

Consumer Interpretation of Trust in Shopee Reviews and Ratings: A Warranting Theory Perspective

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Abstract

The development of e-commerce has changed people's consumption patterns in shopping, including in the purchasing decision-making process, which is now increasingly considered through online consumer reviews and ratings. This study aims to understand how consumers assess warranting cues and warrant value in reviews and ratings of local fashion products from the Erigo and Executive brands on Shopee. The main theory used in this study is Warranting Theory developed by Joseph B. Walther and Malcolm R. Parks, which explains that information from third parties is more credible than information from the seller. This study was conducted using a descriptive qualitative approach. Data collection techniques used observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, while the selection of informants used purposive sampling to obtain information relevant to the study. The results show that consumers assess trust based on the presence of Warranting Cues, such as visual evidence in the form of photos or videos, detailed product reviews based on personal experience, a minimum rating of four stars, and a high number of review likes. The identity of the review author is also an important consideration. In addition, the Shopee Mall label and brand image play a supporting role in building a stronger Warranting Value, so that reviews are considered more credible and convincing to be used as a basis for consideration in purchasing a product.

Keywords: consumer reviews, online ratings, Shopee, warranting theory, trust

INTRODUCTION

The development of e-commerce in Indonesia has shown a significant growth trend in recent years. Data from the Ministry of Trade (2024) estimates that e-commerce users will increase from 38.7 million in 2020 to more than 99 million in 2029, in line with the projected value of digital transactions reaching IDR 503 trillion in 2025 (Anggela, 2024). Of the various available platforms, Shopee holds the top position with the highest traffic, reaching 235.9 million visitors (SimilarWeb, 2025). The fashion category is the most frequently purchased product, with a purchase rate reaching 49%, indicating the category's dominance on the Shopee platform (Setyowati, 2023).

Shopee is an e-commerce platform that makes online shopping easier for consumers. Through digital devices such as smartphones or computers connected to the internet, consumers can efficiently access various Shopee services (Salsabila & Rusdianto, 2024). This platform offers several features designed to enhance transaction convenience and flexibility. These include free shipping on product purchases, installment payments via Shopee PayLetter, an instant payment system with ShopeePay, and a cash on delivery (COD) option (Maulana et al., 2022).

When shopping on the Shopee platform, consumers face limitations in directly assessing products. Therefore, reviews and ratings from other consumers serve as primary references in the decision-making process. Online reviews serve as a form of electronic word of mouth (cress) that can convey real-life experiences through text, photos, and videos. Meanwhile, star ratings also help consumers form perceptions of product quality (Ardianti & Widiartanto, 2019). Bright Local's 2025 research showed that reviews accompanied by photos, videos, or descriptions are perceived as more objective and can increase consumer trust (Paget, 2025).

Research by Nurafifah & Muflihah (2024) shows that consumer reviews, ratings, and prices have a significant impact on the purchasing decision process, in line with the theory explained by Lavidge and Steiner in the Hierarchy of Effect Model. This model explains the stages of consumer decision-making, starting from awareness, understanding information, interest, personal choice, conviction, to action of purchasing. Research by Ardianti & Widiartanto (2019) also shows that online consumer reviews and ratings have a significant influence on purchasing decisions. However, studies specifically analyzing how consumers assess Warranting Cues and Warranting Value on the Shopee platform are still limited.

Based on this background, this study utilizes the Warranting Theory developed by Joseph B. Walther and Malcolm R. Parks. This theory explores in depth the tendency of consumers to trust information from third parties or independent sources more than information provided directly by the relevant parties. These findings are necessary to understand how consumers assess and consider these factors in shaping their perceptions of the products they purchase.

When shopping on the Shopee marketplace, consumers cannot directly assess products through sight and touch before purchasing. The information they obtain generally comes from product descriptions compiled from the seller's perspective. In some cases, reviews indicate sellers delivering or even exchanging ordered items without prior confirmation. This has led to a decline in consumer trust in sellers (Capriati & Hikmah, 2024). One example of a case published by Media Konsumen occurred on April 4, 2023, when a consumer received a product that differed from the description and photos displayed by the *igoods.johnny* store. Despite reading claims that the product was 100% authentic, the complaint was rejected by the Shopee mediation team without further discussion, resulting in disappointment and a feeling of insecurity (Ayu, 2025).

Based on this phenomenon, this study focuses on fashion products from two prominent local brands in Indonesia, Erigo and Executive, which are popular on Shopee (Reka, 2025). Erigo is known for its casual and modern image, having even appeared at New York Fashion Week (Putwiliani, 2022). Meanwhile, Executive offers formal and elegant clothing (Sanjaya, 2022). Both brands provide online purchasing services through their official Shopee stores. The official store page records the highest sales of the Erigo brand is the Antelope Black Oversize T-Shirt - Unisex Oversize Shirt, while the Executive brand is the Executive Basic Oxford Long Sleeve Shirt Off White.

Before making a purchase, consumers tend to look at reviews first. Despite the lack of personal contact, approximately 70% of Indonesian consumers still trust consumer reviews (Debora, 2016). This indicates that online reviews and ratings play a significant role in shaping trust and influencing purchasing decisions. Therefore, this study is important because it can provide deeper insight into how consumers evaluate online consumer reviews and ratings on the Shopee platform. Using the Warranting Theory approach, this study emphasizes the extent to which information from third parties or consumer reviews is considered more convincing or credible than statements made by sellers.

Most previous research using Warranting Theory has examined consumer behavior quantitatively. Therefore, the researcher in this instance brings Warranting Theory into the qualitative realm to see how consumer behavior is formed when viewing product reviews before making a purchase. The novelty of this research lies in the use of Warranting Theory, which has not yet been applied to study consumer behavior regarding the brands Erigo, The Executive, and the Shopee platform. From this research, it will provide a contribution in the form of guidelines for online sellers to understand how consumers trust reviews and make purchasing decisions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC)

Computer Mediated Communication is the process of human communication thru computers. With this, CMC changes human interaction patterns by eliminating the boundaries of space and time, and mediating text, visual, and audio (Herring, 2007). CMC

has two characteristics, namely asynchronous and synchronous. E-commerce reviews fall under the asynchronous type of CMC because there is communication that is delayed or does not occur simultaneously.

Online Platform Credibility

Online Platform Credibility is a theoretical concept that measures the extent to which users perceive a digital platform as trustworthy, possessing expertise, and presenting accurate information with minimal bias (Fogg, 2003). Flanagin and Metzger (2008) divide online information credibility into three main levels: 1. Source Credibility: Assessment of who produces the message. For example, is the reviewer on Shopee a real buyer? 2. Message Credibility: Assessment of the content of the message itself. For example, is the review detailed, reasonable, and accompanied by photos/videos?). 3. Site/Platform Credibility: A holistic assessment of the digital platform. Users view the platform's reputation institutionally, for example, Shopee as a major e-commerce platform has security systems, money-back guarantees, and account curation like the Shopee Mall label. If the platform itself is considered credible, users will be more inclined to trust the information (eWOM) within it.

Online Trust

Trust Online trust is a psychological condition when one party is willing to accept risk or be vulnerable to the actions of another party in the digital space, based on the belief that the other party will behave as expected. According to Charles Gefen et al. (2003) in the study of information systems and digital consumer trust, online trust in the e-commerce world is crucial because digital transactions are filled with high uncertainty. This trust is built on three main dimensions, namely ability (the capability of the platform/seller), benevolence (the seller's good intention not to deceive), and integrity (the honesty and consistency of the information presented).

Warranting Theory

Warranting Theory was developed by Joseph B. Walther and Malcolm R. Parks, which examines how individuals form impressions and assess the trustworthiness of information obtained through computer-mediated communication (CMC) (Cherney, 2023). The core concept of this theory is Warranting Value, which refers to the extent to which information cannot be easily changed or manipulated by the recipient. The more difficult it is to manipulate the information, the higher its Warranting Value, and the greater the level of trust placed in it by the recipient (Littlejohn et al., 2021).

This theory distinguishes two types of information:

1. Self-generated information

Information created or controlled directly by the subject of the information, such as a product descriptions or product photo provided by the seller. This information tends to have low warranting value because it is easily manipulated.

2. Other-generated information

Information originating from third parties or independent sources that have no direct interest in the subject of the information, such as consumer reviews. This information has higher warranting value because it is considered more objective and difficult to manipulate.

In the context of e-commerce, consumer reviews from buyers serve as other-generated information. Reviews that include tangible evidence such as photos or videos are considered strong warranting cues, which are clues or indicators that help consumers assess the authenticity and credibility of the information. The presence of strong warranting cues increases warranting value, leading consumers to trust the reviews more when making purchasing decisions (Littlejohn et al., 2021).

METHODOLOGY

This study applies a descriptive method with a qualitative approach that aims to understand how consumers assess online consumer reviews and ratings on the Shopee platform. Merriam (2009), argues in Waruwu (2024), that qualitative research is a process that involves direct observation of an object with the aim of gaining in-depth understanding through the process of interpretation, problem definition, detailed description, and natural analysis of meaning with sentences according to context.

The study was conducted in Banyumas Regency, Central Java. According to the Central Java Provincial Statistics Agency (2022), internet network utilization in Banyumas Regency has shown significant growth, marked by increasingly widespread and accessible internet access. In 2021, social media or social networking usage reached 91.63%, reflecting the high level of digital technology use in the region. Furthermore, online purchases of goods and services in the same year were recorded at 13.16%, indicating an early trend in people's digital consumption behavior.

Informants were selected using a purposive sampling approach. This technique is used in qualitative research that intentionally selects informants who have knowledge, experience, and direct involvement with the phenomenon or problem being studied. The specific criteria for the informant profile are: 1) The informant is someone who actively uses Shopee with a minimum of 2 years of shopping on Shopee, 2) The informant has experience in reading product reviews and ratings on Shopee, 3) The informant is male and female, 4) The informant is an early adult individual with an age range of 18 to 40 years. Referring to these criteria, the research determined six informants who were selected as sources of information for this study.

The informants consist of 6 consumers and are considered sufficient in this study because data saturation has been reached. Simply put, data is considered saturated when the researcher interviews the next informant but no new information, patterns, or themes are found. All the answers started to repeat from what was conveyed by informants 1 to 4. Gresswell and Crewell (2018) also state that for qualitative research, a

sample size of 3-10 is quite adequate, provided that the interviews are conducted in-depth until reaching the point of saturation.

The data collection techniques used in this study were observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Direct observation techniques were established by observing online consumer reviews and ratings of fashion products on Shopee, specifically for the Erigo T-shirt Oversize Antelope Black – Kaos Oversize Unisex and the Executive Basic Oxford Long Sleeve Shirt Off White. The type of observation applied was non-participatory, where the researcher only observed information online. In-depth interviews allowed for direct questions to be asked to consumers. This research documentation serves as supporting evidence in analyzing the application of Warranting Theory regarding the extent to which information originating from third parties (consumers) is considered more trustworthy than information originating from sellers.

The researcher tested the validity of this descriptive qualitative data by applying four trustworthiness criteria standards from Lincoln and Guba (1985), namely credibility thru method triangulation by comparing interview data from 6 informants, observations of reviews from Shopee Mall Erigo and The Executive, and documentation, followed by source triangulation and member checking, then dependability and confirmability thru the application of an audit trail that transparently documents the entire analysis process and direct quotes from informants to minimize personal bias, as well as transferability thru the preparation of a thick description report so that the essence of this research finding can be understood and contextually applied in similar e-commerce ecosystems.

The stages of data analysis in this study are conducted systematically using a thematic analysis approach consisting of five crucial phases (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The process begins with verbatim transcription of the interviews to convert all audio recordings from 6 informants into written textual data, which is then followed by repeatedly reading the data to build deep familiarity with the informants' narrative experiences. Next, the researcher conducted data reduction by creating codes (coding) in the form of conceptual labels on excerpts of Shopee reviews and ratings, then grouping these codes into macro themes relevant to the constructs of warranting cues, warranting value, and online trust. In the final stage, the researchers conducted an in-depth synthesis to draw credible and objective conclusions about how the credibility of the platform and consumer reviews influence the purchasing decisions of local fashion products Erigo and The Executive.

RESULTS

This section presents the results of research using in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation of consumer review and rating content on the Shopee platform. The products used in the study were Erigo and Executive. Documentation was conducted using screenshots of reviews and ratings. The screenshot period was March, April, and May 2025, with a total of 30 reviews per product. The results of this study focus

on findings related to consumers' assessment of online product reviews and ratings on Shopee using Warranting Theory.

Overview of Erigo and Executive Products on the Shopee Platform

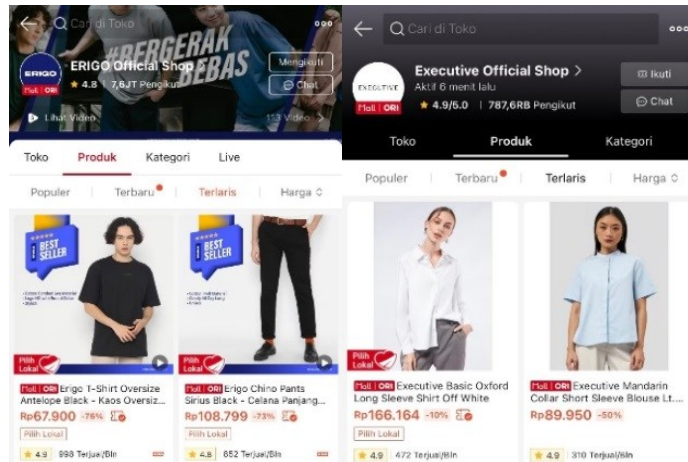


Figure 1. Erigo and Executive Store Pages on Shopee.

Source: Screenshot of Erigo and Executive Store Pages on Shopee

The image above shows the Shopee store pages for the Erigo and Executive brands. According to the Shopee app, the platform offers various features to facilitate convenient shopping for consumers. Fashion products topped consumer preferences in Indonesia in 2022, 2023, and 2024. Observations indicate that 49% of Indonesians shopped for fashion products in 2022.

This trend intensified in 2023. Jakpat, an online survey platform, showed that fashion remained the top product purchased, with 88% of consumers purchasing it. In 2024, fashion products increasingly dominated. Especially during National Online Shopping Day (Harbolnas), transaction value was led by fashion products. The increasing popularity of these products demonstrates that Indonesian consumers are increasingly aware of their style and fashion trends.

The most popular Indonesian fashion brands on the Shopee Indonesia platform are Erigo and Executive. Erigo is known for its modern designs and adherence to current trends. Based on product categories on Shopee, Erigo offers a variety of products, including clothing, jackets, pants, and accessories. Erigo is not only popular in Indonesia but has also successfully penetrated international markets. Erigo's appearance at New York Fashion Week demonstrates its commitment to the global fashion industry.

Meanwhile, Executive is an Indonesian fashion brand that has been around since 1984. It is known for its men's and women's clothing collections that combine modern style with classic essences. The brand's presence on Shopee makes it easier for consumers to purchase men's and women's clothing collections more conveniently,

without having to visit a physical store. Through Shopee, Executive offers a variety of product categories, ranging from formal and casual wear to complementary accessories suitable for various occasions.

When shopping online, one of the challenges consumers face is the inability to touch or try the product directly. To mitigate this uncertainty, many consumers rely on customer reviews as a reference. Reviews that include firsthand experiences can provide a realistic picture of the product's quality, comfort, and suitability to the description. Therefore, customer reviews of brands like Erigo and Executive are a key consideration when making a purchase.

The products examined in this study included the top-selling products from the Erigo and Executive brands available on the Shopee platform. Erigo's top-selling product was the Antelope Black Oversize T-Shirt – Unisex Oversize Shirt. Meanwhile, Executive's top-selling product was the Off-White Executive Basic Oxford Long Sleeve Shirt.

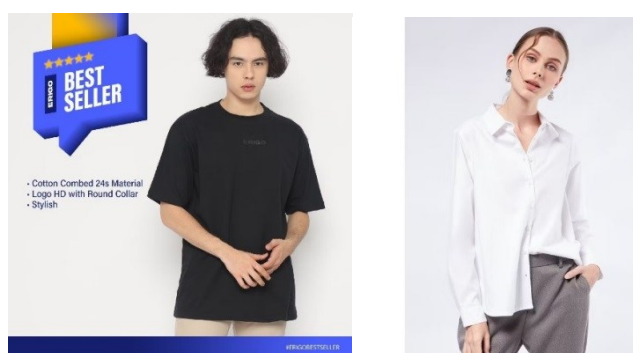


Figure 2. The best-selling products at Erigo and Executive stores.

Source: Screenshot of Erigo and Executive's Most Sold Products on Shopee

According to Erigo's Shopee store page, t-shirt is the best-selling product, with sales exceeding ten thousand units. The product has a 4.9 rating and 31 thousand reviews, receiving a positive response from online consumers. Meanwhile, the Executive product, the Executive Basic Oxford Long Sleeve Shirt Off White, has managed to sell 503 units per month, with total sales reaching 4,000 units. This positive customer support is reflected in the product's 4.9 rating, based on 1,800 online consumer reviews.

Reviews and Ratings as the Initial Basis of Trust (Online Trust)

Out of three Executive informants, it was stated that high ratings are the initial attraction for consumers. Meanwhile, two out of three Erigo informants, namely Shafira and Manan, also emphasized the importance of reviewing ratings when first seeing a product. According to them, the rating serves as an initial indicator of quality before reading the detailed reviews. Rating is considered capable of providing an initial picture of the level of consumer satisfaction with the product. As Shafira stated:

"Rating helps us to consider whether to buy the Erigo product or not. For example, the rating for clothes, especially shirts, is 4.9. But for items like those, 4.8 is okay, still fine." (Interview with Shafira, June 17, 2025)

The high rating is considered to represent the quality of the product. However, Nada has a different perspective on ratings compared to other informants. Nada mentioned that a product rating of 3.0, which is not too high, indicates sufficient quality. Nada's viewpoint opens a new perception in understanding the warranting value of consumer reviews and ratings. According to her, a rating of 3.0 is not a bad indicator, but rather an honest and realistic assessment. This statement is in stark contrast to the dominant responses from informants that a good rating is at least 4.8.

Not only that, the six informants when shopping also often look at the catalog photos and product descriptions from the seller as an initial reference. However, to decide on purchasing a product, they will rely on reviews from other consumers. As Manan stated in his interview:

"The seller's description also has a significant impact, but in my opinion, consumers who comment clearly are very helpful." (Interview with Manan, June 15, 2025).

According to Manan, reviews written by consumers serve as a reference in purchasing decisions. Reviews can be trusted or relied upon if they are supported by detailed information such as design, color, material, quality, and body size. Specific reviews like that are considered Warranting Cues based on direct consumer experience, making them more convincing compared to brief reviews. The genuine involvement of consumers makes the review considered honest and psychologically convincing. This helps consumers adjust the product to their personal preferences and needs.

Meanwhile, according to Shafira, consumers are not only looking for positive reviews and visual evidence, but also clarity and objectivity. Terms like "mantap" or "keren" are considered less informative because their meanings are subjective. The inconsistency between visual evidence and the content of the review also adds doubt to the authenticity of the consumer experience. However, Shafira's view differs from Manan's, who claims to have never encountered dubious reviews on Erigo products.

Photos and Videos as Visual Evidence that Strengthens Trust

Three informants believe that ratings alone are not enough to be the main benchmark. Reviews in the form of visual evidence of consumer experiences who have already purchased are considered more convincing. According to Rangga and Nazwa, conveying a high rating will be more credible if accompanied by detailed information and visual evidence. Even before purchasing a product, Rangga looks for content references thru social media platforms like YouTube and TikTok in the form of video reviews or try-on haul videos that showcase the product directly.



Figure 3. Product Reviews on Shopee.

Source: Screenshot of Erigo and Executive Product Reviews on Shopee.

Based on the image above, one strong indicator that is considered to enhance the reliability of reviews is the presence of photos or videos. This element is considered very important because it provides a direct picture of the actual condition of the product. The presence of visual evidence serves as proof that the review was written based on personal experience. The six (6) informants agreed that the presence of visual evidence in reviews uploaded by consumers can help them. As in assessing the authenticity and quality of the product objectively, here is a quote from the interview with Nada:

"If there are photos or videos, there is a picture, so it's like we can see it directly as if we were offline, it doesn't feel like online if there are photos or videos from the customer. If there are photos or videos, it helps me make a purchase." (Interview with Nada, June 20, 2025).

Visual elements in reviews provide a more realistic and convincing shopping experience. Nada feels that photos or videos uploaded by consumers in reviews present the actual condition of the product.

Consumer Behavior in Viewing the Number of "Likes" Before Purchasing In Shopee

There is a number of "likes" or thumbs up in a review from consumers as shown in the image below:

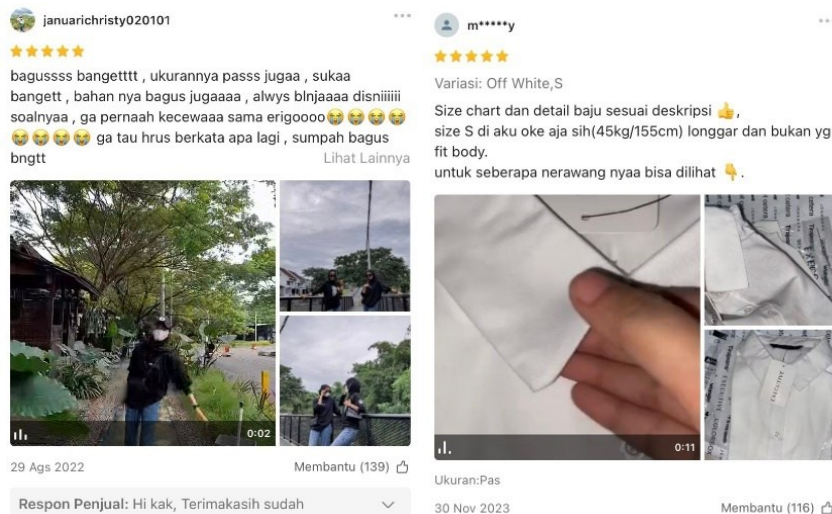


Figure 4. Erigo and Executive Product Reviews with Likes.

Source: Screenshot of Erigo and Executive Product Reviews on Shopee.

Based on interviews with Executive informants, perceptions in evaluating reviews based on the number of "likes" yield different findings. Nazwa and Nada conveyed that they tend to trust reviews that receive many "likes." According to them, these reviews have helped many people, and the statements in the reviews are justified. The number of "likes" is considered a form of validation that the information conveyed in the review is trustworthy. Indicators such as the number of "likes" on reviews that appear at the top position are also taken into account by informants Nazwa and Nada.

However, Rangga expressed a different opinion. According to him, although "likes" can be an indicator, Rangga still prefers to look at reviews as a whole. Including reviews that mention the product's shortcomings. Similarly to Shafira, who also takes a critical view of the number of "likes":

"I don't, I actually don't focus on that, I mean, likes seem to be very helpful, right? In the reviews, they directly help us filter again. For example, if people like it, it means they also agree with what is accepted, so we look at it again, sis." Basically, it doesn't really matter. Care, but again, let's just focus on the original review, not looking at a lot of these, yeah, there are a lot, but this one is definitely the most accurate, no. Not like that." (Interview with Shafira, June 17, 2025).

Shafira's view aligns with the opinions expressed by Manan and Wahyu. Although the number of "likes" helps in filtering information, it is not the main determinant of the review's reliability. The essence of a review lies in the authenticity and relevance of the review's content to the received product. So it's not just about its popularity, but also its relevance to consumer experiences.

Anonymous Accounts Are Still Trusted If Supported by Visual Evidence

Based on interviews with Erigo informants, it was found that they place more trust in information from reviews that include the identity of the consumer. As Shafira stated in an interview like this:

"Okay, first the account, I trust kpopers' accounts more. Because I also have a Shopee account for kpopers." So there must be an active person changing the name, the username, so there are people who are changing it. And clearly, there is a profile, the product description, that's the quality, and also, for example, if there are any issues, maybe they provide an explanation in the description, I would trust that more." (Interview with Shafira, June 17, 2025).

Shafira stated that a trusted review is one that can provide detailed information and visual evidence that is contextually appropriate or relevant. In addition, the identity of the review writer, such as a K-pop themed account, indicates the presence of human interaction behind it. And not only does it provide a 5-star review, but it also includes detailed reasons.

Unlike Shafira, Manan stated that account identity is not crucial for him. Meanwhile, according to Wahyu, the identity of consumers in providing reviews on Shopee plays an important role. Wahyu argues that the use of real names by consumers can increase trust. Because it shows that the review was made based on real experiences and not fictional.

Having a different perspective from the informant Erigo, Nazwa and Nada conveyed that the pseudonym is not the main concern. They do not pay much attention to the pseudonyms of the reviewers. Anonymous accounts do not directly reduce trust in reviews and ratings. However, a different perspective was expressed by Rangga. Rangga believes that reviews from anonymous accounts tend to refer to fake reviews or buzzers. According to him, the lack of clear identity is an indicator of the low authenticity of the information in the review. This ultimately reduces the level of trust in the reviews and the information within the reviews. However, differing views on anonymous accounts do not diminish the focus on the quality of the review content.

The Shopee Mall Feature Shapes Product Credibility Perception

According to Manan, consumer trust levels are influenced by the credibility of the seller, such as the Shopee Mall label. In this case, the presence of a label like Shopee Mall is considered quite convincing that the products sold are genuine and trustworthy. Through the observations conducted, it was found that the Erigo and Executive stores on the Shopee platform have been verified as Shopee Mall. This verification indicates that the products offered are guaranteed to be authentic. In addition, the strong brand image and consistency of both brands also strengthen consumer trust.

Shafira believes that Erigo's achievement at fashion week increases consumer purchasing interest. Shafira feels that the brand's existence creates a psychological push for consumers to want to own Erigo products. Shafira acknowledges that the fear of

missing out (FOMO) factor also influences her decision to buy Erigo products, as she mentioned in her interview:

"It is influential, very influential, because it follows the FOMO trend, of course, and also to be seen, of course." "Yes, it greatly influences the increase in purchase interest." (Interview with Shafira, June 17, 2025).

The reputation built by Executive is capable of influencing consumers in increasing their purchase interest. Rangga, as an informant, stated that Executive's reputation is an important factor in the decision to purchase a product. The good reputation that Executive has becomes one of the main considerations. However, a different opinion was expressed by Nazwa. Nazwa sees that her trust in the Executive brand is not only based on the brand's general reputation but also on platform attributes, such as the verified status of the Executive account as part of Shopee Mall.

DISCUSSION

Based on the research findings that have been presented, it was found that consumers of the local fashion brands Erigo and Executive on the Shopee platform do not simply purchase the products, but rather engage in a critical evaluation process first. This finding aligns with the core of Warranting Theory, which is a theory in computer-mediated communication (CMC) developed by Walther and Parks (2002). This theory explains how individuals form perceptions or impressions of others based on the information they obtain. The essence of this theory is that information that cannot be easily manipulated by the individual subject of the information, such as consumer reviews, has a higher trust value or warranting value. Conversely, information created directly by the individual, known as self-generated information, such as personal profiles or product promotional descriptions, is considered to have lower warranting value because it tends to be arranged according to interests. Therefore, recipients of information tend to trust independent external sources more (Cherney, 2023). The following is the concept of warranting theory based on research:

Warranting Cues

Warranting cues are initial clues to identify the trustworthiness of an information source, which determines its warranting value. In general, individuals or sellers have less control over what is uploaded or shared online. Therefore, self-generated information tends to have low warranting value because it is easily manipulated. Conversely, online information uploaded or shared by a third party has high warranting value (Liu & Zhang, 2020).

Walther and colleagues in Liu & Zhang (2020), created fake Facebook profiles for an experiment. They manipulated the profiles to make them appear friendly and extroverted (first study) and physically attractive (second study). The first study only provided mixed support for Warranting Theory, while the second study provided stronger evidence that information from others does influence impressions of a person more than information created by oneself.

Walther's research aligns with the findings of this study, namely Warranting Theory, which states that information conveyed by third parties carries a higher level of trust in people's perceptions compared to information from sellers. Furthermore, Cherney's (2023) research revealed the same finding that information sourced from others, or other-generated information, has a greater impact on impression formation than self-generated content.

The results of this study are consistent with those of Liu & Zhang (2020), which support warranting theory by showing that posts from Chinese students on Facebook pages have low warranting value due to their ease of manipulation. Meanwhile, information sourced from posts by others is more credible.

When purchasing a product online on Shopee, consumers need to consider many factors, such as product reviews and previous customer ratings. Visual evidence in reviews is a crucial element in strengthening the credibility and appeal of information shared by previous customers. This aligns with the findings of Wahpiyudin et al. (2022), which noted that consumer reviews on the Shopee platform typically contain visual evidence and information related to specific details of the product purchased.

Visual evidence can take the form of personally taken product photos or videos, such as unboxing videos, or even before-and-after comparisons of product use. This evidence creates a sense of honesty and transparency, helping consumers build on real-life experiences and reduce uncertainty. These reviews convey a sense of authenticity, as demonstrated in a research by Saehu et al. (2025), which concluded that authentic reviews can influence consumers' purchasing decisions.

These detailed and informative reviews contain specific descriptions of previous consumer experiences, such as material quality, stitching, color, fit, and shipping speed. Such details demonstrate that the reviewer has actually used the product and experienced the purchasing process firsthand, thus providing authenticity. The results of this study are similar to those of Nuraini (2023), which identified that Generation Z currently prefers visual evidence in reviews, detailed descriptions of product quality. However, this study differs by incorporating price as a factor in consumer purchase intention.

In addition to visual evidence, ratings are also a consideration and initial step in evaluating a product. Research by Aji (2023) found that consumer feedback, or ratings, significantly impacted product purchase intentions. Therefore, in line with this study, ratings or star ratings given by previous consumers serve as a quick indicator for consumers in assessing a product's quality.

The influence of ratings in shaping consumers' initial perceptions is further reinforced by a study conducted by Lakuy & Sopacua (2024), which states that many individuals rely on the testimonials of others as a basis for trust when purchasing goods. High ratings and objective reviews often create the impression that a product is of

superior quality and worth purchasing. Therefore, due to the influence of other consumers' reviews, it can trigger an emotional impulse to purchase.

Warranting Value

The concept of Warranting Value is part of Warranting Theory introduced by Walther and Parks. DeAndrea explains that Warranting Value arises from Warranting Cues, which are clues indicating that information reflects the reality of an individual or product in the real world (Cherney, 2023). In e-commerce, such as Shopee, product descriptions from sellers are self-generated information with low warranting value. Conversely, consumer reviews that include real photos or videos are considered to have high Warranting Value because they reflect real experiences and are perceived as more honest.

From a Warranting Theory perspective, clear user identities, such as accounts that appear active or display a plausible name and profile photo, can act as Warranting Cues and have high Warranting Value. These cues create the perception that the consumer is genuine and engaged in purchasing the product, thereby reducing the likelihood that the review is fake or manipulative. These results are consistent with a previous study by Wahpiyudin et al. (2022) on three e-commerce platforms: Shopee, Tokopedia, and Lazada. Product reviewers still do not use real photos or names, remaining anonymous.

The phenomenon of anonymity was also seen on the Twitter account @jogjamnfs in Cesar & Aprilia's (2023) study, where informants felt freer to express themselves without a recognizable identity. However, the results of this study indicate that not all consumers consider identity a primary factor. Reviews that are informative, relevant, and accompanied by visual evidence are considered more likely to contribute to trust than the author's identity.

Furthermore, brand image plays a crucial role in shaping consumer trust, particularly in fashion products. Brand identity and reputation serve as benchmarks for assessing character and credibility, as demonstrated by Erigo, which carries a modern, casual image, and Executive, which is more formal and elegant. This finding aligns with Sofyansyah's (2025) findings, which emphasize that brand reputation impacts loyalty and repeat purchases. In addition, brand image also strengthens consumer retention. A study by Sindarto & Ellitan (2022) showed that a positive brand image fosters stronger retention in consumers' minds. As a result, consumers become more familiar with and easily recognize the product.

In e-commerce platforms like Shopee, Warranting Theory strengthens consumer trust through Warranting Cues and Warranting Value. One key indicator is the Shopee Mall label, which indicates that a product comes from an official brand or trusted distributor, such as Erigo and Executive. This label serves as a guarantee of authenticity and quality, and increases the value of the Warranting Cue.

These interview findings align with an article by Shopee (2024), which states that Shopee Mall is awarded to stores that have passed a rigorous curation process and offer additional benefits such as product returns. Thus, the label not only builds trust but also serves as proof of validity, strengthening purchasing decisions.

Informant assessments demonstrate relevance to Warranting Theory, where independent reviews have a high warranting value because they are not fully controlled by the seller. Information from other parties (other-generated information) is considered more credible than self-generated information. Warranting cues such as visual evidence, detailed information, ratings above 4.0, and clear author identity strengthen the authenticity of the review. Further, a positive brand image and affiliation with Shopee Mall also increase the warranting value and build trust in the product.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to gain a deeper understanding of consumers' assessment of trust in reviews and ratings on the Shopee platform. This study uses the warranting theory approach developed by Walther and Parks (2002). The findings indicate that third-party information, particularly reviews from consumers who have made purchases, has a higher warranting value than the seller's product description. Warranting cues such as photos or videos, detailed reviews, seller identity, and high ratings have been shown to strengthen review credibility. Furthermore, a positive brand image and Shopee Mall contribute to the perception of trust. The more comprehensive and relevant the information provided, the higher the resulting warranting value.

This study contributes to understanding how consumers assess trust in online reviews and ratings through a Warranting Theory approach. These findings certainly have shortcomings that require attention in terms of methodology, analysis, and discussion. Therefore, future research could consider expanding the research object and context, such as by comparing different product types, other online shopping platforms, or examining differences in consumer behavior across generations.

The practical implications of this research include recommendations for e-commerce platforms like Shopee to develop a feature that marks reviews from "verified consumers" to minimize the presence of fake buyers or buzzers. For brands and sellers, this research emphasizes the importance of encouraging consumers to provide authentic reviews, clear experiences, and visual documentation. Meanwhile, consumers are expected to go beyond rating scores and also consider the credibility of the reviewer, the content provided, and supporting evidence to make more informed purchasing decisions.

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