

The Impact of Brand Authenticity on Consumer Purchase Decisions in Digital Marketplaces: The Role of Brand Trust as a Mediator

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: This research assesses three relationships in digital marketplaces: whether perceived brand authenticity predicts consumers' purchasing choices, whether it builds brand trust, and whether trust carries part of authenticity's influence to purchase decisions.

Methodology: A cross-sectional survey was administered to 267 Indonesian marketplace users with prior online purchasing experience. Participants were chosen purposively according to the study's eligibility requirements. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was then used to estimate the measurement and structural models, including the hypothesized mediation pathway.

Findings: The estimated structural paths produced a coefficient of 0.995 from brand authenticity to purchase decision and 0.863 from brand authenticity to brand trust. The coefficient linking brand trust with purchase decision was positive but smaller (0.131). Assessment of the indirect path was interpreted as partial mediation by brand trust.

Conclusion: Within the sampled digital-marketplace context, authenticity emerged as the principal factor associated with both trust and purchasing choice. Brand managers should make verifiable, consistent, and candid conduct central to their online branding so that trust can be reinforced and purchasing outcomes improved.

Keywords: Brand Authenticity; Brand Trust; Purchase Decisions; Digital Marketplaces.

Submitted: 28-06-2025

Revised: 30-10-2025

Accepted: 05-11-2025

Article DOI:

http://dx.doi.org/10.22441/jurnal_mix.2025.v15i3.012

INTRODUCTION

The expansion of digital commerce has made consumers more attentive to the conduct behind a brand, not merely to the attributes of its products. In crowded online environments, dependable and candid behavior can help a brand establish loyalty and reduce doubts about its claims (Chalirafi et al., 2021; Munandar et al., 2022). In this study, authenticity is treated as a consumer judgment that the brand communicates and behaves in a genuine, credible, and transparent manner (Bruhn et al., 2012). Prior evidence associates this judgment with both stronger trust and more favorable buying responses (Margana et al., 2019; Moulard et al., 2016; Safeer et al., 2023). Examining these links is especially relevant as marketplace interactions increasingly occur without direct contact between buyers, products, and sellers.

Online shoppers often compare brands using signs of openness and consistency, making authenticity a meaningful basis for choice (Dachi, 2023; Wahyuni & Zulfikar, 2024). Yet authenticity need not affect the final decision through only one route. A credible brand presentation may first strengthen confidence in the brand, and that confidence may subsequently make purchase more acceptable. This trust-building sequence is consistent with earlier explanations of how perceived genuineness shapes consumer responses (Bruhn et al., 2012; Fritz et al., 2017).

Research has established several outcomes of brand authenticity, but the pathway from authenticity to an actual purchase decision through brand trust remains less developed for general marketplace settings. Much of the existing evidence concerns intention, loyalty, or narrowly defined product categories (Nabih & Alhosseiny, 2024; Panyekar, 2024). Evidence drawn from Indonesian marketplace users is also limited. The present study therefore distinguishes the direct association between authenticity and purchase decision from the indirect association that operates through trust.

That distinction matters because consumers in online marketplaces usually evaluate an offer without handling the product or meeting the seller. Their decisions depend on signals such as the credibility of the brand, the clarity of its communication, and the consistency of its conduct. Authenticity can improve the believability of those signals, whereas trust can lessen uncertainty surrounding the transaction (Fritz et al., 2017; Guèvremont, 2018). A clearer account of this process can support more coherent branding and service policies.

Against this background, the model tests four linked propositions among Indonesian digital-marketplace consumers: authenticity as a predictor of purchase decision, authenticity as a predictor of trust, trust as a predictor of purchase decision, and trust as a mediator. Treating the relationships in one model extends the discussion beyond isolated direct effects and translates the findings into guidance for managing credibility and consumer assurance online.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Authenticity

Morhart et al. conceptualize brand authenticity through continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolic meaning (Morhart et al., 2013). From the consumer's viewpoint, a brand is also more likely to be judged authentic when its stated identity, product quality, and observable conduct remain aligned (Napoli et al., 2014). Accordingly, authenticity is not confined to visual identity or promotional language. It is inferred from whether claims are supported by practice, information is

dependable, and concerns are addressed openly. Alignment across these elements can improve brand evaluation and deepen the consumer-brand relationship (Fritz et al., 2017; Guèvremont, 2018).

Digital marketplaces make these judgments more consequential because buyers often have to assess a brand through mediated evidence. Reviews, product descriptions, prior transactions, and the brand's online responses substitute for physical inspection and face-to-face contact. When those sources provide consistent and verifiable information, perceived authenticity can rise while transaction uncertainty declines (Oh et al., 2019; Safeer et al., 2023).

Brand Trust

Brand trust denotes a consumer's readiness to depend on a brand even when the outcome cannot be known with certainty. It rests on the expectation that the brand is capable, keeps its commitments, and will deal responsibly with consumers (Delgado-Ballester, 2004). Such confidence is accumulated through repeated evidence, including dependable quality, truthful information, reliable service, and fair handling of problems.

Two judgments underpin this confidence. The first concerns competence and reliability: whether the brand can deliver what it promises. The second concerns intention: whether the brand is expected to protect rather than exploit consumer interests. Both judgments carry particular weight online, where quality and seller behavior cannot always be verified before payment.

Trust lowers the mental and perceived-risk burden of comparing alternatives. Confidence in a brand's likely performance can reduce concern about failed transactions and support preference, advocacy, loyalty, and buying willingness (Delgado-Ballester, 2004; Holbrook & Chaudhuri, 2001). Consistent behavior that appears authentic is repeatedly identified as one of the conditions from which such confidence develops (Eggers et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2021).

Purchase Decision

Purchase decision describes the point at which a consumer selects one option after identifying a need and weighing the benefits and risks of available alternatives (Kotler & Keller, 2012). In an online marketplace, that choice may reflect not only price and product information but also reviews, platform reputation, earlier experience, the credibility of the brand, and confidence in the seller.

Purchase intention and purchase decision are related but not identical. Intention captures a future-oriented willingness to buy, whereas a decision indicates that the consumer has moved to a more definite choice. Here, purchase decision is represented by confidence and satisfaction with the chosen brand, preference over alternatives, the brand's role in the final choice, and willingness to buy again.

When product information is incomplete, consumers use brand cues to simplify evaluation. A brand that appears dependable and consistent can make expected performance easier to judge and can reduce the effort required to compare offers. Authenticity and trust are therefore positioned as signals that may shape which brand is ultimately selected.

Brand Authenticity and Purchase Decision

Authenticity may affect purchase decisions by improving the diagnostic value of a brand's signals. Consumers are more likely to respond positively when the brand's claims, values, and actions appear to support one another. This coherence also helps separate the brand from competitors whose messages seem contrived or inconsistent.

Earlier studies connect authentic brand perceptions with closer consumer-brand bonds, stronger affective attachment, higher perceived value, and favorable behavioral outcomes (Fritz et al., 2017; Oh et al., 2019; Safeer et al., 2023). In a marketplace setting, buyers can observe whether product performance, service, and communication substantiate the brand's promises. Greater coherence across those touchpoints should make selection of the brand more likely.

H1: Brand authenticity has a positive effect on purchase decisions in digital marketplaces.

Brand Authenticity and Brand Trust

Trust can emerge when consumers see evidence that a brand's expressed values are reflected in its conduct. Transparent communication and repeated consistency make future behavior more predictable, which lowers the perceived chance that the brand will fail to honor its commitments. Authenticity is therefore expected to provide a basis for dependence on the brand.

Empirical work generally positions authenticity before trust in the causal sequence. Studies of entrepreneurial brands, consumer-based authenticity, and Indonesian digital commerce report that brands perceived as sincere and coherent tend to receive stronger trust evaluations (Eggers et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2021; Margana et al., 2019; Moulard et al., 2016). This evidence also suggests that authenticity supports durable brand relationships rather than only short-term reactions.

The proposed link is particularly relevant online because consumers must infer reliability from indirect evidence. Verifiable information, consistent service, and open responses to problems can confirm that the brand behaves as represented. As those signs accumulate, stronger perceptions of authenticity should be accompanied by higher brand trust.

H2: Brand authenticity has a positive effect on brand trust in digital marketplaces.

Brand Trust and Purchase Decision

Brand trust may affect the final choice by reducing the downside consumers associate with selecting an offer. A trusted brand is expected to deliver the promised standard and is viewed as less likely to act opportunistically. These expectations can tip the comparison in its favor when several alternatives are available.

Digital purchases involve multiple uncertainties, including product fit, payment protection, delivery, returns, and complaint handling. Trust is reinforced when descriptions are accurate, orders are fulfilled reliably, return procedures are clear, and assistance is responsive. These experiences can give consumers sufficient assurance to complete a purchase.

Previous research relates trust to consideration, preference, loyalty, and eventual brand choice (Delgado-Ballester, 2004; Erdem & Swait, 2004; Holbrook & Chaudhuri, 2001). Evidence from Indonesian online and branded-product contexts likewise shows a positive contribution of brand trust to purchasing decisions (Oktaviani et al., 2022). On that basis, consumers with stronger confidence in the brand are expected to be more inclined to select it.

H3: Brand trust has a positive effect on purchase decisions in digital marketplaces.

Mediating Role of Brand Trust

Authenticity can reach purchase decision through two conceptually different routes. In the direct route, the brand is chosen because its identity and behavior are themselves judged genuine. In the mediated route, authenticity first builds confidence in the brand, after which that confidence supports the purchasing choice.

Perceived consistency, integrity, and credibility provide evidence that a brand is likely to act as promised. Trust converts that evidence into assurance by lowering uncertainty during evaluation and transaction. The mediator thus explains how an abstract judgment about genuineness can become a more concrete buying response.

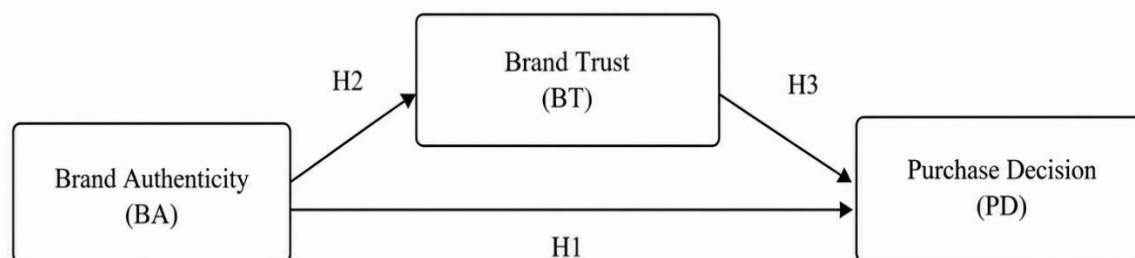
Prior studies treat trust as one mechanism through which authentic brand perceptions lead to subsequent consumer outcomes (Kim et al., 2021; Nabih & Alhossein, 2024). This mechanism should be especially visible in online marketplaces, where direct inspection and interpersonal contact are limited. Accordingly, the model expects part of authenticity's effect on purchase decision to operate through brand trust.

H4: Brand trust mediates the positive effect of brand authenticity on purchase decisions in digital marketplaces.

Conceptual Framework

The model in Figure 1 specifies brand authenticity as the originating construct and purchase decision as the outcome. Brand trust is placed between them as a mediator. The diagram therefore contains one direct path from authenticity to purchase decision and a second, two-stage path that passes through trust.

Figure 1. Proposed Research Model



METHOD

Research Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey was used to test the proposed relationships among marketplace consumers. Eligible respondents were Indonesian users who had previously completed purchases through digital marketplace platforms (Chalirafi et al., 2021; Fajri et al., 2025; Mariana et al., 2018). The design permits simultaneous estimation of authenticity, trust, and purchase-decision relationships.

Population and Sample

The questionnaire was distributed online through Google Forms. Purposive selection was applied: participants had to have marketplace purchasing experience and sufficient familiarity with the brand they assessed. After screening, 267 usable responses remained. SmartPLS was used to estimate the PLS-SEM model (Edeh et al., 2023; Hair et al., 2017; Kinanti & Usman, 2023; Pereira et al., 2024), an approach suited to latent-variable systems that include both direct paths and mediation (Hair et al., 2019; Henseler et al., 2016; Liza & Mariana, 2023; Rahmadhani et al., 2025).

Data Collection

The instrument contained measures for brand authenticity (BA), brand trust (BT), and purchase decision (PD). Responses were recorded on a five-point scale anchored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Participation was voluntary, and the survey did not request identifying details, thereby maintaining anonymity.

Table 1. Construct Operationalization

Variable	Definition	Indicators	Scale
Brand authenticity (BA)	Consumers' judgment that a brand is genuine, remains faithful to its core values, and communicates and acts transparently (Morhart et al., 2013).	Value consistency Authenticity Trustworthiness Meaning Commitment	Likert 1–5
Brand trust (BT)	Consumer confidence that the brand is dependable, acts with integrity, and will honor its commitments and expected performance (Delgado-Ballester, 2004).	Honesty Reliability Care Consumer interest Quality	Likert 1–5
Purchase decision (PD)	The evaluative process that culminates in choosing and purchasing an option on the basis of perceived benefits, risks, and confidence in the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2012).	Confidence Satisfaction Repurchase intention Brand influence Preference	Likert 1–5

Source: Processed data (2025).

Data Analysis

PLS-SEM was applied to estimate the hypothesized direct and indirect paths (Zulkarnaini et al., 2025). Assessment began with the measurement model. Indicators were considered adequate for convergent validity when their loadings were above 0.70 and each construct's AVE exceeded 0.50. Empirical separation among constructs was examined with the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Hair et al., 2012, 2021; Purwanto & Sudargini, 2021; Sarstedt et al., 2022). Internal consistency was judged using composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha, with the stated thresholds of 0.70 and 0.60, respectively (Hamid et al., 2017).

The possibility that a common response source inflated the associations was examined with Harman's single-factor procedure (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Sharma & Lijuan, 2014). Because the first factor accounted for less than one-half of the variance, common method bias was not treated as a dominant threat. The structural paths and indirect effect were then evaluated; significance was defined by $t > 1.96$ and $p < 0.05$. The mediation assessment followed the direct-and-indirect-effect procedure described by Hair et al. (2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Indicator Loadings

Outer loading values were used to determine whether each item represented its assigned construct. The decision rule was 0.70. Every BA, BT, and PD indicator in Table 2 exceeded that benchmark.

Table 2. Indicator Loadings and Validity

Code	Indicator	Measurement statement	Outer loading
BA1	Value consistency	The brand I chose consistently practices the values it communicates to consumers.	0.989
BA2	Authenticity	The brand I chose has an authentic identity and does not merely imitate other brands.	0.991
BA3	Trustworthiness	The information communicated by the brand accurately reflects the product's actual condition.	0.994
BA4	Meaning	The brand I chose has values or meanings that are relevant to its consumers.	0.996
BA5	Commitment	The brand I chose demonstrates a commitment to maintaining its identity and product quality.	0.983
BT1	Honesty	I believe that the brand I chose provides honest information to consumers.	0.980
BT2	Reliability	I can rely on the brand to provide products as promised.	0.993
BT3	Care	The brand shows concern for its consumers' needs and complaints.	0.996
BT4	Consumer interest	I believe that the brand considers the interests of its consumers.	0.988
BT5	Quality	I believe that the brand can maintain consistent product quality.	0.993
PD1	Confidence	I am confident that choosing a product from the brand was the right decision.	0.988
PD2	Satisfaction	I am satisfied with my decision to purchase a product from the brand.	0.991
PD3	Repurchase intention	I am willing to repurchase products from the brand in the future.	0.984
PD4	Brand influence	The name and reputation of the brand influenced my purchase decision.	0.998
PD5	Preference	I prefer products from the brand over similar products from other brands.	0.986

Source: Processed data (2025).

All observed items were strongly associated with their intended latent variables. Loadings for BA1-BA5 fell between 0.983 and 0.996; those for BT1-BT5 ranged from 0.980 to 0.996; and PD1-PD5 ranged from 0.984 to 0.998. Since none fell below 0.70, all indicators were retained and the measurement results satisfied the loading-based convergent-validity criterion.

Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Table 3 summarizes four measurement-quality statistics for BA, BT, and PD: Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, composite reliability, and AVE. The first three address consistency, whereas AVE indicates the share of indicator variance captured by each construct.

Table 3. Reliability and Convergent Validity Statistics

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	rho_A	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Brand authenticity (BA)	0.995	0.995	0.996	0.981
Brand trust (BT)	0.995	0.995	0.996	0.979
Purchase decision (PD)	0.995	0.995	0.996	0.980

Source: Processed data (2025).

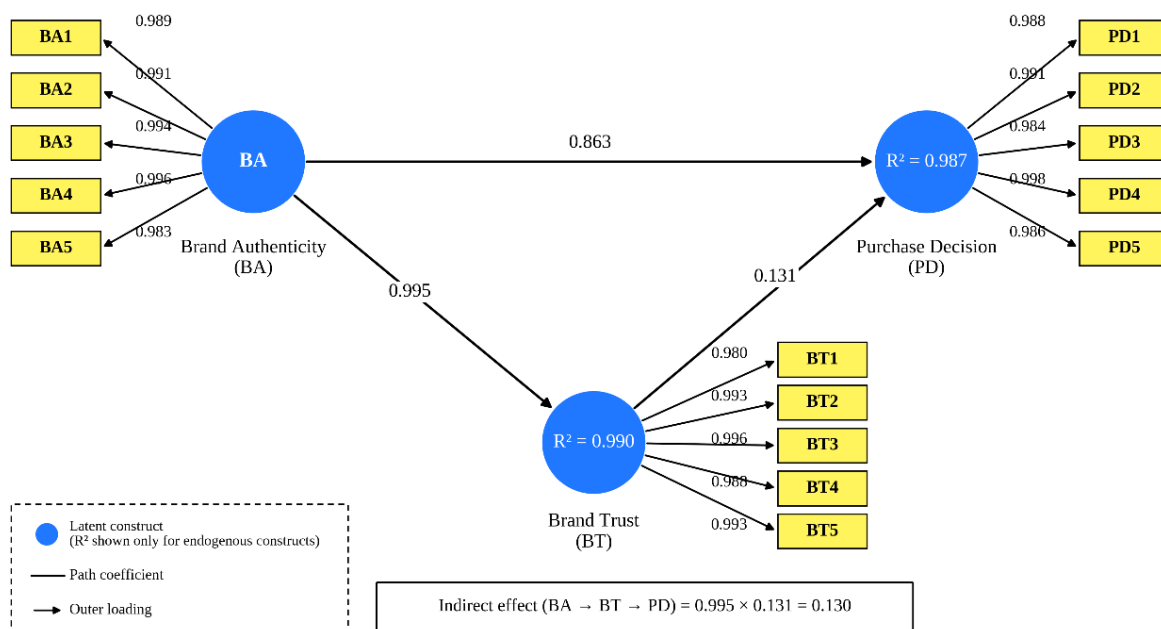
The reliability statistics were uniformly high. For every construct, Cronbach's alpha and rho_A equaled 0.995, and composite reliability equaled 0.996; each value was above its acceptance

benchmark. AVE was 0.981 for BA, 0.979 for BT, and 0.980 for PD. Because all three AVE estimates exceeded 0.50, the constructs met the reported convergent-validity requirement.

Structural Model Assessment

Structural estimates are reported for the three hypothesized links. Brand authenticity was associated with purchase decision at 0.995 and with brand trust at 0.863, while the trust-to-purchase-decision path was 0.131. The model reported R^2 values of 0.987 for brand trust and 0.990 for purchase decision. Taken together with the measurement-model results, the estimates portray authenticity as the dominant predictor and trust as a smaller additional pathway.

Figure 2. PLS-SEM Structural Results



Explained Variance (R^2)

Table 4 reports the explained-variance statistics (R^2 and adjusted R^2) for the two endogenous constructs, BT and PD.

Table 4. Explained Variance in Endogenous Constructs

Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Brand trust (BT)	0.987	0.987
Purchase decision (PD)	0.990	0.990

Source: Processed data (2025).

The predictors accounted for 98.7% of the reported variance in brand trust ($R^2 = 0.987$) and 99.0% of the variance in purchase decision ($R^2 = 0.990$). Adjusted R^2 did not differ from the corresponding unadjusted values. Thus, correcting for the number of predictors did not change the stated explanatory proportions.

Structural Path Testing

Table 5. Structural Paths and Hypothesis Decisions

Hypothesis	Path coefficient	Description	Result
H1	0.995	Higher brand authenticity is associated with a higher purchase-decision score.	Supported
H2	0.863	Higher brand authenticity is associated with stronger brand trust.	Supported
H3	0.131	Brand trust is positively associated with purchase decision, although the coefficient is relatively small.	Supported
H4	0.131 (Indirect Effect)	An indirect authenticity-to-purchase-decision path is reported through brand trust.	Supported

Source: Processed data (2025).

1. H1: Effect of Brand Authenticity on Purchase Decisions in Digital Marketplaces
For H1, the estimated authenticity-to-purchase-decision path was 0.995. The positive coefficient indicates that higher authenticity assessments accompanied more favorable purchasing choices; H1 was therefore classified as supported.
2. H2: Effect of Brand Authenticity on Brand Trust in Digital Marketplaces
For H2, the coefficient from brand authenticity to brand trust was 0.863. Respondents who rated the brand as more authentic also tended to express greater confidence in it, leading to support for H2.
3. H3: Effect of Brand Trust on Purchase Decisions in Digital Marketplaces
The trust-to-purchase-decision coefficient was 0.131. Its direction was positive, but its magnitude was much smaller than the authenticity path. H3 was nevertheless recorded as supported, with trust interpreted as an additional rather than primary predictor.
4. H4: Mediating Role of Brand Trust in the Relationship Between Brand Authenticity and Purchase Decisions
The study reports an indirect coefficient of 0.131 for the route from authenticity to purchase decision through trust. On that basis, H4 was accepted and the mediation was described as partial. The result assigns trust a secondary channel alongside the direct authenticity effect.

Discussion

Brand Authenticity and Purchase Decisions in Digital Marketplaces

The 0.995 coefficient places authenticity at the center of the model's explanation of purchase decision. Within this sample, brands judged to be genuine and internally consistent were also the brands consumers were most prepared to choose. The result is consistent with scholarship that treats authenticity as a decision-relevant cue in environments where consumers must evaluate brands remotely.

One explanation is relational rather than purely functional. Integrity, credibility, and symbolic meaning can create attachment that makes a brand more salient at the point of choice (Morhart et al., 2013). Authenticity may also strengthen brand equity by making the brand easier to recognize and safer to consider (Lusianti et al., 2024). These mechanisms help explain why perceived genuineness can influence the final selection even when competing products offer similar functional benefits.

Authenticity appears to matter especially for consumers who are already engaged with a brand (Deng et al., 2025; Kumar & Kaushik, 2022; Oh et al., 2019; Safeer et al., 2023). It can organize favorable associations and provide a stable reference for evaluating new information (Fritz et al., 2017). Consistency over time then supports loyalty and trust (Moulard et al., 2016), while a record of credible conduct may buffer the brand when adverse information appears (Guèvremont, 2018). The findings therefore fit a cumulative account in which authenticity is reinforced across repeated encounters.

The relevance of authenticity is not limited to one industry or to long-established firms (Fritz et al., 2017; Schallehn et al., 2014; Södergren, 2021). Work by Athwal & Harris (2018) shows that heritage and existential cues can shape authenticity judgments and purchase intention even for emerging brands. In practical terms, new brands may compensate for limited history by making their origins, values, and practices coherent and verifiable (Athwal & Harris, 2018).

Authenticity may also intensify affectionate responses to a brand, including brand love, which can translate into stronger buying behavior (Safeer et al., 2023). Other evidence suggests that some consumers evaluate genuineness alongside price and quality rather than treating it as a secondary attribute (Dong, 2024). A consistent authenticity strategy may consequently improve both differentiation and commercial resilience.

Overall, the direct-effect result is best interpreted as a signaling and relationship-building effect. Authenticity can reduce skepticism, make brand claims more credible, and strengthen the emotional and cognitive reasons for selecting the brand in a digital marketplace.

Online touchpoints make the implementation of authenticity visible. Consistency among social-media content, customer service, product information, and actual delivery can build engagement and trust (Rossalini et al., 2025). A more human and believable online presence has likewise been associated with greater purchasing responsiveness (Abed et al., 2016; Mohanty & Mishra, 2025). Authenticity therefore operates as a practical differentiation strategy, not merely as an abstract brand trait.

Brand Authenticity and Brand Trust in Digital Marketplaces

The estimated coefficient of 0.863 confirms a pronounced association between authenticity and trust. Consumers appear to use evidence of genuineness and consistency when deciding whether a brand is dependable. H2 is therefore supported, and authenticity can be viewed as an important input to trust formation in marketplace transactions.

Integrity and behavioral consistency are among the cues from which consumers infer authenticity (Halwani & Cherry, 2023; Kumar & Kaushik, 2022). Repeated exposure to those cues can create attachment and make the brand's future conduct easier to anticipate (Morhart et al., 2013). Consumer-based studies also report that authenticity feeds directly into brand trust (Kim et al., 2021), after which trust can support loyalty and other favorable responses.

Authenticity has been linked with both perceived value and trust (Hendri & Abror, 2021). When the brand is judged genuine, its offering may acquire greater meaning and value, which in turn supports confidence (Cinelli & LeBoeuf, 2020; Hendri & Abror, 2021; Monfort et al., 2025). Evidence that trust carries authenticity into brand equity further indicates that trust is a relationship asset through which authenticity produces longer-term outcomes (Lusianti et al., 2024).

A broader brand environment that signals authenticity can improve attitudes toward both trust and loyalty (Dananjoyo & Udin, 2023). Consumers are more likely to prefer a brand when its

claims, quality cues, and conduct point in the same direction. Because authentic brands also create stronger expectations of dependable quality (Moulard et al., 2016), the authenticity-trust link should be particularly valuable in markets where many offers are otherwise difficult to distinguish.

In digital commerce, trust performs an assurance function because physical evidence is scarce. Authentic values become persuasive only when they are repeatedly demonstrated in communication, service, and problem resolution. Transparent online practices, ethically consistent messages, and reliable fulfillment can convert authenticity perceptions into confidence that supports first and repeat purchases (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Rossaliani et al., 2025). Trust is therefore the mechanism that makes authenticity actionable under transaction uncertainty.

Brand Trust and Purchase Decisions in Digital Marketplaces

The coefficient for the trust-to-purchase path was 0.131, so its role was positive but comparatively limited. The result suggests that trust adds assurance to the choice process rather than displacing authenticity as the main explanatory factor. Even so, that assurance remains meaningful online because it helps consumers proceed despite uncertainty about products and sellers.

Evidence from other settings similarly connects trust with product selection and purchasing decisions (Oktaviani et al., 2022). In the fast-food context, brand trust has also been associated with purchase intention when quality and delivery of brand promises are salient (Hung et al., 2023). These findings support the positive direction observed here, while allowing the size of the effect to vary across markets.

The need for trust arises from the limited opportunity to inspect an online offer before committing funds. Consumers therefore evaluate whether descriptions are credible, delivery is dependable, and the brand behaves consistently across channels. Such operational evidence can reduce perceived risk and influence the final purchase choice (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Rossaliani et al., 2025).

Trust may also transmit other brand evaluations into purchase-related outcomes (Patel et al., 2024) and has been reported in varied market segments (Humairoh et al., 2021). Its influence can extend beyond a single transaction by reinforcing loyalty and repurchase (Shakuntala & Ramantoko, 2023). Consistent with this interpretation, online-shopping research links trust with lower perceived risk and a greater willingness to proceed with a purchase (Abouzeid et al., 2023).

The modest coefficient should not be read as evidence that trust is unimportant. Consumers also rely on brand image, equity, and other signals, which may absorb part of its statistical contribution (Wu & Wang, 2011). In online settings, trust often substitutes for unavailable product experience and provides psychological security (Mohanty & Mishra, 2025). Clear communication, coherent digital branding, and favorable electronic word-of-mouth can maintain that security over time (Rossaliani et al., 2025).

Mediating Role of Brand Trust in the Relationship Between Brand Authenticity and Purchase Decisions

The reported mediation result indicates that authenticity was related to purchase decision through trust as well as through the direct path. With an indirect coefficient of 0.131, the mediated route was smaller than the direct relationship but remained part of the model. Trust can therefore be interpreted as one process through which authenticity becomes behaviorally relevant.

Authenticity offers evidence about whether a brand is consistent, candid, reliable, and sincere—qualities that reduce doubt in consumer-brand exchanges (Eggers et al., 2013; Holbrook & Chaudhuri, 2001; Morhart et al., 2013; Napoli et al., 2014). When those qualities are recognized, trust and loyalty can strengthen and may subsequently affect buying behavior (Kim et al., 2021). The managerial implication is that authenticity should be demonstrated through repeatable conduct, not asserted only in promotional language.

Prior research also treats trust as a link between authentic brand perceptions and subsequent brand outcomes. Trusted brands are more likely to enter consumers' consideration sets (Lusianti et al., 2024), and affective reactions to authenticity can reinforce trust before influencing behavior (Huaman-Ramirez et al., 2019). In an online marketplace, this sequence is plausible because virtual interaction magnifies the need for assurance. Open communication and credible digital engagement can therefore help move consumers from a favorable authenticity judgment to an actual choice.

Authenticity-related associations can encourage engagement and purchase intention by making the brand easier to understand and believe (Panyekar, 2024; Papadopoulou et al., 2023; Rose et al., 2016). Once trust is established, consumers are more inclined to buy from the brand and advocate for it (P. Becerra & Badrinarayanan, 2013). Trust has also been shown to connect brand experience with loyalty (Huang, 2017). Together, these studies support the interpretation of trust as a bridge among brand meaning, relationship quality, and purchase-related behavior.

CONCLUSION

The analysis identifies brand authenticity as the dominant construct in the proposed model. Its coefficient was 0.995 for purchase decision and 0.863 for brand trust. Thus, respondents' judgments that a brand was genuine, coherent, and credible were closely associated with both confidence in the brand and selection of its products. Authenticity should therefore be treated as a strategic capability in digital-marketplace competition.

Brand trust also showed a positive coefficient for purchase decision (0.131), although the magnitude was far below the direct authenticity path. Its contribution is best understood as supplementary assurance that lowers perceived transaction risk. The study further characterizes trust as a partial mediator, implying that authenticity is connected with purchase decision both directly and through a smaller trust-based route.

For managers, authenticity should be translated into observable operating practices. Claims should be verifiable, promises should be fulfilled consistently, and customer feedback should receive timely and accountable responses. Online narratives, influencer collaborations, product information, and service delivery need to reflect the same values. Performance can be monitored through conversion, repeat-purchase, return, and complaint indicators, while crisis responses should disclose the problem, corrective action, and progress.

Conceptually, the findings position authenticity as an antecedent of both trust and purchase choice, with trust adding a complementary mediation pathway. Future studies could test whether the same pattern persists over time, across countries and platforms, and when behavior rather than self-reported evaluations is observed. Product category and consumer segment may also alter the relative strength of the paths.

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