Purchase intention	Trust	Status
Online customer ratings	0.803				Valid
Online customer reviews	0.802	0.801			Valid
Purchase intention	0.650	0.600	0.836		Valid
Trust	0.544	0.533	0.692	0.845	Valid

Source: Primary data treated (2025)

In Table 4, the number in the online customer ratings column  $\sqrt{AVE}$  is 0.803, while the correlation value with other variables, namely online customer reviews 0.802, purchase intention 0.650, and trust 0.544 have values smaller than 0.803, so they are valid. The number in the online customer reviews column  $\sqrt{AVE}$  is 0.801, while the correlation number with other variables, namely purchase intention 0.600 and trust 0.533 has a value smaller than 0.801, so it is valid. The number in the purchase intention column  $\sqrt{AVE}$  is 0.836, while the correlation number with another variable, namely trust 0.692 has a value smaller than 0.836, so it is valid.

Construct reliability, high Cronbach's alpha value suggests that the constructs are well measured and consistent for measurement validity. Table 5 is Cronbach's alpha values.

Table 5. The value of Cronbach's alpha

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Status
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Online customer reviews	0.920	Reliable
Online customer ratings	0.931	Reliable
Purchase intention	0.892	Reliable
Trust	0.943	Reliable

Source: Primary data treated (2025)

Table 5 illustrates the Cronbach's alpha outcomes that are 0.920 for OCR1, 0.931 for OCR2, 0.892 for PI, and 0.943 for T. Constructs meet the lowest limit of Cronbach's alpha  $\geq 0.7$ , suggesting that the measurement instruments exhibit excellent internal consistency.

The inner model assessment includes the evaluation of R-square values along with hypothesis testing. The R-square ( $R^2$ ) amount reflects the model's overall predictive capability. The ranges of  $R^2$  from 0 to 1, that higher score denotes stronger interpretive strength of the model. These R-square results are detailed in Table 6.

Table 6. R-square outcomes

Dependent variable	R-square	R-square adjusted
Purchase intention	0.588	0.582
Trust	0.322	0.316

Source: Primary data treated (2025)

As revealed in Table 6, the PI variable has an R-square value of 0.588, implying that 58.8% the variance in PI can be justified by the independent variables included in the model. The remaining 41.2% is attributed to external factors not captured within this framework. Thus, the association among the independent variables and PI is classified as moderate in strength. The R-square value of 0.322 for the trust variable, indicates that 32.2% of these variables may be interpreted by independent variables in the model, with 67.8% influenced by external factors, reflecting a moderate relationship, suggesting that the model manages to clarify some of the factors that influence trust, even though there are many external factors that are not captured by the model.

Significance (hypothesis testing), the hypothesis of this research has a positive relationship direction, so it is used one-tailed. Table 7 is the finding of a direct effect of bootstrapping.

Table 7. Path coefficient bootstrapping direct effect outcomes

Path coefficients	Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T-statistics	P-values	Status
Online customer reviews → Purchase intention	0.093	0.096	0.093	1.009	0.157	Unproven
Online customer ratings → Purchase intention	0.320	0.317	0.096	3.338	0.000	Evident
Online customer reviews → Trust	0.270	0.274	0.100	2.685	0.004	Evident
Online customer ratings → Trust	0.328	0.327	0.098	3.348	0.000	Evident
Trust → Purchase intention	0.468	0.469	0.065	7.250	0.000	Evident

Source: Primary data treated (2025)

As reported by Table 7, the analysis of the direct influence hypothesis is described as follows. The findings show that OCR1 does not have a statistically direct influence on PI. The path coefficient value of 0.093, the t-statistical value of  $1.009 < 1.96$ , and the  $p$ -value of  $0.157 > 0.05$ , indicate that there was no direct influence statistically. Thus, the hypothesis that OCR1 positively impact on PI directly is unacceptable, so it can be concluded that online customer reviews do not have a direct influence on purchase intention. This shows that online reviews that customers give to products/sellers do not affect consumers' buying intent directly, but there is an influence of another factor, namely trust as a mediator.

OCR2 has been shown to show a positive and significant impact directly on PI, with the coefficient of 0.320 which means positive, the t-statistic  $3.338 > 1.96$ , and the  $p$ -value  $0.000 < 0.05$

means significant. These findings corroborate that online customer ratings positively and significantly increase consumer purchase intention, which supports this research hypothesis regarding the direct effect positively OCR2 on PI. Empirical findings show that OCR1 has a statistically significant positive effect on T, with the coefficient value of 0.270 which means positive, the t-value of  $2.685 > 1.96$ , and the *p*-value of  $0.004 < 0.05$  is statistically significant. This means that online customer reviews have a positive impact and significantly increase consumer trust directly, which supports this research hypothesis regarding the direct effect positive OCR1 on T.

The effect of OCR2 on T was directly proven to be positive and significant, with the path coefficient value of 0.328 positive, the t-value of  $3.348 > 1.96$ , and the *p*-value of  $0.000 < 0.05$  was statistically significant. This shows that online customer ratings positively and significantly increase consumer trust directly, which supports this research hypothesis regarding the positive direct effect of OCR2 on T. T has been displayed to have a significant positive direct effect on PI, with the coefficient of 0.468 which means positive, the t-statistic  $7.250 > 1.96$ , and the *p*-value  $0.000 < 0.05$ . These findings corroborate that trust positively and significantly increase consumer purchase intention directly, which supports this study's hypothesis regarding the direct influence positively of T on PI.

The outcomes of the indirect effects bootstrapping are displayed in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Bootstrapping outcomes of specific indirect effects

Path coefficients	Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T-statistics	P-value	Status
Online customer reviews → Trust → Purchase intention	0.126	0.129	0.051	2.463	0.007	Evident
Online customer ratings → Trust → Purchase intention	0.154	0.154	0.052	2.950	0.002	Evident

Source: Primary data treated (2025)

As shown in Table 8, it can be interpreted as follows. The findings of the analysis revealed that OCR1 had a statistically positive and significant indirect influence on PI mediated by T. This is evidenced by the coefficient value of 0.126, the t-statistics of  $2.463 > 1.96$ , and the *p*-value of  $0.007 < 0.05$ , indicating statistical significance, that the hypothesis was confirmed. These findings demonstrate that online customer reviews effectively enhance consumer trust, which consequently has an impact in increasing purchase intention. The analysis indicated that OCR2 had a positive and significant indirect effect on PI when mediated by T, with the coefficient value of 0.154, the t-statistics of  $2.950 > 1.96$ , and the *p*-value of  $0.002 < 0.05$ , confirming statistical significance, that the hypothesis was supported. These findings suggest that customer ratings effectively enhance consumer trust, which subsequently acts as essential component in enhancing purchasing intention.

## Discussion

The study's findings indicate that online customer reviews do not impact (a statistically significant direct effect) on consumers' intention to purchase smartphones at Shopee Indonesia's official store. This reveals that the appearance of online reviews alone do not necessarily translate into increased purchase intentions. Several factors explain no direct effect among this relationship. First, consumers have become increasingly skeptical of fake or biased reviews, which undermines the credibility of reviews as a direct determinant in purchase decisions. Second, for highly involvement products like smartphones, purchase choices tend to be more heavily impacted by trust in the brand and official store rather than reviews alone. Furthermore, reviews often function as a confirmatory tool rather than an initial decision factor. These results contrast with prior studies that demonstrated a significant positive direct effect of online reviews on purchase intentions. Nonetheless, this study supports earlier findings indicating that customer reviews have no significant direct impact on purchase intention but influence it indirectly through consumer trust. Research conducted on originote products on Shopee, involving management students at the State University of Medan, showed that reviews affected purchase intention only when mediated by trust, based on analysis using PLS and data from 150 respondents (Sitorus & Siregar, 2025). The discoveries made in this research prove that the credible the consumer reviews, the higher the desire

of consumers to buy smartphone products on official store Shopee, if bridged by another factor, namely consumer trust in this research context.

The findings of empirical data testing prove that online customer ratings directly have a significant positive influence on consumer purchase intention in smartphone product at the official store Shopee Indonesia. An increase in online customer ratings tends to directly enhance consumers' intention to make purchases. This discovery is corroborated by study executed by Ramadhani & Sanjaya (2021), Sa'diyah, 2024, Hermawan & Astuti (2024), and Adriyanto et al. (2023), all of which confirm that online customer ratings have a significant and positive influence on purchase intentions. Higher ratings are generally interpreted as signals of product reliability and seller credibility, consequently, boost consumer intent to purchase. The data obtained from this study prove that the higher rating, the more elevated the inclination of consumers to buy smartphone goods at official store Shopee.

In the context of Shopee Indonesia's official stores, the effect of online customer reviews on consumer trust is direct positive and significant. Higher quality reviews tend to elevate consumer trust more effectively. Online customer feedback is a critical element affecting the level of consumer trust, on the official store Shopee platform. Reviews serve as a valuable information source about products and sellers, helping consumers make more informed for online purchase decisions. This research findings prove that the more credible the reviews are, the higher consumer trust. This finding is sustained by the study of Ovaliana & Mahfudz (2022) that identified a significant influence online customer review on consumer trust.

The outcomes of this research suggest that online customer ratings have significantly and positively direct effect on consumer trust regarding smartphone products sold through Shopee Indonesia's official store. Higher star ratings are perceived as signals of superior product quality and service reliability from the seller. This study results prove that the higher the online ratings are, the better consumer trust. Conversely, lower customer ratings tend to diminish consumer trust in both the products and sellers. This aligns with Wahyudi et al. (2019), which assert that enhanced online ratings will enhance consumer trust in making purchasing decisions. Furthermore, a significant positive effect of online customer rating on consumer trust has confirmed with research of Rahman & Khasanah (2024).

Consumer trust has been confirmed to have a significant and positive direct effect on purchase intent, based on testing in this research. The necessity of trust in the transaction process, so that consumers have confidence that the products purchased will meet expectations and foster a safer shopping experience. This implies that the better consumer confidence, the more consumer purchase intention increases. This is aligned with the studies of Rohmatulloh & Sari (2021), Ramadhani & Sanjaya (2021), and Wibowo & Safitri (2022), which confirm that consumer trust directly positively and significantly impacts consumer purchase intentions. This research brings attention to the role of consumer trust as a primary driver of purchase intentions. Consumers tend to feel more confident and comfortable when consumers place strong trust in a product, brand, or seller, thereby increasing consumers' intent to buy.

Trust acts as a mediating position in the significant positive influence of online customer reviews on consumer purchase intention. Prior research demonstrates that the influence of online customer reviews on purchase intention is significantly transmitted through consumer trust. These results corroborate earlier studies by Rohmatulloh & Sari (2021), Mulyati & Gesitera (2020), and Tanuwijaya et al. (2023). Essentially, the more trustworthy the customer reviews are perceived to be, the better the consumer's trust in the product or seller, which subsequently enhances their intention to purchase smartphone products from Shopee Indonesia's official store.

The evidence gathered in this research shows that online customer reviews do not have a direct influence on purchase intention. However, there is an indirect influence through trust, which shows the occurrence of full mediation, which means trust acts as a mediator is an important component that bridges the effect of online customer reviews on purchase intention. The online customer review variable influences purchase intention entirely through a trust mediator, which means that once trust is integrated into the model, it indicates that the effect of online customer reviews is indirect that transmitted entirely through the consumer's trust level. This provides evidence that online reviews build trust, and trust in turn increases purchase intention, while the review's direct path to purchase intention is meaningless by including trust mediators in the model. Thus, consumer trust is the only causal mechanism among customer reviews and purchase intention in this model of research. This was found in a study of Mahmud et al. (2024), which shows that with trust as a mediating variable, the direct effect of e-WOM on purchase

intention weakens, bringing about full mediation, suggesting that e-WOM constructs consumer trust and affect consumer purchase intention. If consumer confidence increases, it will increase purchase intention, and vice versa. Therefore, companies need to implement strategies that build consumer trust, because if consumer confidence declines, this can impact the decreased purchase behavior of consumers.

The test findings showed that trust mediated online customer ratings had a significant positive effect on consumer purchase intention, that the greater the rating value, the higher consumer trust, which drove an increase in purchase intention. The evidence from this research corroborates the findings of Purnama et al. (2024) and Ramadhani & Sanjaya (2021), who revealed that customer ratings have a significant positive influence on purchase intention, with consumer trust performing as a factor of mediating. The findings of this research project confirm that the direct impact of online customer ratings on purchase intent is positive and significant, while the indirect effects mediated by trust are also significant, so trust serves as a partial mediator. Online customer ratings can sway purchase intent, either directly or indirectly through trust. This presents a detailed investigation of the mechanism of the relationship, so that marketing strategies can focus on improving online customer ratings, also considering the formation of increased trust to enhance consumer purchase intentions. The findings of this inquiry imply that online customer ratings are not only numerical value but also serve as an element that can increase consumer confidence, which serves a function in increasing consumers' willingness to purchase. It concludes that the impact of online ratings on purchase intent is partly mediated by trust, but the influence can be immediate, not entirely dependent on trust.

The indirect sway of online customer reviews on trust mediated purchase intent is full mediation, whereas the indirect effect of online customer ratings on trust-mediated purchase intent is partial mediation. These findings make the latest conclusions from this investigation, which are different from the results of Wibowo & Safitri (2022), that trust only partially mediates the influence of online reviews on purchase intent, because online reviews have a direct impact on purchase intent before the entry of trust as a mediator. In contrast, trust fully mediates the impact of customer ratings on purchase intent, as customer ratings indicate that there was no direct influence on purchase intent before trust mediation was applied.

Online customer reviews and ratings function as an essential component in fostering consumer trust when buying a smartphone through the official store Shopee Indonesia. Consumer actions are strongly shaped by the behavior and opinions of others based on the Theory of Social Influence. Credible reviews and high product ratings reflect normative influence, which means potential buyers align their choices with prevailing norms or majority preferences.

Reviews and ratings act as social cues that influence consumer perception in the purchase decision process. When potential buyers observe a lot of favorable disclosures and high ratings from previous customers, then consumers become more assured in the quality of the products and seller's services even without physical experience. In addition, consumer trust is also shaped by the influence of information, another aspect of Social Influence Theory, which occurs when individuals rely on insights from sources that are considered knowledgeable or experienced. Hints of official store labels and authentic user-generated content (photos or videos) from previous purchasers increase the perception that the information given is trustworthy. This minimizes perceived uncertainty and enhances customer confidence, especially when purchasing high involvement products such as smartphones digitally. These social signals include high ratings, reliable reviews, and official store verification enhance the building of consumer trust, which operates as a mediator among social influence and purchase intent, in decision process consumer purchases.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The study reveals that digital customer feedback, including reviews and ratings, drives the improvement of consumer trust, thereby impacting the intention to purchase smartphones from Shopee Indonesia's official store. This investigation delivers both theoretical enrichment and applied perspectives. Theoretically, it advances knowledge around digital marketing by contributing to a more nuanced perspective on consumer behavior in digital commerce landscape. The findings reinforce recognized theoretical frameworks and prior applied research. One of the key theoretical contributions is the validation and strengthening of Social Influence Theory amid the landscape of e-commerce. It

demonstrates that consumer-generated reviews and ratings function as concrete manifestations of social influence, shaping customers' trust toward both products and sellers in digital marketplaces. From a managerial perspective, the study suggests (1) fostering trust by ensuring transparency in product descriptions, implementing clear return policies, and providing expeditious handling of customer requests or grievances; and (2) showcasing credibility through official store labels, verified reviews, delivery speed guarantees, and assurances of product authenticity to reflect reliability and professionalism.

This research offers potential for further development by broadening its study scope, such as investigating product categories beyond smartphones or comparing consumer behavior across various e-commerce platforms. Future studies could also incorporate moderating variables like brand awareness, pricing factors, or the influence of digital personalities to achieve a more holistic understanding of online purchasing behavior. Moreover, researchers may adopt a dual-method approach to examine in greater depth the underlying consumer perceptions and motivations related to digital reviews and ratings that affect trust and consequently purchase intention.

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