

Online Consumer Reviews and Purchase Intention: The Mediating Role of Celebrity Endorsement among Gen Z in Pakistan

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Abstract

The digital transformation of consumer behavior has altered how people evaluate products and make purchasing decisions, particularly among Generation Z, which has grown up immersed in online platforms and social media ecosystems. The formulation of the problem in this study is how to describe and how much influence online customer reviews have on purchase intention. This research deploys quantitative methods. The research used a primary research method (the authors devised the survey questions and collected data), gathering data from 347 respondents using a questionnaire. The findings reinforce the role of OCR as a primary determinant of purchase intention among Generation Z, as demonstrated by both global and Generation Z-specific data.

Introduction

The digital transformation of consumer behavior has altered how people evaluate products and make purchasing decisions, particularly among Generation Z, which has grown up immersed in online platforms and social media ecosystems. Online consumer reviews, functioning as electronic word of mouth (eWOM), are one of the most powerful factors that affect purchase intention (Osei-Frimpong, Donkor, & Owusu-Frimpong, 2019). In the context of Pakistan, Gen Z's purchasing behaviors are increasingly shaped by consumer reviews online and the pervasive influence of celebrity endorsements, making these constructs central to contemporary marketing research and practice (Akram, Khan, & Ahmad, 2023).

Celebrity endorsement has become an influential marketing technique that uses the credibility, attractiveness, and relatability of known figures to impact consumer attitudes and behaviors (Arif, Tat, Saad, Anser, & Khan, 2023). Advertisers frequently utilize celebrities to endorse products to increase audience engagement,

impart glamour and desirability, and boost the memorability and credibility of the commercial (Wei & Lu, 2013). The source credibility theory is among the theoretical basis that supports celebrity endorsement of a brand and its influence on purchase intention, which is based on celebrities who relate to the target audience (Hameed, Malik, Hadi, & Raza, 2023).

Online consumer reviews (OCRs) have emerged as a significant subject across diverse e-commerce platforms (Dhahak & Huseynov, 2020). OCRs are information generated by website users who have acquired the product in question. OCRs encompass information and recommendations about products from a consumer perspective (Rahayu, Utama, & Novianty, 2021). Studies show that online reviews are strongly correlated with consumer purchasing intention and significantly influence it (Obiedat, 2013).

The use of social media apps among Gen Z in Pakistan has increased. The formulation of the problem in this study is how to describe and how much influence online customer reviews have on purchase intention. Several studies suggest a gap in understanding the factors that influence endorsements, customer reviews, and customer experience in relation to purchase intention (Febriani & Khairusy, 2020). In contrast to earlier research, this study focuses on the effects of OCRs and celebrity endorsement; limited research has explored their combined and mediating impact on Gen Z in Pakistan. This study aims to address this gap by employing a quantitative approach to examine the direct positive impact of online consumer reviews on purchase intention, and the mediating role of celebrity endorsement in this relationship. The findings are expected to provide actionable insights for marketers seeking to optimize digital strategies for Gen Z consumers in Pakistan.

Research Objective

The primary objective is to systematically investigate the relationships between the Online Consumer Reviews and Purchase Intention, specifically focusing on the mediating role of celebrity endorsement within Gen Z in Pakistan.

To assess the direct positive influence of online customer reviews on the purchase intention of Gen Z consumers in Pakistan.

To examine the mediating influence of celebrity endorsement in the relationship between online consumer reviews and purchase intention among Generation Z in Pakistan

Research Question

The research questions for this present study were carefully developed to provide a clear overview of what the current literature is known about the impact of online consumer reviews and celebrity endorsement on purchase intention among Generation Z in Pakistan. By focusing on key constructs such as online consumer reviews, purchase intention, and the mediating role of celebrity endorsement, this study provides valuable insights that can serve as a starting point for future investigations and foster future empirical work in this dynamic field.

How do online consumer reviews influence the purchase intention of Generation Z consumers in Pakistan?

In what ways does celebrity endorsement mediate the relationship between online consumer reviews and purchase intention among Generation Z in Pakistan?

Literature Review

Online Consumer Reviews

Online consumer reviews (OCRs) have become a pivotal source of information for digital consumers, especially among Generation Z, who are highly active on social media and e-commerce platforms. Empirical research consistently demonstrates that OCRs exert a significant positive influence on purchase intention (Macheka, Quaye, & Ligaraba, 2024). For instance, studies among young consumers reveal that online reviews enhance knowledge, reduce uncertainty, and motivate purchase decisions (Sari & Arifin, 2024). The credibility and volume of reviews are particularly influential, as they provide social proof and reduce perceived risk, which is crucial for Gen Z's decision-making process (Achmad, Fitriansyah, Lesmana, & Yударuddin, 2024). In the context of Pakistan, the growing penetration of digital platforms has amplified the role of OCRs, with evidence showing that positive reviews directly increase the likelihood of purchase among Gen Z consumers (Akbar & Fietroh, 2024).

Online Consumer Reviews and Purchase Intention

The intention to purchase is a crucial part of the consumer buying decision process. This process is attractive due to the way consumers seek and assess product information. The likelihood of a consumer purchasing a specific product is referred to as purchase intention (Sutanto & Aprianingsih, 2016). Many consumers consider online reviews to be a more trustworthy source of information than traditional sources (Fang, Ye, Kucukusta, & Law, 2016). Online customer reviews provide reliable, user-generated content that influences the purchasing decisions of potential buyers. Consumers generally place greater trust in peer reviews compared to brand messages, particularly in digital contexts (Fileri & Mariani, 2021).

Celebrity Endorsement

Numerous factors affect customers' purchasing decisions or intentions. The existing literature indicates that customer purchasing intentions are mostly reinforced by celebrity endorsements (Arai, Ko, & Ross, 2014). A celebrity may be an entertainer (such as a comedian), an athlete, an actor/actress, or others, recognized by the public for their accomplishments in fields distinct from the products or services they advocate or promote (Wei & Lu, 2013). The match-up hypothesis states that the connection between a celebrity image or personality and the endorsed product enhances the effectiveness of the advertising (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2021). Compatibility specifically denotes a connection between the attributes of the endorser and those of the endorsed product (Janssen, Schouten, & Croes, 2022). The study supports this perspective, revealing that athletes are more appropriate than actors for advertising energy drinks, but not for candy bars (Till & Busler, 2000).

Celebrity Endorsement and Purchase Intention

Celebrity endorsement is a well-established marketing strategy that leverages the popularity, credibility, and attractiveness of public figures to influence consumer attitudes and behaviors (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019). Theoretical frameworks such as source credibility theory and the match-up hypothesis suggest that endorsements by celebrities who resonate with the target audience can enhance brand perception and drive purchase intention (Khan & Khan, 2024). Source credibility enhances attention and positive feelings toward the advertising message, ultimately leading to increased purchase intentions. Customers should form emotional attachments to items and purchase them whenever they desire to do so (Yilmaz, Eser Telci, Bodur, & Eker Iscioglu, 2011). According to Yilmaz et al. (2011), prior research, source credibility is a significant factor for consumers during the information acquisition process. A high level of credibility will lead to an increased buying intention, while a low level of credibility will result in a diminished purchase intention. Empirical studies in emerging markets, including Pakistan, confirm that celebrity endorsement has a direct and significant positive effect on purchase intention, particularly when the endorser is perceived as trustworthy, attractive, and congruent with the brand (Ellison, Padgett, & Fowler, 2017). For Gen Z, who are highly responsive to influencer culture, celebrity endorsements on social media platforms are especially effective in shaping purchase intentions (Achmad et al., 2024).

Hypotheses Development

Based on the reviewed literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Online customers' reviews positively influence purchase intention among Gen Z in Pakistan.

H2: Celebrity endorsement has a positive influence on purchase intention among Gen Z in Pakistan.

H3: Celebrity endorsement mediates the relationship between online consumer reviews and purchase intention among Gen Z in Pakistan.

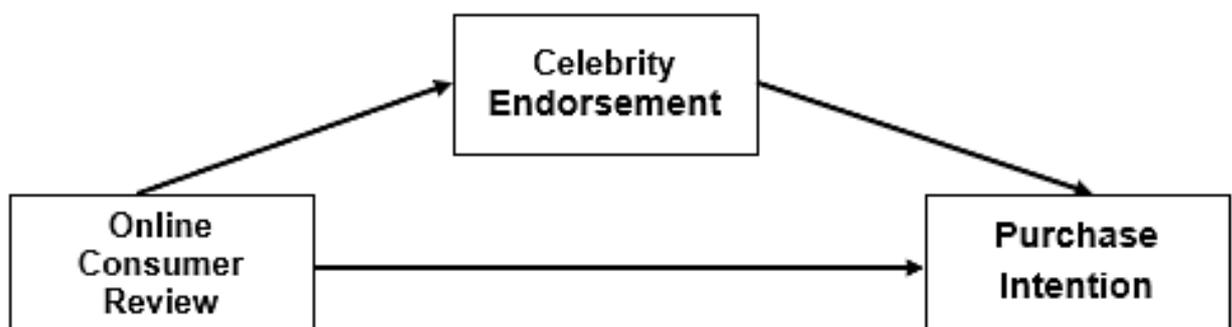


Fig 1: Research framework

Methodology

Procedures and participants

This research deploys quantitative methods. Questionnaires were identified as the most efficient data-collection technique for this study. The research used a primary research method (the authors devised the survey questions and collected data), gathering data from 347 respondents using a questionnaire (Abbasi, Tsiotsou, Hussain, Rather, & Ting, 2023). The sample includes professionals from Gen Z in Pakistan who shop online, especially for beauty and tech-related products. Coding and entry of Survey Data were done by converting data into numerical values and entering them into SPSS. Then, the data were screened for missing values, outliers, and very low response standard deviations. Testing of the hypotheses was performed using regression analysis in SPSS and Hayes' PROCESS.

Measures

The items were adapted from the literature and discussed with the field experts before piloting. The questionnaire was finalized after the pilot study. The relevant measurement scales used in this study are mature scales that have been published in internationally renowned journals. A five-point Likert scale was used for all the study measures ("where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree"). This study had three main variables of Online Consumer review: five items adapted from Macheke et al. (2024). Purchase Intention: four items adapted from Putri, Juniwati, Purmono, Afifah, and Setiawan (2024), and Celebrity Endorsement: four items adapted from Waqas, Qalati, Hafeez, Rana, and Farhan (2020). Sampling approach and size were based on Mushtaq, Mukhtar, and Ramzan (2024).

Results of the Study

The study tested a conceptual framework, examining the mechanisms through which online customer reviews and purchase intention have a mediating role via celebrity endorsement. The analysis focused on the following constructs.

Reliability Statistics

To ensure the validity and reliability of the survey, the study assessed the internal consistency of each construct using Cronbach's alpha and factor loading analysis. The results presented in Table 1 summarize the validity and reliability for the main scales: online customer reviews, purchase intention and celebrity endorsement.

S#	Variables	No. of Items	Reliability
1	Online customer reviews (OCR)	5	0.899
2	Celebrity endorsement (CE)	4	0.776
3	Purchase Intention (PI)	4	0.730

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

The Alpha range of Cronbach is between 0.730 and 0.899, which means that the variables of our model are highly stable. In this reliability analysis, the first variable is OCR on a scale of 5 items, and a Cronbach's alpha value is 0.899; the second variable is CE on a scale of 4 items, and the Cronbach's alpha value is 0.776; and the third variable is PI on 4 items, and the Cronbach's alpha values are 0.730.

Correlations and Descriptive Statistics

S#	Variables	M	SD	OCR	CE	PI
1	OCR	3.7522	1.10716	1		
2	CE	3.6009	1.01591	.792**	1	
3	PI	3.3581	1.00694	.700**	.743**	1

N=347 **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2: Correlation and Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 shows the correlation analysis. CE is positively and significantly associated with OCR ($r = .792^{**}$, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, the PI has a positive and significant relationship with OCR ($r = .700^{**}$, $p < 0.01$), and CE has a positive and significant relationship with PI ($r = .743^{**}$, $p < 0.01$).

Linear Regression

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
OCR → PI	.637	.035	.700	18.203	.000
CE → PI	.736	.036	.743	20.617	.000

N=347 p < 0.05

Table 3: Linear Regression

Regression analysis for OCR and PI has been executed. The result shows that “there is a positive and significant relationship between both of them” ($\beta = 0.700$, $p < 0.05$). Similarly, Regression analysis for CE and PI has been executed. The result shows that “there is a positive and significant relationship between both of them” ($\beta = 0.743$, $p < 0.05$).

Mediation Result Analysis of OCR→CE→PI

Mediation analysis was conducted using the bootstrapping method in line with the recommendations of Preacher and Hayes (2008). The results support our hypothesis that CE mediates the relationship between the OCR and PI.

OCR→CE→PI				
	Effect	S.E	LLCI	ULCI
Total Effect	.6366	.0350	.5678	.7054
Direct Effect	.2721	.0517	.1704	.3738
Indirect Effect	.3645	.0418	.2772	.4416

N = 347. SE = standard error, LLCI = lower limit confidence interval
 ULCI = upper limit confidence interval

Table 4: Mediation Analysis

Discussion

This study examined the influence of online consumer reviews (OCR) on purchase intention (PI) among Generation Z consumers in Pakistan and explored the mediating role of celebrity endorsement (CE) in this relationship. Drawing on Source Credibility Theory, the findings offer important empirical and theoretical insights into how digitally mediated information sources shape consumption behavior in an emerging market context. Overall, the results demonstrate strong support for the proposed relationships and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Gen Z’s decision-making processes in the era of social media and influencer-driven marketing.

The findings confirm a strong, positive, and significant effect of online consumer reviews (OCR) on purchase intention (PI) among Gen Z in Pakistan. Also, among Gen Z and young consumers in Indonesia (Macheka et al., 2024), South Africa (Eriyani & Amalia, 2025), and other markets, studies indicate strong positive influences of OCRs on purchase intention and online shopping behavior, which often account for a large portion of the variance in intention or decision outcomes (Achmad et al., 2024).

According to the source credibility theory Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953), Consumer reviews serve as “everyday expert” sources of information whose credibility and experiential authenticity compensate for the lack of physical product examination (Mutiara, 2025). When reviews are perceived as credible, detailed, and voluminous, they can increase perceived usefulness and decrease perceived risk, thereby strengthening the intention to purchase (LESMANA, YUDARUDDIN, & Kutai). The significant correlation between online consumer reviews (OCR) and purchase intention (PI) observed in this study is consistent with previous research indicating that Generation Z is highly review-oriented and risk-averse in online environments, using OCR as a contemporary form of word-of-mouth to mitigate uncertainty (Achmad et al., 2024). Overall, the findings reinforce the role of OCR as a primary determinant of purchase intention among Generation Z, as demonstrated by both global and Generation Z-specific data. Furthermore, the magnitude and immediacy of this effect appear to be context-dependent (Sari & Arifin, 2024).

The study demonstrates that celebrity endorsement (CE) significantly mediates the relationship between OCR and PI, with OCR strongly associated with CE ($r = .792$, $p < 0.01$), CE strongly associated with PI ($r = .743$; $\beta = 0.743$, $p < 0.05$), and a significant indirect OCR \rightarrow CE \rightarrow PI path. These findings are consistent with research demonstrating that the credibility and attractiveness of celebrity endorsers enhance consumer attitudes and purchasing intentions, particularly when combined with online reviews (Macheka et al., 2024). The current evidence demonstrating that celebrity endorsement (CE) significantly mediates the online consumer review–purchase intention (OCR–PI) relationship among Generation Z in Pakistan is consistent with broader trends in source credibility research and possesses theoretical significance. In this context, celebrities serve not only as parallel influences to online consumer reviews but also as integral elements in the process of converting review information into purchase intention.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study contributes to Source Credibility Theory by demonstrating its applicability within digitally mediated consumption environments and in the context of emerging markets. The findings suggest that credibility emerges from the interaction between user-generated content and celebrity influence, rather than from a single source (Halder, Pradhan, & Chaudhuri, 2021). These results highlight the need for more comprehensive theoretical frameworks that incorporate layered credibility processes rather than focusing solely on discrete persuasion effects (Halder et al., 2021).

The results indicate that integrated strategies connecting reviews and celebrity

campaigns will be more efficacious for practitioners. Brands in Pakistan that want to reach Gen Z should not see OCR and CE as separate tools. Instead, they should choose endorsers who fit the tone and content of real reviews and who also respond to user feedback (Sari & Arifin, 2024). This could strengthen both credibility and the desire to buy. However, evidence from other contexts indicates that online consumer reviews (OCR) can dominate or overshadow celebrity endorsement (CE), and that CE may be non-significant in certain categories (Selvia & Wati, 2024). This cautions against excessive reliance on celebrity expenditure without ensuring product–endorser alignment and robust organic review systems (El Hedhli, Zourrig, & Becheur, 2021).

Limitations and future research

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged, even though it makes some good points. First, the cross-sectional design restricts the ability to draw causal inferences. Second, the context is specific to Gen Z shoppers in Pakistan, who are likely from a well-connected, educated group. Cross-cultural research shows that different generations and markets place varying weight on OCR and celebrity cues, and that credibility is built in different ways (Eriyani & Amalia, 2025). Lastly, the study does not distinguish among the various dimensions of source credibility, such as expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, for both reviewers and celebrities. Existing evidence Park and Lin (2020) suggests that these dimensions may exert distinct effects and interact with factors such as product involvement, product type, and match-up conditions.

Future research that dissects credibility and examines interaction effects (e.g., among review valence, celebrity trustworthiness, and product–endorser fit) would enhance theoretical rigor and yield more practical insights.

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Final Questionnaire (5-Point Likert Scale)

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

OCR1: Online customer reviews make it easier for me to make purchase decisions.

OCR2 Online customer reviews have enhanced my effectiveness in making purchase decisions.

OCR3 The last time I read online reviews, I adopted consumer recommendations.

OCR4 Information from online reviews contributes to my knowledge of products.

OCR5 Online reviews have motivated me to make a purchase decision.

CE1: You are likely to purchase celebrity-endorsed cosmetics.

CE2: You are likely to try celebrity-endorsed products.

CE3: You buy a product if a celebrity is endorsing it.

CE4: The Presence of celebrities in ads encourages you to buy cosmetics

PI1: I am more likely to purchase after seeing many positive customer reviews.

PI2: I am confident in my decision to buy a product if the celebrity I follow gives a positive review of it.

PI3: I am confident in purchasing products recommended by celebrities I follow.

PI4: I feel more motivated to buy products that the celebrities I follow personally use.