



Determinants of Buying Interest in Recommended Brands

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Article history:
Received: Jun 30, 2022
Revised: Jul 20, 2022
Accepted: Jul 29, 2022

Keywords:
Determinants,
Influencers,
Brand,
Social Media,
Buying interest

The development of technology makes marketing activities more effortless, and buying interest is based on the ability of influencers to recommend a product. This study aims to determine the determinants of customer buying interest in brands recommended by influencers digitally through electronic word of mouth (eWOM). Quantitative research design with a descriptive approach The research was conducted by distributing online questionnaires to millennial and generation Z people who had made transactions online on e-commerce or social media and followed influencers of products purchased with a total sample of up to 300 people. Purposive sampling was used to collect the data, which was then statistically analyzed using AMOS. The results obtained the age dominance of respondents ranging from 18–24 years (97.7%) and female (99.3%). The results of hypothesis confirmation show the influence of digital influencers in recommending brands through electronic word of mouth (eWOM) on the interest in buying the recommended brand. All variables have a significant positive effect on the determinant of buying interest: perceived influence on brand engagement (p=0.000), perceived influence on brand value (p=0.000), brand engagement on brand value (p=0.000), perceived influence on buying interest (p=0.004), brand engagement on buying interest (p=0.000), and brand value on buying interest (p=0.020).

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1. Introduction

Technological advances are becoming increasingly advanced and making it easier for humans to do activities [1], [2]. One of the technological advances that are increasingly developing is communication technology. The emergence of gadgets makes long-distance communication more accessible. This is due to the rapid development of telecommunications. Social media is becoming part of technological advancements that are increasingly making human life easier and more practical, and the available content can increase user proximity [3], [4]. Furthermore, marketing activities have now entered a new era. Product sellers are trying to offer products, goods, and services on media that are currently popular, such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, TikTok, and other social media [5]–[7]. The use of social media as a marketing tool as well as a means of communication makes it an intelligent way for the public to shop because of the ease of shopping; the content and information provided are more attractive and complete, and promotional activities are more efficient [8], [9]. Furthermore, social media marketing improves product image and increases buying interest. This is because many user testimonials make the public more confident in a product or item being marketed [10]–[12].

Previous research revealed that people whom the public has widely known as influencers and market goods and services are more trusted, so people are willing to use the recommended brands [13], [14]. In addition, the support of electronic word of mouth (E-Wom) adds to the image of the product being marketed and can attract the interest and purchasing power of the public [6], [15]. Thus, the role of digital influencers is currently considered to have a good impact on their followers through status uploads, photos, and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) that they convey on social media. Companies that own products, goods,



and services seek to use the services of influencers to market, recommend products online, and promote brands to targets to increase consumers' purchase intentions [11].

In marketing, social media plays an essential role in a product. Erkan & Evans [13] revealed that consumers who buy or choose a product must look for complete information, hammering various sources to generate purchase intentions. The higher the positive rating of others toward a product, the higher the consumer's purchase intention [16]–[19]. Research by Carissa and Aruman [20] states that influencers are third parties who significantly shape customer purchasing decisions based on product reviews, the number of purchases, and people who have used them. However, there have not been many studies that reveal the role of digital influencers in recommending brands in terms of their role in the impact of recommended brand purchase interests, brands' perceived influences, and brand involvement in affecting buying interests. The research of Flyn [21] revealed that brand involvement in the self-concept is used as a reference in measuring a group characteristic in an area. Then, Uzunoglu and Kip [22] found that the expected brand value affects consumers buying the recommended product. Thus, research on the influence of influencers, brands, and buying interests requires a more in-depth study to obtain an overview of related components [23], [24].

Reviewing these issues and the limitations of previous research, it is necessary to conduct research on the influence of digital influencers in recommending brands via electronic word of mouth (eWOM) by determining the potential influence of their followers based on the perceived influence variables: brand involvement in self-concept, expected brand value, and intent to purchase the recommended brand. This study aims to identify the determinant of customer buying interest in brands promoted digitally through eWOM by influencers. Hopefully, the study results can be used as a guide for determining the most effective and efficient marketing strategy based on brand attributes and the usage of influencers.

2. Methods

A quantitative research design with a descriptive approach was used in this study [25]. The study was conducted using primary data from the results of questionnaires distributed online in a Google form containing questions related to research variables. The questionnaire assessment uses a Likert scale, with the minimum value of strongly disagreeing and the maximum value of strongly agreeing. The questionnaires sent out have been tested for validity and reliability by 50 people. For the validity test, the r count had to be higher than the r table, and for the reliability test, Cronbach's Alpha had to be higher than 0.7. The questionnaire was distributed through social media, including Instagram, Whatsapp, Line, and TikTok. This is because social media users are pretty high and widespread. The targets in this study are millennials and generation Z throughout Indonesia. The sample used was three hundred people, determined by purposive sampling. The object of the study is healthy food products recommended by influencers. There are four variables, including the perceived influence (3 indicators); brand involvement in self-concept (4 indicators); expected brand value (4 indicators); and interest in buying the recommended brand (3 indicators).

This study's assumptions include H1: Perceived influence has a favorable effect on brand involvement and self-concept. H2: The perceived impact influences positively the expected brand value; H3: The perceived influence positively affects the intent to purchase the recommended brand. H4: Brand participation in self-concept influences expected brand value positively. H5: The brand's relevance to the self-concept positively influences the desire to purchase the recommended brand. H6: The expected value of the brand influences the willingness to purchase the recommended brand positively.

Data analysis uses descriptive analysis to interpret respondents' characteristics, including age and gender distribution, while statistical analysis tests and emphasizes results related to the influence of predetermined variables. Statistical analysis with the AMOS application utilizing Structural Equation Modeling. The test was carried out through several stages, namely testing the normality of the meng data using the critical ratio skewness criterion of 2.58 at a significant level of 0.01, then carrying out outlier observations by identifying different characteristics between variables. Furthermore, a coefficient factor analysis was carried out and expressed with the value of the loading factor to measure the validity of the construct of a questionnaire. The last stage of SEM analysis includes model development based on theory, matrix input, and model estimation, assessing the criteria for the goodness of fit, and hypothesis testing by determining the probability value. If the significance value is <0.05 , it can be said that the hypothesis is proven or accepted, while if the significance value is > 0.05 , the hypothesis is rejected [25].

3. Results and Analysis

3.1 Characteristics of Respondents

The analysis results relating to the respondent's characteristics consisting of gender and age are presented in tables 1 and 2. Respondents of the female sex dominate the characteristics of respondents based on gender. This shows that women are more interested in buying healthy food products, especially in Indonesia. The age characteristics of the millennial generation and generation Z, who are highly interested in shopping on social media, are dominated by those aged 18–24. This is because the high desire to try new things, feel what is felt by others, and follow the advice and recommendations that others suggest is higher in adolescence.

Table 1
Characteristics of respondents by gender

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Male	2	0.7
Female	298	99.3
Total	300	100.0

Table 2
Characteristics of respondents by age

Category	Frequency	Percentage
13 - 17 Years	5	1.7
18 - 24 Years	293	97.7
25 - 30 Years	2	0.7
Total	300	100.0

3.2 Hypothesis confirmation results

In this study, involving 300 people used in the study sample, The results of the questionnaire were analyzed statistically to see the influence of the variables studied. The results of the data normality test obtained average distribution data with a critical ratio (c.r) value of 1,691. Furthermore, the identification of outliers reviewed from Mahalanobis Distance with $p < 0.001$ was carried out. The results showed the absence of a number greater than 36,123 (X^2), so no outlier data was found. Furthermore, a Goodness of Fit and configuration analyses were carried out. The results showed that all questionnaire components were declared valid and reliable because they met the standardized requirements. The results of testing the six hypotheses that have been carried out are presented in table 3.

Table 3.
Hypothesis testing results of relationships between variables

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R	P	Hypothesis
Brand Involvement	←	Perceived Influence	0,403	0,066	6,095	0,000	Significant Positives
Brand Value	←	Perceived Influence	0,224	0,057	3,916	0,000	Significant Positives
Brand Value	←	Brand Involvement	0,394	0,066	5,956	0,000	Significant Positives
Buying Interest	←	Perceived Influence	0,169	0,060	2,842	0,004	Significant Positives
Buying Interest	←	Brand Involvement	0,646	0,085	7,582	0,000	Significant Positives
Buying Interest	←	Brand Value	0,170	0,073	2,327	0,020	Significant Positives

The results of the study obtained on the variable relationship of perceived influence on brand involvement obtained an estimate of the value of the coefficient of standardized regression weight of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) with C.R 6.095; thus, there is a significant positive relationship between the influence of the feel affecting brand involvement. This indicates that the existence of a brand can influence a person's self-image in addition to increasing concepts and views related to the desire to buy. There are so many brands on the market with diverse concepts and lingo that a person may feel that a brand represents their perspective on themselves [26]. The concept of self arises from social interaction and elements of social interaction, which are contained in the elements of social interaction in the form of the brand of a brand or product that is widely circulated in the market and maybe guide or influence the way it views self-concept [12]. In line with Setiadi et al. [17] statement, people can define, maintain, and improve their self-concept by buying and using



a product. A trusted brand can improve a person's self-concept. Putri [27] and Wang [28] found that the use of influencers was done to increase brand awareness (98.8%), educate target consumers (62.7%), increase sales (50.6%), get more followers (39.8%), improve SEO (Search Engine Optimization) (25.3%), and be able to influence consumers' feelings for a brand. Perceived influence refers to the tendency to receive information from individuals considered valid by others [29]. The individual can be said to be a figure currently referred to as an influencer. Then, according to Uzunoglu and Kip [22], influencers can mediate messages and influence communities in the digital environment. This message medium can be disseminated quickly and easily with the potential viral effect. In addition to mediating and influencing, the role of influencers can involve recommending brands in a community on social media to increase consumers' buying interest [30], [31].

Moreover, the estimated value of the standardized regression weight coefficient for the link between perceived influence and brand value was 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) with a correlation coefficient of 3.916, indicating a substantial positive relationship between perceived influence and brand value. This indicates that when a person has strong feelings for a particular brand, they expect the brand to have value according to their expectations. Consumers' perception of the value of a brand is greatly influenced by what consumers feel towards a particular brand [32]. If he feels that the brand is in line with his wishes, his expectations of the brand's value will be high. Consumers' feelings of influence on a brand will affect consumer expectations of the value of a brand they are interested in [33], [34]. When consumers feel attached to and like a brand, they expect the brand's value to be in line with their expectations, in the sense that brand value increases their overall prestige. Furthermore, Gruen et al. [35] show that eWOM can impact consumers' overall perceived value of a product. In addition, Lee & Watkins [36] show that vloggers who act as brand ambassadors can obtain positive results for well-known brands, including an increase in the brand value of a product.

Moreover, the estimated coefficient of standardized regression weight for the variable link between brand involvement and brand value was 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) and C.R. 5.956; hence, there was a substantial positive relationship between brand involvement and brand value. This shows that brand engagement is capable of influencing the value of the brand itself. Expected brand value is a series of perceptions (assumptions) that exist in the minds of consumers toward a brand. The relationship with a brand will be stronger if it is well-informed based on experience [37]. Values are expected to represent perceptions that can reflect objective reality or not. A person's perspective on a brand connected to their self-concept will undoubtedly affect how they view the expected brand value [38]. When a person feels that a particular brand is in line with their self-concept, that person will expect the brand's value to increase their self-image. A person who views his self-concept as someone with high prestige will then expect the value of the brand he chooses to further increase his status in the eyes of others [39].

In the following variable, namely the relationship of the perceived influence on buying interest, an estimate of the value of the standardized regression weight coefficient of 0.004 ($p < 0.05$) with C.R. 2.842 was obtained. Thus, there was a significant positive relationship between the perceived influence on buying interest and C.R. 2.842. A feeling consumers feel toward the brand of an item will significantly affect their interest in buying it. When consumers feel that a particular brand is in their hearts, it will arouse interest in buying goods. Cao et al. [40] states that interest is a motive because a person becomes interested in an object through exploration. The desire for a brand can occur before or after direct experience, which means that even if a person has never used the brand, their feelings can influence their interest in buying it. Thus, buying interest is a person's attention and behavior towards something because they are interested and want to buy it. Consumer engagement can increase sales growth and brand referrals [40], [41]. In addition, according to Marques [42], consumer engagement can also affect consumer loyalty. This influence starts with the online interaction and dependent relationships built with opinion leaders. This starts a process called "shared value creation" [43] that makes consumers interested in a brand. Zhao [37] and France [44], say that when consumers develop a psychological state of passion and immersion in a brand, which is a sign of engagement, and even start to think of essential brands as part of who they are, they will feel that the brand has more value.

In the following variable related to the relationship of brand involvement to buying interest, an estimate of the value of the standardized regression weight coefficient of 0.004 ($p < 0.05$) with C.R. 2,842 is obtained. Therefore, a significant positive relationship exists between brand involvement and buying interest. This shows that the existence of a brand can influence a person's buying interests. Shamim [45] shows that expressing interest is a strong desire for something. A person's interests may fluctuate due to unexpected

circumstances, making him unstable. When a brand is considered to represent a consumer's self-concept, it will cause interest in buying the recommended brand. Their interest grows because of the feeling that a product can represent their perspective on self-concept. Research by Jansom [46] self-concept has a considerable influence on purchasing interest.

Furthermore, in verifying the relationship between brand value and buying interest, an estimate of the value of the standardized regression weight coefficient of 0.020 ($p < 0.05$) with C.R 2.327 was obtained. Thus there was a significant positive relationship between brand value and buying interest. This is because if a consumer decides on a specific brand, they will expect the brand's value. In their view, the brand value they expect follows their perspective on themselves. If consumers judge that a brand has a value that meets consumer expectations, this perception will give rise to the intention to buy the brand [47], [48] Consumer interest in a brand or object is influenced by attention to the object, interest in everything related to the object, and relates to the activity that approaches the object [49]. Desire is the desire to know more about something. These three aspects will cause a perception of the brand's value expected by consumers, which will generate consumer interest to buy the brand.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that various determinants influence consumers' buying interests, especially in brands recommended by digital influencers. In our findings, the age dominance of respondents ranged from 18–24 years and was female. The results of hypothesis confirmation show the influence of digital influencers in recommending brands through electronic word of mouth (eWOM) on the interest in buying the recommended brand. All variables have a significant positive effect on the determinant of buying interest: the perceived influence on brand engagement, the perceived influence on brand value, brand engagement on brand value, the perceived influence on buying interest, brand involvement on buying interest, and brand value on buying interest. Further research is needed to be related to the correlation of socioeconomic factors associated with the ability of digital influencers to recommend a brand, and the model or way influencers recommend a brand is likely to be able to influence buying interests and needs to be re-examined.

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