

# Influencer's Trustworthiness for Car Purchase

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## Abstract

Determine the effect of trustworthiness, customer participation behaviour, customer citizenship behaviour, and expected brand value towards purchase intention in high involvement product. This research uses purposive sampling, quantitative approach and SEM-PLS method with the Smart-PLS version 4 software. All direct effects are proven as significant and affective, except for trustworthiness effect against customer participation behaviour, and customer participation behaviour against brand expected value. All mediation effects are not significant, except for expected brand value's mediation variables which mediate trustworthiness with purchase intention. There is no moderation effect by para-social relationship between neither trustworthiness and customer participation behaviour, nor trustworthiness and customer citizenship behaviour. Novelty of this research can be found in the research object itself, which is influencer's influence on products' high involvement with independent trustworthiness as variable, where automotive influencer is used as research object. Moreover, this research is conducted in a different country than previous research. Building trust is one of the most important things in ensuring the success of customer citizenship behavior, by giving key updates via various social media or brand influencer. Brand owners could also increase their own involvement in exploring social media, one of the examples is by doing campaign to communicate and interact with customers, reviews, comments, and votes. Brand owners could also consider whether Fitra Eri is the most suitable automotive influencer to promote their brand, in accordance with their objectives. The conclusions taken from the research in another countries, cultures, or influencers cannot be generalized. Followers' intention of following the influencer is not necessarily related with their purchase intention.

*Keywords:* customer participation behaviour, customer citizenship behaviour, expected brand value, purchase intention.

## 1. Introduction

Marketing influencers have increased in recent years (Lou & Yuan, 2019). The market size of influencers continues to increase from 2016-2022. According to Skyquest, in 2025, it is estimated that the market size will reach 31 billion dollars. Today, there are 4.33 million social media users worldwide, spending an average of 2 hours and 27 minutes per day consuming behaviour-changing content that can make a huge difference to businesses both large and small (Partipost, 2022). Influencer marketing, which refers to endorsement, sponsorship, or product placement of influential people or organizations, is a means of social media marketing (Kay et al., 2020). Marketing using influencers can reach more target customers in a more organic, authentic, and direct way when compared to traditional marketing strategies (Lou and Yuan, 2019). Influencers also promote products quickly and widely (De Veirman et al., 2017).

Influencers are individuals who have an audience and have social influence over their audience (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Digital influencers include bloggers, vloggers, social media stars, internet celebrities, and so on (Hughes et al., 2019); (Lou & Yuan, 2019). The success of influencers so far is obvious from a business point of view. Companies include digital influencers as part of their electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) strategy as online opinion leaders to recommend their brands and enhance brand image and value (Casaló et al., 2020). According to Lou & Yuan (2019), influencers have the power to persuade customers to buy products that are endorsed or promoted by the influencer. Customers feel that influencers are more accessible and credible (De Veirman et al., 2017). Thus, messages communicated by influencers are considered more authentic and trustworthy (Childers et al., 2019). Participation behaviour must also be studied (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019).

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Consumers seek information in various ways depending on product involvement (Gu et al., 2012). Product involvement refers to consumer perceptions of the importance of a product and how interested consumers are in a product (Zaichkowsky, 1985). According to Li (2019) product involvement can be classified into low involvement products and high involvement products. Several previous studies have not examined the effectiveness of influencer marketing in high involvement products. Research by Bu et al. (2022) has drawbacks, because it does not specify influencers and has only been studied in the United States. Then research from Chung & Cho (2017) regarding vlogger credibility also has drawbacks in the sample characteristics section where it is less representative because it uses a voluntary sample conducted by people who consider themselves fans of a particular media figures. In addition, this research was also conducted in Singapore, whose culture is different from America. Kim & Kim research (2021) on the characteristics of influencers and their mediation of trust also has the same drawbacks so that in the future it is hoped that cross-cultural and cross-national research can be carried out. As well as Lou & Yuan's (2019) research which also only analyses influencer marketing from low involvement product and a more general phenomenon, so there is little literature on the influence of influencers on high involvement products. Therefore, this research is expected to increase knowledge about influencer marketing in high involvement products, namely cars.

One of the high involvement product influencers is Fitra Eri. Fitra Eri is a YouTuber, racer, and journalist, who is also one of the most well-known automotive influencers in Indonesia. Fitra Eri has the character, intelligence, and good intentions which are perceived when conveying information (Kompasiana, 2022). Fitra Eri is also known for his credibility in conveying information. He is always honest in providing information to his audience. His presentation is straightforward and easy to understand. Fitra Eri has several social media accounts, such as Youtube, Instagram, Tik-Tok, Facebook, and Twitter. However, he focuses only on Youtube and Instagram to produce reviews and cars promotions. In this study, it has been decided to further pursue Fitra Eri's influence on Instagram's cars enthusiast market, since he has the most followers amongst other automotive influencers. His follower's count is at approx. 1.2 million. For comparison purposes, closest automotive influencers' follower's count is 1 million and 983 thousand, held by Ridwan Hanif and motomobi respectively.

According to research, influencers can persuade people to buy an endorsement product, service, or brand (Ki & Kim, 2019). Although, selecting the right influencer for a brand could be challenging, it is important for a company to select an effective influencer. Besides, it is critical to determine whether customer citizenship and participation behaviour influence the brand's expected value and purchase intention. Recent research on customer citizenship and participation behaviour, as well as purchase intention, has been conducted by connecting those variables to homophily and brand expected value (Bu et al., 2022). Most of previous studies were conducted to determine the impact of source credibility on purchase intention and focuses on para-social interactions on low involvement products (Kim & Kim, 2021); (Masuda et al., 2022); (Weismueller et al., 2020). Hence further research about the effect of source credibility with customer citizenship behaviour, customer participation behaviour, expected brand value, and purchase intention for high involvement products is required since product involvement is one of the most critical factors in purchase intention. In addition, research on automotive influencers, particularly cars, still requires further research to determine the effect of source credibility on customer citizenship behaviour, expected brand value, and purchase intention.

## 2. Literature Review

The initial model derived from Bu et al. (2022) uses an independent variable, namely homophile, while this study uses an independent variable, namely trustworthiness. Homophily itself is similarity in certain matters such as beliefs, values, education, social status between individuals who interact (Ladhari et al., 2020). According to research, homophile is one of the most important factors in attractiveness (McGuire, 1985). According to Munnukka et al. (2016), attractiveness of sources which have elements of similarity, familiarity, and likeability (Mcguire, 1968) is more related to low involvement products than high involvement products. In addition, according to Petty et al. (1983) with high involvement products, customers pay more attention to brands and products compared to similarity (homophily) or the attractiveness of information providers (influencers). Therefore, because this research uses influencers for high involvement products, while reference journals do not specify influencers, it would be more appropriate if the variable homophile changed to trustworthiness. Research by Bu et al. (2022) also recommends that for further research, an independent source credibility variable can be used. Other research also shows that trustworthiness is the most important dimension in source credibility (McGinnies, 1980). A car is a product that has high technology and is a high involvement product, so trustworthiness is used in this study.

### 3. Research Method and Materials

This study seeks to achieve the objectives through the collection of empirical evidence and makes use of the quantitative research technique and a cross-sectional research design. Surveys with accompanying online questionnaires are used in the data collection process. Followers of Fitra Eri who are at least 18 years old and lives in Indonesia made up the study's preliminary population.

### 4. Results and Discussion

This circumstance can happen if customer trustworthiness is not something that can affect customer participation behaviour. There are other factors such as homophily (Bu et al., 2022), which can make customers engage in customer participation behaviour. In addition, this can also occur due to the uneven distribution of the questionnaire, which means that there are people who have just recently followed Fitra Eri, while they are not active and are still new in finding and sharing information. This is in line with Zhou's research (2011) which says that in social media there are people who have low (passive) interaction as they are still new to the platform. In addition, in the online community there are some people who only see and read without engaging in any form of interaction (Madupu and Cooley, 2010).

Trustworthiness has positive effect with customer citizenship behaviour, the T-value and P-value for this hypothesis are 2.006 and 0.045 respectively. The hypothesis' T-value is greater than 1.96 and P-value is less than 0.05. This means that H2 is accepted and H0 is not met. The path coefficient of H2 is 0.095 which means that the trustworthiness relationship with customer citizenship behaviour has a positive influence. This is in accordance with the research by Eagly & Chaiken (1975), which considers that if other customers or influencers are considered trustworthy, their messages will be more effective in changing attitudes and behaviour. When trust is high, then customer citizenship behaviour will also be high as it will reduce uncertainty and increase understanding of other customers. Urban's research (2005) also says that when trust exists, customers are more willing to respond to brand advocacy and participate in giving suggestions for a brand. This finding also supports previous research, namely research by Robinson and Celuch (2016) regarding the importance of trust that customers feel in order to increase the intention to provide feedback in a service.

**Table 1.** Hypothesis Analysis

	Path Coefficient	T-value	P-value	Conclusion
Trustworthiness -> CPB	-0,083	1,256	0,209	Rejected
Trustworthiness -> CCB	0,095	2,006	0,045	Supported
CPB -> EBV	0,146	1,769	0,077	Rejected
CCB -> EBV	0,303	3,46	0,024	Supported
CPB -> PI	0,335	4,629	0,000	Supported
CCB -> PI	0,2	4,105	0,000	Supported
EBV -> PI	0,362	5,797	0,000	Supported
Trustworthiness -> CPB -> PI	-0,028	1,188	0,235	Rejected
Trustworthiness -> CCB -> PI	0,019	1,511	0,131	Rejected
Trustworthiness -> EBV -> PI	0,053	1,973	0,049	Supported
Trustworthiness -> CPB -> EBV -> PI	-0,004	0,969	0,333	Rejected
Trustworthiness -> CCB -> EBV -> PI	0,01	1,547	0,122	Rejected
Parasocial Relationship x Trustworthiness -> CPB	-0,017	0,717	0,473	Rejected
Parasocial Relationship x Trustworthiness -> CCB	-0,029	0,32	0,749	Rejected

Hypothesis Customer participation behaviour has positive effect on expected brand value is rejected as its T-value and P-value are both lower than the minimum requirement, T-value <1.96 and P-value >0.05. This means that the relationship between the variables customer participation behaviour and expected brand value is not significant. Among other variables, this hypothesis has the largest path coefficient and T-value, hence customer participation behaviour is the variable with the most positive influence on expected brand value.

This is in accordance with research from Zadeh et al. (2019) namely information seeking, providing information, personal interaction, and being responsible for influencing the value expectations felt by customers. In addition, this

hypothesis is also not in line with the research of Merz et al. (2018) who consider customers as people who want to participate in generating value and have expectations that drive brands to be better.

Customer citizenship behaviour has positive effect on expected brand value. With the T-value and P-value according to the criteria and positive path coefficient, it can be concluded that H0 is rejected and H4 is accepted with a significant and positive effect. Customers can voluntarily offer suggestions about products/services to brands to help improve quality (Gonçalves Curty & Zhang, 2013). Customers can also offer guidance to brands since customers have direct experience in various other products (Liang et al., 2011). According to Frassetto et al. (2019), empirical studies have shown customer citizenship behaviour can positively influence satisfaction, if satisfied, expectations for a brand will increase including brand satisfaction.

Customer participation behaviour has positive effect on purchase intention. The T-value and P-value of this hypothesis are 4.629 and 0.000 respectively. This means that with positive path coefficient, H5 is fulfilled significantly and has an effect on purchase intention. This is in accordance with research from Liu et al. (2018) and Ki & Kim (2019), namely sharing a product on social media influences customer decisions in purchase intention since according to See To and Ho (2014), social media has become a place to share information, develop and promote brands or products, and spread e-WOM.

Customer citizenship behaviour has positive effect on purchase intention is significant since T-value is  $>1.96$  and the P-value is  $<0.05$ . This positive path coefficient indicates that customer citizenship behaviour has positive effect on purchase intention. According to Kennedy & Guzmán (2017), customer citizenship behaviour can increase customer involvement and satisfaction in making decisions, where engagement increases purchase intention. In addition, according to Casalo (2010) and Hammedi et al. (2015), advocacy in customer citizenship behaviour encourages purchase intention.

Expected brand value has positive effect on purchase intention. This hypothesis has T-value of 5.797 and P-value of 0.000. Therefore, the hypothesis has a significantly positive effect. H7 is accepted which means the expected brand value has positive effect on purchase intention.

The hypothesis of this study is in line with the research of Ponte, et al. (2015) who showed that perceived value is the main antecedent of online purchases. In social media, brand engagement and expected brand value can directly influence purchase intention (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). When customers are more enthusiastic about brand engagement, the expected brand value increases and can increase purchase intention (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). In certain cases, such as e-commerce and tourism, the greater the value customers feel for a product on a website, the more likely they are to shop there. Likewise, Wu, et al. (2014) empirically concluded that when customers' perceptions of the value of a product or brand increase, their purchase intention also increases online.

Customer participation behaviour positively mediates the effect between trustworthiness and purchase intention, the hypothesis given has no effect and is not significant because the T-value and P-value are 1.188 and 0.253 which do not meet the minimum threshold. According to Wang (2022) some customers are worried about privacy issues, especially when buying high involvement products such as cars, so they will incur losses if they engage in customer participation behaviour on social media.

Customer citizenship behaviour positively mediates the relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intention is not significant and has no effect. H0 is accepted with a T-value of 1.511 and a P-value of 0.131. Whereas previous research such as Kok Wei & Li (2013) study said that customers will voluntarily share advocacy, assistance, and feedback when they receive information from sources they trust, so that these influencers will influence purchase intention (See To and Ho, 2014).

But this hypothesis is also in line with the research of AlFarraj et al. (2021) who examined the influence of online mediation on customer citizenship behaviour. In their study, it was proven that customer citizenship behaviour does mediate the relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intention. These different findings are due to differences in background and culture of the samples taken (AlFarraj et al., 2021).

Expected brand value mediates the relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intention, recommendations from trusted influencers will have impact on expected brand value which can influence customer perceptions of companies or products (Beck & Kenning, 2015), hence they will be related to purchase intention and by buying goods that are similar in value, so they will get recognition and trust (Hu et al., 2016). This hypothesis is in accordance with

the results of this study, since the study results have T-value of 1.973 and P-value of 0.049, and the path coefficient is 0.053 which means that they have positive effect and significant.

Customer participation behaviour [H10a], customer citizenship behaviour [H10b], and expected brand value respectively mediate the relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intention is accepted because the T-value and P-value exceed the conditions, namely for T-value  $< 1.96$  and P-value  $> 0.05$ . This can happen when customers trust influencers, especially for expensive products, such as cars, customer participation and citizenship behaviour will not affect purchase intention as customers do not need them or do not have sufficient resources to buy them. Apart from that, according to Ohanian (1991), trustworthiness does not have a significant influence on purchase intention. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a customer mediating variable participation behaviour, customer citizenship behaviour, and expected brand value have no effect on the relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intention.

Para-social relationship moderates the relationship between trustworthiness and customer participation behaviour and trustworthiness and customer citizenship behaviour (H11b) is rejected since its T-value is  $< 1.96$  and its P-value is  $> 0.05$ . H11a has T-value of 0.717 and P-value of 0.473. H11b has T-value of 0.32 and the P-value of 0.749. This is not in line with the research of Yuan et al. (2016).

However, the results of this research hypothesis are in accordance with the research of Pressrove & Pardun (2016) which says that the active role of influencers is also decisive for para-social relationships. Meanwhile, in the opinion of Fitra Eri's followers, Fitra Eri never replied to comments or direct messages from his followers whom he did not follow back, which means that Fitra Eri himself is less active in interacting with his followers.

From this research, brands can increase their role to further explore social media. From a managerial perspective, this research recommends brands to use social media to improve customer relationships, to optimize customer citizenship behaviour in online brand communities. This study examines the trustworthiness of influencer Fitra Eri and its implications towards his Instagram followers. Based on the findings in this study, brands need to have good involvement, since expected brand value will increase in line with the increasing of customer participation behaviour and customer citizenship behaviour. Brands must encourage customers to talk openly about their experiences in buying or using their products. Brands have an important role in increasing the effectiveness of influencers ability to influence customer participation behaviour and customer citizenship behaviour, to increase both expected brand value and purchase intention. Brands can use customer citizenship behaviour variables to increase expected brand value, by conducting campaigns on social media and providing a place to accommodate communications and interactions with the customers online. In addition, brands can also consider whether Fitra Eri is the most suitable automotive influencer to promote their brand according to the goals the brand wants to achieve.

Influencer marketing concentrates on particular individuals inside the influencer's network. Influencer marketing is understanding how followers are influenced. Influencer can benefit if the followers trust them, when followers perform customer participation behaviour and customer citizenship behaviour, then this effort plays a crucial role in persuading customers that a brand is worth more. This research can add value to practitioners' understanding on one of the dimensions of credibility, namely trustworthiness. The main findings of this study indicate that customers like influencers who can be trusted in their delivery and can increase customer citizenship behaviour, expected brand value, and purchase intention. One other contribution is knowing the impact of trustworthiness, customer participation behaviour, customer citizenship behaviour, on expected brand value, and purchase intention. The results of this study have contributed to theoretical understanding. With this research, having trusted influencers can cause purchase intention to arise. The existence of customer participation behaviour, customer citizenship behaviour, and expected brand value does not mediate trustworthiness with purchase intention, hence even though customer participation behaviour and customer citizenship behaviour are low or do not occur, purchase intention can still exist if the influencer is trusted.

## 5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of Fitra Eri's trustworthiness, customer citizenship behaviour, and customer participation behaviour, against customer's purchase intention. In addition, this study is also set out to determine the effect between customer citizenship behaviour and expected brand value mediating trustworthiness with purchase intention in automotive products. This study concludes that there is a significant direct effect between trustworthiness and customer citizenship behaviour, however there is no effect between trustworthiness and customer participation behaviour. This study also concludes that there is a positive influence between either customer

participation behaviour or customer citizenship behaviour, with expected brand value. Both customer participation behaviour and customer citizenship behaviour have direct and positive effect on purchase intention. Furthermore, expected brand value positively influence purchase intention. Expected brand value has partial mediating effect on the relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intention, while both customer citizenship behaviour and customer participation behaviour, have no such effect. This study also concludes that, pairing either expected brand value and customer citizenship behaviour, or expected brand value and customer participation behaviour, have no mediating effect as well on the relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intention. Lastly, para-social relationship does not moderate the relationship between trustworthiness with either customer participation behaviour or customer citizenship behaviour.

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