

## **Online Customer Reviews and Purchase Intention: The Moderating Role of Brand Image**

Heba Abdel Wahab

1. Faculty of commerce and business administration, Future University in Egypt, 90th street Fifth settlement, new Cairo Egypt

E-mail of the corresponding author:  
heba.abdelwahab@fue.edu.eg

Sahar Ahmed Nagaty

2. Faculty of management, Sadat Academy for management sciences, P.O. Box: 2222 CABLE SAMSAD A.R.E

### **Abstract**

Communication through word of mouth has been recognized to have a significant influence on consumer behavior and purchase intention. Due to the rapid growth of internet usage, a non-personal but global form of communication known as online word of mouth or online customer reviews was created. It has been considered as a new version of the traditional word of mouth, where customers could use several sources on the internet to have hands-on information created by others about the products/services they intend to buy. Moreover, Brand image has also been recognized as a key driver that positively influences consumers' purchase intention. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the effect of online customer reviews on purchase intention, as well as to examine the moderating role of brand image in the relationship between customer online reviews and purchase intention. The selected brand sector was the mothers who purchase diapers for their children, focusing on Pampers as a well-known brand. Data was gathered through online self-administered questionnaires from a sample of 294 mothers who

purchase the brand Pampers for their children. Statistical analysis was conducted to analyze the gathered data whereby appropriate statistical techniques and tests were employed. Results revealed that online consumers' reviews have a significant positive effect on brand image and that brand image was significantly and positively related to purchase intention. Furthermore, online consumers' reviews had no significant impact on purchase intention. Additionally, brand image moderates the relationship between online consumers' reviews and purchase intention. It was also revealed that online customer reviews have a significant positive indirect effect on purchase intention. Research findings were discussed to reflect on the researchers' interpretation and perception of the outcomes addressed.

**Keywords:** Word of mouth communication, online word of mouth, online customers' reviews, purchase intention, brand image, and diapers industry.

## 1. Introduction

When consumers intend to buy a product, they go through a decision process that ranges from a very simple to a very complex process depending on the type of decision and the type of product. A very important step of this process is the search for information that can help the consumer in making the purchase decision. One of the important source information is the word of mouth communication or the opinions of customers who have experienced the product or the service. The communication using the word of mouth (WOM) has a significant effect on consumer behavior and purchase intention (Chatterjee, 2001; Sen and Ierman, 2007; Xia and Bechwati, 2008). Researchers have concluded that the use of word of mouth has more impact than the other forms of communication (Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Smith et al. ., 2005; Trusov, et al. ., 2009) because customers perceive it a source of trustworthy information (Gruen et al. ., 2006). Accordingly it is considered credible and reliable information that can persuade greatly the customers (Chatterjee, 2001; Godes and Mayzlin, 2004; Mayzlin , 2006).

Although the communication using the WOM has been known essentially as one to one communication between customers (Chatterjee, 2001; Sen and Lerman, 2007), but the rapid growth of internet has created a non-personal but global form of communication called online word of mouth (eWOM) or online customer reviews (OCR) (Brown, et al., 2007; Chatterjee, 2001; Davis and Khazanchi, 2008; Godes and Mayzlin, 2004; Kiecker and Cowles, 2001; Xia and Bechwati, 2008). This form of communication has helped consumers to add a large quantity of information that can have an impact on other consumers (Chatterjee, 2001; Chen and Xie, 2008; Dellarocas, 2000; Godes and Mazylin, 2004). Recent researches concluded that information generated by consumers or what we can call online customer reviews can have an impact on consumer behavior (Chatterjee, 2001; Chen and Xie, 2008). Nevertheless, consumers do not depend only on online customer reviews when choosing to buy a product. Brand image is also an important factor in this decision process. It can influence positively or negatively the consumers' behavior. Nowadays, the big challenge for organizations is how to create a stronger image for their products in the mind of the customers to influence their purchase decision. Therefore, the aim of this research is to study the effect of online customer reviews and purchase intention, as well as examining the moderating role of brand image in the relationship between customer online reviews and purchase intention in the diapers industry in Egypt focusing on Pampers brand.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Online Customer Reviews (OCR)**

Since individuals existed, word-of-mouth communication has been used. However, using it in the marketing concept is comparatively new. These communications, which companies in the past have hardly noticed or ignored, have now become one of the most important marketing instruments (Gürcü, and Korkmaz, 2018).

Word-of-mouth (WOM) communication is regarded as a significant aspect influencing the buying behavior of customers.

Latest studies indicate that marketing using the word-of-mouth helps companies to efficiently sell their products to customers (Meiners, Schwarting and Seeberger, 2010). Features such as interaction, speed and absence of business interest, are likely to make word-of-mouth communication one of the most efficient sources of data for future customer choice. In this context, communication using word-of-mouth can be said to be one of the most significant elements influencing customer decision-making (East, Hammond and Wright, 2007).

Consumers acquire data about products, services or organizations from different channels. This information can be obtained from other customers or sales personnel (East, Hammond and Wright, 2007; Mookerjee, 2001). The presence of many options in the market for the same or comparable products leads customers to use objective, autonomous and consistent sources of data about other consumer preferences (Cop and Gümüş, 2009; Özkan, and Yıldız, 2015).

Remarkable Internet growth has developed a new type of word of mouth called online customers reviews presented in a printed electronic form (Demirbaş, 2018). Online customer reviews have become a significant source of consumer data, replacing and completing other types of word of mouth communication (Chevalier and Mayzlin; 2006) The online customer reviews or recommendations are generated by the online users who have experienced the product or the service. These online reviews can be either information or opinions about the product or the service from the customers' point of view (Park, et al. ., 2007) that has gained lots of importance because of its possible effect on customers purchase decisions (Chen and Xie, 2008).

Even though organizations also publish information about their products, but it is different than the information generated by customers in three elements: credibility, orientation and presentation. First previous researches concluded that information generated by customers are more credible than the information generated by organizations (Dellarocas,2003) because organizations have tendency to neglect the negative

points of their product (Park, et al., 2007). Second the orientation, the customer online reviews are customer oriented they describe the use of the product and its points of strength and weaknesses from the customers' point of view (Dellarocas,2003). Finally, the presentation, organization generated information is presented using a unified form. While the customer generated information is not unified, it can take several forms and can be biased information, emotive impressions, unbiased or fair information (Park, et al.,2007).

Customers' online reviews are considered a new version of the traditional word of mouth, both are alike because they are considered as an important tool for communicating customers' opinions about a product or a service (Trusov et al. , 2009) Chatterjee, 2001; Chen and Xie. 2008). But there are important differences between them. Classic word of mouth can influence the limited surrounding of the individual customer while the online consumer reviews can influence a larger number of customers because they are sent through the internet which is seen all over the world (Chen and Xie, 2008). Besides the sources for the classic word of mouth are close people like family members, work colleagues or friends, while online customer reviews are generated from stranger internet users who have experienced the product or the service (Ratchford, et al.,2001). The content and the quantity of these reviews are very important because if the content is logic and can persuade the customers they can easily believe it, and if a large number of customers recommend a product or service other customer can have a positive opinion towards it (Park, et al. , 2007).

## **2.2 Purchase Intention**

Purchase intention was considered by Chen, Hsu, and Lin (2010) as a result of pre-purchase satisfaction while others viewed it as a sort of decision making that shows why consumers buy a certain product in a certain situation (Shah et al., 2012; Mirabi et al., 2015). Therefore, it can be categorized as one of the core elements of the buyer cognitive behavior that can indicate the consumer's willingness and prospecting to purchase a brand (Ling, et al 2010;

Hosein, 2012). It is likewise used as an indicator of evaluating the consumer behavior, as well as a vital element to predict the consumer's buying process (Wu et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2017). Before deciding to purchase a product, consumers are going through a six-stages model that starts with the awareness stage, then knowledge and interest afterwards, followed by preference and then persuasion, and then purchase intention comes at last (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010); Kawa et al., 2013). As the final behaviour of the consumer is a result of intention that grants his real final action, the consumer goes through a full conscious attempt in kind of cognitive intention in order to decide how to act in the future in a pre-chosen way (Baber et al., 2016). Purchase intention is considered a consumer's conscious plan to attempt to buy a specific item (Diallo, 2012).

Product information, quality, and prices were considered as the most influential attributes that positively influence the consumers' purchase intention (Kotler and Keller, 2012); whereas Gogoi (2013) claimed that internal and external motivations may also affect consumers during their buying process. When consumers think of purchasing, they consider a not well-known and low-priced product with plain packaging as high risk as they do not quite trust its quality (Gogoi 2013). The more the probability for purchasing a product or brand increases, the stronger would be the consumers' purchase intention created towards that product (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2005). But higher purchase intention doesn't mean that the consumer will surely buy the product it only means that the likelihood of purchasing is very high (Wang and Tsai, 2014). On the other hand, a lower intention doesn't wipe out the possibility to purchase the product.

Bickart and Schindler (2001) explained how important reliable internet sources are and how they would positively influence the consumers' willingness to purchase. Previous researches likewise consolidated purchase intention as the main indicator for the success of an online advertisement and as one of the mainly common outcome variables of online customer reviews (OCRs) communication (Moe and Fader, 2004; Sher and Lee, 2009; Lee

and Lee, 2009). Accordingly, it was declared that e-WOM as well as OCRs impact the consumers' purchase intention with a positive direct relationship (Mauri and Minazzi (2013); Lee et al., 2011; Jalilvand, and Samiei, 2012). Nevertheless, online trust, product type and features and the extent of customer's involvement are some important factors that affect the nature and strengths of this relationship (Park et al., 2007; Sen & Lerman, 2007). Plotkina and Munzel (2016) therefore announced that customer online reviews (OCRs) can be used effectively to increase the consumers' purchase intention towards new products. This depends on how well promotion claims with the prompt information sources.

Positive brand information has great impact on the consumer's purchase intention. Thus, information is strongly needed to create the image of a brand (Wang & Tsai, 2014). Customer may seek information from varied sources such as a friend, the family, a group, and the media (Arslan and Zaman, 2014). E-WOM communications placed on the internet as a vital interactive communication media help consumers to gather information before purchasing products or brands and accordingly influences strongly the brand image and creates their purchase intention (Zhang & Tran, 2009; Sharif et al., 2016). Therefore, the intention to purchase a certain product or brand increases when the consumer's attitude regarding that product or brand is getting more favorable.

### **2.3 Brand Image**

A brand was defined by Kotler (2000) in a more generic way. He clarified that every name, term, symbol, or design, or even a mix of all these indicates a certain brand that is used to differentiate one's offerings from those of other competitors in the market. The brand can be used to identify a certain product, adds value to that product to be able to compete within the market, and supports the ease of product recognition (Chi et al., 2009). It also offers the consumers a consistent promise that provides them with various bundles of attributes to help them achieve a certain level of satisfaction, a guarantee of quality, and loyalty. The product

attributes and benefits related to a brand that gives the brand its distinction is combined in the form of a brand image that is conceived by the consumer (Bian and Moutinho, 2011). Attributes can either be physically valued; or comprised of emotional values, rationalities, and unseen. From the viewpoint of benefits, it was suggested that brand image is frequently examined from three aspects (Chi et al., 2009). The functional aspect represents the internal benefits associated with the attributes related to the product that fulfil the basic needs of the consumers. Symbol benefits are seen in a sort of added value that indicates the other attributes not related to the product itself that fulfil the underlying needs and the self-concept of the consumers. Furthermore, the experimental benefits are how it feels to utilise a product that is consistent with product-and non-product-related attributes that achieve subjective customer satisfaction (Aaker, 1996). Moreover, the brand image reflects the individual's self and identity and provides the consumer with the relative proper information needed for the purchasing decision and boost accordingly his purchase intention.

Kotler, et al (2012) stated that brand image is an association of one's personal belief, idea, and impression stored in the customer's memory towards a specific brand. Consequently, the brand image comprises consumers' experience and evaluations associated with a brand (Wang & Yang, 2010; Bian & Moutinho, 2011). Brand image is built up with consumer perception that can to some degree be controlled by marketing strategists and comprises consumers' brand recalls for the performance and the experience associated with the brand and comes out as cognitive and emotional satisfaction (Erdil and Uzun, 2010; Erdil, 2015; Granot et al., 2010; Kumar and Kim, 2014). Hence, the brand image reveals the ability to meet consumers' needs and likewise uncovers value and identity made for the customers (Rayburn and Voss, 2013). Brand image is considered as the most significant intangible asset in the organizations and is vital for their success in the market, for their future and long-term profits, for attaining sustainable competitive advantage and all other decisions related



to their stock price and an opportunity for alliances and acquisitions (Torlak et al., 2014).

Brand image plays a pivotal role and is mostly viewed as an external key driver to help consumers compare different alternative products when making a purchasing decision (Wang and Tsai, 2014). As expressed by Lien et al. (2015), brand image is an essential cue that impacts the purchasing intention of consumers. The stronger the brand image of a product, the bigger the willingness to buy it and moreover, when consumers are more familiar with the product, they will gain more trust in purchasing it (Chi et al., 2009). When buying a product, consumers normally prefer to choose a well-known brand with a favourable image that helps in reducing their perceived risks as well as a positive brand image may increase the perceived value of consumers (Wang & Tsai, 2014).

### **3. Research Objectives**

This research aims to:

1. Study the effect of online customer reviews on purchase intention
2. Analyze the impact of online customer reviews on brand image.
3. Analyze the impact of brand image on customer purchase intention
4. Discover the moderating role of brand image in the relationship between the customer online reviews and the purchase intention.

### **4. Research Hypotheses**

The relationship between online customer reviews and purchase intention have been largely examined by researchers in the marketing field (Lee, et al, 2011; Torlak et al 2014). This way of communication has given the customers the chance to collect a large amount of information that can impact the behavior of these customers (Chatterjee,2001; Chen and Xie. 2008; Dellarocas,2000; Godes and Mazylin, 2004). The researches proved that online reviews play a vital role in influencing customers' purchase intention and decisions ( Kiecker & Cowles,

2001; Sen and Lerman , 2007; Xia and Bechwati ,2008) and have concluded that because of its credibility online reviews are considered the most effective communication tool (Chatterjee, 2001; Mayzlin, D., 2006). These arguments have led to our first hypothesis:

H1: Online customer reviews have a significant impact on purchase intention.

As mentioned previously online customer reviews has a more significant effect on the consumer behavior than the traditional communication tools (Trusov et al., 2009). Elseidi (2016) argued that in case of purchasing a product integrated with high financial and emotional risk, consumers will probably include more in online customer reviews. Besides, literature witnessed the staggering effect of information sharing when perceiving brand image (Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012; Setiawan, 2014; Torlak et al., 2014, Charo et al., 2015). Jalilvand (2012) revealed a positive impact of electronic word of mouth on brand image. Brand image and attitude can be shaped in the consumers' mindsets through either positive or negative online customer reviews (Elseidi, 2016). Charo et al. (2015) expressed that consumers are more likely to adopt up to date online reviews related to food discussion which can impact their perception of a brand or product. Accordingly, this leads to the following research hypothesis:

H2: Online customer reviews have a significant impact on brand image.

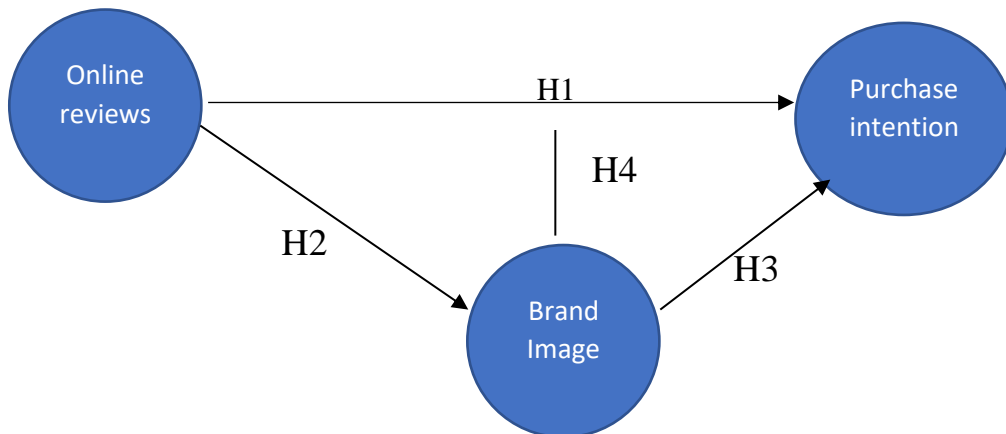
When deciding to purchase, a consumer will choose those brands with good image. Enhancing the brand image is associated with higher purchase intention (Arslan & Zaman 2015). According to previous studies the influence of brand image on consumers' purchase intention was tested and revealed a significant relationship between these variables (Arslan & Altuna, 2010; chi et al., 2008; Tariq et al., 2013). Zeeshan (2013) showed that brand image has a significant effect on customers' purchase intention. Better brand image is vital for influencing purchase intention

(Shukla ,2011; Wu et al., 2011; Charo et al., 2015; Lien et al.,2015). Regarding cell phone brands, Torlak et al. (2014) stated the significant influence of brand image on purchase intention through electronic word of mouth. This leads to state the following hypothesis for this study:

H3: Brand image has a significant impact on purchasing intention  
Brand image is a very important asset of any organization. It can be considered as a vital competitive advantage that can be used to create value for the brand (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2009). Brand image plays a very important role in strengthen the relationship between online customer reviews and purchase intention. Lin, et al. ,. (2013) , Kala & Chaubey (2018) and jalilvand and Samiei (2012) have suggested that brand image plays a moderating role in the relationship between the electronic word of mouth and the customers’ purchase intention. this leads to the development of the following hypothesis:

H4: Brand image moderates the relationship between online customer reviews on the purchase intention.

Based on these previous hypotheses the research model is as follows:



**Figure 1: The proposed research Model**

## 5. Study Sector and Data Collection

The researchers have chosen the Pampers brand that commands a very powerful customer fidelity due to its long-standing presence in the Egyptian market and its excellent reputation for quality (Euro monitor reports, 2017-2021). Pampers is one of the important brands forming the diapers industry which is considered one of the highly growing industries in Egypt and globally. In 2019 The size of the market of the global baby diapers was valued at \$52.6 billion, and is expected to grow at a CAGR of 5.0 percent from 2021 to 2027, to reach \$68.3 billion by 2027 (Chouhan, et al.,2021)

Data were gathered through an online survey. The study population consisted of mothers of children who use the brand pampers, as the population is an unmeasurable population, the sample size calculated was 384 respondents (Robert et al., 1996). Only 294 complete valid and reliable surveys were collected, with a response rate of 76.5%.The researchers collected the data of the research over a period of eighteen months starting in August 2019.

## 6. Measurement Scales

The questionnaire was based on the scale proposed by Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold (2001) which measure online reviews or electronic word of mouth. Brand image was measured using (Davis et al., 2009) scale, and purchase intention was measured using Shukla's (2010) scale. The different items of the three instruments were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The final part of the questionnaire collected some demographic data from the participants including age, number of children, average income per month, the educational level, the occupation, the most used social media platform and the number of hours spent on social media.

## 7. Data Analysis

### 7.1 The descriptive statistics

**Table (1) The descriptive statistics of the sample**

Age	N	Frequency %
Less than 20	3	1%
21 – 30	76	26%
31 – 40	157	53%
> 40	58	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Number of children</b>		
1	94	32%
2	113	38%
3	70	24%
More than 3	17	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Average income</b>		
Below 1000	6	2%
1001 – 3000	28	10%
3001 – 5000	71	24%
5001 – 10000	95	32%
More than 10000	94	32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Educational level</b>		
Undergraduate	4	1%
Bachelor's degree	185	63%
Master's Level	64	22%
Doctorate degree	41	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Occupation</b>		
Private sector	118	40%
Public sector	71	24%
Self – employed	21	7%
Student	5	2%

Housewife	79	27%
<b>Total</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Social platform most used</b>		
Facebook	231	79%
Instagram	54	18%
Twitter	9	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Hours spent on Social Media</b>		
Less than 1 hour	44	15%
Between 1-3 hours	149	51%
Between 3-5 hours	65	22%
More than 5 hours	36	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>100%</b>

As shown in table (1), 53.5 % of the respondents were between the age of 31 and 40 years old. For the number of children, most of the respondents (62%) of the respondents have 2 children or more. For the monthly income the results revealed that 32% of the respondents earn a monthly income between 5001 and 10000 L.E while another 32% their monthly income was more than 10000 L.E Concerning the educational level of the respondents the majority 63% held a bachelor degree. Their occupation varied between 40% working in the private sector and 24% (71) working in the public sector For the social media platform, they use the most, Facebook came in the first place as 79% of the respondents (231) have chosen Facebook as their no1 social media platform. For the number of hours spent on social media 51% of the respondents (149) spend from 1 to 3 hours daily on social media.

## 7.2 Convergent validity and reliability of the measures

**Table (2) Properties of measures (convergent validity and reliability)**

Construct	Item*	Standardized loading	Mean	SD	Cronbach's $\alpha$	CR	AVE
Online customers' reviews			3.912	.8420	<b>.847</b>	<b>.856</b>	<b>.548</b>
	OCR1	.831	4.095	.9903			
	OCR2	.833	4.116	.9950			
	OCR3	.625	3.493	1.2358			
	OCR4	.795	3.895	1.0831			
	OCR6	.577	3.963	1.0196			
Brand image			3.863	.9276	<b>.832</b>	<b>.839</b>	<b>.637</b>
	BI1	.794	3.690	1.1927			
	BI2	.702	4.163	.9848			
	BI3	.887	3.735	1.0274			
Purchase Intention			3.3390	1.3297	<b>.944</b>	<b>.946</b>	<b>.853</b>
	PI1	.909	3.350	1.4129			
	PI2	.977	3.381	1.3542			
	PI3	.883	3.286	1.4381			

Note: CR, construct reliability; AVE, average variance extracted. **Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of all constructs is .870**

\* OCR5 removed because the value of **standardized loading factor of it less than 0.5**.

As shown in table 2, the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was used to measure the internal consistency of the measures. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of all constructs was 0.870, which means that the items have a high degree of internal consistency as it is higher than 0.5. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of each construct was 0.847, 0.832 and 0.944 respectively, which means that the internal consistency of each construct was acceptable. Besides the AVE results which were between 0.548 and 0.853 proved that the measures have a high convergent validity.

**Table (3) The correlation Matrix between the constructs**

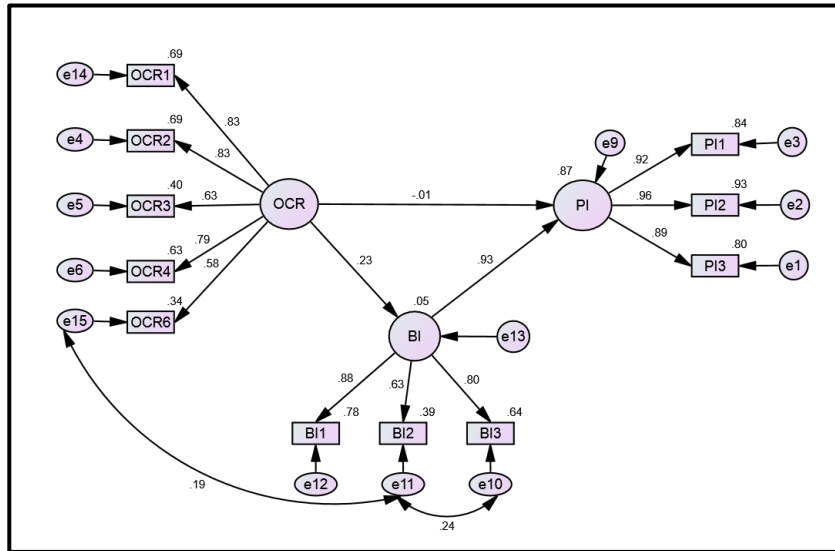
Correlation p-value	OCR1	OCR2	OCR3	OCR4	OCR6	BI1	BI2	BI3	PI1	PI2	PI3
OCR1	1.000 -----										
OCR2	0.751 0.000	1.000 -----									
OCR3	0.493 0.000	0.501 0.000	1.000 -----								
OCR4	0.632 0.000	0.667 0.000	0.550 0.000	1.000 -----							
OCR6	0.448 0.000	0.476 0.000	0.417 0.000	0.516 0.000	1.000 -----						
BI1	0.151 0.009	0.180 0.002	0.208 0.000	0.129 0.028	0.204 0.000	1.000 -----					
BI2	0.139 0.017	0.162 0.005	0.104 0.076	0.131 0.024	0.258 0.000	0.563 0.000	1.000 -----				
BI3	0.201 0.001	0.228 0.000	0.194 0.001	0.231 0.000	0.253 0.000	0.702 0.000	0.600 0.000	1.000 -----			
PI1	0.158 0.007	0.152 0.009	0.182 0.002	0.159 0.006	0.186 0.001	0.766 0.000	0.561 0.000	0.701 0.000	1.000 -----		
PI2	0.166 0.004	0.163 0.005	0.204 0.000	0.152 0.009	0.196 0.001	0.790 0.000	0.574 0.000	0.720 0.000	0.890 0.000	1.000 -----	
PI3	0.181 0.002	0.176 0.002	0.226 0.000	0.166 0.004	0.195 0.001	0.772 0.000	0.576 0.000	0.678 0.000	0.805 0.000	0.867 0.000	1.000 -----

The correlation test was used to assess the discriminant validity among the items of the measures. As shown in table 3 the findings indicated that all correlations among constructs are significant at the 0.01 level except the correlation between OCR 3 and BI2, as



it was found to be close to zero with a p-value greater than 0.05. In general, the correlation results were satisfactory in a way that can help in the illustration of the structural model.

### 7.3 The Structural Model



**Fig. 2: Standardized regression coefficients proposed model**  
 In figure 2, a structural model was tested. It presented the standardized path regression coefficients that showed the direct relationships among the dimensions for the proposed research model. Accordingly, the model fit indices in table (5) specified that the model fits well to the data, whereas all values were within the acceptable levels. It was found that the normed chi-square statistic is 1.277, that is less than the minimum threshold 3 and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is less than the cut off value 0.08. It showed also the p-value 0.156 that is greater than 0.05 and the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) that were both greater than the cut-off values .90

**Table (4) Maximum likelihood estimates for research model (n = 294)**

Hypothesis	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Estimate	Standardized estimate	Standard error	t-statistic	p-value
H <sub>1</sub>	Online customers' reviews	Purchase Intention	-.009	-.006	.056	-.153	.878
H <sub>2</sub>	Online customers' reviews	Brand image	.216	.226	.065	3.337	***
H <sub>3</sub>	Brand image	Purchase Intention	1.456	.932	.095	15.281	***
H <sub>4</sub>	Interaction (OCR *BI)	Purchase Intention	.285	.012		23.573	***

Notes: \*\*\*significant at the p < 0.001 level (two-tailed).

**Table (5): Model fit statistics**

Structural model	Fit statistics	Cut-off value
$\chi^2$	47.856	-----
df	39	-----
p-value	.156	>0.05
Normed $\chi^2$	1.227	1.00-3.00
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.972	>0.90
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.979	>0.90
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.996	>0.90
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.028	< 0.08

Table (4) depicts the maximum likelihood estimates for research model to test the significance of the relationships between variables. Four research hypotheses were tested, and the result of the analysis indicated that online consumers' reviews (OCR) has a significant positive effect on brand image (BI), with  $\beta=0.226$ ,  $t=3.337$ , and  $p=0.000$ . It also showed that brand image (BI) was significantly and positively related to purchase intention (PI), with  $\beta=0.932$ ,  $t=15.281$ , and  $p=0.000$ . However online consumers' reviews (OCR) had no significant impact on purchase intention (PI) as p-value is greater than 0.05,  $\beta=-0.006$  and  $t=-0.153$ . As moderator in this study, brand image moderates the

relationship between online consumers’ reviews and purchase intention. Regarding the interaction between online consumers’ reviews (OCR) and brand image (BI), findings revealed a significant positive indirect effect of brand image on purchase intention (PI) with  $t= 23.573$  and  $p= 0.000$ . As a result, it was found that H2, H3 and H4 hypotheses were supported. As presented in table (6), the interaction between online consumers’ reviews and brand image that influence purchase intention was tested using the standardized direct, indirect and total effects for research model. As seen online customers’ reviews had a direct effect on brand image and brand image had a strong direct effect on purchase intention. Findings articulated that OCR had a negative direct effect on purchase intention (- 0.006), whereas it revealed a positive indirect effect on purchase intention (0.211) but through its effect on brand image. That assures the rejection of H1 hypothesis, as the direct relationship between OCR and purchase intention was not supported. Finally, brand image had the strongest total effect (0.932) on purchase intention followed by online consumers’ reviews on brand image (0.226) and lastly comes online consumers’ reviews on purchase intention with the total effect 0.205.

**Table (6): Decomposition of total effects for research model**

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect
Online customers' reviews	Brand image	0.226	0.000	0.226
Online customers' reviews	Purchase Intention	-0.006	0.211	0.205
Brand image	Purchase Intention	0.932	0.000	0.932

## 8. Discussion and Conclusion

This research is an empirical study that tested the effect of online customer reviews on customer purchase intention with brand image as a moderating variable. It was assumed based on the finding of the previous literature that online customer reviews

have a significant effect on purchase intention and that online customer reviews have a significant impact on brand image while brand image has a significant impact on purchase intention also the researchers added that brand image moderates the relationship between online customer reviews and purchase intention. The following discussion shows the main insights that underline the effect of online customers reviews on customer purchase intention.

Unlike many studies that concluded that there is a positive direct effect of online customer reviews on purchase intention such as Jalilvand, (2012); El Seidi, (2016); Setiawan (2014), our study concluded that this direct effect of online customer reviews on purchase intention is not supported. This result is due to the nature of the sample of the study, as shown by the descriptive statistics the majority of the respondents 73% of the respondent aged 31 years and older , 68% of them have two children or more which means that they are experienced mothers. Normally when dealing with the first child mothers tend to ask for recommendations, suggestions and reviews from other customers to choose the right product for their children. But this is not the case for experienced mothers who have more than one child they tend to rely on their long experience with different brands of diapers and they choose the right brand for their children based on this experience. This result is also due to the fact that despite the tremendous development in the field of Internet and information and the large quantities of customer reviews available, this is still not sufficient by itself to affect the purchasing intention of the Egyptian consumer. However, this huge amount of information and opinions helps in building a positive brand image, that in turn, is responsible for influencing the purchase intention of customers. This means that online customer reviews play a vital role in influencing the customers' intention to buy but through brand image as a moderator on the relationship between online customer reviews and purchase intention. These findings were supported by Lin, et al. ., (2013), Kala & Chaubey (2018) and jalilvand and Samiei (2012) who have suggested that brand image plays a

moderating role in the relationship between the electronic word of mouth and the customers' purchase intention.

Brand image is essential for organisations' sustainability and growth decisions and gaining competitive advantage in the market (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Therefore, marketers can use this study's results to develop a convenient marketing strategy by enhancing brand image and accordingly increase the customers purchase intention towards the brand. Opinions of others especially in sectors targeting children may strongly influence and shape the image of the brand (Neelankavil, Mathur & Zhang, 2000). Strong brand image creates higher purchase intention and customers strongly depend on it when deciding to purchase a brand (Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

This study highlights the importance of brand image as a decisive criterion when customers intend to purchase a brand. This result confirms those studies of Shukla, (2010); Wu et. al. (2011); Charo et. al. (2015); El Seidi (2016) where they revealed the existence of a significant effect of brand image on the consumers purchase intention. This can be interpreted from the viewpoint of the child's care. Mothers in Egypt are very cautious about their children. They want to reduce the perceived risk they may undertake to the minimum. Therefore, they prefer to buy a well-known brand according to its trustworthy image. Moreover, it shows the vital role of online customer reviews in shaping the perception of the brand in the mind of customers. This result is consistent with the result of Trusov et al. (2009) where they asserted the importance of eWOM as a vital media in influencing the consumer behavior. Meanwhile, El Seidi (2016) showed that the customer prefers to rely on electronic reviews when it comes to high financial and sentimental risks. Diapers in Egypt have a relatively high price. Therefore, mothers prefer to depend on electronic reviews to help them in choosing the best quality with the most suitable price.

Therefore, marketers should consider this important communication channel when developing the organisation's marketing strategy. They could use it to create awareness towards

their brand and share with their existing and potential customers the favourable information about the brand and their organisation. They may change any negative perception associations customers may have towards the brand to enhance the companies brand image that leads to increasing the customers purchase intention.

### **9. Limitations and Future Research**

It should be noted that this study focused on the diapers sector in Egypt on a single brand, Pampers specifically. Therefore, its results were limited to this sector. Further researches may consider other sectors and other brands in the Egyptian context. Also, they may study the effect of online customer reviews on other variables such as brand trust, brand loyalty, risk, price and others on customers purchase intention. Moreover, online customer reviews can be analysed more wider considering variables affecting it such as the quality and quantity. How to manage online customer reviews effectively is another issue marketers should consider to enhance the brand image and purchase intention.

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