

## **The Role of Online Customer Reviews and Brand Equity in Shaping Purchase Decisions: A Comprehensive Exploration of Purchase Intention as a Mediator**

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### **Abstract**

*Companies are required to compete fiercely to create and sustain consumer desires, as consumers are constantly looking for new things in the products and services they consume. The purpose of this study is to find out the role of online customer reviews and brand equity on purchase decisions mediated by purchase intent. This study uses a quantitative data analysis method using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Square (PLS) with the help of SmartPLS 3.0 software. Primary data was collected by distributing questionnaires to 160 consumers of the Erigo brand. Online customer reviews were found to have a positive impact on consumer purchase intentions but did not directly affect purchase decisions. Instead, brand equity emerges as an important factor, which positively influences purchase intentions and decisions. Furthermore, this study underlines the role of buying intention mediation in bridging the effects of online customer reviews and brand equity on actual purchase decision behavior.*

**Keywords:** online customer review, brand equity, purchase intention, purchase decision

### **INTRODUCTION**

Globalization and modernization continue to grow rapidly without being stopped in various parts of the world. This change has slowly but surely brought about a profound transformation in human life. The modern era presents various conveniences and technological advances through innovative products. In this situation, companies are required to compete intensively to create and maintain consumer interest, because consumers always want updates in the products and services they use (Ramadhan et al., 2023). One sector that shows rapid development is the fashion industry, especially in local clothing companies. People are now increasingly appreciating domestic products thanks to their quality that can match international brands. Innovations made by local industry players have even exceeded expectations, so the negative perception that local brands are unable to compete has begun to erode (Khafid, 2022). In fact, local brands can survive and compete by offering high quality at a more friendly price.

Erigo is one example of a local brand that still survives today. Erigo is an Indonesian fashion brand that presents a variety of clothing products, especially for travel needs and everyday casual style. The brand is synonymous with simple yet stylish and eye-catching designs. In the face of a highly competitive global market, maintaining existence is an important key for Erigo to continue to grow and survive.

Based on data from the research, there are six local brands that have successfully penetrated the international market. Among these brands, Erigo stands out as the most successful, even appearing at the New York Fashion Week with products that carry simple yet trendy and attractive styles. Erigo's success raises interesting questions regarding the factors that make consumers interested in buying their products, especially in the midst of their great achievements in the international arena. In terms of quality, Erigo has been the object of many researchers' studies and its product quality has been widely recognized (Ciu, 2024; Wijaya et al., 2024). However, scientific studies on Erigo's *brand equity* are still minimal, even though this aspect is a crucial element in marketing strategy.

*Brand equity* itself is an important marketing asset that can strengthen the relationship between brands and consumers and encourage long-term purchasing behavior (Thuy et al., 2022). According to Nguyen's research (2022), *brand equity* reflects the extent to which consumers' knowledge of a brand affects their response to the brand's marketing activities, especially when consumers have strong and positive associations with the brand. *Brand equity* consists of five main components, namely brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and pricing policy (Çifci et al., 2016). By understanding these elements, companies can strengthen marketing communications and open up greater opportunities. To increase *brand equity* and sales, strategies such as utilizing online customer reviews can be an effective approach. Brands can encourage consumers to leave reviews through incentives or by creating a satisfying customer experience (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004).

Online customer reviews are defined as product reviews provided by consumers and published through company websites or third-party platforms (Dwidienawati et al., 2020). The presence of these reviews is believed to reduce consumer uncertainty, increase satisfaction, and assist them in decision making. Research by Yan et al. (2016) mentioned that online reviews not only increase consumers' interest in visiting websites, but also extend the time they spend on them. In addition, reviews also play a role in building consumer trust in a product. A number of studies show that OCR has become one of the main references in the product or service selection process (Chatterjee et al., 2022; Rosario et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2019). However, according to Huseynov & Dhahak (2020), there are three main reasons why online reviews are not always fully informative: first, reviews can contain errors; second, there is a possibility that reviews are paid by companies; and third, differences in perception between consumers and reviewers make reviews not fully reflect the reality of the experience.

Purchase intention is defined as a consumer's behavioral tendency that reflects their likelihood to make a purchase based on certain beliefs and attitudes (Park et al.,

2023). The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) states that intentions to shop online are influenced by perceived control over behavior and subjective norms, which are attitudes from people around consumers. Lim et al. (2016) in their research explained that these two factors directly influence purchase intentions and ultimately lead to purchase actions. Therefore, exploration of purchase intention as a surrogate for actual behavior is very important. While intention has been shown to be a key predictor of buying behavior, many studies use purchase intention as a mediating variable between independent and dependent variables.

The description above shows a strong relationship between all the variables in this study. Based on researchers' observations, there are still few studies that investigate the relationship between online customer reviews and *brand equity* on purchasing decisions mediated by purchase intentions. This creates a research gap that this study aims to bridge, with a focus on the local brand Erigo. In addition, there are also inconsistencies in findings between studies, such as Huda's study (2022) which states that *brand equity* has no significant effect on purchase intention, inversely proportional to the research of Khan et al. (2024) and Rizwan et al. (2021) which showed a significant effect.

Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by examining the effect of *brand equity* and online customer reviews on purchasing decisions, with purchase intention as a mediating variable, especially for consumers who have purchased Erigo products. Therefore, this study is titled: *"The Role of Online Customer Reviews and Brand Equity in Shaping Purchasing Decisions: A Comprehensive Exploration of Purchase Intention as a Mediator"* (*The Role of Online Customer Reviews and Brand equity in Shaping Purchase Decisions: A Comprehensive Exploration of Purchase Intention as a Mediator*).

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research applies a quantitative approach as its main method. According to Creswell (2014), the quantitative approach is a research method based on the positivism paradigm, used to examine certain populations or samples, collect data through research instruments, and analyze data quantitatively or statistically with the aim of testing hypotheses that have been formulated. In determining the sample, this study used *purposive sampling* technique. This technique is a sample selection method based on certain criteria or considerations (Cochran, 2022). The *purposive sampling* technique was chosen because not all members of the population meet the criteria needed in the study. Therefore, the researcher sets a number of criteria that must be met by respondents, namely consumers who have purchased products from the local brand Erigo.

The types of data used in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through distributing questionnaires using Google Form, which were addressed to consumers who had experience buying Erigo products. The measurement instrument in this questionnaire uses a Likert scale, which is a measurement scale used to assess the attitudes, views, and perceptions of individuals or groups towards a social phenomenon. In this scale, respondents are asked to express their level of agreement with

various statements by marking the appropriate options, such as checking or marking. The questionnaire consists of a number of statements that reflect the research indicators. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from various references, including printed and digital books, previous scientific journal articles, and relevant literature reviews (Hair et al., 2019).

The population in this study includes online shopping customers who have purchased products from local brand Erigo. The exact number of this population is unknown as Erigo's consumers continue to grow over time. Therefore, to determine the sample size, the researcher used the formula from Hair, which states that the minimum number of samples should be five to ten times the number of indicators of the variable used. With 32 indicators, the minimum number of samples in this study was 160 respondents.

To test the theoretical model developed, this study used SmartPLS 3 software. The analysis includes construct validity testing, which includes convergent and discriminant validity, as well as reliability testing to assess the internal consistency of the construct. In addition, *bootstrapping* testing was also carried out to obtain test results for each of the hypotheses that have been determined.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Data Analysis Results

#### 1. Convergent Validity Test

Table. 2 Outer Loading

	Online Customer Review	Brand Equity	Purchase Intention	Purchase Decision
OCR1	0.631			
OCR2	0.776			
OCR3	0.546			
OCR4	0.857			
OCR5	0.817			
OCR6	0.763			
OCR7	0.772			
BE1		0.546		
BE2		0.861		
BE3		0.817		
BE4		0.745		
BE5		0.714		
BE6		0.848		
BE7		0.830		
PI1			0.666	
PI2			0.853	
PI3			0.871	
PI4			0.844	
PI5			0.892	
PI6			0.865	

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PI7	0.827
PI8	0.777
PD1	0.515
PD2	0.838
PD3	0.834
PD4	0.700
PD5	0.672
PD6	0.846
PD7	0.869
PD8	0.820
PD9	0.900
PD10	0.833

Source: Data processed

Assessment of the validity of indicators is done by referring to the *outer loading* value. Indicators are said to be valid if the *outer loading* value exceeds 0.7. However, in the context of a model that is still at the development stage, indicators with a *loading factor* value between 0.5 to 0.6 are still acceptable (Ghozali, 2014). Meanwhile, indicators that have a value below 0.5 should be eliminated from the model (Chin, 1988). Based on Table 2, all *loading factor* values displayed are above 0.5, so it can be concluded that all indicators have met the validity requirements and are suitable for use in the next stage of analysis. Visualization of the structural model is shown in the following figure.

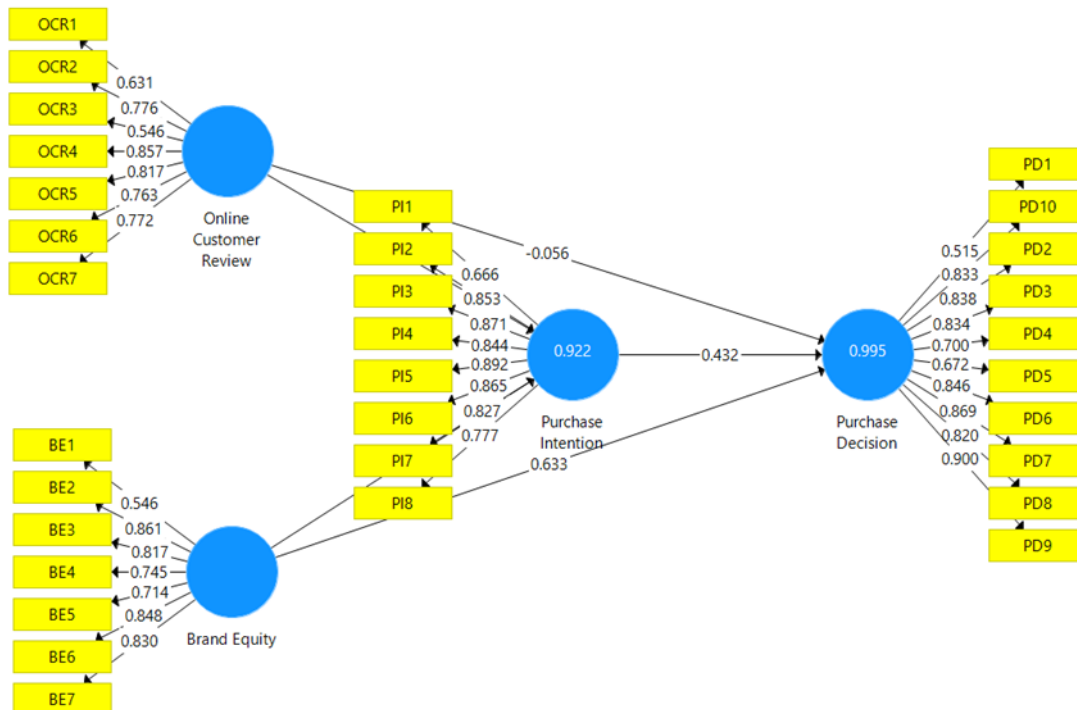


Figure 2. Outer Model Testing Results

## 2. Reliability Test Results

Reliability testing of indicator blocks that reflect constructs is carried out through several stages of testing. In this study, composite reliability is used as the main reference for assessing the level of reliability, with an acceptable threshold value of above 0.7. In addition, construct reliability can also be shown through the Cronbach's alpha value of the related indicator group. A construct is said to have good reliability if its Cronbach's alpha value exceeds 0.7 (Sarstedt, 2017). Table 3 below presents the loading value of each research variable construct obtained through data processing using SmartPLS software.

**Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity**

	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>	<b>(AVE)</b>
Online Customer Review	0.864	0.895	0.554
Brand Equity	0.884	0.911	0.597
Purchase Intention	0.933	0.945	0.684
Purchase Decision	0.930	0.942	0.625

Source: Data processed

An *Average Variance Extracted* (AVE) value that exceeds 0.5 is considered adequate to demonstrate the validity of a reflective construct. Conversely, if the AVE value is below 0.4, then the construct needs to be removed from the model (Hair, 2014). This assessment is important to ensure that each variable meets the established validity standards. Based on Table 3, all variables analyzed have an AVE value above 0.5, which means that each variable in this study has met the discriminant validity requirements. Therefore, it can be concluded that all constructs used have also met the reliability criteria previously described.

## 3. R-Square Inner Model

R-square is an indicator used to measure the extent to which exogenous variables are able to explain endogenous variables. Based on the opinion of Chin, Peterson, and Brown (2008), the R-square value is classified into three levels. If the value is below 0.33, it indicates a weak relationship between exogenous and endogenous variables. A value of 0.33 indicates a moderate level of relationship, while a value above 0.67 indicates that the relationship is strong.

**Table 4. R-Square**

	<b>R Square</b>	<b>R Square Adjusted</b>
Purchase Decision	0.995	0.995
Purchase Intention	0.922	0.921

Source: Data processed

The table above shows that both the purchase intention and purchase decision variables are successfully explained significantly by the model, which indicates that the model has a relevant contribution in describing the factors that influence these two variables.

#### 4. Hypothesis Testing Results

According to Hair (2014), analysis of the coefficients in the structural model is used to test hypotheses by evaluating the extent to which the relationship between variables is significant. In this study, hypothesis testing was carried out by paying attention to the *T-statistic* value and *P-value*. A hypothesis is considered accepted if the *T-statistic* value exceeds 1.96 and the *P-value* is below 0.05. The following table presents the results of *Path Coefficients* which describe the direct influence between the variables studied.

Table 5. Test Result

Hypothesis	Relationship	Coefficient	T Statistics	P Values	Information
<b>Direct Effect Test Result</b>					
H1	Online Customer review > Purchase Intention	0.563	6.084	0.000	Supported
H2	Brand equity -> Purchase Intention	0.406	4.326	0.000	Supported
H3	Online Customer review - > Purchase Decision	0.056	1.928	0.054	Not Supported
H4	Brand equity -> Purchase Decision	0.633	20.266	0.000	Supported
H5	Purchase Intention -> Purchase Decision	0.432	18.825	0.000	Supported
<b>Indirect Effect</b>					
H6	Online Customer review - > Purchase Intention -> Purchase Decision	0.243	5.535	0.000	Supported
H7	Brand equity -> Purchase Intention -> Purchase Decision	0.175	4.310	0.000	Supported

Source: Data processed

#### Discussion

##### Effect of Online Customer review on Purchase Intention

The findings in this study indicate that the first hypothesis is proven significant, where *online customer reviews* (OCR) have a real influence on *purchase intention* for the Erigo brand. This can be seen from the *T-statistic* value of 6.084 which exceeds the minimum limit of 1.96, as well as the *p-value* of 0.000 which is smaller than 0.05. These results indicate that when consumers read positive reviews, their level of trust in the product and seller increases, thus strengthening the intention to make a purchase. OCR is

considered an important tool for businesses and consumers in obtaining relevant information about products or services based on previous user experience. This finding is in line with research conducted by Huseynov & Dhahak (2020) and Loindong et al. (2024), which state that online customer reviews have a significant influence on purchase intention. Most consumers tend to read reviews before making a purchase decision, because these reviews provide an overview of the advantages and disadvantages of a product or service, thus helping potential buyers make more informed decisions (Tonda et al., 2024). In other words, previous consumer experience can be a useful source of perception as an alternative to direct experience-based marketing strategies (Faridi et al., 2025).

### **The influence of *Brand equity* on *Purchase Intention***

Based on the findings of this study, the second hypothesis shows significant results, namely *brand equity* has a significant influence on *purchase intention* for the Erigo brand. This is evidenced by the *T-statistic* value of 4.326 which exceeds the threshold of 1.96, as well as a *p-value* of 0.000 which is below 0.05. These results indicate that the Erigo brand is able to create strong brand awareness because it has succeeded in embedding high brand memory in the minds of consumers. The positive reputation and performance owned by the Erigo brand is also felt directly by consumers, forming positive perceptions of quality and ultimately driving purchase intentions. Therefore, *brand equity* is proven to have a positive and significant influence on consumer purchase intention. This finding is in line with the results of research by Husain et al. (2022), Mada (2021), and Majeed et al. (2021), which state that the value of a brand is able to foster trust among consumers. When consumers have confidence in the value of a brand, it tends to create a desire to purchase products (Mustofa et al., 2024).

### **Effect of Online *Customer review* on *Purchase Decision***

The results showed that the third hypothesis was not significantly supported. Online *customer reviews* do not have a significant influence on purchasing decisions for Erigo brand products. This is indicated by the *T-statistic* value of 1.928 which is below the minimum limit of 1.96, as well as a *p-value* of 0.054 which exceeds the 0.05 significance limit. This finding indicates that although online reviews can provide additional information, their influence on purchasing decisions is limited. Several factors are thought to be the cause of this weak influence, such as consumer uncertainty about the authenticity of reviews, potential bias due to incentives, or the existence of reviews that are too extreme to cause distrust (Hong et al., 2017). This result is also reinforced by previous studies that show that in some cases, consumers are more influenced by other aspects such as price and product quality than online reviews (Kang et al., 2022). In addition, consumers who already have previous experience with a product or service tend not to pay attention to online reviews in making purchasing decisions (Karimi et al., 2015). Thus, it can be concluded that online *customer reviews* do not have a significant



influence on purchasing decisions because they are influenced by certain limitations and there are other variables that are more dominant in influencing consumer decisions.

#### **The influence of *Brand equity* on *Purchase Decision***

The findings of this study indicate that the fourth hypothesis is significantly supported. *Brand equity* is proven to have a significant influence on purchasing decisions for Erigo brand products. This is reflected in the *T-statistic* value of 20.266 which far exceeds the threshold of 1.96, as well as a *p-value* of 0.000 which is smaller than 0.05. These results indicate that consumers who have a positive perception of brand equity tend to prefer products or services from that brand in the purchasing decision-making process. *Brand equity* plays a role in building customer trust and loyalty, which in turn increases the tendency of consumers to make repeated and consistent purchases. Conversely, positive purchasing decisions can also strengthen *brand equity* through satisfying customer experiences. This finding is in line with the results of previous research by Mahesti et al. (2024) and Prajapati (2017), which underline the importance of *brand equity* in shaping consumer decisions.

#### **Effect of *Purchase Intention* on *Purchase Decision***

The results of this study confirm that the fifth hypothesis is significant. Purchase intention has a significant influence on consumer purchase decisions for the Erigo brand. Empirical evidence is shown through a *T-statistic* value of 18.825, which is greater than the threshold of 1.96, as well as a *p-value* of 0.000 which shows statistical significance because it is below 0.05. This finding strengthens the premise that the higher the consumer's intention or desire to buy a product, the more likely the purchase decision will occur. Within the framework of the *Theory of Planned Behavior* proposed by Bosnjak et al. (2020), purchase intention is the main predictor of actual purchase behavior. Several previous studies also support this relationship; Yoo et al. (2021) found that purchase intention has a positive influence on purchase decisions in fashion products, while Stansyah (2023) identified a similar influence in the context of online purchases of food products.

#### **The influence of *Online Customer review* on *Purchase Decision* mediated by *Purchase Intention***

The findings of this study indicate that the sixth hypothesis is proven to be significant. *Online customer reviews* have a significant influence on purchasing decisions mediated by purchase intention for the Erigo brand. This is indicated by a *T-statistic* value of 5.535, which is higher than the threshold of 1.96, and a *p-value* of 0.000 which is below 0.05, meaning that the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that consumer reviews play a role in shaping purchase decisions indirectly through increasing purchase intentions. In other words, reviews from previous customers are an important consideration factor for prospective buyers in making product purchase

decisions (Waluyo, 2022). This result is in line with the findings of Pratiwi et al. (2023) which state that online reviews and ratings are an important element in influencing online purchasing decisions. The existence of online *customer reviews* can increase consumer confidence, form positive attitudes and behaviors, and strengthen the intention to make purchases through online platforms.

### **The effect of *Brand equity* on *Purchase Decision* mediated by *Purchase Intention***

The results of this study support the seventh hypothesis which shows a significant effect. *Brand equity* significantly influences purchasing decisions with the mediating role of purchase intention for the Erigo brand. This is indicated by a *T-statistic* value of 4.310, which exceeds the threshold of 1.96, and a *p-value* of 0.000 which shows significance below 0.05. Based on previous studies, it can be concluded that *brand equity* makes a positive contribution to purchasing decisions through purchase intention as an intermediary variable. In other words, the higher consumers' perceptions of brand equity, the greater their tendency to have purchase intentions, which in turn increases the probability of making purchasing decisions. This finding is in line with research conducted by Sultan et al. (2020), which shows that *brand equity* affects purchase intention, as well as research by Büyükdağ (2021), which states that purchase intention is a strong indicator in determining purchasing decisions. Therefore, it can be concluded that *brand equity* plays an important role in the formation of purchase decisions, with purchase intention as a mediating path. In marketing practice, understanding this mediating role allows companies to strategize more optimally in building *brand equity* to drive consumer purchasing decisions.

## **CONCLUSION**

Overall, this study confirms the important role of *online customer reviews* and *brand equity* in shaping consumers' purchase decision behavior towards a local brand, Erigo. The findings show that online customer reviews have a positive influence on purchase intentions, but do not show a direct influence on purchase decisions. On the other hand, *brand equity* was shown to significantly influence both consumer purchase intentions and decisions. In addition, the results highlight the mediating role of *purchase intention* in linking the influence of *online customer reviews* and *brand equity* on actual purchase decisions. The implications of these results provide practical contributions for

marketing players, especially in formulating strategies aimed at strengthening local brand image through effective management of customer perceptions and experiences.

As a note for future research, it is recommended that this research be further developed by adding other variables that have the potential to influence purchase intention and purchase decisions. In addition, the scope of research subjects can be expanded and the use of more diverse theories will enrich the conceptual studies used. Researchers are also encouraged to explore different data analysis approaches to provide a more comprehensive methodological perspective, as well as support the development of knowledge in the field of marketing management.

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