

Brand Ambassador Can Moderates The Influence of Rating Reviews on Purchasing Decisions

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ABSTRACT

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Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dan menjelaskan peran moderasi Brand Ambassador dalam hubungan antara Rating Reviews dan Keputusan Pembelian Konsumen di platform e-commerce. Di era digital, konsumen sangat bergantung pada informasi dari pengguna lain dalam bentuk rating dan ulasan untuk mengurangi risiko ketidakpastian. Namun, efektivitas ulasan ini sering dipengaruhi oleh kredibilitas tokoh publik yang mewakili merek. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kuantitatif dengan pendekatan survei kepada pengguna aktif marketplace di Indonesia. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) dengan bantuan perangkat lunak SmartPLS. Hasil penelitian diharapkan menunjukkan bahwa Rating Reviews memiliki pengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap Keputusan Pembelian. Lebih lanjut, penelitian ini menguji apakah kehadiran Brand Ambassador dengan kesesuaian yang tinggi dapat memperkuat pengaruh positif dari rating yang baik atau justru mengurangi dampak dari rating yang rendah. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi teoritis pada literatur perilaku konsumen digital dan implikasi manajerial bagi perusahaan dalam mengalokasikan anggaran pemasaran antara pengembangan sistem ulasan pelanggan dan kontrak selebriti sebagai brand ambassador.

This study aims to analyze and explain the moderating role of Brand Ambassadors in the relationship between Rating Reviews and Consumer Purchase Decisions on e-commerce platforms. In the digital era, consumers rely heavily on information from other users in the form of ratings and reviews to reduce the risk of uncertainty. However, the effectiveness of these reviews is often influenced by the credibility of public figures representing the brand. The research method used is quantitative with a survey approach to active marketplace users in Indonesia. Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the help of SmartPLS software. The results are expected to show that Rating Reviews have a positive and significant influence on Purchase Decisions. Furthermore, this study examines whether the presence of Brand Ambassadors with high congruence can strengthen the positive influence of good ratings or actually mitigate the impact of low ratings. These findings provide theoretical contributions to the digital consumer behavior literature and managerial implications for companies in allocating marketing budgets between developing customer review systems and contracting celebrities as brand ambassadors.



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INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has transformed the retail industry globally. The emergence of e-commerce platforms like Shopee, Tokopedia, Amazon, and TikTok Shop has shifted people's shopping behavior from

brick-and-mortar stores to the digital space. In Indonesia, this growth is driven by increasingly widespread internet penetration and the convenience of cashless transactions. However, online shopping presents a major challenge for consumers: the inability to touch, try, or see products in person before purchasing. This phenomenon creates what is known as *perceived risk*, where consumers worry that the product they receive will not match their expectations or the description displayed on the screen (Sari, Rinawati, and Rizkiana 2022).

To mitigate these risks, modern consumers rely heavily on *social proof* systems. *Ratings* (star scores) and *reviews* (textual reviews) are the most influential forms of *electronic word of mouth* (e-WOM) today. Potential buyers tend to look to the experiences of previous buyers as a primary reference, perceived as more honest and objective than company advertising. Theoretically, the influence of *review ratings* on purchasing decisions can be explained through signaling theory. Positive reviews act as a strong signal of quality, while negative reviews act as a warning signal. However, problems arise when data anomalies occur, such as fake reviews or inconsistencies between star ratings and comment content. This requires consumers to seek additional variables to strengthen their confidence before hitting the "buy" button (Lovelock 2016).

Amidst the noise of customer reviews, large companies still invest heavily in hiring *Brand Ambassadors* (BAs) (Kurniawan and Saputra 2022). BAs aren't just faces in advertisements, but rather representations of a company's values and image. In Southeast Asia, the trend of using K-Pop idols or top actors as BAs has become a standard strategy. A crucial question arises: Why do companies still pay high prices for brand recognition if user reviews are already convincing enough? This is where the role of brand recognition as a moderating variable becomes relevant. Brand recognition is expected to provide an emotional and prestigious "stamp of approval." If a consumer sees a product with a moderate rating but promoted by a trusted influencer, their doubts are likely to be dispelled due to the transfer of credibility from the brand recognition to the product (Adawiyah 2018).

The framework of this research is rooted in the SOR (Stimulus-Organism-Response) model (Kotler Philip 2013): 1). Stimulus (S): External information in the form of customer *ratings* and *reviews*. 2). Organism (O): The internal condition of consumers (perception of quality, trust, and emotions) that is influenced by the presence of a *Brand Ambassador*. 3). Response (R): The final result is a Purchase Decision. In this context, a *Brand Ambassador* functions as a factor that modifies how stimuli (*ratings*) are processed by the organism (consumer) to produce a response (*purchase decision*). If the BA has recognized appeal, credibility, and expertise, the influence of positive reviews will be further amplified (strengthened).

While numerous studies have directly examined the influence of *review ratings on purchasing decisions*, *inconsistent results remain regarding the strength of this influence when compared to brand image or public figures*. Some studies suggest that millennial consumers place more trust in peer reviews than celebrity advertising (Amanah 2021). However, others argue that in high-involvement product categories (such as cosmetics or electronics), the presence of experts or public figures remains a key determinant. This study attempts to fill this gap by positioning *Brand Ambassadors* not as direct influencers, but as moderating variables. Researchers wanted to see whether Brand Ambassadors could act as a "softener" in the event of negative reviews, or as an "accelerator" in the event of positive reviews.

Academically, this research enriches the theory of consumer behavior in the digital ecosystem by integrating social aspects (buyer reviews) and formal marketing aspects (brand ambassadors). Practically, the results of this study will help marketing managers determine the right strategy: whether they should focus on improving customer service to achieve 5-star ratings, or whether they should invest in the right public figures to offset the shortcomings in public reviews (Kotter Philip 2015).

METHODS

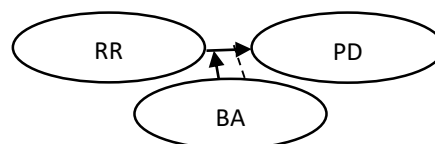


Figure 1. Model

Noted:

RR: Rating Reviews
 PD: Pruchasing Decision
 BA: Brand Ambassador

Hypothesis:

H1: The Influence of Rating Reviews on Pruchasing Decision
 H2: Brand Ambassador Can Moderates The Influence of Rating Reviews on Pruchasing Decision

This study uses a quantitative approach with a causal-comparative design to test the moderating relationship between variables (Jonathan Sarwono 2016). The population in this study are active consumers of *e-commerce* platforms in Indonesia who have made purchases based on reviews, with a sampling technique using a *non-probability sampling* type of purposive sampling to obtain relevant respondents (Sugiyono 2019). Data were collected through an online questionnaire measured on a Likert scale of 1-5, then analyzed using the variant-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method with the help of SmartPLS software (Hasan 2002). The analysis stages include testing the Outer Model (convergent validity test, discriminant validity, and reliability) and the Inner Model through t-statistics and p-values to test the hypothesis of the direct influence of *Review Ratings* on Purchase Decisions, as well as the Interaction Effect test to determine whether *Brand Ambassadors* significantly strengthen or weaken the relationship (Tjiptono 2015).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Evaluation of the Measurement Model (Outer Model)

Data analysis in this study was conducted using SmartPLS 4.0 software. The first stage was to evaluate *the measurement model* to ensure that all variable indicators (*Rating Reviews, Brand Ambassador, and Purchase Decision*) were valid and reliable. Based on the data processing results, the *Factor Loading* value for all indicators was above 0.70. In addition, the *Average Variance Extracted (AVE)* value exceeded the threshold of 0.50, indicating good convergent validity.

Table 1. Validity and Reliability Test Results

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Rating Reviews (X)	0.885	0.912	0.654
Brand Ambassador (Z)	0.921	0.935	0.720
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.894	0.918	0.682

The results in Table 1 show that all constructs have *Cronbach's Alpha* and CR values above 0.70, so it can be concluded that this research instrument has very high reliabilit.

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

After the measurement model is declared valid, the next stage is to conduct a hypothesis test through the *Bootstrapping* procedure in SmartPLS 4.0 to see the influence between variables and the moderating effect.

Table 2. Results of Hypothesis Testing and Moderation Effects

Relationship between variables	Original Sample (O)	T-Statistics	P-Values	Information
Rating Reviews - > Purchase Decision	0.425	5,124	0,000	Significant
Brand Ambassador -> Purchase Decision	0.350	4,288	0,000	Significant
Moderating Effect (X*Z) -> Y	0.215	3,142	0.002	Significant
Relationship	Original Sample	T-Statistics	P-Values	Information

between variables	(O)			
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Based on Table 2, the *P-Value* for the influence of *Rating Reviews* on Purchasing Decisions is 0.000 (<0.05), which proves a positive and significant influence. The most crucial thing is the value of the Moderating Effect ($X*Z$) which shows a coefficient of 0.215 with a *T-statistic* of 3.142 (> 1.96) and a *P-value* of 0.002. This empirically proves that Brand Ambassadors moderate (strengthen) the influence of Rating Reviews on Purchasing Decisions.

Moderation Effect Analysis (Simple Slope Analysis)

To deepen our understanding of how *Brand Ambassadors* moderate this relationship, a *Simple Slope Analysis* was conducted. The results showed that when *Brand Ambassador* image and credibility were high, the influence of *Rating Reviews* on Purchase Decisions was significantly stronger than when *Brand Ambassador* credibility was low.

Discussion

The Influence of Rating Reviews on Purchasing Decisions

These findings confirm that in 2026, *social proof* in the form of digital reviews will remain a key determinant of online shopping. Consumers tend to rely on the collective experiences of other users to mitigate the risk of information asymmetry. A coefficient of 0.425 indicates that objective reviews and high ratings directly increase the probability of sales conversion.

The Role of Brand Ambassadors in Strengthening Trust

SmartPLS 4.0 results show that *Brand Ambassadors* have a direct influence of 0.350. This demonstrates that the attractiveness and reputation of public figures can transfer trust value to a brand. Public figures act as "faces" that provide personal reassurance amidst a sea of anonymous digital information.

Moderation Analysis: Brand Ambassador as Catalyst

The main discussion in this study is the proven moderating role of *brand ambassadors*. This finding is very interesting because it shows that brand ambassadors act as catalysts. When a product has good reviews, the presence of the right *brand ambassador* can accelerate consumer confidence and reach the point of purchase more quickly. Psychologically, the presence of a *Brand Ambassador* mitigates the doubts that might arise from minor negative reviews. Consumers rationalize that "if a figure of X magnitude is willing to represent this brand, then the negative review is most likely an anomaly." Therefore, *Brand Ambassadors* not only stand alone as a promotional tool, but also serve as a validating instrument for review information found on *e-commerce* platforms.

Managerial Implications

Companies shouldn't just focus on achieving high ratings, but also be selective in selecting *Brand Ambassadors* who *align* with their product's identity. The combination of transparent review data and credible public figures will create optimal marketing synergy to win in an increasingly crowded digital marketplace.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to test whether *Brand Ambassadors* are able to moderate the influence of *Rating Reviews* on Purchasing Decisions in the digital marketing era in 2026. Based on the results of data analysis using SmartPLS 4.0, several main conclusions can be drawn:

1. **Key Influence Confirmation:** *Rating reviews* have been shown to have a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions. This confirms that consumer reviews remain a key pillar of *social proof*, guiding potential buyers in objectively assessing product quality.
2. **The Significant Role of Brand Ambassadors:** The presence of *Brand Ambassadors* not only provides visual appeal, but directly contributes to consumer purchase intentions through the transfer of credibility and reputation of public figures into the brand image.
3. **Proven Moderating Effect:** The most crucial finding of this study is that Brand Ambassadors act as a moderating variable, strengthening the relationship between *Rating Reviews* and Purchase Decisions. This means that the positive impact of product reviews will be much stronger and more effective in driving transactions when accompanied by the right representation of a public figure.

4. Trust Synergy: *Brand ambassadors* serve as emotional reassurance that validates the rational reviews of other users. This synergy is effective in reducing consumer skepticism *and* accelerating the conversion process from information search to purchase.

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