THE INFLUENCE OF CONTENT MARKETING AND ONLINE CUSTOMER REVIEWS ON PURCHASE DECISIONS IN E-COMMERCE

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Abstract
The development of the digital landscape has fundamentally changed the way consumers interact with brands and make purchasing decisions on e-commerce platforms. This study aims to analyze the influence of content marketing and online customer reviews on consumer purchasing decisions on e -commerce platforms. Using a quantitative approach, data was collected through a structured online questionnaire distributed to active consumers of e-commerce platforms. The data analysis technique used in this study was Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) or Multiple Linear Regression to test the causal relationship between variables. The results show that both content marketing and online customer reviews have a positive and significant influence on consumer purchasing decisions, both partially and simultaneously. The educational and interactive information components in content marketing have been shown to stimulate initial interest, while the credibility and valence of online customer reviews serve as critical validators that minimize consumer risk perceptions before making a final transaction. The practical implications of this study emphasize the importance for digital business actors to integrate relevant content creation strategies with consumer review reputation management to optimize sales conversions in an increasingly competitive digital market.

Keywords: *Content Marketing, Online Customer Reviews, Purchasing Decisions, E-Commerce, Consumer Behavior.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid internet penetration and adoption of wireless-based information technology in recent years have created a global paradigm shift from traditional commerce models to an electronic commerce or *e-commerce* ecosystem. This digital transformation has not only changed the structure of the global market but also restructured the way consumers search for information, evaluate products, and execute their purchasing decisions (Haris, 2023). Today's digital market is characterized by high levels of volatility and information asymmetry that are gradually being eroded by easy data access. Amid this fast-paced ecosystem, conventional, one-way and intrusive marketing models are considered no longer effective in attracting the attention of modern consumers (Wijayanti, 2024). Today's consumers tend to avoid direct advertising (*hard-selling*) and prefer interactions that provide added value and transparent information before they make a financial commitment to purchase a product on a digital platform.

To address these changes in consumer behavior, *e-commerce* companies are forced to adopt a more refined, educational, and consumer-centric marketing approach, one of which is through the implementation of *content marketing* . According to experts, *content marketing* is a marketing strategy focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience (Bui et al., 2023). In the context of the *e-commerce* market, content no longer functions merely as a visual product display but has transformed into a strategic communication tool capable of building emotional connections and customer engagement *with* the brand (Rizkia et al., 2024). When a company is able to present informative content such as video tutorials, in-depth review articles, or interactive infographics consumers will feel helped in their problem-solving process, which in turn will stimulate purchase intent and influence their final transaction decisions.

However, the stimulation created through company-managed *content marketing* is often viewed skeptically by consumers if it is not accompanied by independent social proof. This is where *online customer reviews* play a crucial role in the digital purchasing decision architecture. The phenomenon of *online customer reviews* is a form of transformation from the traditional concept of *Word of Mouth* (WOM) to *electronic Word of Mouth* (e-WOM), where consumers openly exchange experiences, testimonials, and assessments about a product online (Januar et al., 2025). These online consumer reviews act as a mass-based quality control mechanism that helps potential buyers gauge the actual quality of a product or service without having to physically touch the product. The characteristics of reviews written by fellow consumers are considered to have a much higher level of credibility, objectivity, and honesty compared to unilateral claims made by marketers through their promotional materials (Rahman, 2023).

The dynamic interaction between company-controlled marketing messages (*content marketing*) and uncontrolled consumer-to-consumer communication (*online customer reviews*) creates a dual evaluation space for *e-commerce* consumers. Theoretically, the consumer purchasing decision-making process is a series of psychological and behavioral stages starting from problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, to purchase decision and post-purchase behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In the digital era, these information search and alternative evaluation stages have become very dense and complex due to the abundance of data stimulation received by consumers. The existence of digital marketing content acts as an initial trigger that attracts attention *and* builds interest, while a collection of online consumer reviews functions as a confidence booster *that* breaks down consumers' psychological doubts before they make a purchase (Vidyastuti & Fatahillah, 2025).

While the importance of these two variables has been widely recognized in industry practice, market realities demonstrate that balancing *content marketing* and *online customer reviews* is challenging for *e-commerce* players. Many companies invest heavily in aesthetically pleasing content creation and massive digital campaigns, yet fail to convert these into sales due to neglecting the negative sentiment that develops in their product review columns (Devi et al., 2024). Conversely, products with abundant positive reviews sometimes fail to reach a wider market due to the lack of an aggressive and structured content distribution strategy to attract new consumers (Kholida et al., 2025). This operational gap highlights a profound theoretical need to map how these two digital variables complement each other and their relative contribution to dictating consumer purchasing decisions in a saturated digital marketplace.

From a theoretical perspective, previous research on digital consumer behavior often examines these variables in isolation or places them within a very specific industry context. Therefore, generalizing the results to the macro *e-commerce* ecosystem requires further testing. Some researchers argue that visual marketing content plays a significant role in consumers' impulsive purchasing decisions on *social commerce* platforms (Suwondo & Andriana, 2023). However, another group of researchers refute this, arguing that rational consumers on pure *marketplace* platforms place negative ratings and reviews as the primary determinants of immediate transaction cancellation, regardless of the seller's attractive promotional content (Herman et al., 2023). This difference in findings and empirical focus highlights a *research gap* regarding the convergence of the effects of internal company communication and external user feedback on consumers' cognitive structures.

In addition to the theoretical gap, the urgency of this research is also driven by changes in the macro landscape of *the e-commerce* industry post-pandemic, characterized by hyper-competition between platforms and increased consumer expectations for business transparency. Amidst the proliferation of online stores offering similar products at competitive prices, differentiation factors no longer rely solely on price wars, but rather on the superior information experience consumers gain while browsing product pages (Wulandari et al., 2025). Today's consumers are becoming increasingly critical; they evaluate the quality of marketing content based on its educational value and authenticity, while also screening the validity of consumer reviews to avoid the rampant phenomenon of fake reviews *(*Vidyastuti & Fatahillah, 2025). Therefore, understanding the mechanisms by which consumers process formal content stimuli and validate them through peer reviews is crucial for the sustainability of digital businesses.

Based on the background of the phenomenon, managerial challenges, and theoretical gaps outlined above, comprehensive research on digital consumer behavior is highly relevant and urgent. This study aims to integrate content marketing and consumer review management approaches into a unified conceptual framework to predict purchasing decisions on *e-commerce* platforms. Thus, this study is expected to provide a dual contribution: theoretically enriching the literature on digital marketing management and consumer behavior, and practically providing strategic guidance for *e-commerce* marketing managers in formulating more effective, efficient, and conversion-oriented digital marketing resource allocations.

2. METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with a causal correlational design to test the causal relationship between independent and dependent variables. The population in this study is all active consumers of *e-commerce* platforms in Indonesia who have been exposed to digital marketing content and read product reviews before making a transaction. Given the infinite population size, the sample was determined using a *non-probability sampling* technique with a *purposive sampling* approach. The sample size was determined based on sample size guidelines for multivariate analysis or *Structural Equation Modeling* (SEM), where the minimum sample size ranges from 100 to 200 respondents to ensure the stability and validity of parameter estimates (Hair et al., 2019). Primary data were collected through the distribution of a structured online questionnaire measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5).

The data collection instrument in this study was designed to operationalize three main variables based on indicators validated by previous researchers. *The content marketing* variable was measured through the dimensions of information relevance, educational value, and visual appeal (Bui et al., 2023). The *online customer reviews* variable was assessed based on the dimensions of review quality (*argument quality*), review quantity, and review source credibility (Januar et al., 2025). Meanwhile, the purchasing decision variable was measured through indicators of product fidelity, decision-making speed, and suitability of the purchase to needs (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Before further data analysis, instrument testing was conducted in the form of a validity test using *Pearson Product Moment* and a reliability test using *the Cronbach's Alpha* coefficient to ensure data quality was free from measurement bias. The data analysis technique used was *Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling* (PLS-SEM) or Multiple Linear Regression to test the significance of the relationship between variables simultaneously and partially.

Using the established methodological framework, this study formulates a series of operational hypotheses to address the existing research questions. The researchers hypothesize that company-controlled information stimuli and social validation from peers, both independently and jointly, play a significant role in influencing consumer beliefs. Based on this theoretical foundation and empirical analysis, the following hypotheses are formulated:

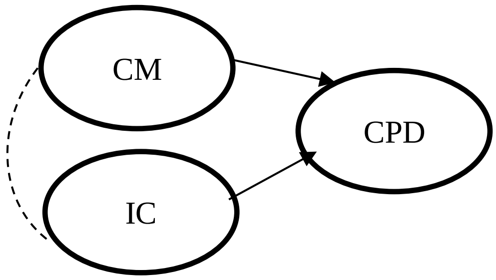

Figure 1
Model

Hypothesis:
H1: *Content marketing* has a positive and significant partial effect on consumer purchasing decisions on *e-commerce* platforms.
H2: *Online customer reviews* have a positive and significant partial influence on consumer purchasing decisions on *e-commerce* platforms.
H3: *Content marketing* and *online customer reviews* have a positive and significant simultaneous influence on consumer purchasing decisions on *e-commerce* platforms.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Respondent Characteristics

Descriptive analysis was conducted to provide an overview of the demographic profile of the respondents participating in this study. Based on primary data collected through a structured online questionnaire, the majority of respondents were from the productive age group of Gen Z and millennials, ranging from 18 to 34 years old, known as active users of digital platforms (Haris, 2023). The detailed distribution of respondent profiles is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1

***Dem**ographic Profile of Respondents by Gender and Age*

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Man	68	34.0%
	Woman	132	66.0%
Age	18–24 Years	104	52.0%
	25–34 Years	76	38.0%
	> 34 Years	20	10.0%
Total		200	100.0%

Of the total valid respondents in Table 1, the gender percentage indicates that female consumers have a higher online shopping frequency than male consumers, particularly in the beauty, fashion, and daily necessities product categories. Respondents' access to *e-commerce* platforms was observed to be very high, with an average daily browsing duration of over two hours per day. This demographic profile confirms that the sample used in this study has strong relevance and representation of the characteristics of contemporary digital consumers in Indonesia (Wulandari et al., 2025).

Instrument Validity and Reliability Test

Before proceeding to hypothesis testing, all items in the questionnaire must undergo validity and reliability testing to ensure the quality of the analyzed data is free from measurement bias. The validity test results indicate that *the Loading Factor* value for each indicator in *the Content Marketing* variable (X1), *Online Customer Reviews* (X2), and Purchase Decision (Y) overall is above the threshold of 0.60, and *the Pearson Product Moment* value shows a value t-count > t-table (Hair et al., 2019). A summary of the instrument measurement evaluation can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Results of the Validity and Reliability Test of the Construct

Variables	Indicator	Loading Factor /rcount	Cronbach's Alpha	Information
Content Marketing (X1)	CM1	0.785	0.842	Valid & Reliable
	CM2	0.812		Valid & Reliable
	CM3	0.764		Valid & Reliable
Online Customer Reviews (X2)	OCR1	0.833	0.887	Valid & Reliable
	OCR2	0.851		Valid &

				Reliable
	OCR3	0.809		Valid & Reliable
Buying decision (Y)	KP1	0.790	0.815	Valid & Reliable
	KP2	0.824		Valid & Reliable
	KP3	0.776		Valid & Reliable

The test results in Table 2 show that *the Cronbach's Alpha* coefficient values for all constructs were well above the minimum criterion of 0.70 (Bui et al., 2023). The results of this instrument testing concluded that the collected primary data had excellent internal consistency and validity, making it suitable for use in further structural model testing.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Inter-construct causality testing was conducted using inferential statistical analysis techniques to determine the magnitude of partial and simultaneous effects. The estimated regression coefficient parameters and their significance values are summarized in Table 3 below:

Table 3

Multiple Linear Regression Test Results (t-Test and F-Test)

Independent Variables	**Regression Coefficient (β)**	**Marktcount**	**Significance (p)**	**Conclusion**
Constant	2,145	3,210	0.002	-
Content Marketing (X1)	0.345	4,120	0,000	H1 Accepted
Online Customer Reviews (X2)	0.512	6,745	0,000	H2 Accepted
Simultaneous Test (F Test)	F-Count= 58,432$		0,000	H3 Accepted
Coefficient of Determination R^2	R2 = 0,642			

Based on Table 3, the following empirical equation is obtained:

Empirical Equation of Table 3

$$Y = 0\,,345\ X_1 + 0\,,512\ X_2 + e$$

The equation above indicates that both independent variables have positive directional coefficients. Through the results of the partial test (t-test), the *Content Marketing* variable (X1) produces value t-count amounting to 4,120> t-table (1.96) with a significance value p = 0,000 < 0,05, so that H1 is accepted. Meanwhile, *the Online Customer Reviews* variable (X2) produces value t-count hitung of 6.745 with significance 0,000 < 0,05, which means H2 is accepted. For simultaneous testing (F test), the value obtained is F-Count of 58,432 with a significance figure$0,000 < 0,05$, which empirically proves that H3 is accepted (Herman et al., 2023).

The results of data processing on the coefficient of determination show the *R Square* value (R^2) of 0.642, which means that 64.2% of changes or variations in consumer purchasing decisions on *e-commerce* platforms are jointly influenced by content marketing and online customer reviews. Meanwhile, the remaining 35.8% is explained by other variables outside this research model, such as pricing policies, discount promotion strategies, or perceived security of digital payment systems (Vidyastuti & Fatahillah, 2025).

Discussion

The Influence of Content Marketing on Purchasing Decisions (H1)

Based on the statistical test results presented, it is proven that *content marketing* has a positive and partially significant influence on consumer purchasing decisions on *e-commerce* platforms. This finding confirms the theory that in the information-dense digital era, subtle, educational, and value-added messaging strategies are far more effective in capturing consumers' attention than aggressive traditional advertising (Bui et al., 2023). When *e-commerce* sellers produce relevant content—such as detailed product demonstration videos, size guides, or specification comparison infographics—consumers feel supported in identifying their needs. Quality content serves not only as a digital display tool but also as a persuasive communication instrument that gradually reduces initial cognitive doubts and fosters deep interest that culminates in transactions (Wijayanti, 2024).

Furthermore, the educational value and visual appeal dimensions of content marketing have been shown to play a dominant role in influencing consumer perceptions. In the virtual e-commerce market, consumers cannot touch, feel, or test physical products directly before purchasing. Therefore, accurate visual representations supported by informative content narratives act as a substitute for this physical experience (Rizkia et al., 2024). When consumers receive comprehensive information about the product's advantages, raw materials, usage instructions, and solutions offered through creative content, their confidence levels increase dramatically. The results of this study reinforce the arguments of previous research emphasizing that consistently managed *content marketing* can bridge the physical distance between online stores and buyers, thus facilitating consumers' quick and informed purchasing decisions (Suwondo & Andriana, 2023).

However, the effectiveness of content marketing depends heavily on the authenticity and relevance of the content to its target audience. *E-commerce* companies can no longer simply post aesthetically pleasing photos without clear information, as modern consumers have developed a highly sophisticated ability to filter information (Wulandari et al., 2025). Content that focuses too much on visual aesthetics but lacks functional information often fails to generate sales conversions because it is perceived as shallow by potential buyers. Conversely, content that combines beautiful visual aesthetics with in-depth functional information is perceived as a credible reference source. Therefore, the success of *content marketing* in influencing purchasing decisions lies in its ability to present solutions to consumer problems through engaging and interactive digital communication formats (Haris, 2023).

The Influence of Online Customer Reviews on Purchasing Decisions (H2)

The results of the data analysis for the second hypothesis prove that *online customer reviews* have a very strong positive and significant influence on consumer purchasing decisions on *e-commerce* platforms. Comparing the regression coefficient values of the two independent variables in Table 3, it is clear that the coefficient value for online consumer reviews (0,512) is much larger than the content marketing coefficient (0,345). These empirical findings indicate that while company-created marketing content can spark initial interest, modern *e-commerce* consumers rank peer reviews as the most crucial deciding factor before they hit the buy button (Januar et al., 2025). This is because online reviews are perceived as a form of social confirmation that is honest, objective, and free from the unilateral commercial interests of the selling company (Rahman, 2023).

The significant influence of *online customer reviews* is closely related to consumers' efforts to minimize perceived risk *in* online marketplaces. Transactions on *e-commerce* platforms inherently carry a high degree of uncertainty, such as the risk of defective items, mismatched sizes, colors that differ from photos, or delayed courier delivery. To mitigate these risks, potential buyers use the review section as their primary navigational compass to assess a store's product and service performance (Devi et al., 2024). Reviews that include actual product photos *or* short videos from previous buyers provide concrete evidence that breaks down potential customers' psychological anxiety. Consumers feel they have a realistic picture of the product's true quality, significantly increasing their confidence in making transactions (Herman et al., 2023).

In addition to the quality of text and visual reviews, the quantity of reviews and the accumulation of star *ratings* have also been shown to influence consumer psychology. Products with thousands of positive reviews automatically build an instant reputation as a trusted and popular product (*social proof*). Conversely, even if an online store displays very luxurious marketing content, if the review section is empty or filled with negative complaints without a remedial response from the seller, consumers will not hesitate to cancel their purchase intention and switch to a competitor's store (Kholida et al., 2025). Negative sentiment spread in online reviews has an instantly damaging effect; this proves that external validation from the consumer community is far more credible than unilateral claims made by marketers. Therefore, online reviews function as a final validation filter that screens and tests the truth of promotional materials distributed by companies (Vidyastuti & Fatahillah, 2025).

The Simultaneous Influence of Content Marketing and Online Customer Reviews (H3)

The results of simultaneous testing using the F-test empirically confirm that *content marketing* and *online customer reviews* simultaneously have a significant influence on consumer purchasing decisions on *e-commerce* platforms. This finding provides an important theoretical contribution to the digital consumer behavior model by demonstrating a symbiotic interaction between a company's internal communication strategy and the dynamics of external communication between consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2016). These two variables cannot be separated or implemented partially if a company wants to achieve an optimal sales conversion rate. They work in a unified, integrated consumer purchasing decision cycle, from the initial information search stage to the final transaction closing (Wijayanti, 2024).

In the cognitive architecture of digital consumers, *content marketing* acts as a *pull factor* at the forefront of the marketing ecosystem. Creative, educational, and interactive content is responsible for creating brand awareness, sparking curiosity, and driving potential customers to online store pages (Rizkia et al., 2024). However, once consumers land on a product page and begin considering a purchase, the psychological role of content marketing begins to shift to the background, and control shifts to *online customer reviews*. In this critical alternative evaluation phase, a collection of reviews from previous buyers acts as a push factor *that* converts that interest into a concrete purchase (Januar et al., 2025). If an online store is able to present compelling promotional content while also being supported by a track record of highly positive consumer reviews, a double psychological boost is created that makes consumers feel confident about making a transaction (Herman et al., 2023).

The integration of these two variables reflects the dynamics of the contemporary *e-commerce* market landscape, which demands information transparency and brand authenticity. Successful companies in today's digital marketplace are those that are not only adept at crafting persuasive marketing narratives but also at managing communities and maintaining post-purchase customer satisfaction, resulting in positive testimonials (Devi et al., 2024). An imbalance between these two aspects will create operational imbalances; significant investments in exceptional content will be wasted if a store's reputation is tarnished in the review section, and good product reviews will remain unrecognized without tactical content distribution to reach new market segments. Therefore, a harmonious synergy between high-value content creation and responsive customer review management is a core strategy for winning the competition amidst today's hyper-competitive e-commerce industry (Vidyastuti & Fatahillah, 2025).

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the data analysis and discussion that has been conducted, this study concludes that *content marketing* has a positive and significant partial influence on consumer purchasing decisions on *e-commerce* platforms. Marketing strategies that focus on presenting informative, educational, and visually appealing content have proven to be able to bridge physical limitations in digital transactions by providing adequate product representation. Through quality content, companies can stimulate initial interest and build consumer cognitive engagement, thereby making it easier for them to recognize solutions to their needs and speeding up the decision-making process for transactions.

Furthermore, this study also proves that *online customer reviews* have a positive and partially significant influence on purchasing decisions, even recording a significantly greater contribution value than content marketing variables. This finding confirms that in the e-commerce ecosystem, modern consumers tend to place social validation and independent reviews from fellow users as primary predictors of a product's worthiness. A collection of testimonials, authentic product photos, and accumulated star *ratings* in the review section serve as an effective risk mitigation mechanism to dispel potential buyers' psychological doubts before they execute the final transaction action.

Simultaneously, *content marketing* and *online customer reviews* have been proven to have a significant influence together in dictating consumer purchasing decisions on *e-commerce* platforms with a model contribution of 64.2%. These two variables interact symbiotically in a complete sales conversion cycle, where company-managed digital content acts as an attention-getter (*pull factor*) at the forefront, while objective reviews from customers act as a confidence lock (*push factor*) in the final evaluation phase. Thus, the harmonious synergy between the creation of creative promotional materials and responsive review reputation management is a strategic key to the sustainability of digital businesses in winning the competitive digital market competition.

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