



## ANALYZING THE ROLE OF APPAREL E-RETAILER'S BRAND REPUTATION IN MODERATING THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH

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### Article Information    Abstract

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This study aims to explore how social media marketing (SMM) and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) influence consumers' online purchase intentions, considering the mediating role of conviction and the moderating role of e-retailer apparel brand reputation. Using a quantitative approach, the study collected primary data through a questionnaire distributed to 300 respondents familiar with the Erigo brand, employing random sampling. Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with Smart PLS software. The findings reveal that SMM significantly impacts conviction, while eWOM shows a positive but insignificant effect. Conviction has a positive but insignificant impact on online purchase intention (OPI), though it mediates the effect of SMM on OPI. However, conviction does not significantly mediate the relationship between eWOM and OPI. SMM and eWOM have direct significant effects on OPI, with brand reputation moderating the influence of SMM and eWOM on OPI through conviction. This research offers valuable insights for decision-makers, particularly in leveraging social media marketing and eWOM strategies to optimize business effectiveness and efficiency. Startup companies in the digital industry can benefit from these strategies by considering conviction and brand reputation as critical factors. Limitations include the relatively small respondent pool of 300 and the need for broader population analysis and deeper exploration of blue ocean strategies for startups.

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### INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, social media marketing has become one of the main strategies for companies in the online apparel e-retail sector to expand their market reach effectively and efficiently. Social media marketing not only allows companies to interact directly with consumers but also plays an important role in creating a more personal and accessible brand experience (Kaur et al., 2022). In addition to social media marketing, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), which is reviews or recommendations shared by users on various digital platforms, also significantly influences consumer perceptions and purchase intentions. Various studies have shown

that positive eWOM can increase consumer trust and strengthen their perceptions of certain brands and products (Kang & Johnson, 2021).

Although social media marketing and eWOM play a major role, their influence on online purchase intention is not always direct, but can be mediated by consumer conviction or belief in a product. This conviction serves as a bridge that strengthens the influence of social media marketing and eWOM on online purchase intentions, because consumers who have high confidence in a product or brand tend to have stronger purchase intentions (Peters & Dennis, 2023). Thus, the influence of social media marketing and eWOM on purchase intention is

not only seen from the functional or informational side, but also from the psychological side through the level of consumer confidence.

In addition, moderating factors such as brand reputation of apparel e-retailers play an important role in strengthening the relationship between social media marketing, eWOM, conviction, and online purchase intention (Park & Lee, 2022). A good brand reputation not only increases the level of consumer trust in the products or services offered but also strengthens the impact of digital marketing on consumer conviction. Consumers tend to be more confident in buying from apparel e-retailers that have a good reputation, because this reputation provides a sense of security and increases the brand value in their eyes (Kim & Ko, 2021). In other words, a strong brand reputation can act as a catalyst that strengthens the influence of social media marketing and eWOM through conviction in forming purchase intention.

This study aims to explore more deeply how social media marketing and eWOM influence consumers' online purchase intention, by considering the mediating role of conviction and the moderation of apparel e-retailer brand reputation. This research is expected to provide practical contributions for online clothing industry players in designing more effective marketing strategies, especially through good brand reputation management and increasing consumer confidence in products, so as to maximize consumer purchasing intentions in an increasingly competitive market.

## HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Social media marketing (SMM) is a marketing strategy that utilizes online social networking platforms to achieve communication goals (Alves et al., 2016; Liao and Hsu, 2019). The goal is to create and distribute content that increases brand visibility and attracts new consumers (Chan and Guillet, 2011; Cheung and Rosenberger, 2020). In their study, Kim and Ko (2012) examined the effect of social media marketing (SMM) on consumers' tendency to purchase premium fashion company products. Based on their research, entertainment and interaction were identified as the two most influential SMM variables. Similarly, Gautam and Sharma (2017) used a similar methodology to examine the effect of customer relationships as a mediating factor on the relationship between social media marketing (SMM) and purchase intention. Their findings showed entertainment and interaction as important indicators of SMM variables. It refers to a collection of communications directed at consumers and aims to provide them with a certain level of enjoyment (Bates and Ferri, 2010).

The concept of entertainment greatly enhances the way consumers perceive value (Gallarza and Saura, 2006; Song et al., 2015). Interaction refers to the user's ability to manage the flow of online information (Jiang et al., 2010; Kim and Ko, 2010; Kirk et al., 2015; Yang and Shen, 2018). An in-depth analysis of interactions on social media between companies and consumers can increase consumers' purchase intentions for certain services or goods (Gallarza and Saura, 2006; Hutter et al., 2013; Jiang et al., 2010; Yen, 2014; Young Kim and Kim, 2004).

### **H1: The better the quality of Social Media Marketing, the higher the Online Purchase Intention**

Koubova & Buchko (2017) highlighted that EWOM has a significant effect on brand attitudes and purchasing power of consumers who use online media towards a product. The positive impact of EWOM created by users has a major contribution in increasing the desire to buy. Social media, as an electronic word of mouth communication channel, functions as a platform for sharing product information and direct reviews from consumers regarding the products they use.

### **H2: The better the quality of Electronic Word of Mouth, the higher the Online Purchase Intention**

Social media platforms empower users to easily share and produce content on specific topics (Hartanto & Nielsen, 2011:2). According to Silalahi (2013), these platforms have the potential to revolutionize the way audiences communicate and exchange information, allowing them to participate in discussions, articulate their thoughts, and share experiences related to specific subjects. Common features found on all social networking platforms include homepages, comment sections, news feeds, user profiles, "hashtag" functions, content sharing, likes, mentions, and location tagging. For Instagram users, it can be a source of inspiration to improve the overall user experience. Social media is one of the best ways to promote goods or brands because it offers various features that can increase consumer confidence in the brand. Marketing through social media provides a more effective opportunity for businesses to introduce brand names and increase brand confidence (ElAydi, 2018).

Photos and videos are social media features that can increase brand trust by giving consumers a visual display of the product or brand, grabbing their attention, and making it easier for them to remember the brand. Hashtags can also increase brand trust, making content more discoverable to social media users and increasing the visibility of

the product or brand on the platform. Another feature that can increase brand trust is interaction; it allows the product or brand to interact directly with potential customers, forming a positive relationship that lasts.

A person's trust develops over time through consistent trust. Thus, this can help overcome the problem of online trust recovery. That is, as online trust strengthens, the risk of trust violations decreases. Security and reliability are very important in relationships in the digital world (Mew & Millan, 2021). The trust that a person has can turn into a stronger belief (Prasad et al., 2019). Trust, which means the development of trust that continues over time, serves as a mediator between social media marketing and purchase intention.

### **H3: The better the quality of Social Media Marketing, the higher the Conviction**

Brand recognition development occurs when customers have knowledge, memory, and familiarity with a particular brand (Keller, 1993). Manufacturers need to set a special budget for marketing communications. Consistent implementation of EWOM can effectively increase confidence. In other studies conducted by Lugi and Azis (2015) and Wicak and Semi (2016), the results obtained showed that EWOM has a significant influence on brand confidence. Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold (2011) proposed that EWOM is one of the important components in an online marketing strategy that has a positive impact on increasing brand confidence and consumer purchasing behavior. A study by Sandes and Urdan (2013) found that positive and negative internet reviews may have an impact on brand perception. Consumers use social media as a means to express and promote a brand. Consumers have a direct role in shaping and enhancing brand value as a collective entity (Jansen et al., 2009; Hanna et al., 2011).

### **H4: The better the quality of Electronic Word of Mouth, the higher the Conviction**

In today's digital era, Social Media Marketing (SMM) is one of the important tools for companies to reach consumers and influence their decisions in shopping online. Kaplan and Haenlein (2019) explain that marketing through social media can help create closeness between brands and consumers, thereby encouraging interest in making purchases. In addition, Dwivedi et al. (2020) also added that an effective social media marketing strategy can have a major influence on consumer behavior, especially when they shop on e-commerce platforms. However, the impact of SMM on online purchasing

intentions does not always stand alone, because it is influenced by other factors, such as brand reputation. According to Keller (2021), a strong brand reputation can increase consumer trust and strengthen the influence of SMM on purchasing intentions. Research conducted by Li and Laroche (2023) also shows that a good brand reputation can strengthen the relationship between marketing activities on social media and consumer interest in making purchases.

Based on this, the hypothesis that can be formulated is: "Brand reputation of apparel e-retailers plays a positive role in moderating the relationship between Social Media Marketing and online purchase intention." This means that when a brand has a good reputation, marketing activities on social media will be more effective in encouraging consumers to buy. Chaffey (2022) emphasized that consumer reputation and trust in a brand can strengthen the impact of digital marketing on consumer decisions to buy products online.

### **H5: The better the quality of the Apparel-retailer's brand reputation, the more it will increase Social Media Marketing and Online Purchase Intention**

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) has become one of the key factors influencing consumer decisions in online shopping. According to Chen and Xie (2020), eWOM can shape consumers' perceptions and views of products or services, thereby increasing online purchase intentions. In the context of digital marketing, the more positive eWOM received by consumers, the more likely they are to make a purchase. However, the effect of eWOM is also influenced by brand reputation. According to Keller (2021), a good brand reputation strengthens the influence of eWOM by increasing consumer trust in the information they receive. Based on this study, the hypothesis that can be developed is: "The reputation of an e-retailer's apparel brand has a positive effect in moderating the relationship between Electronic Word of Mouth and online purchase intention." This means that the better the brand reputation, the stronger the influence of eWOM on consumers' decisions to purchase. This is supported by a recent study by Li and Laroche (2023), which shows that when a brand has a strong reputation, consumers tend to trust reviews and recommendations from others more, thereby increasing their intention to shop online.

### **H6: The better the quality of Apparel-retailer's brand reputation, the more it will increase Electronic Word of Mouth and Online Purchase Intention.**

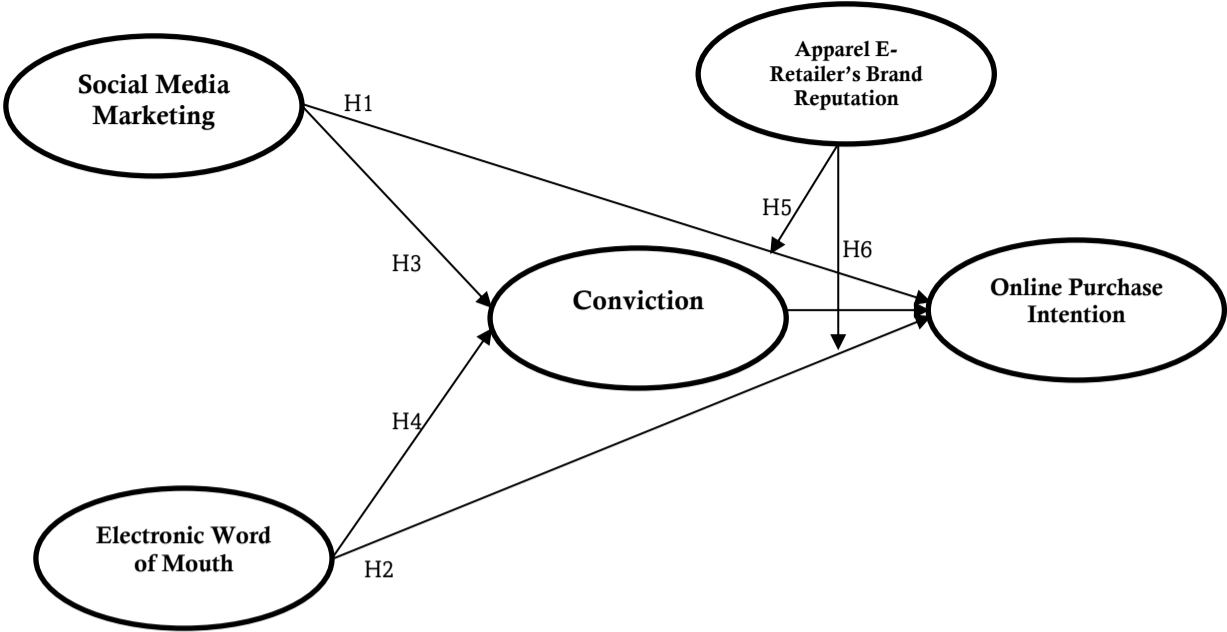


Figure 1. Research Framework

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach. There are two types of data used in this study, namely primary and secondary data. Primary data in this study were directly collected by researchers from their first source. Primary data were collected using a questionnaire that was directly addressed to the research sample. The sampling technique in this study was the random sampling technique. This technique was used because the grouping of respondents was united into one group, namely the consumer group who knew the Erigo business brand. This makes the sampling of respondents have no levels (stratification) in it, so that sampling was carried out randomly and proportionally in each region. The number of samples in this study was 300 respondents who knew the Erigo brand.

The questionnaire used in this study was the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) questionnaire which consisted of several questions that could provide researchers with information about Social Media Marketing, Electronic Word of Mouth, Online Purchase

Intention, Conviction, Apparel e-retailer's brand reputation. The questionnaire in this study used a Likert scale that had five levels of preference, each of which had a score of 1-5.

The analysis technique used in this study is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the help of the Smart PLS program. SEM as one of the multivariate techniques that combines aspects of multiple regression (testing dependency relationships) and factor analysis (describing concepts that cannot be measured by factors with multiple variables) to estimate the interdependence relationship simultaneously of latent variables with their indicators as stated by Hair et. al., (2010).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Reliability and Validity Test

Reliability and validity tests in this study were conducted before hypothesis testing. The results of the reliability and validity tests in this study are as follows:

Tabel 1. Validity and Reliability Test of Research Variables

Variable	Indicator	Loading Factors (≥ 0.7)	KMO (≥ 0.5)	Sig. Bartlett Test	Cronbach's Alpha (≥ 0.7)	Test Results
Social Media Marketing (SMM)	SMM1	0.812	0.743	0.000	0.826	Valid & Reliable
	SMM2	0.793				
	SMM3	0.765				
Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)	eWOM1	0.834	0.712	0.000	0.801	Valid & Reliable
	eWOM2	0.798				
	eWOM3	0.780				

Conviction	Conv1	0.849	0.725	0.000	0.822	Valid & Reliable
	Conv2	0.830				
	Conv3	0.788				
Online Purchase Intention (OPI)	OPI1	0.805	0.708	0.000	0.812	Valid & Reliable
	OPI2	0.798				
	OPI3	0.790				
Brand Reputation (BR)	BR1	0.832	0.752	0.000	0.838	Valid & Reliable
	BR2	0.815				
	BR3	0.787				

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2024

Table 1 shows that all indicators in this research variable passed the validity and reliability tests so that they can be continued to the next stage of testing.

**Table 2.** Test Result of Goodness of Fit (GoF)

Indeks GoF	Cut-off Value	Research Model Value	GoF Result
Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	$p > 0.05$	0.071	Fit
Chi-Square/df	$\leq 3$	2.105	Good Fit
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	$\leq 0.08$	0.056	Good Fit
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	$\geq 0.90$	0.913	Good Fit
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	$\geq 0.90$	0.901	Good Fit
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	$\geq 0.90$	0.934	Good Fit
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	$\geq 0.90$	0.927	Good Fit
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	$\geq 0.90$	0.915	Good Fit
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	$\geq 0.90$	0.937	Good Fit
Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)	$\leq 0.08$	0.045	Good Fit

Source : Primary Data Processed, 2024

Based on table 2, it can be explained that the model in the study meets all elements of goodness of fit so that the model in this study can be said to be good and meets existing standards.

**Table 3.** Hypothesis Test Results

Influence Between Variables	Regression Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	t-value	p-value	Conclusion
SMM $\rightarrow$ Conv	0.472	5.389	0.101	Significant
eWOM $\rightarrow$ Conv	0.413	1.652	0.091	Not Significant
Conv $\rightarrow$ OPI	0.585	1.928	0.071	Not Significant
SMM $\rightarrow$ OPI	0.256	3.005	0.003	Significant

eWOM → OPI	0.293	3.210	0.001	Significant
SMM → Conv → OPI	0.273	3.672	0.001	Significant
eWOM → Conv → OPI	0.242	1.823	0.081	Not Significant
BR × SMM → Conv → OPI	0.335	3.415	0.002	Significant
BR × eWOM → Conv → OPI	0.283	3.056	0.003	Significant

Source : Primary Data Processed, 2024

Based on table 3, it can be explained that the results of the hypothesis test show that there are six accepted hypotheses (significant) with a P-Value <0.05 (Alpha 5%) and there are three rejected hypotheses (not significant) with a P-value > 0.05. The detailed results of the hypothesis test are as follows:

H1 posits that Social Media Marketing (SMM) has a significant positive effect on conviction. This suggests that the more effective social media marketing efforts are, the greater the consumer's confidence in the products or services being promoted. Effective SMM strategies can therefore enhance consumer trust and engagement, contributing positively to the perceived credibility of offerings.

H2 highlights that Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) has a positive but insignificant effect. Although eWOM can influence consumer perceptions and decisions, its impact may not always be strong enough to be statistically significant, potentially due to variations in message consistency or consumer trust in online reviews.

H3 asserts that conviction has a positive but insignificant effect on Online Purchase Intention (OPI). While consumer confidence can theoretically enhance the likelihood of purchasing online, its direct effect may be limited without additional factors, such as marketing efforts or product appeal, reinforcing this intention.

H4 and H5 indicate that Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth both have significant direct effects on Online Purchase Intention. This underscores the critical role of digital marketing strategies in directly shaping consumer purchase decisions, making them essential tools for driving online sales.

H6 explains that conviction mediates the effect of Social Media Marketing on Online Purchase Intention. This finding suggests that consumer confidence acts as a bridge, amplifying the influence of social media marketing on purchasing behavior by enhancing trust and perceived value.

H7, however, reveals that conviction is not significant in mediating the influence of Social Media Marketing on Online Purchase Intention in certain contexts. This indicates that while confidence may play a role, other factors could be

more pivotal in driving the transition from marketing exposure to purchase intention.

H8 and H9 demonstrate that apparel e-retailer brand reputation moderates the influence of Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth on Online Purchase Intention through conviction. A strong brand reputation amplifies the effectiveness of these digital marketing strategies, fostering greater consumer trust and reinforcing the connection between conviction and purchase intention.

The results of the significance test on Hypothesis 1 show that Social Media Marketing (SMM) has a significant positive effect on Conviction, with a high coefficient and a p value <0.05. This indicates that the more effective social media marketing is, the higher the consumer's confidence in the products or services offered. In this context, these results are in line with previous findings showing that consumer exposure to structured social media marketing campaigns can increase their positive perceptions and trust in brands (Chen & Lin, 2019; Kim & Ko, 2012). Consumers who engage in interactive content, such as posts or reviews, are more likely to feel confident in the credibility and quality of the brand, thereby strengthening their positive feelings towards the product or service (Khan et al., 2016). Meanwhile, in Hypothesis 2 (H2), Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) was found to have a positive effect on Conviction, but this effect was not significant.

This means that although eWOM can increase consumer confidence in a brand, its strength is less consistent when compared to SMM. This result can be attributed to the heterogeneity of information that consumers may obtain through eWOM, where more diverse reviews and those from other users can reduce consumer trust, especially if there are negative reviews (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). As a marketing tool, eWOM does have the potential to build positive perceptions, but its impact tends to be limited when consumers do not fully know or trust the source of the information they receive (Ismailova et al., 2020).

Furthermore, Hypothesis 3 shows that Conviction has a positive effect on Online Purchase Intention, although this effect is also not significant. This indicates that although consumer confidence in a product or brand can drive online

purchase intentions, its effect is not strong enough to ensure that a purchase occurs. This finding is in line with the results of research by Dwivedi et al. (2021) which shows that consumer confidence factors often require additional factors, such as price promotions or adequate user experience, to drive higher purchase intentions. Conviction alone may not be enough to overcome consumer uncertainty related to online purchase decisions.

For Hypothesis 4 and Hypothesis 5, both Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth were found to have a significant direct influence on Online Purchase Intention. This shows that marketing through social media and eWOM play an important role in influencing consumer purchase intention directly, without going through a mediator. This strengthens the results of previous studies which emphasize that direct interaction with consumers through social media and positive eWOM tends to increase trust and purchase intention of products, because consumers see it as a form of social validation (Hajli, 2014; Erkan & Evans, 2016).

In Hypothesis 6, Conviction acts as a significant mediator between Social Media Marketing and Online Purchase Intention, indicating that consumer beliefs can strengthen the influence of social media marketing on purchase intention. This supports the view that trust formed from exposure to social media increases consumer willingness to buy online (Hajli et al., 2017). However, in Hypothesis 7, it was found that conviction did not act as a significant mediator in the relationship between Electronic Word of Mouth and Online Purchase Intention, which shows that eWOM is not strong enough to increase consumer purchase intention indirectly through belief. This finding is consistent with studies showing that the influence of eWOM on purchase intention is more dependent on direct factors than the belief process, especially if the eWOM information is too diverse or inconsistent (Park et al., 2007).

Hypothesis 8 (H8) and Hypothesis 9 (H9) show that Apparel e-retailer's brand reputation plays a moderating role that strengthens the influence of Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth on Online Purchase Intention through Conviction. These results indicate that a good brand reputation can strengthen the relationship between digital marketing, belief, and consumer purchase intention. A strong brand reputation increases consumers' positive perceptions and makes them feel more confident in the quality and reliability of the product or service, which ultimately increases their intention to purchase (Aaker, 1991; Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion of the study, it can be concluded that Social Media Marketing (SMM) has a significant positive effect

on Conviction, Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) has a positive but insignificant effect, Conviction has a positive but insignificant effect on Online Purchase Intention (OPI), Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth also have a significant direct effect on Online Purchase Intention, Conviction mediates the effect of Social Media Marketing on Online Purchase Intention, Conviction is not significant in mediating the effect of Social Media Marketing on Online Purchase Intention, Apparel e-retailer's brand reputation acts as a moderating variable that strengthens the effect of Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth through Conviction on Online Purchase Intention.

Further research can consider the variety of social media platforms used, such as Instagram, TikTok, or X, to see the differences in the effectiveness of each platform in increasing conviction and online purchase intentions. Given the different characteristics of social media users, these more specific results can enrich the understanding of market segmentation on each platform. Second, further research can deepen the analysis of eWOM by considering information quality factors, such as the credibility and relevance of content received by consumers. This is important considering the positive but insignificant effect of eWOM on increasing conviction in this study, which may be due to the ambiguity or diversity of information sources that reduce consumer trust.

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